

DIVERSITY AS/IN PRACTICE:
DIFFERENCE, BELONGING, AND CONFLICT
AT AN AMERICAN PUBLIC UNIVERSITY

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Acknowledgements

“To be whole is to be part; true voyage is return.”

—Ursula K Le Guin, *The Dispossessed*

The project that follows is what is referred to in critical sociology as *relational analysis*—my argument about diversity policy and practice is rooted in an understanding that those objects are the product of a network of relationships. Relational analysis allows us to see interconnection and interdependence where we are socialized to see independence and isolation. I have been struck in recent years by the convergence of a variety of paradigms—from quantum entanglement in physics to the notion of “interbeing” in certain forms of contemplative practice to relational approaches to social science—that all affirm that this deep interconnection is at the root of our social, material, and spiritual worlds. It seems only right, then, to begin this dissertation with a different kind of relational analysis—to acknowledge all of the dear colleagues, friends, and family who made this project possible. This dissertation has never been my work alone.

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I Introduction: What We Talk About When We Talk About Diversity

For more than four decades, State University has made diversity, inclusion, and equity a core institutional priority. While there is still much to do to foster a campus that is inclusive and beneficial for every member of our community, we celebrate the daily progress we make toward this goal.

Leaders at State University were fond of making statements such as this. In fact, nearly identical versions of this statement appear in multiple important diversity texts, this particular quote belonging to the implementation roadmap for the campus' latest strategic diversity plan. In a public speech in the late fall of 2015, at the campus' annual Diversity Conference, the university president redundantly declared diversity "a top priority." A former Chief Diversity Officer once wrote, "Few institutions have consistently made diversity a central, strategic priority as has State University." Not only did State University make diversity a "core," "top," and "strategic" priority, but it did so more than almost anyone else. Read together, it seems like institutional leaders stumbled over themselves to declare diversity a priority.

In the pages that follow, I explore the lives of the individuals at State University whose work was the manifestation of the institution's prioritization of diversity. Seen through their eyes, a more complex picture begins to emerge:

As a Native student, I face some unique challenges...Had it not been for Wonkis, the Native American student organizations, the Native American Cultural Outreach Specialist, and the Multicultural Student Union, persistently advocating for us, I'm certain that the university would have done nothing to address [our hardship]. Being involved in this small community has opened my eyes to how we as students of color are expected to spend our time here, advocating for our safety, our voices, and the existence of our

cultures on campus, when the number one reason we are here is to be students and receive the education that we rightfully deserve.

—Ali, Student

So, the lip service: “We're here to support you. We're committed to diversity.” And at the same time we don't have the resources to do what we need to do and the major resource is to have competent, passionate professionals engaged with what's at stake, the actual buy in. We believe, I don't think that as a collective, you know, many staff members don't really believe the administration. You say, you give great speeches. You, I mean, yes. You give great speeches but we don't believe you. As professionals we don't buy it. We've been here long enough to know that.

—Sofia, Staff Member

I have to rebuild spines. I have to rebuild students in their own identity. I have to remind students that they belong here and that they're valuable and that the scholarship that they will engage in here will be positive and life-changing. And that's before I get into teaching my course.

—William, Faculty

[For] us to pretend like racism doesn't exist at SU is silly. But that's what we like to do. Like, “No racism doesn't exist here! We're not going to talk about that.” Cause it makes us look bad. And I'm like, “Uh...it happens here and it happens everywhere.”

—Kendall, Mid-level Administrator

I mean, I remember going to one of my first meetings to meet community members and I went down to [small town]. I was meeting with some of the Asian community leaders and they said, “You know, for us, we sit in the shadow of the university. But then the

university doesn't even know we exist." So that was, that was very telling for me to say, you know, they sit right there in the shadow but, the university doesn't know they exist. And you know, all they were looking for was a relationship with the university.

—Sharon, Upper-Level Administrator

While each of these participants—actors positioned in various places within the organizational structure and hierarchy—challenge the representation at the beginning of the chapter, this dissertation is not simply an analysis of the veracity of the proclamations above. The utility of these kinds of policy statements is that they are notoriously difficult to verify. Indeed, these declarations of priority border on the nonsensical—to be a priority by definition means to be the *most* important thing. Instead, this study tells the stories of the students, staff, faculty, administrators, and community members who were tasked with realizing and acting out this priority and whose labor encompassed the “still much to do” to make State University into a diverse, inclusive, and equitable institution.

What I reveal is not simply that State University struggled to live up to its proclaimed commitment to diversity, but that there were competing understandings of what diversity, inclusion, and equity mean. This in turned shaped how institutional actors framed problems, proposed solutions, and set about attempting to transform the institution and the costs many of them paid to do so. Just as their conceptions of diversity were competing, so too were their actions.

Diversity is a ubiquitous term in colleges and businesses alike. As I will argue in the following chapter, it has become the dominant frame by which we make sense of and manage human differences in institutions. When a word like *diversity* becomes commonplace, it is easy to assume we know what it means when we encounter it in everyday texts and speech. Keeping

with the ethnographic tradition of “making the familiar strange,” this dissertation attempts to render diversity into an object of curiosity by illuminating the variety of ways institutional actors at State University articulated and acted upon their conceptions of diversity and what a truly diverse and inclusive institution might look and feel like.

Diversity at State University

What follows is an ethnography of diversity policy and practice that traces and studies through a series of institutionally structured relations I refer to as State University’s “diversity apparatus,” an analytic tool I borrow from Foucault (1980). Diversity policy and practice, or what Ahmed (2012) calls “diversity work,” is not a centralized enterprise at State University. The campus mobilizes millions of dollars to fund hundreds of offices, programs, initiatives, and events that are spread out across State University’s campus and beyond into the surrounding community of Union City where the campus is located. While the campus has a central diversity office administered by a Chief Diversity Officer (CDO), most of the elements that comprise the diversity apparatus are not within his administrative portfolio. Quite a few are clustered in the university’s specific colleges and in the Division of Student Life. But many more beyond these are spread out across the university’s various administrative units. A good deal of the individuals—students, staff, faculty, administrators, and community members—who keep these programs going are not full-time diversity workers; diversity work is one of many duties they carry or, oftentimes, they volunteer to participate in diversity policy and practice. As I discuss in greater detail in later chapters, the concept of the apparatus allows me to better situate the complex and decentered nature of diversity work at State University.

When I entered the field, my goal was to answer the question: How are institutional relationships produced and organized through the practice of diversity and how is this

experienced by diversity workers? My concern was to understand how diversity work was carried out on a daily basis and to examine how diversity workers experience and make sense of this work. Thus my goal was to understand the daily, mundane sorts of policy work and practice in which colleges and universities across the country engage—implementing campus diversity plans, hosting cultural events, administering scholarship programs and cultural centers, organizing committee meetings, running trainings, writing reports, and many, many more besides. Like discourses of diversity, these forms of daily practice are just as ubiquitous in US colleges and universities and I wanted to better understand their significance for either addressing or perpetuating institutional inequities. As Joan Acker (2006) demonstrates, it is within pedestrian and oft-overlooked institutional practice where larger forms of social inequality are born and perpetuated. My goal to make diversity strange would revolve around rethinking and retheorizing the everyday forms of diversity work.

To a large extent, I did follow this line of inquiry. I engaged in participant observation at all of the kinds of events I mention above and which one would expect to find on almost any post-secondary campus, from a local community college to an Ivy League university. For instance, a significant amount of time in the field was spent in committee meetings, one of the most ubiquitous institutional forms in large organizations (Schwartzmann, 1989). What took place in these spaces and programs held great significance for the ultimate shape of diversity policy and practice at State University.

However, the 2015-2016 school year when I did the bulk of my fieldwork was not a typical school year for State University or for many colleges and universities across the country. Building on the momentum sparked by the Black Lives Matter movement and its critique of the devaluation of Black life and inspired by students protesting racism at the University of Missouri

in Columbia, student protest movements swept the country and State University was no exception. Like the protests and activism that took place at State University the previous school year, it might have largely subsided had it not been for the momentum generated by, on one hand, a national trend in student activism and, on the other, a series of highly publicized racist acts that took place in almost rhythmic fashion during the spring semester. While significant policy work was already underway as the CDO implemented a series of initiatives spawned by the campus' most recent diversity plan, diversity policy and practice took on a new sense of urgency as a crisis developed on campus in response to both the racist incidents and students protests.

These developments significantly altered the context in which diversity work occurred. As one of the quotes above attests, racism on college campuses is neither new nor unique to State University. However, spurred by intense media interest, the national conversation about racism, inclusion, and free speech on college campuses was unique. As a result, while the mundane, daily sorts of practices continued, they took on a new sense of urgency. The diversity apparatus was mobilized in various ways to address and contain the crisis. State University could no longer simply make "daily progress," not if it wanted to address the negative press coverage and the anger on campus and from community members and the families of minoritized students. It needed to make significant change, or at least appear to make significant change, and to do so quickly. Thus the portrait I offer of diversity policy and practice at State University includes both the ordinary and extraordinary.

Diversity as/in Practice

Diversity is most often understood as the characteristic of certain bodies, which can be transferred to institutions when those bodies are present. As Puwar (2004) writes:

“In policy terms, diversity has overwhelmingly come to mean the inclusion of different bodies. It is assumed that, once we have more women and racialized minorities, or other groups, represented in the hierarchies of organizations (government, civil service, judiciary, police, universities and the arts sector), especially in the elite positions of those hierarchies, then we shall have diversity. Structures and policies will become more open when these groups enter and make a difference to organizations” (p. 1).

As I describe in the following chapter, we see this understanding reflected in the scholarship that explores the relationship between campus diversity and educational outcomes (e.g. Gurin et. al., 2002; Jayakumar, 2008; Harper & Yeung, 2013; Denson & Chang, 2015). It is assumed that particular bodies are different (difference being key to diversity) from what Puwar calls the “somatic norm” of the white, male, able body. Differences between these bodies are essential differences, and thus when more of these different bodies enter the institution, the institution itself will be different.

One of the persistent problems with this scholarship is that it perpetuates an essentialist understanding of human difference, rooted in categorical thinking: “The underlying narrative in these studies seems to be that individuals are *racially different*, and that after accepting that *fact*, researchers then figure out how to measure that *fact*” (Baez, 2004, p. 290). In other words, to believe that diversity can transform an institution, one must first believe that diversity is something real, that it possesses some essential qualities that are not present in but can be acquired by the institution. This logic is perhaps unsurprising given that so much of the diversity in higher education research is based on large statistical datasets, where students are divided into assumed racial categories (e.g. Bowman & Park, 2014; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002; Hurtado, Alvarado, & Guillermo-Wann, 2015).

Anti-essentialist theories have confronted these kinds of problems in a variety of ways. One approach has been to recast difference as the product of experience rather than essential, unalterable internal attributes. This is the anti-essentialist strategy of Critical Black Feminists and the corresponding framework of standpoint epistemology (Collins, 1991). Another approach has been to recast categorical differences as relationships rather than essences (Tilly, 1999). For example, Blackness and Whiteness come to be understood as a relationship of hierarchical difference rather than fixed qualities of social groups. While both of these approaches have deeply influenced my perspective on diversity, I also draw on the anti-essentialist work of post-Marxist theorists (Gibson-Graham, 2006; Resnick, & Wolff, 2001). Essentialism has dogged theories of class just as it has theories of race. For many Marxists and other critical theorists, social classes are assumed to objectively exist and have fundamental differences, usually articulated as “class interests.” One need only pick up the *Communist Manifesto* to see this logic at work. Post-Marxists addresses this issue by recasting class as a set of social practices by which value is produced, extracted, and redistributed (Gibson-Graham, 2006; Gibson-Graham, Resnick, & Wolff, 2001; Resnick & Wolff, 1987). Class is no longer what one is, but something one participates in, often in dynamic and contradictory ways.

This dissertation takes a similar approach by studying diversity in practice by theorizing diversity *as* practice. Diversity is no longer understood as something people possess but something they *do*. These practices are both discursive and material. It entails the construction of what Baez (2004) refers to as diversity’s “knowledge of difference”, or the ways in which the objects of diversity are discursively brought into being. This includes practice such as labeling students as “underrepresented” or “targeted minorities.” It also entails the various forms of

material labor by which those differences are managed, what Ahmed (2012) calls “diversity work.” In other words, diversity lives in representations and actions, not in bodies.

Seen from this vantage point, what diversity means is no longer given, because it is not permanently fixed to any reference point, such as racialized bodies. Diversity includes the practices by which certain bodies come to be seen as diverse while others do not. To make sense of this dynamic, I once again draw on Marxist theorists, this time Stuart Hall and Ernesto Laclau. Laclau’s (1996, 2005) work exhibits a fascination with the open-ended nature of language and the social processes by which meaning becomes partially fixed. He troubles our understanding of basic political concepts such as freedom and revolution by demonstrating they are *empty signifiers* whose meaning is produced through social practice and conflict rather than pre-determined. Likewise, I argue that diversity operates as an empty signifier and that diversity work entails, in part, the process by which diversity is given meaning or the empty signifier of diversity is “filled.” But, as Laclau points out, this process is never completed. Stuart Hall (1988a) is useful here because he provides a model for how meaning becomes fixed and *refixed*. He argues that competing social groups *disarticulate* or borrow the ideas and discourses of other groups and then *rearticulate* or rework them to be in line with the interests they wish to advance. Hall and Laclau demonstrate that the social processes that produce meaning are dynamic and conflictual.

This leads me to two analytic concepts I develop over the course of the dissertation—*diversity ideologies* and *institutional projects*—each of which helps to demonstrate the multiplicity of ways the people I encountered at State University conceptualized, represented, and engaged in diversity as a form of practice.

My participants offered various and sometimes competing conceptions of what diversity is and what it meant for State University to be a diverse and inclusive institution. They relied on different languages and assumptions to diagnose and frame what was wrong with the university and in turn to offer potential solutions for institutional transformation. What I call diversity ideologies refers to the shared ways institutional actors made sense of, challenged, and defended diversity policy and practice at State University. Diversity ideologies allowed my participants to articulate what diversity is and, just importantly, what it should do or what should be done about diversity. There are hints of these ideologies in the interview quotes above and they are explored in greater depth later in the dissertation.

These ideologies are significant because they shaped how institutional actors went about their daily practice as well as how they went about proposing, advancing, and implementing policy. When diversity ideologies were put into practice, they became what I call institutional projects—attempts to realize a particular vision of what State University could and should be. I take this term from Povinelli's (2011) notion of social projects, by which she means collective attempts to build alternative social worlds. Institutional projects are the attempt to build an alternative institutional world. These ranged from an institution defined by radical forms of redistribution to an institution governed by data-driven best practices. It is important to note that the same diversity ideology could be leveraged into different institutional projects. This occurred as a result of the ways in which actors are differentially positioned within institutional structures.

Two important clarifying remarks about institutional projects are needed before proceeding. First, the term institutional project is agnostic—it could be applied to any collective attempt at institutional transformation organized around particular ideological conceptions of problems, solutions, and visions of a better institution. The academic capitalism (e.g., Slaughter

& Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004) and audit culture literatures (e.g., Shore & Wright, 1999; Strathern, 2000) I discuss in the following chapter are examples of other institutional projects. However, institutional projects are not always overtly political economic undertakings as is the case with the projects explored in those literatures and this study. Other institutional projects may attempt to transform institutions by promoting environmental sustainability, instructional technology, or service learning to name but a few possibilities. As such, the analytic tool I develop here has utility for institutional analysis in arenas other than diversity policy and practice.

Second, the institutional projects I examine here are *racial* institutional projects. Their ideologies and actions revolve around making sense of and managing human differences in institutions and more specifically racial differences. This framing echoes and is related to Omi and Winant's (1994) concept of racial projects. Racial projects entail social movements' attempts to (re)represent and (re)organize race relations in a given society by engaging in protracted conflict and negotiation with the state. Racial projects are the "building blocks" of racial hegemony (p. 64). While racial institutional projects are focused on transforming particular institutions, they are not—as this project attests—isolated from larger social struggles and racial projects. As I discuss in the following chapter, they are intimately bound up with them. In this sense, racial institutional projects can be understood as specific institutional sites of struggle within larger racial projects. I explore this issue more in depth in the following chapter.

Over the course of my time at State University, I watched these institutional projects arise as actors attempted to transform the institution in different and competing ways. These projects did not exist in isolation—they were forced to contend with each other. Over time I observed that actors advanced their project by borrowing the discourses of other projects—engaging in what

Hall calls disarticulation and rearticulation. In order to experience any level of success, projects could not ignore each other; they had to strategically engage each other. But, as I will demonstrate, the actors who advanced these projects were not all entering these conflicts from similar positions of power. While projects were forced to contend with each other, they did not do so on equal footing. Ultimately, the shape of diversity policy and practice at State University was the product of how these institutional projects intersected and collided. Below, I lay out the organization of the dissertation and how I explore the stories of diversity workers at State University.

Outline

In Chapter 2, I situate this project both within the larger body of scholarship on diversity in higher education as well as provide a historical context for the current state of diversity as a form of practice within the academy. I divide this literature in two camps, first a macro-level literature that utilizes large data sets to argue for the educational, developmental, and social benefits a diverse campus supposedly provides as well as scholarship examining the nature of “campus climate” and “campus culture.” The second, what I characterize as the micro-level literature, utilizes small-scale qualitative studies to uncover the (predominantly) negative experiences of minoritized students, staff, faculty, and administrators. I argue that a meso- or institutional-level analysis is largely lacking, but might provide opportunities to build on some of the critical responses to the existing diversity literature. In attempting to historicize this literature, I take a cue from Laclau and Mouffe’s (1985) genealogy of hegemony, asking how it came to be possible to think about human difference through the lens of diversity. Using a hegemonic analysis drawing on both racial formation and Marxist theory, I argue that diversity arose as a means to reconcile the competing demands of Civil Rights movements as well as the

backlash from white's who feared a loss of access to institutional resources. Diversity then is seen as the product of a compromise that allowed for some level of institutional inclusion while also recentering the needs and desires of the majority.

In Chapter 3, I provide an overview of the existing body of anthropological and ethnographic literature in the field of higher education. I uncover a trend in this literature that is strikingly similar to the gaps in the diversity literature—namely that there has been little ethnographic work done at the institutional level. Most often the institution recedes from view as the setting of ethnographic inquiry rather than the object of that inquiry. As an alternative, I propose a model for engaging in a critical ethnography of the university, drawing on conventions from institutional and policy ethnography to consider what this model might look like as well as explicating the methodological choices I made when formulating and conducting this study. I also discuss the challenge of studying diversity as a phenotypically White biracial male graduate student as well as discuss some of the ethical challenges I encountered in the field.

Next in Chapter 4, I map the diversity apparatus at State University in order to provide an institutional context for the analysis that takes place in subsequent chapters. In the first half of the chapter, I provide a broad overview of the hundreds of positions, offices, programs, and initiatives that comprise State University's diversity efforts as well as how they fit within the organizational structure of the university. I characterize this as the university's "official knowledge" of diversity work that is represented in organizational charts and institutional reports. In the latter half, I situate these programs and practices within the institution's ruling relations—or the ways in which power circulates within and beyond the institution.

Chapter 5 provides a different kind of map—in this chapter I explore the different ways in which participants and people I encountered represented what diversity is and what it means

for institutional life. I identify three different diversity ideologies—an ideology of care, which was primarily articulated by the various staff, faculty, and administrators engaged in diversity work in the colleges, Student Life, and the Office of Diversity; an ideology of racial justice, which is how student activists made sense of diversity as a claim to radical reform and redistribution of resources to minoritized students, staff, and faculty; and an ideology of equality, which was espoused by the campus' and system's executive leadership and certain white faculty and reframed diversity as a problem of equalizing educational outcomes between categorical groups. I also discuss how the ideology of white supremacy shaped what took place on State University's campus.

In what follows, I examine the five institutional projects that arose at State University during my time in the field, exploring how various groups mobilized around their diversity ideologies in order to attempt to transform State University. Chapter 6 explores the first of these—the project of care. This project was carried out primarily by student affairs professionals, the ones most closely engaged with serving and supporting minoritized students (and in some cases staff and faculty). They engaged in intense forms of emotional labor, usually at great cost to themselves, in order to ensure that minoritized students received the emotional, social, and academic support they needed to survive at State University. These diversity workers also attempted to make the institution itself more supportive and caring by training their majoritarian peers to be more sensitive to and competent in addressing minoritized students' needs.

In Chapter 7, I explore the project of redress, which was spearheaded by student activists and their allies and made possible by the project of care. Responding to national social movements as well as to specific acts of racism and bigotry on campus, students lobbied and protested State University and State University System administrators to address their negative

experiences on campus. Students made a variety of demands—from increasing services for minoritized students to mandating cultural competency training to giving communities of color more oversight and power on campus. While students were partially successful in seeing some of their less radical demands adopted, the student protest movement I observed collapsed due to a conflict between students themselves that emerged after they took over student government.

The following chapter, Chapter 8, goes inside diversity committee meetings to explore the project of commitment. Staff and faculty in some of the university's central diversity committees articulated a conviction that if only more campus members were committed to and believed in diversity, the institution would be transformed. Frustrated by the lack of commitment from the campus as a whole and executive leaders in particular, they regularly engaged in “preaching to the choir” to console each other. They also engaged in largely unsuccessful attempts to secure greater influence as well as a firm commitment to diversity in the form of an institutional diversity mission statement. The ways in which these committee members espoused an affective attachment to diversity as an abstract ideal is contrasted with committees who were focused primarily on advancing the needs of specific institutional populations, such as women and LGBTQ-identified individuals.

Chapter 9 examines the work spearheaded by the Chief Diversity Officer and his staff, what I refer to as the project of effectiveness. Throughout the course of my time in the field, the CDO and his office were in the process of launching initiatives outlined in the campus' strategic diversity plan and implementation roadmap—two policy documents which he often discussed in his public remarks. I frame this project as an attempt to demonstrate to critics of diversity policy and practice—what he commonly referred to as “the haters”—that diversity could effectively

accomplish its goals, thus deflecting the criticism that diversity work was a waste of institutional (and ultimately taxpayer) resources.

In the penultimate chapter, Chapter 10, I explore the final project—the project of equality. This project was the work of the university president and provost, as well as other institutional and system leaders and a select group of white faculty. The project of equality was an attempt to contain, defuse, and de-politicize the crisis on campus and, to borrow from James Ferguson (1994), to render diversity technical by recasting diversity as a managerial problem of equalizing outcomes between majoritarian and minoritized students. This project was undergirded by a particular set of epistemological assumptions that rendered certain forms of knowledge about the crisis unintelligible to institutional leaders. This knowledge positioned white faculty as the “experts” on how to manage the crisis and ultimately worked to further marginalize the minoritized students, staff, and faculty who were closest to what was happening.

In the final chapter, Chapter 11, I bring these five institutional projects into conversation with each other to demonstrate how the final shape of diversity policy and practice at State University was determined by the ways in which these institutional projects overlapped, collided, and competed. While no institutional project was able to successfully (or partially successfully) advance its agenda without engaging and strategically rearticulating competing projects, nor were they enacted from similar positions of power. Ultimately, executive leaders proved quite effective in containing attempts to engage in more systematic or radical forms of institutional reform.

Analyzing the ways in which institutional projects engage each other demonstrates how diversity policy reform is the product of institutional struggle. In contrast to some of the higher education institutional change literature which suggests that transformation can be led by

institutional or grassroots leaders, or a convergence of the two (Kezar 2012a, 2012b; Williams, 2013), I demonstrate that transformation (and the containment of transformation) does not follow a linear path, originate from one source, and is not something that can easily be “lead.” Rather it is the result of institutional struggles and the instrumental effects of those struggles. This complicates our understanding of diversity by demonstrating that its content and form is neither predetermined nor fixed. Such an approach, I argue, is able to account for both the positive benefits that arise from diversity work, something that is not often present in the critiques of diversity work, as well as its negative consequences. However, I demonstrate that channeling the benefits of diversity policy and practice to individual students, staff, and faculty works to foreclose possibilities for radical changes in institutional structures and relations. However, by better understanding how these dynamics occur, we open up new possibilities for disrupting them. While this study corroborates the critical scholarship that demonstrates that diversity is ultimately non-performative (Ahmed, 2012) or empty, I attempt to frame this emptiness as a space of possibility for articulating new visions of institutions that are not simply diverse, but also substantively and even radically just.

II Diversity & Hegemony

SU President: We have to go beyond ethnicity and race to be an inclusive campus. We have to bring those differences together. We've all had budget problems so we can't buy our way out of those problems. There is also an opportunity when we don't just throw money at things because we're talking about behavioral and cultural change. Making this an inclusive campus is a priority because it is the right thing to do. Diversity enriches education. Diversity is going to give you a competitive advantage. We have a lot of work to do, but it's worth talking about the work that has been done.

—Fieldnotes, February 2016

Student: I'm not a student of color. I'm Black. I have to come to these meetings. I'm paying to ask you to treat me like a human being. When am I going to get something out of it? I'm going to leave this place with a lot of debt and less of a person than when I started. You get to add me to your numbers, but what do I get?

Chief Diversity Officer: I hope you don't leave here less...

Student: [emphatically] It's too late.

—Fieldnotes, February 2016

Introduction

Difference has once again become a source of profound existential threat. Donald Trump rode a wave of fear into the presidency, channeling and stoking whites' fear and resentment of the Other who threatens our society in many guises: the illegal immigrant stealing jobs, the murdering Latino gang member, the plotting Muslim terrorist, and the inner-city Black shooter. In a move that was as consistent as it was appalling, Trump responded to white supremacist violence in Charlottesville, Virginia by equating neo-Nazis and the citizens protesting them. For

many Americans, especially white Americans, difference—particularly racial, ethnic, and religious difference—has long been perceived as a threat to the American way of life. In this light, while the rise of Donald Trump may appear to be a new social phenomenon, it is the product of very old patterns of fear and resentment. Reading these recent trends with an eye toward longer historical patterns helps to illuminate just how surprising it is that the discourse of diversity came to dominate how we represent human differences in institutional life. When the president of State University claimed that diversity “enriches education” and gives students “a competitive advantage,” these were not novel assertions. Linking difference and value is a central articulation at the core of diversity as a discursive formation.

In this chapter, I provide a brief history of the present (Foucault, 1970) by considering how it became possible to think about human differences as a source of value to institutions and their members. If one of the primary thrusts of anthropology is to “make the familiar strange,” then diversity is an ideal candidate for this sort of intervention, particularly in a moment where the common sense-ness of diversity’s value is under widespread challenge. While this entire dissertation project is designed to problematize our assumptions about what diversity is and does, this chapter situates my work within larger scholarly conversations on diversity in higher education. I begin by providing a broad overview of the dominant streams of research on diversity in higher education and critiques of that work. I identify two primary impulses in that scholarship—one to document the educational and developmental outcomes that are produced by having a racially diverse campus (or diverse along other axes of difference—gender, socioeconomic status, sexuality, religion, etc.), and the other which studies the experiences of students, staff, and faculty who are marked as diverse. Where one is focused on documenting, quantifying, and celebrating the impact of diversity, the other illuminates the challenges

experienced by minoritized people in institutions of higher education. The two excerpts at the beginning of the chapter illustrate the profound differences in these two bodies of literature.

After laying out the terrain of contemporary diversity scholarship, I historicize that work by tracing some of the key currents and social movements that gave rise to the discourse of diversity. While not an exhaustive historical account, this survey will demonstrate that diversity is a powerful discursive and policy frame because it helps to address a particular social problem—namely, how to incorporate previously excluded social groups into institutions without threatening majority dominance and interests. By this I mean the “central and superior place of whiteness in the structuring of organizations and positions of authority” (Puwar, 2004, p. 53). Specifically in the case of higher education, this refers to the ways in which institutional structures and practices are designed in a way to cater to the norms, values, and desires of majoritarian students, staff, and faculty and to ensure that power and resources are distributed in a way that ensures majoritarian members have institutional advantages over and above minoritarian members.

Historicizing diversity scholarship reveals that diversity emerged as a hegemonic compromise. Theorizing diversity in relation to hegemony moves the critique beyond the simple problem of whether diversity is good or bad, effective or not. It allows us to recognize that it will by necessity be contradictory—containing what Antonio Gramsci (2000) refers to as common sense, or ideological elements that serve to perpetuate domination and ideas drawn from subordinated groups, and good sense, the insights and understandings that subordinated groups have about their position within unequal social relations. Common sense and good sense are Gramsci’s reformulation of the Marxist notion of false-consciousness, the belief that dominated people do not truly understand how and why they are dominated. It was Gramsci’s belief that

subordinated people only partially internalize their subordination and are capable of possessing deep, if often incomplete, understandings of how society truly functions. This framing is essential to my analysis in subsequent chapters of diversity ideologies and how they are mobilized, as well as my ultimate claims about how diversity policy and practice provide avenues both for serving minoritized students and maintaining the status quo. In addition to my theoretical stance as a post-Marxist, my analysis has also been deeply informed by studies of international development, and I believe the field of diversity in higher education could be greatly enriched by engaging critical development theories. Both fields are concerned with understanding how powerful, majoritarian-controlled institutions mobilize to intervene in the lives of minoritized peoples.

Diversity Scholarship

This section provides a broad overview of the diversity and higher education literature, primarily looking at research from the last twenty years. As I demonstrate below, this literature developed in large part in response to the affirmative action cases before the U.S. Supreme Court in the early 2000s. While race-based and identity-based research in the field of higher education is far older, the direction this research took shifted significantly as a result of legal battles over affirmative action.

My primary goal is to make an account of the dominant thrusts in this research, of which I identify two broad trends: research on diversity and educational outcomes and research on the experiences of people marked as diverse. These bodies of scholarship are themselves heterogeneous. For example, while there is a broad literature on “interactional diversity” (i.e., the extent to which students interact with people who are different from them), there are sub-literatures focused on particular forms of interactional diversity (between, say, racial groups or

socioeconomic groups) or on particular outcomes (educational, developmental, civic, etc.). Likewise, while many scholars have documented the experiences of minoritized groups on campus, there are a wide variety of specialized literatures focused on particular institutional groups (undergraduates, graduate students, staff, faculty, etc.), on particular fields (e.g., in STEM majors, athletic programs, etc.), and particular identities (people of color, women, working class and first generation, queer, etc.). Each of these sub-literatures is deserving of its own review, but my purpose here is to provide a wide-angle view of the racial diversity literature and to consider how it became possible to think about diversity as a source of value to colleges and universities. I focus primarily on the racial diversity literature both because affirmative action debates have played a key role in shaping this field and because racial diversity was the primary focus of my research.

Diversity and Outcomes

The first trend in higher education diversity research that I identify is a body of scholarship that seeks to understand and verify the relationship between institutional demographics and practices pertaining to diversity and the educational and development benefits that accrue to students. One early exemplar of this kind of scholarship is Alexander Astin's (1993) much celebrated *What Matters in College?* This four-year study of 25,000 undergraduates at more than 200 four-year colleges and universities measured how the collegiate environment shapes a wide array of outcomes ranging from identity formation to academic success. Among these, Astin documents how an institutional and faculty "emphasis" on diversity and students' experiences across difference leads to outcomes such as "cultural awareness" and "commitment to promoting racial understanding."

Several years later, this kind of research would become more focused and urgent, largely in response to the U.S. Supreme Court cases *Gratz* and *Grutter*. To support their affirmative action policies, the University of Michigan commissioned a report entitled *The Compelling Need for Diversity in Higher Education* (Sugrue, Foner, Camarillo, Gurin, Bowen, Steele, Bok, Syverud, & Webster, 1999) that would serve as the basis for the university's defense of its admissions policies. Each author makes different cases, ranging from larger sociological arguments about the significance of race in American society to arguments against the effectiveness of using test scores in admissions. Patricia Gurin's portion of the report documents how diverse classrooms lead to gains in complex thinking. Gurin and her team (2002) would later publish this research in the *Harvard Educational Review* in a paper that has been cited nearly two thousand times, by one estimate, in the last fifteen years. In that article, the authors claim:

It is also clear that diversity is the primary basis for arguing the constitutionality of using race as one of many factors in college admission, and thus research on *whether* and *how* diversity might affect education is of crucial legal and practical importance (p. 332).

Scholars took this admonition seriously, leading to a proliferation of new studies. In the last fifteen years, an ever-growing body of research documents the benefits of diversity to student learning and development. While particular attention is paid to learning outcomes, scholars have authenticated a variety of other benefits that accrue to students as a result of diverse campuses: citizenship skills (Gurin et al., 2002), cultural competency (Jayakumar, 2008), openness to other perspectives (Harper & Yeung, 2013), and self-esteem and sense of agency (Denson & Chang, 2015) to name but a few. Some of these outcomes may be more or less desirable based on one's

perspective, such as finding that diversity can lead to increased student activism (Pascarella, Salisbury, Martin, & Blaich, 2012).

There are, however, persistent and vexing problems in this line of research. One is that if one asserts the claim that it is “irrefutable” that diversity produces gains, then determining how much diversity, structural (i.e., numerical) or interactional, is necessary to maximize these gains becomes a reasonable, perhaps even necessary line of inquiry, what is commonly referred to as the problem of “critical mass” (Bowman, 2013). Of course, should the benefits peak when critical mass is achieved, then it would justify halting attempts at further diversifying a campus beyond the point of critical mass. Another problem is to determine the variables that moderate the relationship between diversity and the outcomes it produces (Denson & Chang, 2015). This includes whether or not other aspects of identity, such as class, also shape these outcomes (Park & Denson, 2013). It is also worth noting that there appear to be differences in how particular groups are impacted by and respond to diversity. A four-year study of nearly 3,000 undergraduates at 28 campuses by Bowman and Park (2014) is particularly revealing in this regard because it complicates our understanding of the linkages between diversity and desirable outcomes. The researchers looked at data from selective institutions that participated in the National Longitudinal Survey of Freshman (NLSF) and found that positive predictors of cross-racial interaction (for example, belonging to an ethnic student organization, being religious, or increased structural diversity) were negative predictors of interracial friendship. This means that as cross-racial interactions rise, interracial friendships fall, and vice versa. Structural diversity increases interactional diversity, but reduces interracial friendship.

In order to make these kinds of claims about diversity’s benefits, scholars have also had to clarify what they mean by diversity and how it can be understood institutionally. The

dominant framework for understanding what diversity means at the institutional level is “campus climate.” Perhaps the most influential definition of the term comes from Sylvia Hurtado and her team’s (1998) “Enhancing Campus Climate for Racial/Ethnic Diversity: Educational Policy and Practice.” They argue that campus climate is the product of four factors: historical legacy, the institutional history of segregation and desegregation; structural diversity, or the number of people of color on campus; the psychological dimension, people’s perceptions of discrimination and conflict and their attitudes towards other racial groups; and the behavioral dimension or what is often called “interactional diversity,” the extent to which people actually interact across racial differences. Hurtado would later amend this framework to argue that outcomes are the result of both campus climate and institutional practices (Hurtado, Alvarez, Guillermo-Wann, Cuellar, & Arellano, 2012). Climate then becomes a new variable for explaining outcomes, opening up a space to talk about how negative climate produces deleterious outcomes (e.g., Hurtado, Alvarado, & Guillermo-Wann, 2015; Johnson, Wasserman, Yildirim, & Yonai, 2014). However, like “diversity”, campus climate can become euphemistic. It is uncommon for scholars to more explicitly name the underlying structural issues that produce a “negative climate.” Gusa’s (2010) is the rare study that links negative climate to the ways in which institutions are structured around whiteness as an organizing norm.

One central problem in this line of inquiry is both the lack of shared definition of the term campus climate (Hart & Fallenbaum, 2008) and the semantic slippage between “campus climate” and “campus culture.” As I detail later in the study, my participants often used the terms interchangeably to refer to how minoritized people experienced campus. In the literature, culture can be differentiated from climate as “the collective patterns of tacit values, beliefs, assumptions, and norms...which differentially shape the experiences of various racial and ethnic groups and

can function to oppress racial minority populations within a particular institution” (Museus, Ravello, & Vega, 2012, p. 32). One can see how the notion of campus culture is more closely related to anthropological notions of culture and is more “embedded” than campus climate (Jayakumar & Museus, 2012). To the extent that climate and culture are differentiated, scholars have also attempted to examine how campus culture shapes educational and developmental outcomes (e.g., Jayakumar & Museus, 2012).

However, there is a troubling trend in this line of inquiry that posits campus culture as singular, static, and bound, assuming a singular campus culture (e.g., Kezar, 2012b). To address this issue, some scholars have noted that there are multiple institutional cultures (Jayakumar & Museus, 2012) or sub-cultures (Museus, Lâm, Huang, Kem, & Tan, 2012) and that the campus culture can be experienced differently (Museus, Ravello, & Vega, 2012). Naming campus culture and climate creates another challenge—how to shape campus culture, and determining who has the power to do so. Scholars provide conflicting accounts over who—staff, faculty, or students—are best positioned to change campus culture (Jayakumar, 2012; Kezar, 2012b).

From my vantage point, this heterogeneous body of scholarship makes two primary contributions. First, it provides an evidentiary justification for taking intentional steps to increase the racial diversity of a school’s student body. It does so by explicitly linking the presence of racialized bodies to the attainment of desirable learning and developmental outcomes. The second contribution is that it provides a language for thinking about racial inclusion as an institutional rather than an individual problem. As collective terms, climate and culture prevent the analysis from being overly centered on any one particular individual’s actions, shifting the onus from the individual’s need to assimilate to the institution’s responsibility to include.

While it is important to note the discursive spaces this literature opens, there are limitations and problems that arise specifically from these two issues, which are explored in further depth below. The evidentiary case for the benefits of diversity recenters majoritarian needs and interests by demonstrating how the majority benefits from the inclusion of minoritized bodies (Yosso, Parker, Solórzano, & Lynn, 2004). And, the institutional framing of campus climate and culture are largely non-agentic and obscure the concrete social relations that manifest as negative climate (a point I return to in my conclusion). Thus while it is important to note the discursive openings, it is equally necessary to recognize the ideological closures that result from these lines of scholarship.

While this research is primarily driven by large institutional and national datasets, I turn now to a second body of scholarship that is focused primarily on the experiences of minoritized people in U.S. colleges and universities.

Diversity and Experience

The diversity outcomes literature described above is largely abstracted from personal experience, as the voices of people of color are aggregated through survey research. A second body of literature examines how minoritized people experience campus life. Where the outcomes literature tends to rely on statistical data, this research includes both quantitative, qualitative, and mixed methods studies. Perhaps as a result of these methodological differences, diversity here is framed in a far less celebratory manner because much of this research uncovers the intense difficulties that students of color and other minoritized groups face on campus. Many of these studies illuminate the hidden costs to minoritized students, faculty, and staff of producing the benefits diversity supposedly provides. In addition, this research tends to be more intersectional, considering student (and staff and faculty) experience across multiple identity categories (e.g.,

Banks & Hughes, 2013; Dávila, 2012; Jack, 2015; Nicolazzo, 2016; Truong, McMickens, & Brown, 2015)—as well as accounting for differences based on fields of study, often with a strong focus on minoritized people in STEM fields (e.g., Espinosa, 2011; Lawrence, Celis, Kim, Lipson, & Tong, 2014; Palmer, Maramba, & Dancy II, 2011).

The literature I consider below is primarily focused on racially minoritized students and staff, but there are also bodies of work that examine the experience of people who are first generation and/or working class (e.g., Hurst & Warnock, 2015; Stuber, 2015; Ward, Siegel, & Davenport, 2012), who belong to minoritized religions and faiths (e.g., Ali, 2014; Mir 2009, 2014; Mutakabbir & Nuriddin, 2016), and who identify as LGBTQ (e.g., Lee & LaDousa, 2015; Nicolazzo, 2016; Simmons, 2017). Each of these is a rich literature in its own right. My reason for focusing on the racial diversity literature here is because racial difference occupies the central position in the debates about diversity in higher education generally, and at State University in particular. As my study will illustrate, diversity was most often shorthand for racial diversity at State University, even when actors made pronouncements about including other minoritized groups.

It is also worth noting that the analytic distinctions I am drawing between these two bodies of literature—diversity as outcomes and diversity as experiences—is just that: analytic. I want to provide a heuristic for the types of claims made about diversity. Much of the literature described as focused on experiences is also concerned with educational outcomes, particularly the retention and, in the case of students, graduation rates for minoritized people. The difference between the two, however, is that what I am calling the “diversity as outcomes” literature inadvertently centers the educational and developmental needs of majority students, because the primary goal is to justify diversifying predominantly white campuses. In contrast, the literature I

am calling diversity as experience, either implicitly or explicitly, is primarily concerned with promoting the well-being and success of minoritized students, staff, and faculty.

Below is a broad sketch of what this literature teaches us about the experiences of racially minoritized staff, faculty, and students on campus. This narrative is by necessity reductive, because these experiences vary based on specific racial and intersectional identities, as well as institutional cultures, climates, policies, and practices. Students, staff, and faculty of color are not homogenous groups. As my survey below demonstrates, these studies usually center the experiences and perspectives of one group (e.g., Latinx STEM students, Black female faculty, etc.). What a broad overview will show is that racially minoritized individuals face burdens and hardships that are not shared by their white peers and that these experiences are the conditions in which the supposed benefits a diverse campus are produced. Illuminating the contradictions between these two bodies of scholarship is the necessary first step toward my larger argument that current diversity discourse and practice is a hegemonic compromise that incorporates concessions to minoritized groups in the form of institutional recognition while maintaining the unequal social relations between whites and people of color.

Staff of color, including administrators, face unique hardships, including racism, prejudice, and discrimination (Gardner, Barrett, Pearson, 2014; Patitu & Hinton, 2003). The experience of minoritized staff, especially in diversity programs, is particularly under-researched. Clark et al.'s (2012) edited volume documents the variety of challenges diversity workers face through a series of narrative case studies, but more systematic research on diversity workers remains novel. Perhaps the largest literature on diversity staff is focused on Chief Diversity Officers, who are often the highest-ranking administrators of color at predominantly and historically white institutions. Chief Diversity Officers are often given relatively lower

administrative positions, denied access to senior leadership, and are short-changed in terms of staffing and resources (Leon, 2014). This occurs despite the fact that they are ostensibly hired to be change agents (Harvey, 2014). Because this position is still relatively new on most campuses, CDO's are often in a position to "trail blaze" for those who follow, in addition to the other expectations placed on them (Wilson, 2013).

Faculty of color are othered across a variety of dimensions that impacts them at every level of the university, including relationships, classroom experiences, departmental politics, and institutional practices (Patitu & Hinton, 2003; Stanley, 2006; Turner, González, & Wood, 2008; Zambrana, Wingfield, Lapeyrouse, Dávila, Hoagland, & Valdez, 2017).). They are burdened with additional expectations to be the ones "embodying" diversity by teaching diversity courses, being the departmental voice or conscience for diversity, and engaging in additional service (Harley, 2008). They are put in the contradictory position of having to speak for their racial group in the classroom while simultaneously being perceived as biased by their students (Schueths, Gladney, Crawford, Bass, & Moore, 2013). To add insult to injury, these additional burdens do not help them when it is time to go up for tenure (Brayboy, 2003; Turner et al., 2008). As a result of these experiences, faculty of color often feel like imposters in the academy (Dancy & Jean-Marie, 2014). These experiences have spawned confessional and advice-oriented works designed to acknowledge shared experiences, overcome challenges, and provide advice for career success (e.g., Brown, McHatton, & Scott, 2017; Christian, 2012; Harris, Sellers, Clerge, & Gooding Jr., 2017; Robinson & Clardy, 2010).

Students of color face a variety of overt and covert forms of discrimination, as well as symbolic and physical violence on college campuses. In other words, institutional racism and individual prejudice—and in the case of multiracial students, monoracism (Harris, 2016)—is

pervasive and commonplace on college campuses (Harper, 2013; Hotchkins & Dancy, 2017; Minikel-Lacocquem 2013; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009). One theoretical concept that attempts to encapsulate the accrued cost of persisting on campus is the notion of “racial battle fatigue,” which is defined as “the cumulative psychosocial-physiological impact of racial micro and macro aggressions on racially marginalized targets” (Smith, Mustafa, Jones, Curry, & Allen, 2016, p. 1192). This frame can be applied to both undergraduate and graduate student experiences (Hubain, Allen, Harris, & Linder, 2016).

Read together, these studies paint a very different picture than those in the diversity as outcomes literature. They demonstrate that students, staff, and faculty of color pay a high personal, and in some cases professional, cost to be the embodiment of diversity on college campuses. However, in order to demonstrate what these experiences look like with great specificity, these kinds of studies often focus on a small group of similar individuals in a shared context—for example, a cohort of Black women in STEM disciplines. As such, these studies must be read together in order to form a broader picture of the nature of campus life for students, staff, and faculty of color. This study attempts to fill the lacuna in the literature while also engaging critiques of diversity discourses and practices.

Critiques of Diversity

It is necessary to distinguish between two different critiques of diversity, both of which are addressed in this chapter. The first is the conservative reaction to policies and programs designed to explicitly promote racial diversity on campus. There is something of an industry for these kinds of works; salient examples include conservative commentator Dinesh D’Souza’s critique of affirmative action, *Illiberal Education* (1991), and Scott Greer’s more recent *No Campus for White Men* (2017). I consider these kinds of reactions to diversity policy and practice

in further depth later in the chapter. First, however, I want to focus on the scholarly critiques of diversity discourse and practice, which have extended the insights of the diversity as experience literature while also illuminating some of the limitations inherent in the logics of diversity itself.

In general, the field of higher education is dominated by social psychological and environmental paradigms and is focused on outcomes (e.g., campus climate research). As a result, particular processes and practices often go unexamined (Jensen, 1999). This is particularly true in the diversity literature, where we know far less about how the supposed benefits of diversity are produced than we do about the numbers needed to produce them. As a corrective, Clarke & Antonio (2012) recommend focusing on relationships and structures. A small but growing body of scholarship both documents the experiences of minoritized students, staff, and faculty, and examines the conditions in which diversity work occurs. What these studies demonstrate, and this study reaffirms, is that diversity work as it is commonly practiced often does very little to transform racial inequalities and in fact may contain attempts to do more radical and transformative work. The paradigmatic example of this kind of work is Sara Ahmed's (2012) qualitative study of diversity officers at a British university. *On Being Included* depicts how the university erects "brick walls" to contain diversity work's transformative potential and coopts the language of diversity in order to advance the university's primary goals of research excellence, institutional prestige, and resource accumulation. Bryan Brayboy (2003) offers a similar critique, arguing that diversity operates as "window dressing" on the university's actual goals and priorities.

These works identify specific practices that help to reinforce diversity's marginal status as an institutional priority. Despite conservative critics' protests that affirmative action is undermining meritocracy, qualitative studies of admissions decisions demonstrate that

admissions officers and faculty tend to rely on notions of merit and “fit” that continue to disadvantage applicants of color (Posselt, 2016; Stevens, 2007). How merit is understood shifts (Baez, 2006), but what remains relatively constant is that it tends to be defined in ways that advantage the majority (Alon & Tienda, 2007). This research confirms what sociologists of education have long argued—that higher education plays a central role in producing and perpetuating social stratification rather than overcoming it (Stevens, Armstrong, & Arum, 2008).

However, admissions is only one important practice. Ahmed (2006, 2012) and Brayboy (2003) identify how institutions’ active attempts at diversity work are non-transformative. This occurs in part because the work of diversifying and transforming the institution is outsourced to people of color (diversity practitioners), thus absolving majority staff, faculty, and in particular executive leaders, from taking a more active role in making change. In addition, the work of diversity—making policy statements, sitting on committees, teaching diversity-themed courses, etc.—is done in such a way that it leaves underlying structures and institutional relations untouched.

This is not simply a matter of policy and organizational structure—there are also discursive practices that prevent diversity from being more transformative. As Ahmed (2006) notes:

In a way, diversity enabled action *precisely because it does not necessarily get associated with the histories of struggle evoked by more ‘marked’ terms such as equality and justice*. Diversity is not only a ‘new word’, but it also gets linked with ‘the new’ within the discourses of the university. Of course, this also suggests that diversity ‘works’ because it secures rather than threatens the ethos of the university, with its orientation towards education as a form of business (p. 747).

It is diversity's very lack of fixed meaning that allows it to be used in a variety of contradictory ways. Linguistic anthropologist Bonnie Urciuoli's (1999, 2009, 2010) work is particularly useful here because she demonstrates how the term's flexibility allows it to be used in incoherent and contradictory ways as the term moves around an institution. The word allows institutional actors and scholars to avoid talking about race and racism (Harper, 2012) and to attach the term to other goals that have nothing to do with making the institution more just or inclusive.

The ambiguity and open-ended nature of the term obscures how diversity discourses commodify racialized bodies for the benefit of the majority (Anderson, 2005; Leong, 2013). Some have recently taken this line of critique a step further, arguing that colleges and universities engage in "plantation politics," citing the example of Black athletes to demonstrate that the slave/master relation still exists between whites and Blacks on college campuses (Dancy II, Edwards, Davis, 2018; Hawkins, 2010). In addition, diversity is still dependent on categorical and hierarchical thinking that reinforces rather than challenges unequal race relations, because it is still rooted in biological reductionism and essentialism (Baez, 2000b, 2004).

These critics identify two problems within the diversity as outcomes and diversity as experience scholarship. First, diversity's benefits are produced in unequal, and in many cases exploitative, conditions of labor by people of color and other minoritized groups, and the value they generate is redistributed to the majority. Second, the logics of diversity are what allow this to occur, and there is little space within those logics to engage in transformative work. Too often diversity is used toward less than progressive ends.

So then is there nothing of value in diversity discourse and practice? This study affirms that diversity discourse and practices have opened up important spaces for including previously excluded groups, and for making a significant difference in the lives of minoritized students. As I

identify above, the emergence of diversity scholarship opened up new spaces to think about institutional imperatives to foster racial and other forms of inclusion. In addition, Bryan Brayboy's (2005) ethnography of Indigenous students demonstrates that "transformational resistance" may be possible in large part because students of color are able to take tools from their education and use them to support their communities. Faculty of color also engage in resistance to oppression in the university (Thomas & Hollenshead, 2001). Scholars of business diversity confirm that minoritized figures often engage in localized forms of resistance (Swan & Fox, 2010). Benjamin Baez (2000a) also argues that resistance is possible—to suggest that it is not is to suggest that structures are universal and unchanging.

The possibility for resistance emerges on two levels. First, when previously excluded bodies enter a space, that act alone is disruptive because space is made by the bodies that occupy them (Puwar, 2004). When minoritized bodies are able to access privileged institutions like elite colleges and universities, it not only provides access to new resources and opportunities, it also provides an opportunity to be disruptive from inside rather than outside institutions. The case of student activists in chapter seven illustrates this possibility. Second, while discourses of diversity often exclude terms like racism (Harper, 2012), diversity by its very nature draws attention to institutional dynamics of inclusion and exclusion. While higher education scholars and leaders may go to great lengths to obscure the underlying social dynamics that give rise to the need for diversity by using diversity euphemistically, diversity still opens a discursive space to see and name that institutions are exclusionary and in need of reform, even if the nature of those exclusions and reforms is subject to conflicting interpretations.

However, as critiques of diversity demonstrate, diversity discourses and practices produce harms and contradictions that are not immediately visible, particularly when diversity is

celebrated for its educational benefits. What I will argue below is that these contradictions are the consequence of the hegemonic struggles that gave rise to the discourse of diversity in the first place. Diversity emerged as a historical compromise that made strategic concessions to minoritized groups while also serving to perpetuate dominant (i.e., white) interests. Seen from this vantage point, it is possible to acknowledge and even celebrate the gains diversity has produced while also recognizing the ways in which it sets limits on more transformational and justice-oriented institutional interventions. Recognizing the contradictory nature of how diversity is represented and practiced allows us to critique these practices while also recognizing diversity may provide avenues for engaging in more radical political reforms, a point I return to in the conclusion.

Diversity, Difference, and the American University

U.S. colleges and universities have always been racialized spaces. Not only did slave labor help to fund and maintain the nation's first universities, but these institutions also played a central role in producing racialized knowledge that supported White dominance (Wilder, 2013). Struggles to integrate and transform U.S. colleges and universities did not begin with the Civil Rights movement, and these attempts to transform American higher education to include previously excluded groups have always provoked a backlash. In almost all southern states, Blacks were legally barred from receiving an education. And while the advent of Black Colleges in the mid-1800s provided new educational opportunities, these institutions have been under assault throughout their history (Gasman & Hilton, 2012). Many colleges and universities kept their doors closed to Black students well into the 1950s and 60s. While *Brown v. Board* is a much-celebrated landmark in educational legal history, other U.S. Supreme Court Cases in the 1940s and 50s prior to *Brown* (e.g., *Sipuel v. University of Oklahoma*, *Sweatt v. Painter*,

McLaurin v. Oklahoma State Regents for Higher Education) played an important role in opening post-secondary institutions to Black students. Desegregation of universities—particularly public universities in the South—continued into the 1960s with difficulty. For instance, University of Georgia students rioted in 1961 in response to the first two admitted Black students—Charlayne Hunter and Hamilton Holmes—arriving on campus. Eight states did not make plans to desegregate their public universities until the 1970s.

The 1950s and 1960s were an important and contentious time for American higher education, particularly at public universities. Students played a central role in desegregating colleges and universities in the post-War era (Broadhurst, 2014) and in the Civil Rights movement and Black Power movements in general (Biondi, 2012; Cohen & Snyder, 2013; Rogers, 2012). In the wake of the Civil Rights movement, campuses were also important sites of struggle by Indigenous, Chicanx, women, and queer students (Broadhurst, 2014).

While student activists of the 1950s-1970s were predominantly focused on group-based struggles, the 1980s and 90s also saw a rise in issue-based activism, such as the global anti-apartheid movement and anti-sweatshop protests (Boren, 2001). However, this period was also marked by continued identity-based student activism in response to campus-based problems. These decades-long struggles were instrumental in producing reforms that are now commonplace on most college campus: ethnic studies programs, increased faculty diversity, and identity-based student centers (Broadhurst, 2014; Rhoads, 1998, 2016). Indeed, minoritized students today are the direct beneficiaries of student struggles during the latter half of the 20th century. And, as we are seeing at places like State University and elsewhere, students continue to protest and engage in direct action in hopes of forcing colleges and universities to be more responsive to the needs of minoritized students.

Affirmative Action

One of the major struggles on college campuses in the late 20th century was around affirmative action policies designed to increase the number of students of color on campus through proactive measures. The term “affirmative action” was coined by a Black lawyer named Hobart T. Taylor Jr. Taylor inserted the term in President Kennedy’s 1960 Executive Order 10925, which stated that government contractors must, “take affirmative action to ensure that applicants are employed and that employees are treated during employment without regard to their race, creed, color, or national origin” (Section 301, ¶ 3). While the term originated in relation to employment discrimination, it is perhaps most closely associated with admissions policies designed to increase the number of students of color admitted to selective public universities.

Rhoads et al. (2005) argue that affirmative action policies were the result of social movements and not just legal debates within the court system. Framing affirmative action policies as the result of social movements underscores that these evolving policies emerged as the result of widespread social conflict, because while students and other civil rights activists helped to spur affirmative action policy reforms, they have also been subjected to intense backlash from Whites. This response was most pronounced in the 1970s and 80s (Rhoads et al., 2005). The so called “New Right” opposed ongoing attempts at racial justice, arguing that the Civil Rights movement won racial equality and that ongoing attempts to redress past wrongs undermine equal opportunity and democracy itself (Crenshaw, 1988). In the case of higher education, an important challenge occurred in the 1978 *University of California v. Bakke* U.S. Supreme Court case, which outlawed the use of racial quotas in college admissions. Legal Scholar Cheryl Harris (1993) argues that what made affirmative action so offensive to whites is

that it threatened access to valuable social goods like education and employment, while also challenging the logics that framed such institutional and legal arrangements as justifiable. In the wake of these conservative challenges, affirmative action advocates in the 90s adopted a “rear guard” strategy to defend existing programs rather than to push for new, more progressive policies (Rhoads et al., 2005).

As a result of this conflict, how affirmative action is justified has changed significantly over time. The initial justification for educational reform was integration, a logic best illustrated by the *Brown v. Board* decision in the 1950s. However, the 1978 *Bakke* case signaled an important shift away from justifying affirmative action based on remediating past wrongs. This would set the stage for the second major shift, because it was in the *Bakke* case that the court first established a link between diversity and educational benefits. This logic would be enshrined in the 2000s in the *Gratz* and *Grutter* cases, where affirmative action was justified based on diversity’s educational benefits (Baez, 200b; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002; Yosso, Parker, Solórzano, & Lynn, 2004).

What these changing logics signify is a shift in the meaning and purpose of human difference in institutional life. Where difference once signified the need to engage in some form of redress and redistribution in order to correct for historic and contemporary injustices, it now signifies a potential source of value for institutions and the majoritarian populations they serve. Here we see the makings of the historic compromise—colleges and universities can take proactive steps to include minoritized populations so long as these moves support and do not threaten majoritarian interests.

In fact, one might argue that attempts to diversify that are framed in this manner must actively *advance* majoritarian interest. The diversity as outcomes literature demonstrates that

majoritarian students are expected to *gain* something as a result of having non-white peers, instructors, and staff on campus. The critiques of diversity I identify above demonstrate that diversity facilitates discursive and material practices by which different kinds of value (symbolic, economic, social, and cultural) are extracted from bodies of color and redistributed to majoritarian students, staff, faculty, and administrators. Seen in this light, the mutual accommodation that diversity purportedly provides (access on the one hand, beneficial outcomes on the other) begins to look more like a form of exploitation, such as is claimed by the student at the beginning of the chapter.

Despite these unequal relations, white resentment of affirmative action continues to this day. Bonilla-Silva (2001) notes that one of the most common stories whites tell each other is of how one's friend or relative was denied a job because of affirmative action, and this narrative is used to justify color-blind racism. Even white students at institutions that no longer use affirmative action policies express anger over these policies (Cabrera, 2014). While the *Fisher v. University of Texas* case is the most recent in a long line of anti-affirmative action lawsuits, more troubling still is the decision of U.S. Attorney General Jeff Sessions to reverse Obama-era policies and actively challenge affirmative action as "intentional race-based discrimination." US Secretary of Education Betsy DeVos has also signaled that she favors "equal opportunity" in higher education admissions, which affirmative action supposedly threatens. For conservatives, equal opportunity is predicated on unmitigated individual choice determined by individual merit rather than the product of systems that disrupt barriers to access. Given that the Trump presidency's core constituency is disgruntled whites, it is likely that we will see a continued and reinvigorated opposition to policies and practices designed to foster diversity and inclusion in U.S. higher education. The compromise appears to be crumbling.

Diversity as Empty Signifier

I now return to the question I pose at the beginning of the chapter—how did it become possible to think this way about human difference, particularly racial differences? Despite the ubiquity of diversity discourses in American institutions, one need only look at how other countries talk about and engage with difference to recognize that there is nothing inevitable or natural about diversity as a discursive formation. Terms like diversity help to fill a “discursive void” (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). Thinking in these terms reorients diversity as a historical product rather than an inevitability—there is a particular problem that existed in American society that diversity helped solve. Namely, the U.S. was confronted by what appeared to many to be a contradictory reality—in the wake of the Civil Rights movement, whites came to believe that the nation had corrected the evils of slavery, Jim Crow, and segregation. At the same time, public and private institutions were still engaged in affirmative action policies in order to redress past injustices. Minoritized communities, of course, were well aware that these injustices were as contemporary as they were historical, but due to the perpetual segregation of American social life, many whites could convince themselves not only that such programs were no longer necessary, but that they were actively harming whites by denying them deserved opportunities for employment and education. Diversity provided a fix for the conservative backlash to Civil Rights era reforms by rearticulating racial difference as an institutional resource that benefits whites.

Seen from this light, the discursive formation of diversity allowed U.S. society to maintain unequal race relations while making strategic concessions to disenfranchised minoritized groups—it enabled a new racial hegemony. Michael Omi and Howard Winant’s (1994) theory of racial formation provides a useful framework for understanding the dynamics I

am describing here. Analyzing social transformations in the wake of the Civil Rights movement, they articulate the following theory: racial social movements arise to challenge the status quo by engaging in racial projects, or attempts to transform racial meanings and the racial state. One way to read their theory is as a binary conflict between racial projects and the state. However, a much richer analysis emerges if we conceptualize the racial state in Althusserian terms as containing both the repressive and ideological state apparatuses, or in Gramscian terms, both the political state and civil society. Such a reading makes intuitive sense given that Gramsci theorized civil society as the primary site where hegemonic struggles are waged—what he referred to as the protracted “war of position.” These racial projects are both material and ideological—they change both how race is represented as well as how racial social relations are organized. The state absorbs and transforms the demands of social movements in order to establish a new, but unstable, equilibrium. To undergird their theory, they provide a compelling account of how white supremacy was maintained in the wake of the Civil Rights movement by absorbing and transforming the demands of Civil Rights activists.

As I describe in the previous chapter, the concept of (racial) institutional projects that I develop over the course of this dissertation is intimately linked to racial projects. Hall (1996a) describes institutions as the “trenches” of the Gramscian war of position. Racial institutional projects are both overdetermined by and constitutive (or overdetermining) of larger racial projects. They are the institutional sites of struggle where racial projects advance and retreat. This is perhaps best illustrated in chapter seven where I explore how student activists at State University were inspired by and connected to the Black Lives Matter movement and other student protest movements around the country. Analyzing institutional projects helps to

illuminate the specific sites of articulation where racial meanings are created, transformed, and destroyed.

What I am attempting to demonstrate here is how diversity as a discursive formation provided a means to reconcile the conservative backlash to affirmative action and the ongoing demands by minoritized groups for recognition and redistribution—two competing racial social movements and two contradictory racial projects. Where Omi & Winant perhaps privilege the political state as the site over which social movements struggle and hegemony is reestablished, Ferguson (2012) takes a more expansive approach, arguing that the hegemonic compromise reflects the interests and interventions of the state as well as capital and educational institutions. Keeping with the spirit of Ferguson’s critique, I want to expand the scope of the analysis to account for the discursive processes and struggles that undergird hegemonic formations while also recognizing their material effects.

The term diversity has no predetermined, stable content or meaning. Language is open-ended, and subject to the “constant overflowing of every discourse by the infinitude of the field of discursivity” (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 100). Thus, the shape and contours of a discursive formation cannot be predicted in advance. It is the very open-ended, flexible nature of language that makes politics and the construction of hegemony possible (Laclau, 1996, 2005). Strategically rearticulating and suturing discourses enables historical blocs and the groups that lead them to win consent and to achieve hegemony (Hall, 1996b). Were diversity to be more clearly defined and its meaning fixed, it would be rendered politically useless. I am not the first to note that diversity is an ill-defined term, capable of being attached to multiple and even contradictory statements and ideas (Ahmed, 2012; Hoffman & Mitchell, 2016). But what has been missing in these critiques is a consideration of the larger social and political significance of

diversity's status as an empty signifier—this is not what makes diversity a failure, but rather what makes it useful in the field of racial politics. No term used to articulate racial difference, or any form of difference for that matter, could ever be anything but partial and open-ended. The problem, then, is not diversity's emptiness but how that emptiness is strategically engaged in the larger terrain of struggle we call race relations.

Like Laclau and Mouffe, Hall (1988a, 1988b) provides a framework for thinking about how language is used to construct hegemony. Read alongside Laclau & Mouffe, Hall's notion of dis/re-articulation—the processes by which discursive elements are reworked and linked together from various discourses in order to construct hegemony—provides a complementary tool for understanding how the emptiness of a signifier like diversity comes to be filled. As I have attempted to demonstrate above, whites employed diversity as an empty signifier by disarticulating the demands of marginalized racial groups and rearticulating them in a way that allowed claims for racial equity to be partially addressed while simultaneously centering and advancing the needs and interests of the majority. The incorporation of contradictory ideas, associations, and meanings under the umbrella of diversity is a necessary condition for reestablishing an unequal racial status quo without outright rejecting the demands of racially minoritized communities, which would leave dangerous forces of social destabilization unresolved. As I will demonstrate throughout the dissertation, various groups within State University articulated different ideologies of diversity and then mobilized around those ideologies to engage in institutional projects that attempted to transform the university. The open-ended nature of diversity is what made these kinds of maneuvers and struggles possible.

These are, however, not simply language games. The theorists I have cited above recognize that racial struggles are deeply material and have material consequences. The struggle

around diversity is primarily a struggle about access to institutional resources and opportunities—these are political economies of difference. Racial groups have material interests (Bonilla-Silva, 2001). These interests may be constructed and subject to change, but nevertheless they are there:

Even the most material economic institutions have a constitutive, irreducible cultural dimension; they are shot through with significations and norms. Conversely, even the most discursive cultural practices have a constitutive, irreducible political-economic dimension; they are underpinned by material supports (Fraser, 1997, p. 15).

Open discourses like diversity allow whites to espouse equality as an abstract ideal without having to acknowledge or address material inequalities (Frankenberg, 1993). Diversity also provides a means for institutions to extract value from racialized bodies and redistributing that value to the majority (Leong, 2013; Urciuoli, 1999).

While the theories I have engaged thus far are primarily concerned with social analyses at the level of the nation-state, the kinds of struggles I am describing also take place at other levels of analysis, particularly around the process of policy formation. As Andrea Cornwall (2007) states:

Policies depend on a measure of ambiguity to secure the endorsement of diverse potential actors and audiences. Buzzwords aid this process, by providing concepts that can float free of concrete referents, to be filled with meaning by their users. In the struggles for interpretive power that characterize the negotiation of the language of policy, buzzwords shelter multiple agendas, providing room for man oeuvre and space for contestation (p. 474).

While Cornwall is analyzing the language of international development, “diversity” clearly operates as a policy buzzword, a term that obscures ideological differences because of its positive connotation and widespread use. Drawing on the work of political philosopher W.B. Gallie (1956), she demonstrates that buzzwords are “essentially contested concepts,” meaning that there is widespread agreement that they are worth pursuing but little agreement on what that pursuit looks like in practice.

All of this is not to suggest that diversity does not also contain within itself possibilities for transformative work. The extraction of value from racialized bodies co-occurs alongside various forms of care work that, as I will demonstrate, have enormous impacts on individual students, staff, and faculty. Diversity includes both good and bad sense—it must in order to win the consent—however unstable—of both majoritarian and minoritized groups.

Conclusion

Throughout this chapter, I have sought to reorient how we think about diversity in higher education. I have demonstrated that the discursive formation of diversity emerged in the latter half of the 20th century as a means to balance the relations of force between racially minoritized communities making ongoing demands for institutional redress and the subsequent backlash of whites who recognized that their material interests were threatened. This formation emerged through competing social movements, academic scholarship, and judicial politics. As a result, diversity includes a complex and contradictory ensemble of articulations that allow it to be deployed for various aims and ends. The open-ended nature of diversity as an empty signifier enables hegemonic racial politics. What I document throughout this dissertation is what those politics look like within a particular institution, how various institutional groups mobilize around competing conceptions of the meaning and purpose of diversity, and how these mobilizations

pursued contradictory ends that, in some cases, undermine minoritized staff's, students' and faculties' efforts to live under conditions of a "less-bad bad life" (Berlant, 2007, p. 291).

In concluding, I want to acknowledge one oft-overlooked aspect of Gramsci's theory of hegemony—namely that moments of hegemony are just that—moments. Balancing relations of force is an invariably unstable project and no hegemonic compromise lasts forever. Often the term hegemony is deployed in ways that imply it is static and fixed when Gramsci recognized hegemonic relations are inherently unstable. In articulating a new vision for Marxism as a "philosophy of praxis," his goal was to prepare Italian revolutionaries to be ready for moments of organic crisis when one historical bloc was in the process of collapsing and before another arose to take its place.

I believe that what we have witnessed over the last several years is the collapse of a historical bloc that Apple (2006) describes as being led by global neoliberal elites, and including neoconservatives, religious conservatives, and technocrats. Across the U.S. and around the world, the neoconservative and white nationalist factions of that historical bloc have rejected the moral and intellectual leadership of global financial elites and are attempting to assert themselves at the forefront of a new historical bloc. This is the particular historical moment in which my research occurred; my Gramscian reading of these transformations leads me to believe that diversity may soon no longer provide the discursive "fix" than it once did.

It is unclear whether the left is capable of forming a counter-hegemonic movement that is capable of both defeating this surge of white supremacy and adequately addressing the material and ideological forms of racial domination in US society. The obsession by progressives with the white working class and the demonization of identity politics does not lead me to be overly sanguine. However, the intervention this study attempts to provide is to articulate the need for a

new social and institutional racial politics that is capable of moving beyond the limitations of diversity toward a more radical cultural, political, and economic project.

III Methodology

Introduction

This chapter poses the following questions—why study diversity ethnographically? What opportunities and insights does this particular methodology hold for advancing our understanding of how colleges and universities engage human differences through diversity policy and practice? And, given the diverse array of ethnographic traditions, what particular approaches might inform higher education ethnography in the future? In order to answer these questions, I survey the relatively small body of anthropological and ethnographic studies of higher education and lay out the theoretical and methodological traditions that shaped my research. I propose a set of considerations that might guide future ethnographic studies that foregrounds the institution itself as an object of study. Before answering these questions, I want to first consider a particularly illustrative ethnographic moment.

In the winter of 2016, I attended a town hall meeting for the campus community that drew hundreds of students, staff, faculty, and Union City residents together to discuss issues pertaining to diversity at State University. I hustled across campus from another event, having left the meeting early in order to make sure I made it to the event on time. While the weather was cold, it was a surprisingly sunny and dry day for that time of year. The meeting was being held in one of the campus' larger event centers, a building I had spent and would continue to spend considerable time in over the course of my fieldwork. In fact, I spent the previous evening in the building, attending a town hall meeting about a bigoted incident that occurred in one of the nearby residence halls.

As I made my way to the second floor of the building, I joined a crowd of people making their way into a large event room. While there was already space in the room for hundreds of

people, the building staff was collapsing a movable wall so that we could utilize the adjoining space to accommodate the ever-growing crowd. In the front of the room was a large stage facing the dozens of round tables spread around the room. Each table was marked with a color-coded sign indicating the topic of discussion at that table: Building Cultural Competency, Awareness and Capacity, Hate and Bias Incidents and Conflicts of Free Speech, Admissions and Recruitment of Underrepresented Groups, Faculty and Staff of Color Recruitment and Retention, and Intersection of Other Identities with Race. After pausing to survey the room, I settled on a table in the back left corner with a sign for hate and bias/free speech. I took a seat across from the campus' Chief of University Police, who was sitting with a small group of students and staff.

Eventually, the Dean of Students stepped to the podium on stage to welcome everyone to the event. The program started with statements from the university president and the chief diversity officer. The president offered his perspective on the state of diversity on campus—recognizing that more work needed to be done but celebrating the campus' retention and graduation rates for students of color as well as the millions of dollars fundraised for need-based aid. The CDO made a modified version of his stump speech. I had heard this speech many occasions, and in it he provided updates on the various initiatives designed to help actualize the campus' strategic diversity plan.

After the official remarks were over, we were invited to participate in a 50-minute conversation at our individual tables, guided by discussion questions prepared in advance. My table—mostly students except for the police chief and an employee from the student union—spent the entire time discussing what could be done to prevent and address hate and bias incidents, debating what kind of training needed to be implemented.

The second half of the event was dedicated to a panel discussion comprised of the president, the dean of students, the CDO, a leader of the student activist group called the Eclipse, and the chair of the student government racial justice committee. Despite the focus on racial and ethnic diversity, the optics of the panel was a binary: two white administrators, a Black administrator, and two Black students. Questions were solicited from members of the audience and passed to the director of the Multicultural Student Union, who moderated the panel, on 3x5 index cards and then shared with the panelists. I later learned the director was supposed to screen the questions but that he intentionally selected more provocative questions. The questions provoked discussions about training faculty and staff, the limits of free speech, students' financial struggles, and the possibility of adopting a test-neutral admissions policy. The student panelists were bold—they pushed back against claims and statements by the president and CDO and offered their own vision of a more just and inclusive campus. The event concluded with a prepared statement by the student committee chair, who used the opportunity to encourage students, staff, and faculty to be more involved and engaged in addressing inequality on campus.

While there were moments of tension during the panel discussion, the event was relatively calm and civil, especially in comparison to other town hall meetings I observed during my fieldwork. Photos of racially diverse community members engaged in dialogue would soon appear on the university homepage, linking to a campus news article about the event. A week later, the president posted about the event on his blog, stating:

“I sincerely appreciate the enthusiasm of our students to engage in conversations about these concerns and the response that State University should pursue. It’s important for all

of us to be a part of the conversation together. We may have different opinions about how to move forward, but we are committed to this work.”¹

While he acknowledged some of the criticism that came out in the conversation, it seemed that the event was a resounding success.

Below, I offer an approach that is able to complicate and enrich our understanding of events like the ones I describe above. The moment above highlights the rich insights that ethnographic research can provide by illuminating how differentially positioned actors made sense of what was happening on campus in very different ways, mobilized various kinds of rhetoric, and engaged in different modes of action. The campus was not simply holding a conversation about diversity on campus; students, staff, faculty, administrators, and community members were engaging in various forms of action and reaction in order to advance their own understanding of the problems and solutions to the challenge of diversity on campus. The president framed the problem as the need to equalize educational outcomes—which is why he celebrated the campus’ graduation and retention rates. The CDO sought to advance the policy agenda articulated in the campus’ strategic diversity plan. The union director utilized his position as moderator to pass on challenging questions. Students used the opportunity to criticize the institution for not doing more to make campus more equitable and inclusive.

The event is open to a variety of interpretations. For instance, one might claim the conversations signaled that the university was taking steps toward a greater appreciation of and engagement with diversity. Conversely, one could assert that it was simply a photo opportunity and a chance for the campus’ executive leadership to appear as if they care about diversity. To fully understand the significance of the event, we must ask what discourses, practices, and

¹ For publicly available quotes, the wording has been slightly modified in order to obscure the field site while attempting to maintain the meaning and feel of the original statement.

relations were brought to bear on this particular event and what this reveals about the role diversity plays in university life. On the surface, there was much to celebrate—the panel provided an opportunity for student activists to publicly converse with campus leaders and provided an outlet for anyone on campus or in the community to share their thoughts and concerns about how to address sensitive and important topics. And, unlike a similar event the previous year, students were given the opportunity to help plan the event and write the discussion questions.

However, what took place during the meeting fit a larger pattern of performative town hall events that rarely, if ever, offered opportunities for follow up. Behind the scenes, the MSU director was instructed on how to vet the incoming questions, instructions he chose to ignore in order to ensure topics he felt were important were discussed. No one confronted him about this, presumably because the white administrators were uncomfortable criticizing a person of color or because they would have to articulate why they chose to ignore some questions but not others. The director had also vetted the committee chair's speech, but she changed it without notifying him. There were also larger patterns in the administrators' rhetoric—the president was fond of using retention statistics as evidence the campus was making progress towards greater inclusivity and diversity. This rhetoric largely deflected his and the institution's responsibility to do more in response to students' demands for racial justice on campus. While the CDO's stump speech was familiar to me by then, for the first time he borrowed the language of the Eclipse's demands, using them to frame what the institution was already doing with its strategic diversity plan.

Students could ask for and even demand a test-optional admissions policy, but the president made no signal he would even consider the policy, instead making a vague suggestion that there should be a “conversation” about the issue. Elsewhere I witnessed him use calls for

conversation to deflect attempts for more substantive action. The president expressed concern about how the university could handle its high volume of applications without test scores, making no acknowledgement of the equity concerns students were raising. Thus, what might appear as a responsive and productive event was fraught with competing conceptions about what diversity means and how to address the problems the campus was facing.

My understanding of this event was informed by more than the field notes generated by that particular act of participant-observation. The analytic and theoretical richness of the moment was born of extensive observation and engagement with a variety of institutional actors, which provided a sense of how this particular public performance fit within larger patterns of institutional engagement with issues of diversity. This allowed me to see how individuals who are differently situated within the power structure of the institution brought their own agendas to this event. Interviews provided an opportunity to explore how various institutional actors—students, staff, faculty, administrators, and community members—interpreted what was happening on campus in distinctive and even conflicting ways. These interviews were invaluable in adding nuance and depth to the insights gained from observations. And finally, extensive analysis of artifacts and texts—emails, meeting minutes, social media posts, policy documents, photographs, articles, and press releases to name a few—further enriched my understanding of these events by illuminating patterns of representation and how these competing interpretations were mobilized and entextualized.

Ethnography and the University

Diversity as Practice

As I demonstrate in the previous chapter, scholarship on diversity in higher education has focused primarily on generalizable outcomes rather than situated practices. As a result, we still

know relatively little about the kinds of practices that produce the educational and social benefits that diversity supposedly provides (Clarke & Antonio, 2012). The claim that the racial composition of a student body or of a campus community as a whole is able to produce measurable outcomes is predicated on two modernist and problematic assumptions that are worth exploring here.

The first is that the logic of diversity as outcome producing reifies and essentializes human differences as stable, categorical objects that can be scientifically known and measured. Thus diversity scholarship participates in producing the very object it seeks to study (Baez, 2000; 2004). This occurs through the process of what Ian Hacking (1995, 1998) calls both “dynamic nominalism” and the “looping effect” of human kinds—social scientists name and classify types or kinds of people. Once they do, we begin to treat them according to their kind, and people also begin to perceive themselves as belonging to that kind. The challenge is that once this process is underway, we tend to see those categories as natural or “real” rather than constructed. What Hacking shows is that there is some level of realness to the categories because social scientists are responding to actual social phenomena and these categories take on an additional sense of realness because people treat them as real. Diversity illustrates this well—certain people are marked as students of color, underrepresented, underserved, etc. All of these “human kinds” were developed in response to actual social phenomena—the exclusion of people marked as raced from higher education opportunities—and over time we have treated them as real, developing programs, offices, and whole professions to meet the needs of the underrepresented and underserved. However, after a certain point, it becomes easier and easier to forget that these human kinds were made up and that they are not stable across time and space. This act of forgetting forecloses opportunities to consider both whom these categories exclude (multi-racial

people, for example) and how these categories change over time (such as how diversity now includes LGBTQIA individuals). This highlights the contradiction at the heart of categorical thinking—it both makes inclusion possible and exclusion likely. Labeling certain groups as underserved provides an impetus for providing more services. Once a line is drawn to form categories, exclusion will occur, much of it in unintended ways and most often for the people who transcend or fall between categories. This insight will be central to my analysis of diversity ideologies—who becomes marked as diverse will always open some possibilities and foreclose others. “Diversity” will always work for some—those who are included—but not for those who are consciously or unconsciously excluded. The “double gesture” of inclusion and exclusion (Popkewitz, 2008) is often driven by particular social and historical contexts—in this case, the national context of racialized police violence and the Black Lives Matter movement helped to position blackness at the center of diversity discourse. The shifting and relational nature of diversity is in large part what this study hopes to illuminate.

The second problematic assumption is that once diversity becomes a solid object (and diverse people become a human kind), a thing to be studied and measured, it also becomes something that can be used and managed. Diversity scholarship is predicated on an implicit belief in rational managerialism, that well-trained specialists and administrators can scientifically engineer institutional and social change. This perspective establishes causal links between how diversity is managed and particular outcomes. The critique of diversity as managerialism is perhaps most developed outside the higher education literature among scholars in Britain and other commonwealth countries in the literature on the “New Public Management”, where technological approaches to management are imported from the private to the public sector to manage service provision for housing, health care, education, etc. Scholars have specifically examined

how these practices are used to address racial and ethnic exclusion and how they reinforce racial inequality by relying on politically neutral frames (See, for example, Law, 1999; Lorbieki & Jack, 2000; Swan & Fox, 2010). The managerialism literature tends to be Foucauldian, focusing on how managerialism operates through the production of forms of knowledge and increasingly sophisticated technologies and techniques for the “control of control”—managerialism is essentially an institutional panopticon (Shore & Wright, 1999). The managerialism literature is particularly useful in illuminating how seemingly politically neutral, rational, and scientific organizational methods support and reinforce uneven social relations, a point I will return to in chapter 10. What this literature is perhaps less useful for is illuminating how those uneven social relations are experienced, contested, and challenged. It focuses on the technologies of governance over the experience, sense-making, and struggles of the governed, which is why I favor a neo-Gramscian approach to theorizing diversity in the academy. This is particularly important given that my research took place during moments of significant institutional and social upheaval. In such moments of rupture, the moral order of institutions is destabilized and called into question, and the managerialism literature did not provide an adequate framework for what was taking place during this particular historical moment.

The problems caused by these assumptions are quickly remedied when we shift the analytic focus from diverse people and the benefits they supposedly provide to diversity as practice. This will, of course, entail studying people marked as diverse, but it will do so while also troubling the ways in which certain actors or groups become attached to diversity while others do not. Such a move is predicated on moving from the large, national datasets that drive so much of the diversity literature to the discourses and practices within specific institutions and among particular actors where such statistics are generated. This work is already underway, and

the growing number of qualitative studies on diversity policy and practice demonstrate the utility of this approach, although very few of them are full ethnographies. The celebratory rhetoric of the diversity outcomes literature stands in marked contrast to the diversity as practice literature, which paints a far less rosy picture of what diversity work looks like on the ground (e.g., Ahmed, 2006, 2012; Brayboy, 2003). This work has made it possible to think about diversity in a different way, recognizing that outside of its explicit aims (which, as this work documents, often fail), diversity serves a variety of *productive*—and I use the term in the Foucauldian sense—functions.

Ethnography is particularly well equipped to trace the relational production of diversity. In formulating the methodological approach for this study, I drew on a variety of traditions in and outside the anthropology of education. The following assumptions, drawn from decades of anthropological and ethnographic research, undergirded how I designed and implemented this study. First, I recognize that diversity as a matter of policy is dynamic, something performed and contested rather than simply handed down by those who write or approve policy. As such, policy produces power-knowledge and orders relationships among those crafting, implementing, and being targeted by policy interventions (Hamann & Rosen, 2011; Levinson & Sutton, 2001; Levinson, Sutton, & Winstead, 2009; Shore & Wright, 1997). Second, I likewise see institutions as a set of organizing processes that work to structure relations and coordinate the activities of those associated with the institution (De Pina-Cabral, 2011; Smith, 2005). Third, while policy formation is one such process, I recognize that there are other processes—often mundane and overlooked—which also help to formulate institutional relationships, for example, meetings (Sandler & Thedvall, 2017; Schwartzman, 1987; 1989). Fourthly and finally, this study was shaped by a belief that what occurs within particular institutions such as colleges and universities

is shaped by and in turn shapes other institutions and structural forces, and that spatially diffuse contexts are nonetheless deeply interconnected (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2016; Shore & Wright, 1997; Shumar, 2004). My task entails accounting not only for what took place at State University, but how it is related to—or as I will frame it, is complexly and mutually *overdetermined* by—larger systems of difference such as political economy and racial formation. In order to accomplish this task, I had to adopt and advance techniques that have generally not been utilized in the nascent field of the anthropology of higher education.

The Anthropology of Higher Education

The underdevelopment of the anthropology of higher education is a well-documented phenomenon (Blum, 2012; Iloh & Tierney, 2014; Shumar, 2004; Shumar & Mir, 2011). While the reasons for this are no doubt complex and beyond the scope of this particular chapter, one can speculate with good evidence that it has in large part to do with the ways in which the anthropology of education has been marginalized as an applied discipline within the field of anthropology and how ethnographic work occupies a marginal position within the field of higher education studies. The former has not prevented the anthropology of K-12 education from flourishing, but the latter has limited the uptake of anthropological theories and methods in studying colleges and universities. Below I trace the contours of the anthropology of higher education, showing the overlap and contradictions between the two most common theoretical and methodological approaches to ethnographically studying university life before turning to outline what I call a critical ethnography of the university and demonstrating how this approach was utilized in my study of diversity work at State University.

Before I go further, it is important to note that I engage literature from both anthropologists studying colleges and universities and ethnographic work coming from scholars

in other disciplines such as sociology and psychology, as well as those trained in higher education studies programs. Even combined, this body of literature is relatively small. Formulating new and innovative approaches to ethnography has and continues to occur in conversation across fields and between disciplines.

Ethnographies of higher education have predominantly followed one of two approaches, and this trend mirrors historical patterns of development within anthropology. The first group has followed a more traditional approach to ethnography that seeks to uncover the cultural practices and daily realities of institutional groups that mirrors traditional single-site ethnography, applying the theoretical and methodological insights of cultural anthropology to university life. This originally focused on the practice of “making strange” the cultural practices of college students, particularly those traditionally included in elite public and private universities (Iloh & Tierney, 2014), but has increasingly focused on other groups of students, as well as staff and faculty. This is what I characterize as the micro-level study of university cultures² and, as I argue below, an unintended consequence of this approach has been to largely ignore the institution in which actors move. This occurs in large part because the focus is usually only on one particular institutional population.

The second approach is rooted in the multi-sited ethnography tradition pioneered by anthropologists like George Marcus and those involved in the *Writing Culture* debates. This approach situates colleges and universities within larger political economic forces and has largely been occupied with the problem of the “commodification of higher education” (Shumar, 2004). This line of research has received more attention from anthropologists, as evidenced by

² I use the plural “cultures” intentionally to signal that, despite the assertion that there is such a thing as a singular “campus culture”, there are always multiple cultures that exist within large, complex bureaucratic institutions.

the organization of conferences and special issues of anthropological journals.³ However, studies that utilize this macro-level approach can sometimes seem removed from the ethnographic encounter common in studies conducted at the micro-level. What is missing are meso-level studies that situate the various institutional groupings and cultures that comprise institutions of higher education within larger structural or systemic forces. Such an approach requires that we retheorize what colleges and universities are and what it means to study them ethnographically.

It is important to note that the micro-level literature is almost exclusively US-based and each study I outline below takes place at a four-year institution. These studies also skew toward research institutions and include both public and private colleges and universities. It is only recently that for-profit institutions have been the object of ethnographic research (see Iloh, 2016). Thus, many kinds of colleges and universities remain unrepresented and underrepresented in the ethnography of higher education.

Micro-level Studies of Campus Cultures

Student life. The two ethnographies that are generally accepted as the first in the field of higher education are Moffat's (1989) *Coming of Age in New Jersey* and Holland and Eisenhart's (1990) *Educated in Romance*. Each applies ethnographic methods and theories to understanding undergraduate student cultures, although *Educated in Romance* focuses on undergraduate women at both a predominantly white and a predominantly Black institution. These early studies served as a model for a variety of subsequent ethnographies, which have sought to explicate college students' rituals and practices, with a central focus on social rather than academic life. In fact, participant observations of undergraduate students usually take place in residence halls, social

³ Both *Anthropology & Education Quarterly* (2000) and the *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* (1999, 2004) have published issues dedicated to anthropological research in higher education. Much of this work and research published in collected volumes focused on the anthropology of university reform were born out of small conferences.

gatherings, and spaces outside the classroom. Rebekah Nathan's (2005) *My Freshman Year* typifies this approach. Nathan lived in a residence hall, much as an anthropologist might live in a village community. Each of these studies illuminates the ways in which social life dominates the time, energy, and thoughts of undergraduate students. Other ethnographers have applied this approach but gone further in exploring particular student subgroups. Armstrong and Hamilton's (2013) *Paying for the Party* brings in the lens of social class to address the gendered realities of undergraduate women, and while they focus on social life, they also consider how academic structures facilitate and conflict with undergraduate party culture.

Within this genre, ethnographers have also examined various student communities organized around race, religion, and gender identity. Bryan Brayboy's (2004, 2005) study of Native students in Ivy League Universities focuses on how they traverse majoritarian spaces, attempting to gain the knowledge, skills, and credentials they need to serve their home communities. Brayboy's work is notable in that he actually spends time in classrooms and meetings between students and faculty. Ethnographers have also immersed themselves in the social and academic worlds of a variety of other student populations: Muslim women (Mir, 2014), Korean Americans (Ablemann, 2009), Evangelical Christians (Magolda & Gross, 2009), Chinese transnationals (Fong, 2011), Mexican American high school graduates (Gildersleeve, 2010), and Trans* students (Nicolazzo, 2016). Together, these accounts challenge the notion of a singular undergraduate student culture as well as the celebratory accounts of college as "the best four years of your life." Each, in different ways, documents the challenges their participants face and the variety of ways in which universities do not serve their unique needs.

Staff and faculty. A smaller number of studies explore the daily realities of staff and faculty within college and universities. These studies focus on colleges and universities as

contested spaces of work and policy implementation. Mitchell Steven's (2007) explores the rituals utilized by admissions officers as they sift through and make meaning of small details in high school students' college applications. Julie Posselt (2016) studies this phenomenon at the graduate level, examining the implicit and explicit values and norms that guide faculty as they choose whom to admit to their graduate programs. These studies help to problematize one of the most ubiquitous and contentious practices in all of higher education, and illuminate the unconscious and taken-for-granted assumptions that undergird admissions practices that are supposedly guided by the value-neutral concept of merit. They demonstrate how merit is constructed and contested in and through the daily practices of those engaged in the admissions process.

Scholars have also used ethnographies of staff and faculty to examine larger processes of institutional transformation. Peter Magolda's (2016) ethnography of campus custodians uses the experiences of this often-invisible group of laborers to pose questions about market-based reforms of higher education. Gail Tuchman (2009) is concerned with similar forms of corporate reform, but examines the processes through the lens of faculty experience. Finally, Ahmed's (2012) ethnography of diversity workers examines the unique ways in which their work is contained and coopted in order to prevent institutional transformation.

Together, these studies provide a vivid, albeit limited, snapshot of a select set of non-student actors. These scholars use their accounts to draw larger conclusions about how colleges and universities operate. However, these accounts seem (and perhaps are) far removed from the experiences of students. In many ways, they still follow the same micro-level model of ethnography that is used to study undergraduates. While these studies often go a step further than

student ethnographies in theorizing the institution as a whole, the focus on a particular group of staff or faculty sets limits on the kinds of conclusions these scholars can draw.

Macro-level Ethnographies of University Reform

While the studies I have discussed above are largely focused on small communities and subcultures, or even particular offices, a larger body of anthropological scholarship examines market- and state-driven higher education reforms. This literature is primarily focused on theorizing the political economy of higher education, much in the same vein as the sociological academic capitalism literature (Slaughter & Leslie, 1997; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). In fact, the same year that Slaughter and Leslie proposed their theory of academic capitalism, anthropologist Wesley Shumar (1997) articulated a framework he calls the commodification of higher education. His ethnography, rooted in the anthropology of policy rather than the field of higher education, has helped to inspire two decades of anthropological work on university reform. While the work I outlined above has been primarily located in the United States—the exception being Fong’s (2011) transnational ethnography of Chinese international students—the university reform literature is a decidedly international. Unlike the anthropology of higher education in the US, this work has received more structural support in the form of special issues of journals and sessions at international conferences.

Shumar’s (1997) study of commodification is one of the few full-length ethnographies in this vein, and it is focused primarily on faculty experience. Like theorists of academic capitalism, Shumar is concerned with how knowledge production is being reoriented toward commercial purposes, but his theory of commodification focuses less on networks of power and more on the semiotic processes by which cultural forms transmogrify into marketable goods. The approaches offered by anthropologists illuminate processes and practices that are not visible through the lens

of academic capitalism, in part because ethnography allows these scholars to link the daily practices of particular actors to larger political economic transformation. For instance, anthropologist Bonnie Urciuoli (1999, 2009, 2010) has done similar work examining the discursive practices that transform diversity and multiculturalism into cultural commodities.

These scholars also problematize the relationship between universities, the state, and the market, by traversing national, regional, and international scales and by examining the role of non-governmental and trans-governmental organizations. For instance, anthropologists have examined how marketized reforms have been shaped by policies introduced by organizations such as the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development or by trade policy like the General Agreement on Trade in Services (Wright & Rabo, 2010). There has been considerable work on how the standardization process initiated under the Bologna Process is remaking higher education in Europe (Baćević, 2010; Romano, 2010). Scholars have also considered how market-based reforms in Europe and the United States travel, and impact processes and practices in other parts of the world (Harrison, 2001; Oxlund, 2010; Shore, 2010). Much of this work also considers how these transformations are facilitated by the rise of new forms of neo-liberal governmentality exercised through audit practices and technologies (Shore & Wright, 1999; Strathern, 2000), and the way policies travel complicates our understanding of the state's involvement in facilitating market-based reforms. In one of the few ethnographies that considers the experiences of students, staff, and faculty, Amy Stambach (2014) examines Confucius Institutes at three U.S. universities to explore the give-and-take relationship between entrepreneurial university actors, states engaged in educational diplomacy, and corporate philanthropists eager to open up new markets. As stated above, these studies benefit significantly

from the multi-sited ethnographic approach, which allows these anthropologists to trace people, texts, and ideas across various levels of the institution and beyond.

Ethnography of the University

The bulk of the work in both bodies of literature was produced in the last fifteen years—the anthropology of higher education remains an emergent field. These studies challenge and extend the work being done in the field of higher education by applying anthropological theory and methods to areas dominated by statistical and social psychological paradigms that often overlook practice in favor of documenting outcomes (Jensen, 1999). However, the study of higher education also provides an opportunity to develop and extend anthropological theory (Wolfgram & Anderson, forthcoming).

In order to engage in the project of developing anthropological theory through ethnographic studies of colleges and universities, scholars will need to address a significant lacuna—namely, an institutional or meso-level account of colleges and universities. While micro-level studies tend to be ethnographically rich, in large part because they center the meaning-making practices of the students, staff, and faculty, one common trend in this literature is that the institution itself recedes from view. Particularly in studies of student life, the college or university becomes the setting rather than an object of scrutiny. The extent to which this occurs varies—for instance, *Paying for the Party* theorizes how the academic pathways organized by schools and departments facilitate and enable party culture, but students' social worlds remain foregrounded. A larger institutional picture emerges somewhat from studies of staff and faculty, but in isolation, these studies do not necessarily provide an opportunity to theorize how the conceptual and spatial worlds of staff and faculty are related to those of students. The ethnographic depth provided by focusing on a particular office or institutional

population necessarily limits the ability to draw connections to other parts of the complex bureaucratic structure and processes that order university life.

Likewise, macro-level analyses of marketization and university reform are better able to theorize institutions as a whole, but they often sacrifice the kind of on-the-ground accounts of ethnographic informants. Stambach's (2014) study is somewhat unique in that she theorizes market-based reforms as being rooted in the actions of particular actors. As a whole, the focus on theorizing policy reform tends to pull the analytic lens back from the daily lives of those involved in producing, contesting, and transforming policy within institutions.

The gap in the anthropology of higher education is thus a meso-level ethnography that bridges these two approaches. On one hand, these studies would be rooted in the daily realities of students, staff, faculty, administrators, and other actors who move within and across institutional borders, but it would also trace the connections between the often-separate social worlds these actors occupy. It would conceptualize the institution as the relations and processes that bind them together. On the other hand, this approach would also be able to link these realities to the larger structural forces that overdetermine and are overdetermined by what takes place within the institution. In this light, higher education ethnography could learn a great deal from institutional ethnographers in general, and medical anthropologists in particular. Medical anthropologists studying hospitals have demonstrated that these complex, bureaucratic institutions are shaped by local practices and cultures and larger structural forces and discursive formations. For example, MacDonald's (2016) study of cancer care in India demonstrates that institutional practices are both situated and particular but always produced within multi-scalar assemblages of power and knowledge. Hospital ethnographies also provide opportunities to examine how different institutional groups and actors interact and converge around particular projects, such as

Chapple's (2010) study of how various kinds of care providers, clergy, and administrators engage the process of dying in two teaching hospitals, following these participants into spaces beyond the hospitals' walls. Particularly relevant to this study is how institutional groups interact with and at times conflict with one another and how these relationships shape ideology and discourse within the institution, as is the case with notions of professionalism in Apesoa-Varano and Varano's (2014) ethnography of an urban hospital. Medical anthropology provides a rich set of literature that may provide valuable models for university ethnographies moving forward.

Below I provide a theoretical and methodological sketch of what such an approach might look like before detailing how this approach was used to construct my study of diversity policy and practice at State University.

Rethorizing the university. It is tempting to frame universities solely in terms of their explicit organizational and governance structures. And indeed, these structures do play a role in shaping institutional life and behavior in colleges and universities (Ehrenberg, 2004). The temptation becomes to view institutions as bounded and static, which gives rise to the assumption that institutions are resistant to change because they are relatively fixed and stable. This essentialist image of the university pits human agency against institutional structure. There are, however, organizational theorists who are challenging this image, drawing on social network theory to deconstruct the perceived hierarchy and boundaries of the institution (see Kezar, 2014a).

Moving toward a critical ethnography of the university requires that we rethink the university as an object of study. What I offer here is a relational and anti-essentialist portrait of the university that is shaped by the methodological tradition of institutional ethnography. Institutional ethnography, at its core, helps to explicate the organizations in which people find

themselves on a daily basis. It is about understanding how institutions, as social organizations, structure power relations to coordinate human behavior and then tracing through those relations as a means to better understand institutional forms (Campbell & Gregor, 2004; Smith, 2005). These power relations are textually mediated, because institutions enact power through the organization and validation of forms of knowledge (Campbell & Gregor, 2004; Darville, 1995). However, because institutional ethnography is about the “world we live in, where we are in our bodies” (Smith, 2005, p. 2), the concern for text and discourse is always matched with attention to the material conditions within institutions.

The ethnographic approach to theorizing and studying institutions stands in direct contrast to much of the organizational higher education literature which tends to emphasize how difficult it is to change colleges and universities (e.g., Lohmann, 2004)). This, as I have stated, is because colleges and universities are theorized as fixed and therefore inherently change resistant. Drawing on the insights of institutional ethnography led me to develop a different set of initial assumptions that guided my methodological decisions as I formulated and executed this study.

While not an exhaustive cataloging of the tenets of institutional ethnography, these four assumptions incorporate many of the key insights of this methodological tradition and were central to my research design: institutions coordinate human relations, universities are discursively constructed, universities are enacted through ordered practices and processes, and universities are both overdetermined and overdetermining.

First, universities as institutions are *coordinated human relations*. In “Confessions of the Flesh,” Foucault (1980) states:

“The term ‘institution’ is generally applied to every kind of more-or-less constrained, learned behavior. Everything which functions in a society as a system of constraint and

which isn't an utterance, in short, all the field of the non-discursive social, is an institution" (p. 197-198).

I will return to Foucault's insight in a moment, but the primary point here is that institutions—whether the abstract institution of the family or marriage, or the seemingly more concrete institution of education, function in and through human behavior, which the institution coordinates. Dorothy Smith (2005) refers to this coordination as *ruling relations*: “that extraordinary yet ordinary complex of relations that are textually mediated, that connect us across space and time and organize our everyday lives” (p. 10). These ruling relationships shape consciousness, action, and the material conditions in which institutional actors find themselves. It is not insignificant that many early and influential institutional ethnographies focused on people like nurses, who are both symbolically and materially subordinated within the hierarchy of the medical industrial complex. Ruling relations are the conduits through which power is exercised. The concept of ruling relations moves beyond the binary of seeing power as totally owned or absolutely decentered—ruling relations are bound up in organizational hierarchies and structures but also operate in complex and diffuse ways. To illustrate this point, imagine for a moment a university football game—thousands of students, alumni, fans, file into a stadium in an orderly fashion to watch their team play. They know where and when to sit and stand, the songs and chants to utter, and how to react to the prompting of the announcer or to what takes place on the field. The announcer is a recognizable instrument of coordination as are campus police, but there are a variety of game-time rituals and practices that will coordinate participant's behavior that are not as easy to pinpoint, especially for the uninitiated. However, as a result of this coordination, spectators find themselves economically stratified (based on the price of

tickets) and situated within very different material conditions within the stadium—some are in the nosebleeds and others in luxurious box suites.

Second, the university is *discursively produced*. To return to the quote from Foucault, after making this statement, he immediately amends it by saying that institutions are discursive, or at least inseparable from discourse. I understand discourse as a systematic way of representing a particular subject that produces “meaningful knowledge about that subject” and as such shapes social practices (Hall, 1992, p. 205). This knowledge calls that subject into being (Baez, 2004). This is not to say that objects do not exist outside the human mind or that the university is merely a simulacrum, but only that they are perceived as objects through the articulatory practice of discourse (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). To put it much more simply, a university does not exist independent of the ways in which it is represented. The university is not simply the organizational chart or the physical campus, although as I have stated, these things are not insignificant. Institutions are produced in part through the proliferation and circulation of texts (Campbell & Gregor, 2005; Darville, 1995), but representation is not only textual. A discourse also creates subjects within that discourse—in this case, students, staff, faculty, alumni, etc. The consequence of this is deeply material—how one is positioned within the institution shapes access to resources and power. To return to the example of the football game, this gathering is itself an articulatory event, as the use of school colors, an oversized mascot, songs, and chants represent to those in attendance and watching or listening at home what the university *is* and *means*. As such, a football game—much the same as any sporting event or ceremony like commencement or convocation—is one in which the university itself is called into being. It also is what allows individuals to make sense of themselves in relation to the university. It also enables individuals to be distinguished from one another as spectators, players, and coaches. To

emphasize the centrality of discourse in constituting institutions is not to reject a materialist reading, but rather informs it by explaining how unequal material conditions are rendered natural and normal by representing that *this is who we are* as a university.

Third, universities are enacted through ordered *practices* and *processes*. Practices are the things that institutions coordinate through ruling relations. Another way to conceive of institutions is as a set of mutual habituations (De-Pina Cabral, 2011). Practices and processes are both explicit and implicit. These practices include the sort of everyday job duties that people are hired and supervised to do, but also include a variety of daily practices and rituals that may not be immediately recognizable. In fact, many of these processes are what produce and reproduce various forms of inequality (Acker, 2006). To return to our metaphor, the ways in which the game is played and observed constitute the practices by which a university football game is recognized as a football game and not, say, a Broadway play. In addition, these processes are the means by which value to be extracted from certain bodies on the field (often racialized bodies), which are subjected to intense physical wear, and redistributed to others. But as the example demonstrates, this includes a variety of processes that occur off the field and yet nevertheless help to form the larger event of the football game.

Finally, the university is *overdetermined* and *overdetermining*. The term overdetermination has a long, rich history that has been much debated in Marxist theory. Louis Althusser (1967) offered a theory of overdetermination wherein the mode of production has the final say over the organization of society “in the last instance” that stood in direct contrast to orthodox Marxism’s more deterministic vision of the relationship between base and superstructure. Post-Marxist scholars significantly reworked this concept, rejecting the notion of a causal hierarchy that can ultimately be traced to the mode of production or any single

originating source—causes are also effects, and vice versa (Gibson-Graham, 2006; Gibson-Graham, Resnick, & Wolff, 2001). The theory of overdetermination as articulated here forms a basis for ethnographically studying and theorizing the link between particular colleges and universities and the state, society, and the market, without, as many have done, reducing that relationship to one of capitalism or neoliberalism penetrating or determining the institution. Rather, systems like capitalism, white supremacy, patriarchy, etc. form the conditions of possibility in which institutions emerge and operate. Likewise, in their own way, however small, higher education and individual institutions likewise form the conditions of possibility in which capitalism and other oppressive systems operate. The question of determination becomes a problem rather than an assumption. Thus an ethnography of the university begins with the recognition that economic exploitation or racism, to name two examples, will be brought to bear on the discourses and processes within the institution without assuming how that will occur. To return to our metaphor one last time, one can see how a football game is shaped by forces and forms that are not physically present at the sporting event, whether that be the rules and regulations handed down by the National College Athletics Association which determine how value is extracted from athletic bodies, the price of tickets shaped by a capitalist economy, or a ranking and playoff system that brings each football game into relationship with every other throughout the course of a season. It is impossible to conceive a single game as standing in absolute isolation from all the other games taking place across the country and across time. This is because institutions are situated within and in turn help to shape political, economic, and cultural forms.

A critical ethnography of the university must be able to account for these four elements—ruling relations, discourse, practices and processes, and overdetermination—as a means to

understand the symbolic and material effects institutions produce. These concepts inform the analytic arguments I make in subsequent chapters. As stated at the beginning of this section, this moves us away from essentialist understandings of institutions of higher education, and it does so by rejecting the idea that universities are bounded or fixed. As others have noted, the relationships within the institution often extend beyond the boundaries of the university (Kezar, 2014a). The four concepts I outline help to decenter the university by demonstrating that what constitutes the institution extends beyond its physical borders and governance structure. As I discuss below, the ethnographer's role is to trace out those relationships, even if that means stepping off campus. And if the institution is continually being reproduced through discourse and practice, and if the conditions of possibility that overdetermine it are likewise shifting, then the institution itself is not fixed or stable. The reason I chose the football game as a metaphor here is because it illustrates one way in which the institution itself is called into being on a regular and ongoing basis. Ruling relations, like all relations, require upkeep. While social relations might achieve a kind of partial fixation, it is never complete or immune to conflict and change (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985). Thus, we must think of the university as something dynamic, constantly in motion even if it gives off the appearance being static or resistant to change.

Anti-essentialism and university actors. What does it look like to apply these theoretical concepts when studying a college or university ethnographically? The theoretical approach I outline above troubles some of the standard objects of study in the field of higher education. While I have hinted at it thus far, I have not discussed what this framework means for the daily lives of the people that populate an ethnographic account of university life. A critical ethnography of the university also recognizes that categories make social relations appear normal or natural. Rather than assume that there are groups called students, staff, faculty, and

administrators, this approach attempts to uncover how these categories are produced, reproduced, and contested.

Categories do not have fixed attributes. In making this claim I am drawing on Charles Tilly's (1999) eloquent articulation of anti-essentialist theory in his essay, "Of Essences and Bonds." Tilly demonstrates that categories are actually relations of difference. These categorical differences are an organizational fix designed to address particular problems. For instance, designating who is a student and who is a professor allows the institution to order classroom practices in a coherent and predictable way. Categorization establishes asymmetrical relations between two or more groups that have consequences for how people experience institutional life, even if we find that asymmetry acceptable or even desirable. The temptation arises to believe that there is something inherent in those categories—for instances, assuming people are professors because they are excellent teachers—rather than recognizing categories as social constructions.

The problem of hierarchical categories is that they often become naturalized and value-laden. The tendency is to see certain categories of people as better, more valuable, superior, etc. and to see those differences as natural rather than the byproduct of processes of categorization. This observation underlies Derrida's (1978) critique of the binary oppositions that order Western thought and Bourdieu's (1984) conception of social distinction. Thus, while categories may provide an organizational fix, Tilly demonstrates that the social differences that arise tend to support practices that reinforce the differences between groups.

The first step toward addressing this problem is to denaturalize, or in Derrida's term, deconstruct, the categories by uncovering the discourses and processes that produce them. These discourses and practices are global and yet intimately local. What it means to be a student or a

professor at a U.S. research university does not originate from of any particular institution, just as the credentialing processes required to become a professor is not determined by any one school or doctoral program. However, these discourses and practices are taken up, modified, and resisted locally, where actors reinforce and subvert them in unpredictable ways. To return to an earlier example, there is a discourse in U.S. higher education of “underrepresented students”, which refers to students of color (usually excluding certain overrepresented Asian populations) and working class and/or first generation students. This discourse circulates in conferences, workshops, academic journals, and books, but individual scholars, student affairs practitioners, and even students themselves articulate underrepresentedness as a subject position. An ethnographer studies sites of articulation within the institution where such categories are produced and contested. In other words, a central task of an ethnography of the university is to understand how actors within universities enact and contest categories of difference, in this case, those associated with diversity—minority, majority, underrepresented, diverse, etc.

The second major task is to uncover how these categorical differences manifest materially in the life of the institution. Once the relationship between “majority students” and “diverse students” no longer appears natural, the next question becomes, how does the distinction between these two shape the ways in which students experience the institution? This movement gets at the heart of the post-Marxist project, which in combining discursive and material critiques recognizes that the discursive construction of reality has profound implications for groups’ material well being. How categories of difference are produced within institutions shapes the “durable inequalities” (Tilly, 1999) that diversity work, among others, is supposed to address. However, the processes and mechanisms by which this occurs will not be the same from institution to institution, but will be given shape by local histories, practices, and cultures.

Methodology

I will now detail the methods I employed in order to explore the relations I describe above and examine how diversity policy and practice was shaped by competing diversity ideologies.

Site Selection

I chose State University as my research site for several reasons. I selected a public flagship university because these institutions have played an important role in shaping diversity scholarship and policy, in large part due to their role in U.S. Supreme Court affirmative action cases. Indeed, national political organizations have been working for several years to bring an affirmative action suit against State University. The university has also been recognized nationally for its diversity programs, and peer institutions sent representatives to learn about its diversity efforts. For this reason, and because State University is located in a community with an active Black Lives Matter movement, the university provided the opportunity to trace the points of contact, connection, and influence between what is happening at State University and national movements. Finally, State University was in the process of rolling out a strategic diversity plan that promises real change, and my ethnographic fieldwork provided an opportunity to witness policy reform in real time.

Preliminary Fieldwork

Prior to beginning my fieldwork, I spent six months laying the groundwork for the study. Initially, much of that time was spent collecting and analyzing policy documents, including past strategic diversity plans, institutional reports, as well as analyzing organizational charts. The purpose of this work was to understand how diversity work is organized and articulated at State

University. This work proved invaluable in helping to identify initial points of entry into the diversity apparatus at the institution, including identifying key committees to observe.

I also spent this time engaging in informal, off-the-record conversations with people involved in diversity work as well as doing some initial observations. These conversations were with various students, staff, and faculty who worked in or had participated in various diversity programs and initiatives around campus. While giving me a broad sense of the diversity landscape, these individuals also helped me to identify key individuals to approach for interviews when my fieldwork began and, just as importantly, introduced me to campus politics and how they shaped what was happening in the realm of diversity work.

During this time, the university was implementing some of the initiatives to come out of its strategic diversity plan. The CDO held a series of town hall events on and off campus to publicize the strategic plan and to answer questions and solicit feedback from members of the campus and local community. Observations at these events allowed me to identify key figures in the diversity network as well as to familiarize myself with the various programs and initiatives that were underway or in the process of being implemented. I was also invited to observe a college-level diversity committee, which helped me to understand how such bodies operate.

I also took this opportunity to become electronically embedded in the diversity apparatus. I signed up for listservs, began following offices and campus leaders on social media, and started combing through the campus calendar for events related to diversity.

Fall 2015

When my fieldwork officially began at the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year, I began to reach out to the various individuals I identified during my preliminary work to schedule interviews. I had already begun to cultivate relationships with many of these people, but I also

reached out to people who were recommended to me during my initial informal conversations. I thus used a combination of purposeful and snowball sampling (Creswell, 2007) in order to identify interview participants. Conducting interviews with both mid- and upper-level administrators proved quite difficult because of their busy schedules. Setting up a time to meet often required significant negotiation, and their strict schedules forced me to sometimes be more direct in an initial interview than I would otherwise be in order to take advantage of the time window I was given. In all instances, the interview was recorded and then transcribed verbatim. I transcribed the vast majority of the interviews myself. I was able to secure funds to pay for a handful of transcriptions by an IRB approved third party, and I reviewed and edited each of these transcriptions for accuracy.

I also identified a variety of campus committees (all names are pseudonyms) to observe, including: the Committee for Admission and Retention, the Campus Climate Committee, the Women's Issues Committee, and the LGBTQ Issues Committee. The Admission and Retention committee temporarily disbanded at the end of the fall semester due to concerns about the scope and function of the committee, and at the same time I began to observe the Diversity Officers' committee. I also observed the chairs of the Diversity Committees in each of the colleges and administrative units. Given the decentralized nature of diversity work at State University, these two bodies provided an invaluable opportunity to keep track of what was happening in various corners of the institution. I also attended a diversity committee in one of the campus' thirteen colleges. I had hoped to observe two other college diversity committees as a point of comparison, but the two I selected were very slow to respond to my requests and to convene, and I ultimately decided that I was already spending a sufficient amount of time in committee meetings. The one other committee I observed was the student government Racial Justice

Committee (formerly the Diversity Committee), which I selected because I needed an entry point into student diversity work, and students participate very little (if at all) in the other committees I observed. Because State University is a public institution and governed by open meeting laws, all of these committees must publicly post their meeting times and locations as well as allow any member of the public to observe their proceedings. While I did not need to request permission to attend committee meetings, I did reach out to the chairs of each of these committees in advance to explain my research and to discuss how I could avoid being disruptive to their proceedings. In one or two instances my requests were met with skepticism, but I was by and large made very welcome at meetings. Most committees provided me a name placard and in one case, the committee ordered extra food so that I could eat lunch with them.

I also participated in a variety of campus events pertaining to diversity. Many of these were convened by the CDO's office—networking events for diversity workers, social and cultural events that celebrated communities of color, and the campus' annual Diversity Conference. These spaces were mostly populated by staff and faculty, but I also observed a variety of events convened by the Multicultural Student Union—multicultural organization fairs, public performances, town hall meetings, and mixers. There were, however, limitations to my participation in certain events, particularly those that were designed to meet particular social and emotional needs. For instance, all programming organized by the LGBTQ Resource Center is closed to researchers in order to protect students' wellbeing and confidentiality. Likewise, certain MSU events were closed, and so prior to each event I attended, I always reached out to MSU staff to get their approval. On some occasions, I attended events but did not collect data.

It is important to note that from the beginning I was engaged in in-situ analysis and attempted to process my fieldwork in multiple ways. I kept a fieldwork journal to document

important or noteworthy events in the field and to record how I made methodological decisions. I also regularly memoed after interviews and observations.

The vast majority of my field notes were taken by hand using a moleskin notebook. While I easily could have taken notes on my laptop during committee meetings, I chose to write them by hand in large part because it offered more privacy. In most cases, I sat at the table with members of the committee, meaning that I had people close by on either side. It would have been quite difficult to prevent people from easily seeing my notes had I chosen to type them. My handwriting is fairly messy and at times difficult for others to decipher, and so handwritten notes afforded me some level of privacy. In instances where I was unable to take notes in real time, I carried a smaller notebook for quick jottings. In some instances, I made audio recordings of whatever I was observing (either at publicly accessible events or with the permission of the event coordinator) and used the recordings to supplement my field notes. When field notes were not taking during the event, I always constructed the notes as quickly as possible after the event. All of my handwritten field notes were typed into word documents so that they could be coded using the research software MAXQDA.

Spring 2016

The end of the fall semester was a turning point for the campus. There was a major protest march in mid-November and students affiliated with the march began disrupting State University System Board of Governors meetings in December. As a result of these developments, the relationships I built with activists in student government proved invaluable as I began to trace their connections to activists outside of student government, most importantly to an informal network of activists called The Eclipse. Connecting with emergent activist leaders opened up a variety of new opportunities not only for interviews, but also participant

observation. Engaging with students took me to new spaces like protests actions and marches, town hall forums, and even digital spaces such as Facebook and Twitter. The relationships I built with students in the Racial Justice Committee helped me make connections with their friends and peers who were engaging in activism outside of student government. My work with students often provided an opportunity to do more participation than my involvement in spaces dominated by staff and faculty. I helped them plan and execute campaigns, I volunteered at events they hosted, and I even marched with them on several occasions in both the spring and following fall semester. Spending time with student activists eventually began to raise both practical and ethical challenges, which I discuss below.

The protests also provoked a series of campus responses, often in the form of town hall meetings, and I spent a significant amount of time in these spaces as well. As I argue above, these events were largely performative—designed to signal engagement with climate problems when in reality they were more often one-off events that provided no clear avenue for follow up or accountability. The pattern of response throughout the spring indicates that upper-administrators were far more likely to act based on negative publicity caused by racist incidents and student activism than they were the feedback at town hall events. The performative nature of the meetings was most clear in how the university’s communication department covered the events to demonstrate that, “Diversity is a top institutional priority for State University.” Eventually, however, the university president did promise a series of new initiatives to address what was taking place on campus. This included piloting a cultural competency training program for new students, hiring mental health professionals of color, exploring establishing a Black Cultural Center, as well as soliciting proposals for other initiatives to address and improve campus climate.

The spring was also an important time for tracing out the relationships and connections from the origin points I identified the previous fall. During interviews in the fall, I always concluded by asking participants whom I should speak with about diversity work. In most instances, I also asked about community members, alumni, business people, or other individuals who were connected to diversity work but not a student or employee at the university. I noted names that came up in multiple interviews and then reached out to them for interviews. While it was not possible to follow up on every lead—this would have produced hundreds of initial interviews—I attempted to interview individuals that multiple participants mentioned. Tracing out is what led me to conduct interviews with community members and corporate actors who gave money to diversity programs. During this time and throughout the rest of my time in the field, I also conducted follow up interviews with the participants who became key informants. These key informants were most often student services staff or mid-level administrators who were awkwardly positioned between directly serving students and responding to upper-level administrators. It was this awkward positioning that gave them particularly keen insight into the complexities of diversity policy and practice, because they were able to reflect on what was taking place from multiple vantage points: students', their own, and their superiors'. As a result, these individuals tended to have the most nuanced and critical perspective. These conversations were vital in helping me unpack and in some instances reconstruct key events and to begin to test hypotheses with participants whose opinions and insights I valued. In addition, I saw these individuals so frequently that we also had informal conversations at events and in passing, and often these short interactions were themselves quite generative. For example, one might say hello at a university-wide diversity event and provide an offhand comment about how only certain identity-groups were being named. Or, a chance encounter before an evening gathering might

spark a brief conversation about the long hours they are working and the ways this was impacting their health and family. A few student activists also became key informants, and students were the only ones who actively sought out opportunities for follow up interviews. I was careful to cultivate deep relationships on both sides of the schism that eventually developed between activists in order to carefully document multiple perspectives on the conflict that unfolded.

During the spring semester, I was also given a unique opportunity to observe the policy formation process in action. The CDO spearheaded an initiative to create a campus wide diversity mission statement, which was supposed to affirm diversity as a key institutional value and be a tool for holding campus leaders accountable to fulfilling their obligations to promote and support diversity work. I was able to attend meetings of the Campus Climate Committee working groups that started the process of drafting the statement. Observing the working group, and at times participating in their conversations, provided an opportunity for deeper understanding of the logics and processes that inform the creation of diversity policies and texts.

Summer 2016

After what became a tumultuous spring semester, campus life quieted down once the semester was over. Because of the limited amount of programming over the summer and because committees do not meet after the school year is over, I spent my time primarily conducting participant observations at summer orientation events to understand how incoming students and their families were messaged about diversity and inclusion at State University.

I also conducted interviews throughout the summer. The slower pace provided opportunities to interview campus members whose busy lives made scheduling an interview during the school year difficult. I also met with student activists who remained in town over the

summer and discussed what had taken place the previous spring. Finally, I also reached out to people engaged in diversity work at the school or college level. Given that it would have been difficult to engage in extensive participant observation in each of the thirteen colleges, interviews provided an opportunity for me to better understand what was happening at the college level.

Fall 2016

While I initially planned to conduct 12 months of fieldwork, I extended my time in the field through the fall semester in order to study the fallout of what took place the previous year. Instead of spending my time in committee meetings, I focused my efforts on conducting interviews and observations pertaining to three issues.

First, the university president promised several new initiatives in response to the hateful incidents that had occurred on campus and in response to student protests. Some of these were announced in the spring, while others emerged as a result of the president's call for new initiatives that were vetted over the summer. The most publicized of these was a new community-building workshop for incoming students that emerged out of the student demand for mandatory cultural competency training. This training was planned over the summer and piloted with a select group of first year students in October and November. I not only participated in actual sessions of the program, I also participated in other events where aspects of the program were piloted.

Second, two initiatives of the strategic diversity plan were rolled out in the fall: the first ever campus-wide student climate survey and an online database to track all of the diversity programs, events, and initiatives on campus. While the survey had already been promised, the sense of urgency for the study increased in the wake of the conflict the previous spring, and the crisis would no doubt shape how students responded to the survey. The database was the answer

to the problem of, as the CDO often framed it, “letting the left hand know what the right hand is doing.” Given that the CDO had been promoting these initiatives throughout my fieldwork, I thought it important to see what the implementation process would look like given everything that had happened the previous year.

Finally, in the spring, a group of student activists and members of student government, predominantly students of color, successfully elected 18 people to student government. This ensured them enough votes to put their peers in all the top leadership positions, effectively giving control of the student government to student activists pushing a racial justice agenda. However, the coalition of students fractured days before the vote after the student poised to become student body president was accused of sexual assault. The coalition of student activists split down the middle and a vibrant student protest movement was left in disarray. I also spent time with student activists in and outside of student government meetings in order to understand the fallout of this schism.

As a result of staying in the field, I was also able to observe a similar cycle of events in response to another nationally publicized hate and bias incident that fall. This took place a week before the election of Donald Trump. Combined, and these events reinvigorated student protesters as well as brought new student leaders into the campus struggle for racial justice.

Positionality & Ethics

As I tell the story of diversity work at State University in the following chapters, I attempt to center the voices and experiences of my participants. However, it is important for the reader to have a sense of how I moved through the various spaces where I conducted research, the issues I confronted as a researcher along the way, and how my identity and experience shaped the research process. Otherwise, the account appears to be told from the perspective of an

omniscient narrator who was not embedded in the relations and processes that shape my participants' experiences. Anthropological knowledge from its origins was predicated on the distinction between the objective Western knower and the Other as the object of inquiry (Baker, 1998). In keeping with the tradition of standpoint epistemology of institutional ethnography and critical black feminist thought, I acknowledge what is known is shaped by who knows and from where they know (Collins, 1991; Smith, 2005). Not only does my identity shape how I conduct research and the conclusions that I draw from that work, but my very identity and how I move through spaces marked for diversity helps to highlight the possibilities and contradictions that are at the very heart of diversity work.

My Body in the Diversity Apparatus

Nirmal Puwar (2004) critiques diversity practices by demonstrating how organizational spaces are designed for and around a somatic norm—the white, able-bodied, heterosexual male body. When other bodies enter those spaces, they disrupt that norm as “space invaders.” Diversity is a tool for managing the process of space invasion without threatening the somatic norm. But what happens when the script is flipped and a body is out of place in spaces marked as “diverse”? Many of my participants bemoaned that majority people (usually referred to obliquely) did not see diversity as including them. Despite having participated in diversity programs and initiatives throughout my undergraduate and graduate career, I still often felt like a space invader, particularly early on in my fieldwork.

What was not apparent to my participants, both from my physical appearance and my European name, is my identity as both a white and Latino man. Race has played a complex and contradictory role in my life in large part because of policy—on demographic forms as a young person in Texas, I did not fit in the category “White, non-Hispanic”; as a “quarter” Latino, I

qualified for programs like the National Hispanic Recognition Program run by the College Board, and at my home institution of the University of Wisconsin, my Hispanic identity trumps all other categories, marking me solely as Hispanic for demographic purposes. However, as a non-Spanish speaker with features few read as Latinx, I have learned that few people accept my racial identity at face value. This has led to deep feelings of ambivalence as to when and how to lay claim to my Latino identity. There were moments during fieldwork when those feelings came to the forefront—situations I describe below—and I was forced to push through those feelings in order to remain present and observant to what was happening around me.

While I have rarely experienced any explicit form of marginalization, the marginalization of multi-racial individuals is a well-documented phenomenon referred to as monoracialism or monoracism (Harris, 2016), and the multi-racial people I encountered in my research spoke to this reality. However, the discourse of multiracialism in popular and scholarly discourse is usually built around the notion of halves. It is my experience that we do not have a sufficient language or theory for understanding what bi- or multiracialism means when someone's race is predominantly but not exclusively a particular racial category.⁴ Nor do discourses of diversity sufficiently take into account the multiplicity of racial identities that cross and blur multiple racial categories.

Quite to my surprise, my racial identity was only explicitly discussed in three different contexts. The first was in interviews with a very small number of diversity workers who are white women. One in particular spoke to me on several occasions about the struggle of doing diversity work as a white person because, in his experience, people openly questioned why he

⁴ This is further complicated by the fact that “Latinx” or “Latina/o” is technically an ethnicity, and one can be a white, Black, Indigenous, etc. Latinx person. In practice, however, Latinx is often treated as its own racial category distinct from White, Black, Asian, and Indigenous.

was engaged in that work. He shared this as a warning to me as someone interested in diversity work, believing I would encounter this problem at some point in my future career. As I was more interested in his perspective on his work, I did not elect to clarify my racial identity in those moments for fear of redirecting the conversation. My assumption throughout my research was that I would be read simply as white and that many or even most people would be curious or even suspicious about my interest in diversity work. While I did encounter suspicion and curiosity, no one ever explicitly framed their reaction in relation to my racial identity. I operated with the assumption that I would likely need to prove to some that I encountered that I valued them and their work. This fear that I would be treated with suspicious was a regular source of anxiety in the field, and was not unfounded. However, as I discuss below, their suspicion often had more to do with the precarity that comes with engaging in diversity work.

The second context in which my identity came to the forefront was when I engaged in participant observation at a series of social events for Latinx students. There were similar events organized for Black, Native, and Asian students, but rather than attend all of them, I elected to attend the Latinx events because these events would allow me to engage in full participant observation. However, on several occasions, people asked if I was helping to staff or organize the event, assuming that I was not there to participate. It was then that I explained that I identify as both white and Latino. Having had these kinds of experience before, I was neither surprised nor offended, even though these kinds of experiences are often deeply uncomfortable. However, having these experiences as a researcher provided an opportunity to simultaneous double gesture of inclusion and exclusion that operates in “affinity” spaces for particular racial groups. My own experience as an ambiguously positioned white and Latino person has deeply informed how I understand the limitations of diversity’s categorical logic.

Finally, I also encountered a handful of multiracial students and staff while conducting fieldwork. When I opened up about my identity, it provided opportunities to learn about how they experienced racialized spaces on campus, like the network of student activists or the Multicultural Student Union. Oftentimes these individuals, students in particular, expressed frustration at not fitting in with their peers, for example, being both too Black and not Black enough depending on the context. It was personally comforting to hear others talk about similar experiences of not fitting in. There was only one event in my entire time in the field that was geared specifically toward multi-racial students, and students themselves had to organize it. By and large, multi-racial people were not visible in diversity discourse and practice at State University.

“I’m always in the political frame”

The very notion of diversity is political. As I discuss throughout this dissertation, diversity constitutes a field of struggle, both to determine the meanings and values associated with diversity but also the practices by which the institution engages with human differences. Like many public institutions, State University was and is under assault by conservative state politicians and organizations that sought to discipline the institution and its supposed cultural elites through a series of legal reforms. These reforms included removing a requirement for the state universities to have plans for recruiting minoritized students. A few years before I began my fieldwork, the system had also quietly shut down its diversity office. The larger political struggle over the nature of public higher education in the state overdetermined how diversity work was carried out on State University’s campus.

The diversity workers I observed and interviewed were aware of and regularly discussed the heightened state of political conflict in and around the university and the fact that diversity

work was itself controversial. The CDO often talked about having to contend with those he called “the haters,” who hoped the university would abandon its diversity initiatives and programs. One particular diversity worker was fond of declaring, “I’m always in the political frame”—meaning that the daily realities of her work are embedded in both institutional, state-wide, and national political struggles and she has to be careful of how she conducts herself.

What this meant for me as a researcher was that in both implicit and explicit ways, many participants and people I encountered responded to my presence and project with reactions ranging from caution to suspicion. The caution was always clearly evident—long conversations would ensue before participants agreed to an interview. Indeed, some interviews took nearly a year to arrange. Sometimes participants asked to make comments off the record. There were several instances in which people turned down requests for interviews, and some spoke directly about their lack of comfort discussing the topic on the record even with my precautions to preserve their confidentiality. In order to address this issue I always offered them the option of reviewing quotes that were included in the dissertation and related articles.

Suspicion looked and felt different, and here I am engaging in some degree of speculation based on my intuition as a researcher. In one instance, a committee member audibly complained about my presence at the meeting and how they had not consented to participate in my research (even though my access was granted by open meeting laws). In another instance, a request for an interview resulted in someone sending a staff member to dig up information about me. In many instances, people repeatedly ignored or deferred my requests for a meeting, interview, or access to information. This made for some awkward encounters in the field. Often this suspicion was subtler—it took the form of looks and body language that signaled a coldness or unwillingness to engage me in conversation. I am willing to acknowledge that my reading of people’s reactions to

me may not be entirely accurate. However, after spending an extensive amount of time in the field I feel confident claiming that some people I encountered were genuinely suspicious of me, and not without reason given the highly political nature of diversity work. Ultimately, however, I gained far more access than I initially anticipated, but this was the product of long-term relationship building and was not always immediately granted.

Anthropologists and qualitative researchers will no doubt be unsurprised that participants' affect could change significantly once the recorder was turned on. As such, it is important to note that these political considerations—particularly for their job security and reputation—shaped and colored the conversations I had with participants. They also informed how I have gone about representing my participants, electing to refer to people with gender-altered or unisex pseudonyms along with the generic designation of upper-level or mid-level administrator, staff member, student, faculty, or community member. More information about this decision can be found in Appendix A.

Given that diversity work is delegated to a relatively small number of people—sometimes a single person in a school or unit, I have limited and altered certain details in order to further obscure their identities. This is why I only refer to people by their title when their remarks were made in a publicly accessible forum. In addition, I have taken other steps to obscure my research site by changing small details about the institution, city, and state and by altering or disguising the dates of particular events.

Navigating a Protest Movement

The second major political and ethical issue I confronted as a researcher entailed navigating between factions of student activists and the administrators they were protesting. One struggle in attempting to study multiple institutional populations is how to negotiate relationships

between conflicting parties. As an example, in the spring I attended a protest-themed art show organized by students to celebrate the activism occurring on campus. I found myself in a corner of the room chatting with a student activist who loudly criticized an administrator for coming to the event while administrator in question was within earshot. While I sympathized with the student's complaints, I was also attempting to build a relationship with that administrator in hopes of securing an interview. I feared that being seen with that student would influence how I was perceived. Similar encounters occurred at other protest-related events where staff and administrators regularly turned out in order to observe and ensure students were safe.

Ultimately, I leaned into the discomfort these awkward encounters caused and trusted that I would be able to build rapport across those lines, and I believe this bore out. I will admit that my sympathies often aligned most closely with the students who were protesting racism on State University's campus because they were the ones most negatively impacted by the hostile campus environment. As will become evidence later on, their critiques tended to be far more systemic and structural and thus more closely aligned with my analysis of what was taking place on campus. These students were oriented toward action—actively planning events, campaigns, and protests—which often stood in contrast to the seemingly endless conversations I witnessed in other corners of the institution—and these actions bore fruit. As will become clear, while these students did not achieve all of their objectives, they were able to extract concessions from the institution. I believe that to whatever extent we can envision that State University transformed in response to what took place, credit is due first and foremost to student activists.

In addition, my relationships with students seemed to come much more easily. Not only were they not distrusting or skeptical of me as a researcher, often they were eager or excited to participate in interviews or have me attend their events. Like many of the non-student

participants in my research, I developed deep affection for and sense of care toward these students. However, my goal was to understand how all of my participants and the people I encountered in my research made sense of what was happening and how they acted on these interpretations. As a result, I attempted to enter every relationship and conversation with curiosity and openness and the fact that I was able to develop deep relationships with participants in a wide variety of institutional positions indicates that participants saw and responded to that curiosity and openness.

Where it became far more challenging was navigating boundaries between student activists themselves. Once sexual assault allegations about one of the leaders of the Eclipse were made public, the network of student activists split into two rivaling factions. Prior to the schism, I had built strong relationships with students who would fall on both sides of that line, and I trusted that those relationships would hold. Because activists move in the same, relatively small geographic spaces on campus, members of one faction sometimes saw me with members of the other group. If this impacted their perception of me, I do not know, but it made for some stressful and awkward encounters. I managed this by remaining guarded when students from one group spoke negatively about students from another, responding with open-ended questions and avoiding making comments that might signal I was aligned with a particular group. There was one student, however, with whom I had a fairly close relationship because of the amount of time we had spent together, and he was as interested in my analysis of the situation as I was of his. Because of this, I felt comfortable pushing back when he was critical of specific students who I knew well. I expressed my genuine confusion over why students who had similar beliefs and goals would be in conflict with one another and this led to a generative discussion that

illuminated the tensions around who controlled and benefited from student government resources.

The awkwardness I encountered was heightened by the fact that some of the individuals that rallied around the accused student became convinced that my research would exonerate and vindicate both their friend and their group. They shared that they looked forward to seeing how my work would uncover everything they thought was wrong with the institution. In subtle and not-so-subtle ways, they encouraged me to look into particular people or events. I navigated this in two ways. First, I had explicit conversations with these students to set boundaries and to clarify the nature of my work. I shared that I was not equipped to investigate what the accused student did or did not do. I took the stance that I was not going to judge what I did not know. Instead, I encouraged them to seek emotional support for what they were experiencing and listened as they shared their frustrations and concerns. Second, I purposefully avoided investigating the specifics of the allegations and instead used interviews and observations to explore how the accusations were impacting their work as activists and the larger implication this had for diversity work on campus. As a result, to this day I do not know any concrete details about the nature of the accusations. Despite the fact that the allegations became public, the specific acts, contexts, and victims have not been publicly detailed.

These decisions were always fraught and made in the moment while conducting fieldwork. It was incredibly difficult to have no sense about the truth of the allegations and to resist the urge to dig deeper. I recognize that inevitably I am giving voice to people who either unjustly destroyed a student's reputation or who are complicit in attempting to silence the voices of victims of sexual assault and their allies. I am reminded that there is a precedent for defending perpetrators of sexual violence for fear of undermining the cause of racial justice (Crenshaw,

1991). I feel it is my responsibility to name this dynamic even if I am unsure of whether or not it was at play in this particular instance.

Giving Back

Because ethnography has historically been rooted in the project of western imperialism and colonialism, anthropologists have had to wrestle with how to navigate the power imbalances between researcher and participants. While these issues are perhaps more subtle when studying powerful, complex, bureaucratic institutions in the Global North, those ethical concerns remain particularly relevant when studying among socially and institutionally marginalized populations. Anthropologists disagree as to how to mitigate the inevitable challenges that arise. And while the Institutional Review Board process is designed to address some of these concerns, the IRB's concerns are primarily legal rather than ethical. As such, it is up to each ethnographer to determine how to address the inequality between them and their participants.

In my own case, I have been intentional about seeking out opportunities to give back to work geared toward fostering diversity and inclusion and to share the knowledge and insights that I gained along the way. Having these experiences opened up new opportunities to serve when I returned to UW-Madison after my fieldwork concluded. Since leaving the field, I have served on a grant-funding committee for UW's diversity office as well as on a campus-wide task force to provide recommendations based on a campus climate survey. I also wrote an article designed to help administrators understand how to engage to student protesters in the hopes that it would help colleges and universities across the country be more responsive to identity-based student protesters—i.e., students who are protesting forms of inequality rooted in their racial, gendered, or sexual identities. Ultimately, the goal is not simply to engage in critical ethnography, but to help to promote equality (Mehan, 2008).

While there is no way to fully repay the time, energy, attention, insight, and in many cases food my participants shared with me, my hope is that this study will elevate their stories, shining a light on often overlooked aspects of the phenomenon we call diversity. Ultimately, my goal is to disrupt the problematic dynamics that prevent institutions from becoming more equitable, just, and inclusive places for those most marginalized in our society.

IV The Organization of Diversity Work at State University

Introduction

In the opening chapter, I provided an overview of what took place at State University during the course of my fieldwork. In that chapter I introduced several of the key actors and spaces where the narrative account I provide in subsequent chapters will unfold. Prior to laying out the results of my data collection and analysis, it is necessary to give the reader a sense of how diversity practice and diversity practitioners fit within the organizational structure of the university.

As I have already asserted, diversity work is a decentralized institutional practice. During the course of my fieldwork, one of the major preoccupations of the policy reform process initiated under the campus' most recent strategic diversity plan was to use communication techniques and technology to render this work more visible and integrated and thus more manageable and productive. In this chapter, I offer a demographic sketch of the university as well as the Union City community. I then provide an overview of how the various actors and initiatives fit within the organizational structure of the university. Finally, I will situate the organizational structure within the institution's ruling relations. This approach allows me to account for both the official knowledge of diversity work, which is entextualized in documents like organizational charts and policy documents, but also examine how this work is situated within larger circuits of power and resources that cut across and extend beyond that organizational structure.

Demographics

State University is located in a predominantly white town—82.7% of Union City's residents are white (U.S. Census Bureau, 2015). Union City is also highly segregated—

neighborhoods in the desirable east and south sides of town are predominantly white, while people of color are more likely to live in the poorer and under-resourced neighborhoods in the north and west sides of town. I found that it was common for members of the campus community to ask each other if they live on the east or south side, never mentioning the segregated north or west sides of the city. A highly publicized report in the late 2000s revealed that the county where the university sits is characterized by stark disparities between Black and white residents in terms of unemployment, arrests, and education. For example, more than half of Black people, and two-thirds of Black children, live in poverty and the Black unemployment rate is several times higher than that of whites. These statistics shattered, or at least challenged, Union City's self-proclaimed progressive and inclusive reputation, and sparked contentious debates among Union City residents.

The university is home to more than forty thousand students (undergraduate, graduate, and professional) and more than twenty thousand staff and faculty. The demographics of the student body and the city are very similar—83.3% of the student body is white (Office of Institutional Research, 2016). The campus' annual report details the following student demographics: Roughly two thirds of the minoritized students on campus are “target minority students.” Enrollment for Asian students has remained relatively steady, while the number of Hispanic students has increased over the last decade, as has the number of students identifying as two or more races. The number of African American and American Indian students declined in that same period—whether this is an absolute decline or a result of the increasing number of students identifying as multi-racial is unclear.

The faculty at State University is likewise mostly white (81.9%), with Asian and Pacific Islanders accounting for more than half of the faculty of color. It is perhaps unsurprising that the

faculty becomes progressively less racially diverse when one moves up the ranks. The Women's Issues Committee I observed publishes annual reports on the demographics and promotion rates of women and racially minoritized faculty. The report they published while I was in the field demonstrates that the faculty becomes progressively more white as one moves from the rank of Assistant to Associate to Full Professor. Staff demographic data also show a similar but less steep decline as one moves up the administrative hierarchy from student-services staff to upper-level administrator. One comment I regularly heard from people in the units under the direction of the Vice President of Administration was that their division was fairly racially diverse as a whole, but that it became less so as one moved up the ladder in the organization.⁵

The campus only disaggregates the demographics of its employees based on their institutional classification. Thus, I cannot make any definitive claims about the racial distribution of employees across the various units and divisions. However, it was clear from my observations, perhaps unsurprisingly so, that people of color are vastly overrepresented in offices and programs that were explicitly and primarily engaged in diversity work—the CDO's office, diversity scholarship programs, the identity-based student centers (academic affairs organizations for students of color, LGBTQ students, students with disabilities, and international students), etc. It would not be a stretch to claim that diversity programs contribute to a significant proportion of the campus' racial diversity, at least among its staff. I turn now to explore the institutional structures in which these diversity workers carried out their work.

Diversity Work at State University

Diversity as Apparatus

⁵ The university only collects demographic information by sex and race/ethnicity. The university does not collect data about students' or employees' sexuality, gender identity, or religion. Data on disability is collected but not made available for analytic purposes.

State University-Union City is the flagship campus of the State University system. The university is a complex bureaucratic organization with a multi-billion-dollar annual budget, and is home to fourteen colleges and dozens of administrative units spread out across several hundred buildings on its roughly 850-acre campus, which sits less than two miles from downtown Union City. The network of individuals, offices, programs, and initiatives that compose State University's diversity efforts cuts across and even beyond these spaces.

I use the term *apparatus* to characterize the complex organization of State University's diversity efforts. I take this term from "The Confession of the Flesh" (Foucault, 1980) where Foucault elaborates a concept that would be central to his analysis in works like *Discipline and Punish* and *The History of Sexuality*. He grapples with how to understand the combined social effects of diverse, seemingly disconnected institutions addressing similar social problems. The concept of the apparatus is rooted in Foucault's critique of Marxist conceptions of power as something held by those at the "top" and exercised downward. Rather, Foucault offers, power is diffuse, multidirectional, and its effects are often quite unpredictable. Power operates by producing knowledge of particular subjects—the criminal, the citizen, the homosexual, etc.—and this knowledge determines what is true and false, normal and aberrant. These forms of knowledge arise out of and circulate throughout the apparatus.

While Foucault theorizes how multiple institutions such as schools, hospitals, and the military interact in complex and unpredictable ways, I am concerned with the interaction of heterogeneous elements within, and in some cases beyond, a large, bureaucratic institution. While the scale of analysis changes, Foucault's fundamental insight remains relevant, particularly when we consider the two central characteristics of the apparatus. First, the apparatus organizes around a strategic function designed to address a particular problem or

challenge. The strategic function is what links together seemingly disparate institutions. In my case, disconnected or partially connected actors, programs, offices, and efforts within a university are mobilizing to address and manage human differences institutionally. Focusing on the strategic function helps us not to be overly caught by the formal organizational structure of the university, because there is no simple correspondence between that structure and the organization of the apparatus. The second characteristic of the apparatus is that its elements—the interrelated actors, organizations, and sites—will exert influence on or functionally overdetermine each other as well as the institution as a whole. Movement by or change within one element will have some kind of effect on the rest of the apparatus because these elements are linked. These kinds of changes are unpredictable, and produce unforeseen or what Foucault calls instrumental effects, which are deeply linked to the ways in which knowledge is produced and circulated. This will be apparent when I discuss how discourses circulated, were taken up, and modified across the diversity apparatus.

Where I break somewhat with Foucault is in my conception of how overdetermination operates. Where Foucault's apparatus is subjectless, my analysis recognizes that overdetermination includes, but is not limited to, intentional forms of coordinated behavior. I am influenced here by Goldman's (2005) neo-Marxist retheorizing of the apparatus as a terrain of hegemony, meaning that we must be able to account for both intentional and unintentional actions and effects. For example, at State University, at first glance there appeared to be strong coordination between the Chief Diversity Officer's programs and those headed by the Dean of Students. The Dean and CDO were frequently seen together, particularly in the midst of the crisis. Their programs served many of the same students, as scholarship program students were often heavily involved in the Multicultural Student Union. In reality, the scholarship programs

often brought together students who were then trained by the MSU staff in student activism that was then directed at the CDO and the Dean. In addition, many student life staff felt ostracized by the policy-making processes initiated by the CDO. As I describe in great detail later in the dissertation, their staff also tended to articulate very different diversity ideologies. As a result, behind the public collaboration between the CDO and Dean was a far more uneven set of relationships and disjunctures between their staff. This, as I demonstrate later, had profound implications for how student activism and the response to it were carried out.

I offer the concept of the apparatus as a middle way between, on one hand, an entirely hierarchical view of the university as an organization and a purely flat ontology. Both perspectives limit the analysis, the former by obscuring the activities that go on across, outside, and beyond the institution and the fact that power is not only exercised vertically, and the latter by being unable to account for the ways in which the hierarchy overdetermines and has a profound effect on what takes place within the apparatus. As my exploration of the final institutional project demonstrates, upper-administrators had a great deal of influence to shape the final outcome of the conflicts and debates I describe. My conception of the apparatus here is what Stephen Ball (2012) refers to as a “heterarchy,” which merges together the attributes of hierarchy and the flat network—in other words, the organization of elements is uneven and allows for multi-direction operations of power. Just as we have to account for intentional and unintentional outcomes, we must also account for both vertical and horizontal relations.

The concept of the apparatus aligns well with the theoretical approach of the anthropology of education policy, which conceptualizes policy formation as a messy, contested process that produces outcomes that are influenced by human intention and action but cannot be

singularly reduced to the intention of any particular actor (Hamann & Rosen, 2011; Levinson, Shore & Wright, 1997, 1999; Levinson & Sutton, 2001; Sutton, & Winstead, 2009).

Below I offer two sketches—first of the organizational structure at State University and how the campus’ diversity efforts fit within that structure. Then, I attempt to explicate how power was organized within and across that organizational structure in ways that are not easily represented in an organizational chart.

The Organizational Structure of Diversity

Prior to beginning my fieldwork, I spent six months making a preliminary sketch of how diversity work is organized at State University. This included informal, off-the-record interviews, observations at events and committee meetings, and extensive artifact analysis of the various documents that detail the university’s diversity infrastructure and policy. The first sketch I provide here is what I characterize as the official knowledge of diversity work, or how the institution represents its diversity work within its codified organizational structure. In 2010, the Chief Diversity Officer at the time compiled a nearly 200-page report of the roughly 300 diversity programs, offices, committees, and initiatives. As such, it is impossible to do full justice to all of the activities and efforts that comprise State University’s diversity efforts in so short a space, but I will attempt to give the reader a sense of the major structures, actors, and activities. The names of all offices and programs are pseudonyms.

This official view does not always correspond neatly to the second sketch I will offer, which is how this work is situated within institutional circuits of power, knowledge, and resources. It is important to note that this organizational structure is, considering the long history of the institution, relatively new, and continued to change over the course of my research (and

after). Despite the appearance of continuity and solidity, the diversity apparatus has always been subject to change.

The Division of Diversity. Like many colleges and universities, the highest ranking administrator whose job pertains to diversity is the campus' Chief Diversity Officer (CDO). At State University this person has the title of Vice Provost and reports directly to the Provost, who in turn reports to the President. The CDO I observed was the fourth person to serve in this position. Prior to the creation of the CDO position, there was a Vice President who oversaw many of the campus' diversity efforts as part of a larger administrative portfolio as the chief student affairs officer. The Division of Diversity was created by the first CDO. The third CDO and predecessor to the one I observed was the consummate student affairs professional as well as a higher education scholar. His tenure was marked by conflict. During his time at State University, he had helped to create a new campus-wide strategic diversity plan, the fourth time in the institution's history this project was undertaken. The process of writing and adopting the framework was largely overseen by the new interim CDO, who had previously served as a faculty member. It is important to note that each of the CDOs were Black men. As I discuss later in the dissertation, there were tensions among diversity workers over who came to represent the "face" of diversity.

The CDO's office oversees a variety of programs, most of them focused on providing academic support to "underrepresented" students, which includes both students of color and first-generation students. While half of the campus' students of color are directly served by one of these programs, each of these programs also serves white students. These programs include: the President's Scholars, a merit-based scholarship for underrepresented students; the State Scholars program, a state-wide scholarship program that works with students as early as elementary

school to prepare them for admission to State University; the Emcee Scholars, a small, performance arts-focused scholarship; the Crew Program, the institutional branch of a national leadership scholarship that brings students to campus in small cohorts; the Center for Academic Achievement (CAA), a federally- and state-funded academic support program for low-income students; and finally, the Office of Cultural Outreach (OCO), a small program comprised of four staff members, each of whom engage in academic support, cultural programming, and community outreach for Black, Latinx, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Indigenous students respectively. While each of these programs and offices primarily focus on recruiting and supporting undergraduate students, the CDO's office also oversees the Office of Diversity and Compliance that handles issues pertaining to federal anti-discrimination law for staff and faculty as well as Communities for an Inclusive Campus (CIC), which organizes year-long social justice communities for staff, faculty and graduate students and a semester-long course for undergraduate students.

Combined, these offices and programs employ dozens of full-time staff and many part-time staff and student workers. At the time, the central Division of Diversity office also included a small staff: two Assistant Chief Diversity Officers, a chief of staff, a communications specialist, an event organizer, two research associates, an executive assistant, and a handful of student interns. This staff grew after my fieldwork concluded.

Student Life. While the Division of Diversity's programs are primarily, although not exclusively, concerned with promoting academic achievement among minoritized students, the Dean of Students administers a variety of programs and offices dedicated to meeting student's developmental and social needs. These programs offer a variety of co- and extra-curricular opportunities geared towards promoting campus involvement and leadership development. Among its nine different programs and offices, the Dean of Students oversees four identity-based

student centers: The Multicultural Student Union (MSU), The LGBTQ Resource Center, the International Student Resource Center (ISRC), and the Center for Disability Services (CDS).

The MSU and the LGBTQ Resource Center experienced a significant change over the past two decades, shifting from offering primarily celebratory cultural programming to taking a more activist, social justice-based approach to student development. Not only do they provide inclusive spaces for marginalized student populations and resources for identity-based and social justice student organizations, they also provided training and programming to develop students as leaders and activists. In contrast, the ISRC and the CDS provide legal and accommodation services and do not serve the same social function. Most of the ISRC's work entails managing visas and complying with federal law, while the CDS ensures that students with disabilities received adequate resources to support their academic success.

It is important to note that the MSU, LGBTQ Resource Center, and the ISRC are all housed in the same building—affectionately referred to as the Cathedral because of its architectural features—as the Emcee Scholars and Crew Cohort programs, most of which are clustered on the second floor (the exception being the LGBTQ Resource Center, which is tucked in the back corner of the first floor). Minoritized students, particularly students of color, tend to congregate in the building where these resources are located. The MSU is often referred to as the “living room for students of color,” both because it has a giant living room area, but also because it is the primary space in which students of color and their allies congregate. The LGBTQ Resource Center also provided a space for students to hang out. As a result, this building was the primary “safe space” for minoritized students on campus.

At the time of my research, the campus did not have any cultural centers except for a small Indigenous Student Center, which operates out of two floors of a small building in an out-

of-the-way corner of campus. The center does not have any full-time staff or an elder in residence, and who controlled and had regular access to the space was a contentious issue among Native students. State University opened a Black Cultural Center in the Cathedral several months after I concluded my research in direct response to student activists' demands. It was, however, the third time the university had opened a Black Cultural Center, raising questions as to the center's long-term sustainability. There was some debate as to whether or not the center should be located in the Cathedral along with so many other spaces dedicated to serving minoritized students. During a town hall meeting about the center, students pointed out that this move corralled all of the "non-White, non-Christian, non-Straight" students into one building. It was also a source of conflict that other minoritized groups did not have their own cultural center.

The other major diversity initiative that is housed in the Division of Student Life is the campus' Bias Intervention Group (formerly the *Hate and Bias* Intervention Group). This team, which includes staff from Student Life, the Division of Diversity, and other parts of campus, is tasked with tracking and responding to reported instances of racism and prejudice against students (issues impacting faculty and staff are primarily handled by the Office of Diversity and Compliance). This can include anything from a racist symbol scrawled into a desk to a prejudicially motivated physical assault. The group does not investigate or mete out punishment—that is handled by either the campus police or the Office of Student Conduct. Rather, the team is in charge of tracking incidents, following up with the impacted students, and producing reports at the end of the fall, spring, and summer terms.

In the spring of 2016, the President agreed to pilot a cultural competency training program for incoming first-year students. The program was developed over the spring and

summer. When it was implemented, it was incorporated into the Division of Student Life, and it held a small office in the top floor of the Cathedral.

Diversity in the colleges and administrative units. State University has eleven different colleges. In addition, there are a variety of other academic and non-academic administrative units ranging from International Academic Programs to Transportation to Facilities Administration. Each of the colleges, as well as Athletics, International Academic Programs, Continuing Studies, and Environmental Studies, has a designated diversity officer, whose role is to promote and coordinate diversity work within their respective unit. What this looks like in practice varies significantly. Most of these individuals hold titles of either director or assistant dean, although two are student services staff. As a result, their standing in each of the colleges and units varies significantly—many report to an associate dean rather than to the dean, meaning their influence in the executive cabinet varies. For some, the diversity officer role is their sole function, while for others it is one among a number of other responsibilities. For one officer, it accounts for only 10% of their job duties. In another case, the diversity officer for the College of Arts and Sciences also oversees a center that provides academic support to underrepresented, first-generation, and low-income students in the school. While a small number of schools have small staffs engaged in full-time diversity work, many officers are a staff of one. These officers meet monthly at a committee convened by one of the assistant chief diversity officers.

In addition to the diversity officers, each school, college, and unit has a diversity committee, composed of staff, faculty, and in many cases students, and usually includes the diversity officer, either as a co-chair, voting member, or ex-officio. These committees are organized under the auspices of shared governance and are tasked with promoting diversity and making policy recommendations at the local level. These committees operate somewhat

differently among the non-academic units, because they are organized under a Diversity and Inclusion Initiative overseen by the Vice President for Administration. This initiative focuses on recruiting and retaining staff in these units, efforts that included training for hiring managers, engagement events, and regular climate surveys. The chairs of the college and unit diversity committees meet monthly with the chief diversity officer.

Diversity in shared governance. It is impossible to fully understand the cultural norms at State University without addressing the campus' professed commitment to staff, faculty, and student shared governance. Until just before my fieldwork, shared governance was enshrined in the Board of Governors' policy, and when that language was removed (effectively ceding more power to the university president), it caused a major controversy that continued throughout my time in the field. There are four executive shared governance bodies—for students, academic staff, non-academic staff, and faculty—as well as dozens of committees that address everything from childcare on campus to institutional technology. As stated, each of the colleges and units house a shared governance diversity committee. Student government also hosts its own diversity committee. In addition to these localized bodies, there are also several campus-wide diversity committees, most of which work in concert with the CDO, who usually provides an intern and a research associate to help staff the committees as ex-officio members. These include (all names are pseudonyms): the Committee for Admission and Retention (CAR), the Campus Climate Committee (CCC), the Women's Issues Committee (WIC), the LGBTQ Issues Committee, and the Disability Services Committee (DSC). In addition, the offices of the CDO and dean of students, like other units on campus, also organized advisory committees. Shared governance also forms ad hoc committees in response to particular needs, such as the ad hoc committee that wrote the campus' strategic diversity plan. The vast majority of the students, staff, and faculty

who participate in these committees are not in positions pertaining to diversity, but rather volunteer their time to serve as committee members. In order to have legitimacy at State University, policy recommendations and changes need to at least maintain the appearance of having gone through the shared governance process and to have the approval of all or most of the shared governance executive committees.

Other diversity efforts. While the infrastructure and actors I describe above form the bulk of the diversity apparatus on State University's campus, there are dozens of other programs, actors, and offices that participated in diversity work on campus. While they are too numerous to detail here, I will briefly mention the ones I encountered during my research and which played a small but sometimes significant role in the campus' diversity efforts. There are four underfunded and beleaguered ethnic studies programs—African American Studies, Latinx Studies, Indigenous Studies, and Asian American Studies—that teach many of the courses undergraduate students take to fulfill their ethnic studies requirements. These are organized as programs rather than full departments—only the African American Studies program offers an undergraduate major. The campus' University Relations office includes an administrator who oversees community engagement, “community” largely referring to communities of color in Union City, particularly in the segregated north and west sides of town. There is also a faculty recruitment and retention initiative that seeds money to help departments increase faculty diversity. Campus Housing operates a diversity office that includes a multicultural living room space in one of the residence halls. There are also two on-campus research centers that engage in various internal and external projects related to diversity. One is an educational research center and the other does a variety of research pertaining to implicit bias, staff and faculty outcomes, and departmental climate.

Finally, the university foundation, the fundraising and alumni engagement organization also has a diversity director whose role is to build the campus' relationship with alumni of color.

It is also important to note that there are many people who are engaged in and connected to the campus' diversity efforts who are not employed by a diversity program, have a title related to diversity, or serve on a diversity committee. For example, the offices of Admissions and Financial Aid play a central role in determining the diversity of the student body but are organized separately from the diversity scholarship programs. Successfully implementing the strategic diversity plan depends on the CDO and his staff working in concert with a variety of actors and units with no direct affiliation to the Division of Diversity. The creation of the Diversity Database was a cooperative effort with the Institutional Technology department and the campus climate survey was developed with staff in the Institutional Research Office. The shape of the diversity apparatus changed over time as individuals and units were drawn into short- and long-term efforts.

Diversity & Institutional Power

Laying out the organization of diversity programs and efforts at State University can only go so far in illuminating the daily realities of diversity policy and practice. Organizational structures have great significance—one's position within that structure grants uneven access to power and resources. However, power does not only operate through formal channels and explicit structures. I will now offer an overview of the more subtle power relations in which the diversity apparatus is situated. I believe that by moving between the hierarchical view of the organizational structure and the flat ontology of the apparatus allows me to account for uneven distributions of power and resources while recognizing that that distribution is not only the result of an intentional, top-down exercise of institutional power.

The State University System

The diversity apparatus is connected to other spaces, institutions, groups, and individual actors beyond the boundaries of the institution, which help to make the diversity policy and practice possible. This includes both the State Government, which sets the budget for the State University System, and the System itself, which earmarks funds specifically for diversity work (funds which have remained flat for decades). The State University System's 16-member Board of Governors sets system wide policy—for example, by banning campuses from organizing “segregated” spaces, a policy that shapes how cultural centers are organized on the campus. Sometimes this is done as a direct result of legal changes made by the state legislature. After my fieldwork concluded, the State House of Representatives passed a bill that would punish students for disrupting campus speakers. While the state senate has not passed the bill, the Board of Governors pre-emptively passed a resolution in the fall of 2017 that requires institutions to suspend and ultimately expel students for repeatedly disrupting the “free expression of others.”

It is here worth noting that there is significant political alignment between the state government and the Board of Governors. The governor appoints fourteen of the sixteen Governors. Given that the governor's party controls both houses of the state legislature, it has been highly successful in implementing a series of higher education reforms that limit and constrain institutions' ability to engage in diversity work. As the flagship university in the system, State University and its president generally have more leverage and influence than many of the other campuses. But, even that relationship has been subject to change—the Governors, who hold broad powers to hire candidates, now directly appoint university presidents.

Prior to my fieldwork, the State University Systems quietly closed its small office that was engaged in formulating and advancing diversity policy at the system level. While many

people on campus were not aware of the system diversity office, the CDO expressed concern about what that office's closure signaled to the individual schools and colleges about the system's commitment to diversity. While I was in the field, largely in response to student protests, the system formed a Diversity Advisory Council and hired a Special Assistant to work on issues pertaining to diversity and inclusion.

Diversity and the Community

Diversity work at State University is also linked to the overlapping constituencies of the so-called “business community,” alumni, and the various geographical communities in Union City and across the state. Businesses and alumni are an important source of funding for the university as a whole and diversity work in particular as a result of a decades-long trend of diminishing state support for public higher education. This money provides influence, and large donors and prominent alumni are a key constituency. It is impossible to separate out the concerns about image and public relations that arose during the crisis that unfolded at State University and the institution's entanglement with external, private money. While much of this relationship is organized through the State University Foundation, the independent institution that engages alumni and donors, power, money, and other resources flow between the institution and the community through other channels. Official organizational charts rarely, if ever, capture the relations between institutions and external interests.

The business community—which most often referred to corporations rather than small businesses—provides an important justification for the campus' diversity efforts. Not only do corporations donate money directly to diversity programs, they also use these programs as a source for recruiting racially diverse employees. The university holds an annual “Diversity Career Fair” to provide an opportunity for businesses to recruit students of color. When

conservative state legislators criticize diversity work on campus, one of the primary justifications offered by the university is that businesses demand culturally competent graduates. Indeed, one narrative that bordered on urban legend that I heard throughout my research related to companies that temporarily stopped recruiting on campus because of their perception of students' cultural incompetence.

At the local level, "the community" usually meant the economically disadvantaged communities of color on Union City's west side. This community provides spaces for students to engage in service learning and a place to draw local community leaders as guest speakers in both classrooms and events organized by the CDO's office. When the crisis broke on campus, the community—particularly Black leaders of local civic organizations and businesses—were outspoken in their criticism of what was taking place and how the campus was responding. This was most evident after the student was arrested for graffiti. Throughout the spring, community members wrote op-eds in local papers and at one point, a group of them convened a press conference. The president attempted to assuage community leaders by holding a meeting in the local offices of the Boys and Girls Club, ultimately agreeing to form a Community Advisory Council, which the president described as "a source of advice for us on diversity issues."

Faculty, Staff, & Administrators

State University's organizational chart also obscures the way in which power is organized within the institution. While State University's president is by all accounts a powerful executive who, if what some participants told me is true, exerts a strong influence and demands loyalty, he does not hold absolute power. The president's power is mitigated both by those outside the university and by the power exercised by faculty through the structures of shared governance

(and to a much lesser extent, staff) as well as the power exercised by deans in the individual schools and colleges.

The popular way in which shared governance is discussed at State University—as a participatory structure that makes decision making more democratic—also masks the way power is exercised between institutional populations. In practice, shared governance solidifies the power of faculty above and over the other three institutional bodies—academic staff, non-academic staff, and students. Certain shared governance authority on academic matters is reserved for faculty and many committees are required to have a faculty chair. The co-chair is drawn from the ranks of other three governing bodies. Faculty are also empowered through the daily practices that occur within shared governance committees themselves—I observed a persistent and general deference to faculty members, particularly when debating institutional reports and data. While perhaps unsurprising to anyone who has spent time working in a college or a university, this division of power holds a unique significance in the case of diversity work, because most diversity programs and efforts are managed by staff, predominantly people of color and/or women. Given that four-fifths of the faculty are white (the majority of whom are men) and that the majority of employees of color work in staff positions, this particular division of power is revealed to be both raced and gendered.

There are also significant power differences between groups of staff. Mid-level administrators—directors and assistant and associate deans (I discuss these actors later as “middle figures”)—are the ones who build and administer diversity programs and efforts. These individuals are awkwardly positioned within institutional configurations of power—they have some localized power and influence, but they are accountable to upper-level administrators who control institutional resources and decision-making process (Rosser 2000; Tyrell 2014). Thus

those closest to the needs and experiences of students of color are, as a whole, largely disempowered within administrative and governance structures.

There are institutional divisions between staff working in Student Life and the Division of Diversity, who are more likely to be people of color and who often had the closest working relationships with undergraduate students of color, and the staff working in the fourteen colleges. I witnessed and was told about tensions between these two groups over how to meet the academic needs of students of color. There were also divisions and subtle forms of conflict between Student Life and the Division of Diversity, despite the fact that the CDO and dean of students worked closely together and were the public face of the university's response to the crisis on campus. Staff in Student Life sometimes felt excluded from policy-making decisions, which is likely due to the fact that the identity-based centers are not overseen by the CDO. They also expressed frustration over which group(s) were centered in the Diversity Division's programming—which was most often the Black community. As a result, many Student Life staff did not feel represented by the Diversity Division. On the other side, I heard Diversity Division staff express frustration over the Student Life staff's involvement in training student activists who set their sights on the CDO and his office. As a result, there was surprisingly little collaboration between the CDO's office and the centers. There were stronger relationships between individual staff members on either side, but this did not often result in stronger working relationship between the two divisions as a whole.

By far the most invisible group on campus is non-academic staff. Academic staff generally have more institutional power and influence than non-academic staff, particularly those who worked in maintenance and facilities roles. The latter is among the most racially, ethnically,

and linguistically diverse group on campus, but are often rendered invisible in the daily life of the institution.

The implicit and explicit ways in which university life is structured coheres into what Joan Acker (2006) refers to as an *inequality regime*, or the “loosely interrelated practices, processes, actions, and meanings that result in and maintain class, gender, and racial inequalities within organizations” (p. 443). What makes Acker’s concept useful is that these practices and processes are generally not intentionally or explicitly aimed at producing inequality, as the case of diversity work illustrates. Diversity work is constituted through a racialized and often gendered division of labor that makes managing human difference some people’s work and not others, and the ways in which that work is carried out creates and reinforces institutional inequalities between members of the majority and minoritized people. How power is exercised over and through diversity work often exacerbates and maintains the very sorts of inequality it is supposedly designed to confront. While Ahmed (2006, 2012) has observed this phenomenon in her studies of diversity officers, what has largely been missing from the literature is a holistic understanding the role diversity work plays in organizing race and gender relations across the institution as a whole.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have sought to provide a broad overview of how diversity work is situated within the organizational structure of the university. I utilized this official knowledge of diversity work to determine the entry points for my initial interviews and observations. From this perspective, diversity work is primarily clustered in one of five areas: the Division of Diversity under the leadership of the Chief Diversity Officer, Student Life, the colleges and administrative units, the university’s administrative division, and Shared Governance. But what I have

attempted to show is that the actual terrain of diversity work—which I call an apparatus—is far more interconnected and diffuse than this initial picture reveals. Actors move across these spaces as they meet in committees, network at events, and collaborate in projects. These activities also draw in actors who are not engaged in diversity work full time or who may not be affiliated with the university at all. In addition, I have also sought to show that there are other forms of power and influence that shape diversity work beyond the power enacted by supervisors over those they supervise.

Now that I have provided an account of the actors involved and the institutional spaces in which they move, my next task is to describe their motives and how they represent and make sense of diversity, diversity work, and what it means to build a more diverse and inclusive institution—what I refer to as diversity ideologies. Actors often behaved differently as they moved through the spaces I describe above. Their actions and rhetoric might appear different in one space than another, sometimes in ways that may seem contradictory at first glance. Describing these ideological formations will help to illuminate why actors behaved differently in different spaces and what goals they were ultimately hoping to accomplish by these strategic actions.

V Diversity Ideologies

You know, we all agree that there should be diversity and inclusiveness but what does that mean? It seems like, you know, with diversity, it's we want to be more diverse, but what does diversity mean and what is our goal other than more?

—Jim, Upper Administrator

In Chapter 2, I explored the dominant way that diversity is framed—as something that resides within individuals and that can be leveraged to produce value for institutions—as well as some of the critiques that challenge this frame. For instance, Brayboy (2003) describes diversity as “window dressing” which is unable to facilitate substantive institutional reform. Likewise, Sara Ahmed’s (2006, 2012) in-depth studies of diversity work in Britain and Australia demonstrate how institutional transformation is contained behind “brick walls” and how diversity work is leveraged in order to advance pre-existing priorities that have little or nothing to do with making the institution more just or equitable. While these accounts and the metaphors they develop are useful, particularly in helping us move from conceptualizing diversity as an identity marker to a form of institutional praxis, my reading is that these metaphors do not fully capture the dynamic and productive nature of diversity work as I experienced it ethnographically—diversity spawns new knowledge and practices as institutional projects intersect and collide. So while diversity policy and practice may appear static in ways that the image of window dressing or brick walls implies, my extended ethnographic fieldwork indicated that diversity is actually relationally produced through conflict and negotiation between actors and actor groups, animated by competing ideologies and engaged in different modes of actions.

In this chapter, I consider how the people I encountered at State University made sense of the meaning and purpose of diversity and the significance this held for how they framed institutional problems and solutions. While the various actors, groups, offices, and initiatives were all ostensibly participating in the university's diversity efforts, what diversity meant to and how it was represented by each of these actors varied a great deal. As I will lay out in subsequent chapters, the ultimate shape of diversity policy and practice on campus was the result of competing visions and varying practices rather than a homogenous, unified, or strategically coordinated set of efforts. This dynamic is only intelligible if one understands the cognitive schema actors brought to their work. Before exploring how these ideologies were mobilized into institutional projects, I will first lay out the meanings that diversity workers brought to their work, explicating the overlapping and at times conflicting ideologies of diversity that ultimately become a material force on the campus through people's behavior and actions.

The students, staff, faculty, administrators, and community members I knew in the field generally articulated one of three different ideologies, considered here for analytic purposes as ideal types. These included an ideology of care, an ideology of racial justice, and an ideology of equality. For each of these ideologies, I outline their internal logics and the discourses each drew on. In addition to specifying which institutional actors most often drew on these ideologies, I also attempt to provide a brief historical account of where these ideologies originated and how they emerged on State University's campus. Finally, I consider what these ideologies make possible for actors to see and do as well as what possibilities they foreclose.

In addition to these three, I consider one more diversity ideology: the ideology of white supremacy. While an ideology of white supremacy certainly encompasses more than the meaning of diversity, here I examine how ideological white supremacy shaped what took place

on State University's campus. As my fieldwork was focused on the experiences of diversity workers, I did not spend extensive time interviewing or observing people who openly opposed diversity work, although I did certainly encounter them at times in the field. However, these opponents—who the CDO called “haters”—loomed large in the minds of many diversity workers. The ideology of white supremacy exhibited a spectral presence in diversity workers' daily lives, and it is impossible to fully make sense of their ideologies or daily practices without also examining the role of whiteness and white supremacy.

This is particularly important given the national political shifts that took place during my time in the field, September 2015 through December 2016, which saw the Republican nomination and election of Donald Trump and the emergence of white supremacy, xenophobia, and nationalism move from a position of insurgency to a position of moral leadership (in the Gramscian sense) within the American political right. These political dynamics overdetermined what took place on State University's campus and continue to exert an influence to this day. Examining the ideological opposition to diversity policy and practice also helps to link what happened at State University to larger trends in higher education that extend far beyond Union City.

In subsequent chapters, I will examine these diversity ideologies in practice, and how they become material and discursive forces through particular practices and processes, what I call institutional projects. In considering ideologies first, my hope is to help make sense of why actors engage in particular actions or projects, even if their behavior may at times appear to be contradictory as they move from one space to another. But before examining each of these four ideologies, I will first briefly outline what I mean by ideology. The term has been subject to

extensive theoretical scrutiny and debate and thus some clarifying remarks are necessary at the outset.

Theorizing Ideology

In everyday language, ideology most often refers to partisan beliefs—pundits and politicians are those most often accused of being ideological. In such cases, the term is more or less equivalent to political bias. In social theory, however, the term has a much richer meaning and history. The term is perhaps most closely associated with Marxist thought. Marx and Engels (1939/2011) proposed a theory of ideology as the ruling ideas of the ruling class—ideology is a constellation of beliefs that originate from dominant classes and are then transplanted/implanted into the minds of the masses in order to ensure that the masses both misrecognize the source of social inequality and come to see the social order as natural, inevitable, and even desirable. The notion that ideology is domination through ideas would be echoed in the works of Louis Althusser (1971), who theorized how ideological institutions—churches, schools, the media, etc. formulate and disseminate ideology. This long-running interpretation in certain branches of Marxist theory postulate ideology as a form of “false consciousness” that stands in opposition to the “science” of Marxism (Williams, 1977). In other words, as a critical intervention, Marxism offered a method for recognizing and stepping outside ideology and seeing the world as it really is.

Marxists and non-Marxists alike challenged this formulation. Antonio Gramsci (2000) provides one of the most forceful breaks with this conception of ideology, recognizing that our ideas are always a mixture of truths and falsehoods (or what he calls “common sense”). Michele Foucault (1984) in his essay “Truth and Power” deconstructs the binary between ideology and science and argues that there is no space outside of or free of ideology, offering discourse as a

theoretical and analytic alternative to ideology. Both theorists were influential in the cultural and post-Marxist tradition from which I draw my understanding of ideology. These theoretical traditions moved ideology away from the notion of false consciousness towards a model of ideology as sense making in every day life and it is within these traditions that I offer my framework for making sense of the nature of ideology.

After Stuart Hall (1996b), I understand ideologies as “the languages, the concepts, categories, imagery of thought, and the systems of representation - which different classes and social groups deploy in order to make sense of, define, figure out and render intelligible the way society works” (p. 26). This formulation is, in essence, a cultural reading of ideology as the collective and systemic process of generating meaning and ideas (Williams, 1977, 1998). Ideology is “a generic term for the processes by which meaning is produced, challenged, reproduced, transformed” (Barrett, 1997, p. 93). While such a formulation does not remove the question of power and control from the problem of ideology, it does move beyond the true/false binary of ideology as false consciousness. It does so by recognizing its particularity with regard to social groups and by rejecting the notion that one can speak from a non-ideological position.

This theory of ideology entails a few key attributes that are worth quickly delineating. First, as the quotes above suggest, ideology is *collective*—what makes something ideological is that they are shared across groups (and, as Hall notes, these groups are not only social classes). Second, ideologies are also discursive—they rely on language and particular vocabularies to make sense of and represent our social world (Hall, 1988a). Third, rather than being true or false, ideologies are always to some degree partial—the discursive concepts on which they are built render some things intelligible and recognizable and others invisible (Hall, 1996b). The “problem of ideology” as Hall (1996b) calls it, entails analyzing the possibilities and limitations

embodied in a particular ideology. Fourth, while ideologies are discursive, they also become a material force through the people and groups that engage in meaningful action shaped by their ideologies (Barrett, 1997; Williams, 1997). And finally, ideologies are a terrain of social conflict—in our modern world, domination is always achieved at least in part through ideology, what Marxists refer to as the struggle for hegemony. Here again, the discursive nature of ideology is central—much of the struggle occurs at the level of every day language, as groups attempt to assert understandings of key concepts. An ideology becomes dominant through incorporating and reworking the language and concepts of subordinated groups (Hall, 1988a, 1988b; Laclau, 1996, 2005). As a result, ideology is never static—it is always being reworked as a result of social struggle and interaction.

Ideology and Identity

While Marxists have primarily theorized ideology in reference to class struggles, feminist and racialization scholars have demonstrated that there are also ideological formations that arise to make sense of race, gender, and other forms of human difference. For example, Bonilla-Silva's (1997, 2001, 2010) structuralist theory of racism explicates how racial categories and concepts are constitutive of ideological formations in modern society. In helping groups make sense of our social worlds, ideologies necessarily entail making sense of race or other forms of difference. To put it differently, race is ideological, and people draw on interpretive frames that allow them to challenge or justify racial inequalities (Feagin, 2000, 2013). Feminist scholars have made similar arguments about how ideologies help people to make sense of, reinforce, and challenge patriarchal and heterosexist social relations (e.g., Barrett, 1997; Hartmann, 1993; Hennessey, 2000; Ingraham, 1997).

What all these theorists have in common is their recognition that ideologies play a central role in constituting, challenging, and defending social relations. To theorize ideology is by necessity to theorize social conflict—the problem of hegemony. This is where my conception of diversity ideologies is deeply influenced by the work of Stuart Hall and Ernesto Laclau—this struggle occurs at the level of discourse, and how people make sense of particular words and terms:

“But if the process of naming of objects amounts to the very act of their constitution, then their descriptive features will be fundamentally unstable and open to all kinds of hegemonic rearticulations. The essentially performative character of naming is the precondition for all hegemony and politics” (Laclau in Žižek, 1989, p. xiv).

In offering an analysis of the diversity ideologies at play at State University, I am attempting to show how different groups made sense of the meaning of diversity and its purpose in institutional life. The meaning of diversity is not given, it is constituted in and through the “hegemonic rearticulations” that Laclau names. The fact that different groups made sense of and represented diversity in different ways is constitutive of the crisis that played out over the course of my fieldwork. These representations, however, were not formulated in isolation from each other. The vocabularies or discourses of any given ideology were formulated in relation to those of other ideologies. As you will see in subsequent chapters, actors borrowed language from—or in Hall’s (1988a) terms, rearticulated the language of—other ideologies. In order for institutional projects to succeed, they had to be able to speak to the ideological concerns of other groups. As a result, diversity ideologies were themselves constantly in motion and in conversation with each other as actors and groups made sense of diversity in relation to competing representations and articulations of diversity on campus and in the world beyond the university.

Ideology & Institutions

What does this mean for life in large, bureaucratic organizations, particularly in colleges and universities? Scholars may speak of ideologies *of* higher education (Slaughter, 1991; Tuchman, 2017)—how people make meaning of the purpose and function of colleges and universities. They might also document what they see as the singular, dominant ideology of a particular college or university (Tierney, 1991). When scholars speak of ideology and higher education, it is usually of wider ideological formations being brought to bear on universities themselves: post-racialism (Baber, 2015), managerialism (Deem & Brehony, 2005; Trowler, 1998), or neoliberalism (Engel, 1984; Giroux 2002; Saunders 2010) to name a few. Seen from this perspective, ideologies capture and remake institutions. For example, Saunders (2010) states, “Throughout the past four decades, the economics, structure, and purpose of higher education, as well as the priorities and identities of faculty and students, have been altered to better align with neoliberal practices and ideology” (p. 42). While these scholars certainly see ideology working through institutions, this perspective diverges from the more orthodox reading of institutions as sites of ideological dissemination and social reproduction (Althusser, 1971). But both perspectives under-theorize ideological production and struggle within the institutions themselves, as if ideology is something that exists “out there” and then comes “in here” or that ideology is singular rather than plural in institutional life.

Two salient examples of the above approaches move us closer toward the ways in which I theorize the relationship between ideology and institutions. Trowler’s (1998) ethnographic study of managerialist ideology demonstrates ideology is reworked and contested by various groups (particularly academics) within the institution he is studying. Kemper’s (1991) analysis of cultural conflict at a community college is framed as a struggle between two competing

ideologies—conservative restoration and social equality. While these two studies perhaps oversimplify the relationship between larger ideological formations and ideology within institutions, they do open up a space for seeing institutions as spaces of ideological conflict rather than passive vessels of ideology.

Ideology has also been neglected as an analytic concept in (neo-)institutional studies, which is perhaps due to an inclination to favor “institutional logics” as the analytic lens rather than ideology (Meyer, Sahlin, Ventresca, & Walgenbach, 2009). In contrast to the term ideology, institutional logics collapses the ideal/material binary by illuminating how institutional order is constructed through interrelated symbolic systems and material processes (Friedland & Alford, 1991). Friedland and Alford recognize that there are always multiple institutional logics available to actors, and it is this condition that opens up the possibility to contest dominant institutional logics. Using a Gramscian lens, Delmestri (2009) takes this definition and interjects ideology as “the institutionalized interest-laden glue justifying material practices through, and connecting them to, the symbolic constructions that make up institutional logics” (117). Taken together, a theory of ideology in complex, bureaucratic organizations begins to come into focus. To rework Hall (1996b), ideologies allow groups to “make sense of, define, figure out and render intelligible” the symbolic and material orders within institutions.

What makes ideology “interested” is that institutional logics produce institutional subjects (Meyer, Sahlin, Ventresca, & Walgenbach, 2009). Their symbolic systems and material processes differentially position actors and groups within institutional social relations. However, no institutional logic is isolated, even if it is hegemonic. Other institutional logics are available, even if they are subordinated. These alternatives can be a resource when mobilizing for change. And, institutional ideologies, like any ideology, will necessarily contain certain contradictions

(Mutch, 2009). What begins to emerge is a picture very similar to what I outlined above—no institutional order is ever fixed—it must be built and it is subject to contestation.

This is where I part ways with the neo-institutional approach. Friedland and Alford (1991) see society as constituted between “nested” levels of reality with the institutional providing the “supraorganizational” structure of society. In rejecting materialist determinism, they embrace another form of determinism whose laws generate isomorphic change within institutional fields. This allows institutions to achieve a level of givenness and fixity (the end point of isomorphic transformation) that I did not find in my work. As I argued in Chapter 3, institutions, like hegemonic blocs, must be built and maintained. While this operates within the dynamic of complex, mutual overdetermination, this does not guarantee any sort of isomorphic transformation.

In breaking from the neo-institutional approach, Anne Swidler’s (2009, 2013) work is particularly useful. She demonstrates that institutions are built on a moral order—they construct moral actors with moral obligations to each other and to the institution, as well as the institution’s moral obligation to its members. We can perhaps draw parallels between institutional logics and this moral order, but Swidler is concerned with institutional resiliency, the ability of institutions to respond to collective problems. It is this moral nature, she argues, that is key to an institution’s ability to weather challenges but is also where the institution is most vulnerable. Challenges to the moral order are challenges to the institution itself. Changes in the moral order will by necessity rearrange the nature of relations between institutional groups. As she demonstrates, this could lead to a disposed leader or a new set of relations and obligations. We once again find ourselves back to Gramsci, for whom moral leadership is the lynchpin of social formations.

To synthesize and put it succinctly, complex bureaucratic institutions are built around a moral order that gives it some level of stability, fixity, and resilience. This moral order is both symbolic or representational, as well as deeply material because it shapes the practices and processes in which actors engage and the social relations—or moral obligations—they have to each other. However, this stability is subject to ongoing challenges, both mundane and significant (we might draw a parallel between Gramsci’s notion of organic and conjunctural crisis). In the case of diversity at State University, this includes the ongoing challenge of integrating the “Other” into a predominantly white institution and the larger crisis of racist incidents and student protest. Ideologies allow actors to make sense of, defend, and challenge the institution’s moral order. These ideologies are never merely internal to the institution—they are always overdetermined and overdetermining. When challenges arise, the stability of the institution’s moral order can become threatened and open up opportunities for alternatives to take hold. The attempt to actualize an alternative moral order is what I call an “institutional project.”

I turn now to the ideologies themselves, beginning with the ideology of care.

The Ideology of Care

The first of the four diversity ideologies that I encountered at State University is the ideology of care. This ideology is characterized by the way in which it singles out particular groups and individuals as being worthy of specialized forms of institutional support. The primary object of the ideology of care is minoritized students—racial minorities, but also students who are minoritized because of their gender, sexuality, gender identity, ability, class, religion, and documentation status. The ideology of care is predicated on a logic of equity rather than equality—it recognizes and addresses not only difference, but the difference of difference. This

includes both the different needs and experiences of specific groups, but also the logic of intersectionality, that those needs cannot be reduced to one identity category such as race, gender, or sexuality (Crenshaw, 1991).

Difference & Care

One defining feature of any diversity ideology is the way in which it renders difference visible. This is not to suggest that a diversity ideology cannot draw on discourses of colorblindness, but even colorblindness is dependent upon first seeing difference and then attempting or claiming to unsee it (Lewis, 2001). All diversity ideologies shape how one sees difference, but how they do so varies a great deal and accounts for many of the key differences between ideological formations. In the case of the ideology of care, it makes difference visible by drawing attention to inequitable experiences, resources, and outcomes across groups. Ideologies form links through the process of articulation between various conceptual elements (Hall, 1988), and in this case, a central link is between difference, need, and care. Here, Valerie, a mid-level administrator describes her work with minoritized students:

This is the work we do. We're here to support you and to give you a place on campus where you do feel safe. Um and I think just even having that, you know, there are a lot of places on campus where students won't have that. Um where they can sit down. Of course they can talk to their peers in that way but you know, just having an advisor, an administrator, someone in their program that really gets them, you know, and understands it. Understands what it's like to be them on this campus.

The final statement reflects the underlying logic of the ideology of care: who you are fundamentally shapes your experiences on campus and for minoritized students, it can do so in a profoundly negative way. Another administrator, Parker, described it this way:

[It's] not just to have [students of color] here. It's to make sure that our students of color can flourish here. That they're able to thrive. They're able to feel, this is a place where they can belong and they can in fact engage their best selves. And that's what I'm supposed, what I'm hoping to create for every student. Um, not just our students of color, but certainly, you hear more of the concern from our students of color because we're a predominantly white institution. So how do we do that and what are the mechanisms or the systems that we can put in place, not a program, not a one-off, but what are the systems we can put in place for support?

The ideology of care recognizes that at predominantly white institutions, one cannot assume that minoritized students will feel a sense of belonging or be able to fully realize themselves. As the first quote states, there are many places on campus where minoritized students can't go to get what they need. Thus, they need alternative systems and supports in place to accommodate those needs. These supports are not simply to ensure academic success, although as I discuss below, that is an important concern. Care includes providing the resources and supports necessary to help students to thrive in the broadest sense.

The articulation of difference, need, and care is also predicated on an expansionary logic—it seeks out new forms of difference in order to render them objects of care. While students of color were certainly a central concern, the ideology of care recognized that other, intersecting forms of identity were also worthy of care:

Um, because you know when you're coming to a predominantly white institution, it's very hard to navigate, especially specifically State U when you compare it to other institutions. It's very white and so as a student of color or international student, you may be the one of one or one of few in your house floor. And that can be detrimental to one's experience.

And so, um, I think what we're trying to do with this whole restructuring is making sure that we're inclusive of many identities but also we're being proactive in figuring out, ok, so how can we best reach out to these students and make sure that they, they feel like they belong and how do we create spaces for them?

—Jonathan, Mid-level Administrator

I think that intersectionality is becoming more of a buzzword and one of the challenges that people say, "Oh, I understand what intersectionality is" but they stop, so they don't actually do anything about it. It's sort of like, "Oh! I know what, I know what it is!" So like, ok, so what? And I think that helping people to see why it's more obvious to work in an intersectional lens. I think that...you know, I think that it's gonna continue to be more complex regarding conversations about what does LGBTQ equity and racial justice look like?

—Stefanie, Mid-level Administrator

One example of where this occurred was a push to address the needs of undocumented students on campus. These efforts ramped up once the Trump administration signaled that it would end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program, but conversations about the needs of undocumented students began long before the presidential election. This is one example of where political conflicts at the national level clearly overdetermined what was taking place on campus and triggered a change in the logics of care—concern for undocumented students rose over the course of my time in the field. While the language of intersectionality has entered the mainstream and perhaps even achieved status as a buzzword, the ideology of care provided a framework for seeing and expanding the categories that are worthy of institutional care, recognizing that new categories emerge and that there are people and groups who sit at the

intersections or margins of those categories. As a result, what constitutes care and who needs care is subject to constant change. The quotes above reflect a broad understanding of what minoritized students need at a predominantly white institution on a day-to-day basis, but new forms of care were needed in response to specific instances and occurrences, whether those be an individual experience of microaggressions or discrimination or one of the larger hate and bias incidents that rocked the campus community as a whole. Thus, what constituted care for minoritized students could and did change over the course of my fieldwork.

Institutional Critiques

By linking difference, need, and care, this ideology also provides a specific vantage point from which to critique the institution. In rendering particular needs visible, it made it possible to foreground the institution's failure to meet those needs. Such critiques generally centered on two issues: the cultural incompetence of students, staff, faculty and administrators and the lack of commitment to diversity from institutional leaders.

The first critique focused on the inability of most members of the campus community to engage across differences—the problem of cultural competence. This discourse frames the majority as a problem by highlighting how interactions between the majority and minoritized students produce many of the negative effects that care is supposed to address. One concern was the inability of majority students to interact with their minority peers:

(Sighs) You know, I don't think there's ever going to be a perfect utopia of racial climate here. I think as long as it's a predominantly white institution you're gonna at some level, you're going to have students who just are not you know, they've never had an experience with people of color. They don't know how to talk to them. They don't know um, they just have to learn how to communicate and how to you know, how to, how to be in

community with people of color and so I think you know, to some degree, you're always gonna have stuff happen.

—Valerie, Mid-level Administrator

This concern also extended to staff, faculty, and administrators who are teaching, advising, and serving minoritized students:

[We] just lost you know, another, a third student died in March. Um, you know, so just, really traumatic situation. So, you know, at least we have an infrastructure and to deal with that, before we didn't, say, so I'll go to the [campus health clinic] and that doesn't; it doesn't work. It doesn't work for students of color. This is not culturally relevant. It's not, it's ongoing, you know, it's a different person every time.

—Charlie, Mid-level Administrator

As I will explore later in the dissertation, one way this ideology was mobilized was in training and educating majority members in order to reduce cultural incompetence and the harm it produces for minoritized students. Such claims became more pronounced in response to both the hate and bias incidents on campus and student activists' demands for cultural competency programs.

Another central concern in the ideology of care was the perceived lack of commitment to diversity by key institutional leaders. There were many ways in which the problems of diversity were framed, but none was more common than the critique that the institution [i.e., top administrators, most often the President and/or Provost] was insufficiently committed to and invested in diversity and diversity work or that their understanding of diversity itself was lacking. These critiques highlight the gap between the needs of minoritized students and the

resources necessary to address those needs. The following quote encapsulates the critique of both leaders and underinvestment:

[We] have multiple staff, multiple staff members doing the actual of two or three professional staff. And that's not sustainable. So, the lip services, we're here to support you, we're committed to diversity, and at the same time we don't have the resources to do what we need to do and the major resource is to have competent, passionate professionals engaged with what's at stake, the actual buy in. We believe, I don't think that as a collective, you know, many staff members don't really believe the administration. You say, you give great speeches. You, I mean, yes. You give great speeches but we don't believe you. Uh, as professionals we don't buy it. We've been here long enough to know that.

—Sofia, Staff Member

In addition to not being committed, there was also a sentiment that top leaders also simply did not understand either people's experiences or their own actions:

If our leaders had those opportunities to think about what is the difference when we talk about diversity and what is the difference when we talk about true equity and inclusion, I am absolutely 100% sure that our top leaders would not be saying and doing what they are doing right now. So what you don't know, you don't know, you don't know, you cannot change.

—Michael, Mid-level Administrator

This second quote illustrates the ways in which “diversity” is a contested term even among actors who held similar beliefs and values. And while the language of the critique varied, there was a widely shared belief that State University's top leaders were not sufficiently aware of how

human differences shaped institutional life and were not committed to adequately addressing the needs of minoritized people.

In recognizing the unique needs of minoritized students as well as the inattention and inability to meet those needs on an institutional scale, the ideology of care also produces the impetus for diversity workers to wrestle with their own relationship to the institution. How does one make sense of their position as a diversity worker at such an institution? individual likened it to participating in the “Hunger Games”, a reference to the post-apocalyptic novel and film series where children compete in deadly gladiatorial competitions for the entertainment of the wealthy and powerful:

So, I try not to be naive about how the institution treats people of color, queer people, queer people of color. Like, I understand this is the game, so the sort of like, understanding it. It's like, but, it's sort of like if you're know you're in the Hunger Games you can play the Hunger Games. [Laughs] You know? Understand that you're, it's not, you're not just playing the Hunger Games to win and to be the only one surviving, but you're actually being used as this sort of institutional thing. And so, like, knowing that, I mean, makes me complicit in it and also at least I'm aware of it and I am fortunate not to, you know, I can see behind the curtain on those things.

—Rory, Mid-level Administrator

The tension in this quote is that the person recognizes that their work allows the institution as a whole to appear committed to diversity—this is how they are being “used.” The institutional commitment materializes in and through them. Thus in attempting to meet the needs of minoritized students, they are also supporting an institutional arrangement they are hoping to overcome and transform. The ideology of care reconciles this contradiction by prioritizing the

needs of minoritized students—becoming complicit in the institution’s fraudulent commitment to diversity is an unfortunate necessity done in service of students. This quote puts the situation in rather stark terms—*The Hunger Games* is a violent vision of the world. But the ideology of care has to reconcile the critique of the institution with the diversity worker’s presence on campus. It must answer the question, “Why am I here?” This allowed individuals to remain committed to diversity and diversity practice even as they are aware that it will not necessarily achieve its transformational goals. This reality is central to my analysis and is key to understanding the realities of diversity work on campus—diversity workers are not dupes, nor is the ideology of care (or any diversity ideology) a form of false consciousness. Diversity practitioners recognized that they were being used by the institution, but were able to move forward with their work because the ultimate goal was to serve students.

Care Workers

The ideology of care was the dominant ideology among non-student diversity practitioners at State University. This included the staff and mid-level administrators for the identity-based student centers and the scholarship programs, the diversity officers in the schools and colleges, members of the diversity committees, as well as the Chief Diversity Officer and his staff. In each of these groups, their work was structured around meeting the needs of minoritized students. The critiques, however, tended to be strongest among those who worked in the centers and scholarship programs. This is most likely because these are the individuals with the most direct contact with minoritized students, those who were engaged in supporting students socially and emotionally, not just academically. The further removed one was from direct work with students, the more abstract the logics of care often became. These differences will become more apparent in subsequent chapters and explains how the ideology of care became attached to very

different kinds of institutional projects—care takes on very different forms depending on one’s relation to the object of care. For example, it is one thing to espouse care for “the poor” as an abstract category and another to treat a person experiencing homelessness with dignity and respect when encountered face to face.

As I discuss in chapter four, most of these staff and administrators in these programs and offices, as well as the volunteers for the committees, were people of color and white women. In general, the staff and administrators in the centers and scholarship and support services tend to include more people of color. The diversity officers and many of the committees were more mixed in terms of majority and minoritized members. Many of my participants and the people I encountered also identified as LGBTQ. None disclosed having a disability. A few spoke about being the first in their family to go to college. Several disclosed that they were Christian or Jewish, but religious diversity is a theme that came up more often with students, in large part because Muslim students were a key constituency in the student activist network.

The logics of care was also echoed by members of the community, particularly among Black parents and middle-aged and older community leaders in Union City’s segregated North and East side (younger activists in the community were more likely to espouse an ideology of racial justice). Where this became most evidence was in response to the racist incidents that occurred in the spring and fall of 2017. A crowd turned up to the meeting at the Boys and Girls Club to criticize and challenge the president and chief of police for how the university handled a particular incident on campus, speaking as parents, grandparents, aunts and uncles. A group of Black community leaders held a press conference in the wake of the racist costume incident to condemn how the university handled their response. These individuals referred to students as

“ours” and “us,” signaling a sense of community care that animated their attempts to lobby the institution for policy changes.

If it is possible to locate a material base for this ideology it is here, within the institutional and community support structures themselves. However this material base must be conceived relationally—the ideology of care is produced in and through the interactions between these diversity practitioners and between the diversity practitioners and the objects of their care: the students themselves. As I describe below, these interactions occurred and relations developed within particular organizational structures that emerged out of evolving understandings of how colleges and universities should relate to students.

Origins

It is crucial to recognize that the individuals who advanced the ideology of care most often shared identities or aspects of their identities with minoritized students. While the ideology of care can be traced beyond the boundaries of the institution, particularly to community forms of survival and resistance-oriented forms of care that have long existed in minoritized communities (hooks, 1999) and which were on display in the community response to racist incidents on campus, there was an aspect of this ideology that drew on the direct past and ongoing experiences of diversity workers themselves. Participants drew explicit links both between their identities and students’ identities:

You know, as great as my friends in leadership work are, they don't have to think about leadership work when they go. Like, some of them do because they're good at their jobs, right? And they have projects they're working on, but when I [laugh] when I have a meeting with a student who has been cut off financially, it's, I can't not worry about them when I go home. I can't not draw parallels from their story to my story, you know? So

again that emotional, emotional labor is also, you know, I think it's harder to free oneself of. Um, so yeah very much the personal and the professional blend together and have very porous sort of, um, um, porous sort of borders and you know, I think that's also very unique to identity-based work.

—Stefanie, Mid-Level Administrator

The ideology of care allowed diversity workers to make sense of students' experiences in light of their own. In many ways, care for students was care for the self. People often discussed their experiences as undergrads as influential for why they went into diversity work, many of whom were students at State University:

Um, as I got to know the students involved more, I felt really compelled to want to help them and I'm an alumni of State University. I was part of [multicultural student organization] as an undergraduate student leader.

—Cameron, Mid-Level Administrator

These experiences could be positive or negative—some diversity workers wanted to replicate the support and care they received as students, while others wanted to prevent current students from having similarly negative experiences. Regardless, the ideology of care draws on diversity workers' past experiences and the sense they make of those experiences.

Participants were also drawing on and reworking older discourses and logics that overdetermine higher education around the country. Prior to the 1960s, the relationship between college and students was shaped by the legal doctrine of *in loco parentis* (“in the place of the parent”). The implied contract of *in loco parentis* suggested a transferal of parental obligation to the institution—staff, faculty, and administrators were expected to act in the best interest of students and their development (Melear, 2003). This framework for understanding the

relationship between students and universities declined in the 1960s and 70s as universities were becoming more inclusive of women, people of color, and other students who had traditionally been excluded (Grossi & Edwards, 1997). While the legal significance of *in loco parentis* is that it granted autonomy and authority to institutions, what is relevant here is that the mass expansion of higher education in the United States occurred at a time when the relationship between students and schools was viewed through the organizing metaphor of the parent-child relationship.

Another simultaneous development occurred in the early 1900s, as a new class of educators emerged—student affairs professionals. As faculty became more specialized, they began to disengage from providing students with non-academic forms of support. Just as *in loco parentis* was declining, emerging psychological theories of student development significantly reshaped how student affairs professionals viewed students and made sense of their transition into adulthood (Long, 2012). Over time, care for students emerged as a core professional value (Young, 1993).

Student affairs professionals must ultimately care about the well-being of the students they serve. On a higher level, the value of care is demonstrated through student affairs professionals' advocacy for special groups of students (Long, 2012, p. 7).

These transformations in the university co-occurred alongside massive student mobilization and activism. As I discuss in chapter two, the 1960s and 70s were key periods for student activism. Influenced by the Civil Rights and Black Power movements, as well as movements for women's and LGBT rights, students demanded that schools recruit more faculty of color and establish ethnic studies programs and cultural centers (Boren, 2001; Rhoads, 1998, 2016). This activism led to the creation of the identity-based and diversity-centric student services that are so

ubiquitous today. As a result, the student affairs profession has incorporated service to “diverse students” as another core professional value (Long, 2012).

The ideology of care is also overdetermined by professionalized discourses in the field of student affairs. Diversity workers whose jobs were primarily student affairs focused were most likely to have earned graduate degrees in student affairs, student development, or higher education leadership and administration. Many participants in my study belong to professional societies like the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AACU), the American College Personnel Association (ACPA), National Academic Advising Association (NACADA), and, NASPA: Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education, and regularly attended their conferences. These kinds of organizations often have sub-groups or divisions that focus on diversity-related issues. Participants also participated in national organizations that focused solely on identity-based or social justice oriented work, like the Social Justice Training Institute or the International Colloquium on Black Males in Education. A few participants cited colleagues in these organizations as key personal and professional supports. Diversity workers are socialized into discourses of care not only as a part of their education and training, but as a part of their ongoing engagement with professional networks, conferences, and journals. However, participants were not passive receptacles for these professionalized discourses. Care was articulated in response to the particular context of State University and Union City and specific students and their life experiences.

Possibilities and Closures

The ideology of care opens up a space to see minoritized students as something special, as being worthy of unique forms of care. As I discuss below, the ideology of white supremacy constructs difference as a threat, and positions minoritized students as unworthy interlopers who

do not merit their place in higher education and who are taking seats from more worthy majoritarian students. The ideology of care turns this script on its head by making minoritized students' needs, challenges, and experiences visible. In this logic, these students do not have to do less to attend selective institutions, they actually have to do *more*. Cameron, a mid-level administrator described this as 'overperformance':

And I think that's a huge power dynamic that plays out here at State University that gets overlooked that historically disadvantaged students are providing undercompensated and uncompensated labor to the academy that we're all benefiting from and in fact so many of the disadvantaged students, students of color, queer students, disabled students, immigrant students are overperforming outside of the classroom and when we also see them underperforming in the classroom that connection isn't being made.

In addition to all of the usual challenges one faces as a college student, minoritized students also have to survive a hostile environment that excludes them while also demanding that they perform diversity and provide cultural education to their minority peers. This is central to why these students are worthy of care—they face more challenges than their majority peers and more is expected of them.

This is not to suggest that the ideology of care forecloses the possibility of addressing the needs of majority students. When these diversity workers discussed the institutional response to the students committing hate and bias incidents (which were mostly majority students), they were able to consider the emotional and educational needs of these students in ways that students themselves often could not:

We want them to succeed. We want them to learn from their choices that they've made.
Um, a lot of people talk about zero tolerance and a lot of the students um have been

asking for zero tolerance but when we think about it like, this is an educational institution and we have to provide a level of learning, you know, even when it comes to these types of situations, right? Cause if we have a zero tolerance and they um, there's expulsion and they're not in this academic setting or this learning center then, who knows? Are they going to continue to repeat the behavior towards other communities or the same communities and make the same choices? So, we start providing that level of support for them too so they know that we're here for them to help them to learn and to reflect and to process and think about their choices that they've made and how it impacted the communities or individuals that they targeted, right? Intent vs. impact.

—Jonathan, Mid-level Administrator

Part of this is certainly motivated by the belief that better-educated majority members will mean a better climate for minoritized students. However, I found that these staff and administrators were able to balance the two groups needs without on one hand re-centering the needs of the majority (the effect of the ideologies of equality and white supremacy) or ignoring them altogether (the consequence of the ideology of racial justice). As I stated above, the logic of care is expansive and can account for the unique needs of particular groups. This includes an increasingly intersectional view that seeks out new forms of difference as objects of care as well as a language for the needs of the majority.

The ideology of care also brings into stark relief the differences between diversity work and other forms of labor in the academy. The quote above illustrates this so clearly by noting that it is “emotional labor” that links together shared experiences of marginalization, discrimination, and oppression that defies boundaries between the personal and the professional. Like the ideology of racial justice, the ideology of care also relies on standpoint epistemology, where the

diversity worker's expertise is predicated not only on their professional training, but also on their personal experience—experience that is not directly accessible to the majority.

But while the ideology of care illuminated institutional and structural barriers to meeting students' needs, I also found that at times it foreclosed possibilities for envisioning different kinds of institutions or institutional arrangements. While recognizing the 'Hunger Games' element of doing diversity work at a predominantly white institution perhaps allows one to play the game more strategically and effectively, it also shapes one's perceptions of the possibility of institutional change. This was most evident in how diversity workers discussed student activists and their demands:

Also, when we have students here who are becoming activists, which is great, um, we want to make sure that they can do that effectively and so engaging them as campus is really important. I've seen many times where students have great ideas, um, and want to challenge issues and they do it very problematic ways that is very destructive to themselves and to the community, so that's another way that we help student leaders understand kind of bigger picture, how their actions might affect other students and themselves too.

—Kendall, Mid-level Administrator

The ideology of care positioned diversity workers to be sympathetic to student activists—many of these individuals had been activists themselves. They were, based on my observations, justifiably concerned with the potential for student activists to negatively impact themselves and their peers based on how they went about their activism. However, the concern for helping them engage “effectively” also illuminates the tendency for the ideology of care to predispose actors to think within existing institutional structures. The ideology of care encourages a particular level

of pragmatism because it illuminates institutional structures that harm rather than care for minoritized students. But while many of these diversity workers themselves engaged in policy work, training, and advocacy in order to change the institution, they were generally forced to do so within rather than against existing structures—unlike tenured faculty and students, their positions in the university were far more tenuous. In turn, they sometimes tried to educate student activists on how things ‘really work’, encouraging them to utilize existing channels and protocols rather than flaunting or challenging them. This isn’t to say that these individuals never engaged in subversive work—many did. However, as a whole, the ideology of care encouraged what Adrianna Kezar (2012a) calls a “tempered radical approach” to change—institutional activism that allows agents to stay within the institution. As I have argued elsewhere (Anderson, forthcoming), being socialized into professional and institutional norms shapes how staff, faculty, and administrators envision possibilities of institutional change.

If this seems contradictory, it is because it is—the ideology of care emerges through and is reworked within the contradictory institutional positions that diversity workers hold. They are expected to respond to institutional and administrative demands and to the needs of their staff and students. They are expected by their supervisors to help promote non-threatening forms of institutional change while also assisting the students on whom the institution regularly inflicts harm. This is why it should come as no surprise that the same individual may advocate for “tempered” reforms in one instance and assist students in making radical demands in the next. Many of these individuals thought both within and beyond institutional structures—they had to in order to engage both students and institutional leaders. Even the most politically radical diversity workers sometimes drew on existing organizational logics to make claims. As I will

demonstrate in future chapters, this also helps to explain how very different institutional projects could emerge from the same ideological formation.

Because the ideology of care is most closely aligned with the ideology of racial justice, I turn now to the diversity ideology most embodied by student activists.

Ideology of Racial Justice

The second diversity ideology that I encountered was that of racial justice. This ideology centered the experiences of minoritized students, particularly students of color and most often Black students. Like the ideology of care, the ideology of racial justice illuminated the needs and experiences of students of color, but rather than focusing on the need for additional care, support, or services, the primary focus was on redress for injustices, both for hate and bias incidents as well as the daily slights, indignities, and symbolic violence they encounter in their daily lives. As a result, this ideology highlighted the stark differences between the experiences of majoritarian and minoritized students. In contrast to the ideology of care, this ideology was more common among students themselves, and while these students sometimes deployed the language of intersectionality, in practice Black students' experiences were most often centered. As a result, other forms of injustice were sometimes sidelined or even rendered invisible.

Naming Racism

This ideology more than any other identified the problems on campus as being rooted in systematic forms of discrimination, injustice, and oppression. Where the ideology of care highlighted unequal services, this ideology focused on unequal experiences. While students sometimes offered contradictory interpretations of the underlying causes of the problem, they were still more likely to offer a systemic explanation of the causes of unequal experience. One illustrative example of this occurred at the second meeting of the student government racial

justice committee. The two committee chairs led a brainstorming exercise where students were first asked to name physical manifestations of diversity issues on campus. Students called out problems like the lack of mental health providers of color, the physical inaccessibility of buildings, the limited number of gender-neutral bathrooms, and pork being the only breakfast meat option in the cafeterias. Next they named the parts of the institution that allowed these problems to occur, and students offered the names of various units and departments on campus, from University Health to the Dean of Student's Office. Finally, the chairs asked people to name underlying causes, and students shouted out things like classism, western ideology, and unawareness of privilege. The chair named this exercise the "tree of oppression," drawing leaves, a trunk, and roots around each of the sets of words and phrases they generated in each phase of the exercise.

The ideology of racial justice named systemic manifestations of oppression in ways and with a frequency that other ideologies did not. The most central of these was racism. Consider the pre-amble to the demands that were issued after the student was arrested for his anti-racist graffiti:

Racism and anti-Blackness is an American problem and therefore a State University problem. We cannot end systems of oppression in one day, but State University-Union City has an obligation to address racial issues in meaningful ways as defined by the most effected people. As many faculty, staff, and students have expressed, instead of fulfilling the institutional responsibility of addressing racial hatred, ways of thinking, and actions on campus, there has been a repressive force of institutional resistibility in regards to genuinely addressing anti-Black racism. In fact, State University perpetuates the white

supremacy and racism that has contributed to our oppression on this campus and in the community.

This ideology identifies racism as endemic to American culture, but also as a present force on campus. The language above provides a far stronger condemnation of what was happening on campus, as well as the institution's response, than what was usually offered in non-student spaces.

In addition to naming racism as the primary problem on campus, the ideology of racial justice also highlighted individual people and behaviors as *racist*. This was a theme that came up often in interviews. Here, a student named Darius complains about the people he encounters at the university:

I want it to be better than what it is. I really like Union City, and I really love the school here. Don't get me wrong, but people are racist here, and I don't like it.

As I discuss later in the dissertation, the institution was very cautious about labeling an act or an individual as racist (and even shied away from using the term "hate"), but those who held to an ideology of racial justice did not hesitate to use this label.

Making this critique was, at times, explicitly and at others implicitly an implication of majoritarian campus members as the underlying cause of the problems on campus. In the same interview, Darius goes on to say:

[The] biggest issue is the people that should be there having these conversations and learning about this, are not there. There are so many people on this campus who have no interest. Who one, either turn a blind eye. Two, don't care. Three, are legitimately racist and could give a rat's ass if there's more Black people here.

These critiques became more pronounced over the course of the school year, particularly in the spring when there was a series of highly publicized hate and bias incidents. Where their ideological lens became more contradictory was in articulating the relationship between individual and systemic racism. As I demonstrate below and in chapter seven, despite the language of systemic racism, students often made demands for individual-oriented interventions like cultural competency programs. Over time, their demands became more systemic or, to use their language, “power-shifting,” but both the institutional and individual lens were constitutive of the ideology of racial justice.

Demanding Change

In centering institutional and individual racism as the fundamental problem on campus, the ideology of racial justice necessarily reorients the possible solutions to those problems. This is most evident in the kinds of demands student activists issued throughout the course of the school year: cultural competency training, increased numerical diversity on campus, more funding for need-based aid, a test-optional admissions policy, oversight of policy changes by community members of color, the establishment of a Black Cultural Center, public apologies for the campus’ failure to achieve justice and diversity, and in some cases, that administrators resign for failing to adequately address the crisis on campus. In addition to these formal demands, there was also a call to discipline the students who were committing the hate and bias incidents. On the more severe end, some students wanted a zero-tolerance policy for microaggressions. To summarize, the ideology of racial justice framed two inter-related actions as the solution to what was happening on campus: the redistribution of institutional resources and power and punishment for racist acts.

The redistribution of resources brought this ideology into partial alignment with the ideology of care. However, instead of highlighting different needs, shifting resources is seen as a form of redress for the injustices of racism and oppression. For example, here a student named Anara talks about the purpose of the Eclipse, the organization that was a linchpin in the student protest movement:

I would basically just say our shared purpose is to bring social and economic justice on campus through adequate resources for under represented communities, and a lot of this through [student government] legislation. That's our shared purpose...We basically said a lot of ideas for what we wanted to do, but a couple other big ones were increase mental health services, and then insure that there's adequate resources for marginalized communities on campus.

In fact, it was common for many people I encountered to draw on the language of social justice to frame their work and what they were hoping to accomplish. However, the ideology of racial justice infused social justice with a redistributive logic that was not as visible in the ideology of care. As I describe above, the ideology of care relies on a pragmatic approach to institutional social change. In contrast, the ideology of racial justice made it possible to think about more radical shifts in institutional relations.

I mean we know when it comes to any social issue really, from this rape culture to indigenous folks, Latina, I think it's really a lack of power of the most impacted and oppressed students. We have zero say so really when it comes to even moving forward.

—Monique, Student

This logic undergirded the demand for “community control”, particularly over the new initiatives and programs that students demanded. Students also talked about trying to secure “positions of

power” within student government in order to shift resources toward students of color. The only way to get access to significant resources was to secure power.

There was also significant divergence from the ideology of care in that racial justice for many implied swift and harsh punishments for acts of racism on campus. This belief stemmed from a sense of injustice in how the campus responded to problematic behavior from white students and students of color:

That's a different one. This is an incidence where a white fraternity decided to hang a black doll from a tree, and they called it a lynching. That was in 2003. Now tell me racism doesn't exist. Right? It's there. The fact that that white fraternity didn't even get expelled from campus, they're chapter wasn't even removed from the campus, they're still here, but okay. Let me tell you. Let's say the Alphas did that, but for a white doll. Let say the Alpha Phi Alphas, a traditionally black fraternity went and hung a white doll from a tree. What would happen to them? The differences between those two, that bothers me.

—Darius, Student

This critique was particular poignant when a Black student was arrested for anti-racist graffiti when none of the hate and bias incidents throughout the semester resulted in an arrest and criminal charges. Racial justice meant that racist incidents would be treated harshly, or at least with an equal amount of severity experienced by students of color when they violated the campus’ code of conduct.

Critiquing Diversity

The focus on resources, power, and punishment put this ideology at odds with the predominant ways diversity was represented on campus. As a result, those who embodied this

ideology tended to be distrusting of diversity, both as a language and a way of engaging difference on campus. This ideology tended to be critical of the very term:

Diversity, what it was before was just like, "Diversity is the idea that we have a bunch of different people from a bunch of different places." That's it. That's what diversity is, but that doesn't mean that those people feel comfortable on campus. That doesn't mean that they feel represented by teachers that look like them, students that look like them around them or are interested in similar types of things.

—Elliot, Student

Concepts like equity, inclusion, social justice, etc. were offered as more meaningful terms for capturing attempts to transform the institution. As a result, efforts and initiatives that utilized the term diversity (such as the statement of institutional commitment to diversity) tended to be viewed as superficial or ineffective. Not only was diversity criticized, in certain cases it was also framed as a barrier to achieving the kinds of institutional changes that people sought:

That's why we were calling for community control over the police because that's a power shifting demand. Where we could have some sort of accountability. I think if I could, yeah that's overall it. That comes to any issue that exists on campus. I think, yeah again, I just said this, but the superficial. To me, they're superficial attempts at using diversity to deal with the issues.

—Monique, Student

As a result, the people who subscribed to this particular ideology rarely used the term.

Student Activists

The group that most clearly embodied the ideology of racial justice were student activists, although it is important to note that there were diversity workers who shared some beliefs with

student activists, particular when it came to their critical stance toward diversity and the desire to shift resources. However, it was rare to find diversity workers who called for “power shifting demands,” even if many care workers helped support students as they made those demands. I also never encountered a non-student diversity worker who advocated for harsher punishments for perpetrators of hate and bias incidents. Where these two groups tended to converge was around the language of social justice, and a reliance on terms other than diversity.

The student activists that I am referring to were primarily students of color, and in general, Black students were at the center of the student activist network. The most visible and vocal example of this was the student organization called the Eclipse. However, as I describe in the previous chapter, they collaborated with other minoritized students, most notably Muslim and Native students, as well as white allies. But, as a general rule, Blackness was at the center of the racial justice project, for reasons that will become more apparent when I consider the historical and contemporary origins of this ideology.

There were also notable differences between undergraduate and graduate students in terms of how they conceptualized racial justice. Initially, undergraduate activists tended to push more for an expansion of services and resources. Under the mentorship of graduate students and community activists, undergraduates began to think more about how to shift power. This is in part what led them to redirect their efforts to taking over student government. This demonstrates that ideological groups are not homogenous, and that ideological shifts can and do take place over time.

The material base for this particular ideology was in the experiences of students of color, both on campus and in the community. The borders of campus and community are porous for students—students generally do not distinguish between what happens on university grounds and

what happens at surrounding bars, restaurants, shops, and residences. Minoritized students congregated in the same spaces on campus (e.g., the Multicultural Student Union) and off-campus (e.g., Multicultural Greek parties). Part of what it means to be a minoritized student is that space is symbolically reconstructed as safe and threatening spaces—spaces for us and for the majority. This illustrates how, once again, ideologies emerge relationally—both between minoritized students themselves and between them and their majoritarian peers. The shared, often negative, experience of being a student of color at a predominantly white university and in a predominantly white city was a strong bonding force that compelled minoritized students into particular spaces.

Origins

When student activists were making claims within the ideological frame of racial justice, they were drawing on discourses and logics from a variety of historical and contemporary social movements in the United States. In the 1950s and 1960s, students played a central role in the Civil Rights and Black Power movements (Rhoads, 2016). Organizations like the Student Non-Violent Coordinating Committee (SNCC) played a crucial role in confronting racial injustices as a part of the larger Civil Rights movement, but transitioned to a Black Power organization under the influence of leaders like Stokely Carmichael. In fact, students helped to launch the Black Power movement, even as the larger Civil Rights movement was winding down (Biondi, 2012; Rogers, 2012). The genealogy of contemporary student activism includes both movements, and students in my study did demonstrate divergent views about whether to work within institutional structures to change those structures or to defy “respectability politics.”

Over time, college campuses, particularly those with a liberal bent, became an ideal place to engage in activism because they offered some level of protection, particularly from police

(Boren, 2001). The focus of student activism changed from larger, national movements to a focus on particular issues like Palestinian liberation, divesting from exploitative and environmentally harmful industries, or to focus on enhancing service provision to minoritized students, including diversification of the faculty, the creation of ethnic studies programs, or the establishment of identity-based campus centers (Boren, 2001; Rhoads 1998). This brought together various social movements and struggles, including Women's and Gay Liberation (Broadhurst, 2014; Rhoads, 2016). More recently, student activists have participated in struggles around immigration, financial reform, and the Black Lives Matter movement (Rhoads, 2016).

These historical and contemporary movements overdetermined what took place on State University's campus. A history of student activism on campus is a predictor of future activism (van Dyke, 1998). In the case of State University, student activism is normalized because of its long history of student protest, much of which specifically addressed racial inequality. In fact, many of the students in my study saw themselves as continuing the legacy of earlier student activists. Students passed down stories, both of past racist incidents on campus (such as the story about the doll lynching referenced above) as well as past activism. In fact, one of the primary goals of the Eclipse was to revive a multicultural student organization that had once been a powerful force on campus.

The overdetermining effect of broader social movements on campus activism is also evident in the ways in which student activists draw discourses and tactical repertoires from other social movements (Barnhardt, 2014). Two influences in particular were clearly evident on the student activism at State University. The first is the larger Black Lives Matter movement, which beginning in 2013 with the murder of Trayvon Martin launched a national struggle to address police brutality and state violence against Black life. Black Lives Matter drew on a rich history

of radical Black thought while also breaking with certain strains by emphasizing gender and sexuality and addressing the inadequacy of earlier legal reforms (Lebron, 2017). Students at State University drew on Black Lives Matter in a variety of ways. This included borrowing slogans (chanting “Black Lives Matter” at protests), tactics (such as using social media to organize and to shame leaders), and policies (particularly when crafting student government legislation around police reform).

Students also drew on other student protests to make sense of what was happening at State University. The very first Eclipse march was organized in response to the Concerned Student 1950 organization at the University of Missouri. Student activists I spoke with were in contact with students on other campus, both nationally and across the state and students were influenced by their peers on other campuses. For example, State University students borrowed the chant “Ashe! Power!” from student protesters at the University of Missouri. They were also connected to local community activists, particularly young Black and Queer activists engaged in the Black Lives Matter movement. So while students were responding to the specific conditions at State University, they made sense of their immediate experience using language and practices that had evolved on other campuses and throughout contemporary U.S. history.

Possibilities and Closures

The ideology of racial justice gave a name to the problem on State University’s campus—racism. This opened up the possibility to use a more specific and critical vocabulary to frame what was happening at the university than the language of campus climate or “hate and bias incidents.” In doing so, it made whiteness visible by demonstrating that there were fundamental differences in how white students and racially minoritized students moved through and experienced campus. It forced the campus to discuss *race* and not just diversity.

More subtly, the ideology of racial justice relied on a standpoint epistemology that valorizes individual experience as a necessary component for formulating truth claims. This centers the testimonial confession as an important political tool, whereby students shared their experiences as proof that racial injustice was the normal order of things on State University's campus. Students' relied on this practice both at protest events as well as online—the story I share in chapter seven about the hashtag *ThisIsStateU* is perhaps the most startling example of what can happen when students engage in testimonials en masse. While this would conflict with the epistemological underpinnings of the ideology of equality, it did open up a space for centering the experiences of minoritized students when making claims about the university. These claims challenged the deeply held belief by many on campus that the institution was a welcoming place to minoritized students and that campus leaders and community members were committed to diversity. They did so by demonstrating that minoritized students' daily experiences were marked by both symbolic and physical violence, revealing the gulf between official institutional rhetoric in support of diversity and actual material conditions.

But while the ideology of racial justice opened these possibilities, it also contained certain contradictions. The first of these was evident in the ways in which student activists framed State University as a racist place but tended to focus primarily on individual racist behavior. As an example, here Jayden describes why his organization put up signs on campus encouraging people to call out racist behavior:

My org put those signs up, so that was my way of expressing how I felt the whole ... This community was feeling a better way to do it because that was something that was more strategic and more like, "When you see racism, just speak up." It was telling people like, "How do you remedy the harms that we feeling?" At the end of the day, I can't expect

you to stop racism, but I would love it if you could just speak up when you see somebody say something racist. That's the least I can ask somebody to do. If everybody did that, we wouldn't got to worry about racism and micro-aggressions and sexism and all that on an interactive level. There'd still be some institutional things, but as far as it being you feeling uncomfortable on campus, it would be a lot different if somebody called me the N-word and white person was like, "Yo, chill."

The focus on individual behavior and individual interventions to disrupt racist behavior is not surprising given that students' experience of racism was most often at the "interactive level."

The most common way students encountered racism was in their interactions with their majoritarian peers. And, the most visible examples of racism on campus were the so-called "hate and bias incidents." This explains why students were so concerned with issues like microaggressions, and advocated for changes like the implementation of cultural competency programs or a zero-tolerance policy for racist behavior.

This framing had two significant effects—first, at times it limited students' ability to consider and address the institutional structures and practices that reinforced racism by focusing on the individual manifestations of racism, most often the behavior of other students and, in some cases, staff and faculty. This is another way to consider the difference between power shifting demands and non-power shifting demands. The demands the president met, such as creating the cultural competency program and hiring mental health professionals of color, were never power-shifting, even if they redistributed resources to a small degree. The structure of diversity work on campus and the ability of minoritized individuals and groups to utilize institutional power remained unchanged. The second effect is that it necessarily shaped students' perceptions of the relationship between racial justice and punishment for racist behavior. Justice

was understood as swift and strong responses such as expulsion or criminal charges. This is completely understandable for students who are regularly harassed and attacked, but it positioned student activists in the same antagonistic position vis-à-vis their majoritarian peers that they were seeking to undermine through their advocacy for cultural competency training. Demanding harsher punishments reinforced the antagonisms between students themselves and risked leaving larger structures and practices unchallenged.

The ideology of racial justice also entailed a contradiction between students' espoused commitment to intersectionality and their actions. The student activist network was, from the beginning, a heterogeneous community of minoritized students and white allies. This included Muslim students, Native students, and working class students. However, at times students struggled to formulate actions and campaigns that were cognizant of and sensitive to these differences. Here, Kendall the mid-level administrator describes working with student activists

I've seen many times where students have great ideas, um, and want to challenge issues and they do it very problematic ways that is very destructive to themselves and to the community, so that's another way that we help student leaders understand kind of bigger picture, how their actions might affect other students and themselves too... So, part of it is to help them understand how do you effectively, um, challenge social issues. What are effective ways through, you know, we look, talk about, you know, past social movements, what's worked well, what hasn't worked well. Also we have to kind of get into the complexities around like, ok great. You're advocating for women's rights but how does it also effect women of color? Or trans women? Or low-income women? You know, that they're not advocating for one population and further marginalizing other populations.

Where this was most clear was in the way the movement centered Black men as the primary leaders. This led to tensions later in the year between men and women, as many of the women involved in activism felt sexism was shaping dynamics within the movement. Another salient example occurred after my fieldwork concluded—activists in student government passed a bill demanding reparations for Black residents of the state in the form of free access to the university, missing an opportunity to connect Black liberation to other similar struggles, such as those faced by the sovereign indigenous tribes in the state.

I am not suggesting that the focus on liberation and justice for Black people was misguided. As Ta-Nehisi Coates (2015) so eloquently articulates, the destruction of black bodies is endemic to our national way of life. I am also not suggesting that it is unwarranted for a social movement to build itself primarily around a particular group. Why this was problematic in this particular instance is that students were organizing a multi-racial coalition to address multiple forms of discrimination and oppression. What I am suggesting is that the ideology of racial justice at State University centered Blackness, and in particular male Blackness, in a way that could and at times did foreclose opportunities to see and act upon the interconnectedness of various systems of oppression. As I have described above—there is contradiction and conflict within ideological groups—there were students who were consistently intersectional in both their language and actions. However, this foreclosure had material effects on the experiences of women and other racial groups and ultimately led to the dissolution of the student activist network.

Equality

The third diversity ideology that I encountered in my fieldwork was the ideology of equality. This ideology was ensconced in the upper tiers of the university's administration and

had a profound impact on both daily practice and the ways in which diversity workers talked about and justified their work. The ideology of equality frames difference as a technical problem that can be empirically known and addressed through rational, administrative, and scientific interventions. It frames diversity in terms of measurable differences between categorical groups and then seeks to equalize those differences. In focusing on educational outcomes, the ideology of equality de-politicizes racial inequities and obscures problem of institutional power. While this ideology allows individuals to see racial inequalities in performance and outcomes, thus opening up possibilities for remedial action, it forecloses recognition of the systematic injustices that produce those inequalities. As a result, the ideology of equality allows actors to engage in seemingly progressive practices designed to benefit minoritized students while avoiding activities that would threaten either the institution's primary goals of securing prestige and resources or the practices that disproportionately benefit majority students, staff, and faculty.

Logics & Discourses

The paradigmatic example of the ideology of equality is the discourse of “gaps”—gaps in achievement (i.e., grades), retention, and graduation between majority students and students of color. The language of gaps provides a way to see racial differences and to make sense of inequality as a matter of educational outputs and outcomes. Not only did this render inequality intelligible in a particular way, but it also provided a clear sense of where the university should be doing—shrinking gaps. Take, as an example, the remarks the State University president gave at the annual campus Diversity Conference in 2016:

“We just got our latest numbers on graduation and retention. Um, retention is the number of freshmen who choose to return with us to our sophomore year. We watch those students closely because they're often a sign of how well we do in those big introductory

classes, how good our advising is, how we do about just pulling people into the community. I'm delighted to tell you that we've set a new record for retention among our targeted minority students. A decade ago we were retaining 88% of them. Today we're retaining almost 96%. That's as good as it gets anywhere in the country. And actually this last year, our retention rate for our targeted minority students was above our retention rate for all other students. That comes on the heels of the good news from the National Educational Trust that singled out State University for remarkable improvements over the last decade in reducing the graduation gap between targeted minority students and others. We still have a gap. It's too big. We need to keep working on reducing that further, but we have made substantial progress over the last five to ten years.”

It is worth noting that in the moment the president gave this address, he was under fire for how he handled another incident on campus—someone had worn a racist costume to a campus-wide event. The president condemned the costume but repeatedly stated that the act was protected free speech. The incident echoed the familiar pattern of hate and bias incidents and institutional responses that occurred the previous year. In this moment, the president was not only celebrating “good news” but was defending his administration and the campus’ reputation. His remarks were familiar to me by this point—I had heard him make the same defense on several occasions the previous year.

The logics of equality are evident in these remarks—this ideology was fundamentally categorical—“targeted minority students” being the operative term for students of color minus certain Asian populations that are statistically overrepresented in U.S. higher education and often outperform white students academically. This is the lens through which the ideology of equality makes racial difference intelligible. But, as Charles Tilly (1999) notes, categories are

relationships. In this case, “all other students” essentially frames white students as the reference point from which minoritized students are judged. As I have described before, it also obscures the differences that exist within and outside categorical groups. In this particular case, one might justifiably note that these gaps look different if one were to disaggregate between targeted minority students in scholarship programs and those who are not. As the quote demonstrates, the university appears to be a good job when one considers these gaps.

What I found was that despite using common terms like “targeted minority” or “underrepresented,” Blackness became the primary signifier for racial otherness, the image of the “targeted minority student”, as evidenced by who the university put forward to signify diversity—the Chief Diversity Officer, speakers and panel participants at campus events, etc. This is despite the fact that Latinx students were actually the largest racially minoritized group on campus. The primary focus, however, was on differences between the racial majority and the minority, most often conceived as a Black-white binary. As a result, there was little space to think intersectionally across various forms of difference.

Only racial difference was visible because other forms of difference were not measured or measurable. The discourse of gaps was almost exclusively one of racial difference, the exception being that the campus did report out information on the retention and graduation of men versus women and for Pell Grant recipients and first-generation students, a proxy for socioeconomic status. But these differences were not the primary focus of discussion and debates about so-called gaps. Annual reports issued by the university include data for these groups but does not disaggregate them by racial group nor does it include other forms of difference—ability, sexuality, religion, citizenship etc. This information tended to be collected locally by diversity workers in particular programs or offices. While there are no doubt legal and ethical

considerations for asking students to divulge this kind of information, the consequence of not collecting this data is that these groups become invisible within the discourse of gaps, which ultimately shapes how individuals receive institutional attention, care, and resources.

The ideology of equality was rooted in a positivist and empiricist epistemology — differences could be scientifically documented and measured, and interventions designed to address supposed gaps could be assessed and measured for their efficacy. In order for statements to be true or meaningful about the nature of racial difference or diversity work on campus, those statements must be tied to empirical data, specifically statistics:

And it's challenging because people want the concrete specifics. They want that quantitative piece of, "We had X amount of this and by next fall we're going to have, you know, X amount of that." Right? It doesn't work that way so you're constantly listening and trying to get a sense of what the lay of the land is and speaking into what the next challenges are so you're proactive as opposed to being reactive.

—Jordan, Upper-level Administrator

Within any diversity ideology, there are particular conditions that must be met in order for truth claims to be made. Where the ideologies of care and racial justice centered personal experience, the ideology of equality prioritized numbers.

By defining success as the narrowing of gaps, diversity initiatives and programs were largely assessed based on their numbers. This put diversity workers in a position to defend their programs based on these numbers, something that would occur unprompted during interviews:

But, I think our track record is pretty amazing. We've got a 95% graduation rate. I mean we had three students, three cohorts that we've had a 100% retention our last three [cohorts].

—Charlie, Mid-level Administrator.

Uh, when we also think about retention on this campus of undergraduates, uh, when we, in looking at recent data compiled by budget and analysis office um looking at I believe

is the year 2011, um, incoming class of 2011, we have the highest retention three year retention rate of any cohort on campus. And when we also look at four-year graduation rate, um, and compare that to our cohorts here on campus, we have the highest four-year graduation rate. So um in terms of how we see ourselves as relates to other diversity programs, those components in terms of those core values, uh, that we have as well as our retention and graduation rate.

—Casey, Mid-level Administrator.

While I asked these administrators about the challenges in their work or how their program related to other diversity efforts, I never explicitly asked them about performance. The fact that data came up so often in interviews indicates how widespread the discourse of data was and that diversity workers had to be able to speak to it even if they did not see numbers as the only way to make sense of diversity on campus.

Because this ideology shaped how actors understood the problem of diversity on campus (i.e., the severity of the gap) by necessity it also shaped how actors understood the solution (i.e., best practices). For example, a month after agreeing to pilot a cultural competency training program for incoming first-year students, the president made the following statement about the program in an interview with two students from an online magazine focused on Black students at State University:

We'd love to identify, um, some curriculum and practices that have been used elsewhere. You want to use something that's actually been evaluated that seems to have an impact. You know, there are a good number of training programs out there that when you evaluate their impact it's zero and that's not what we want to use, right? We want to find, and this is something that's going to get tweaked over time. You try it the first year. You see what works and what doesn't and you tweak it and try to improve it the second year. It's always a work in progress.

What gives the intervention legitimacy is that it has been piloted and assessed scientifically. There is no explanation for what the “impact” is or “what works” because these statements can be taken for granted within the logics of equality—he is referring to statistical changes in attitudes and behaviors as measured by survey instruments, not to changes in social or institutional relations. Whether it is the daily functioning of programs or the response to the crisis, the measure of truth and efficacy are numbers. This is not to suggest that such interventions should not be studied and tested, but that these assessments occur within a particular framing that necessarily shapes the perception of what works and for whom while obscuring this with the language of scientific validity.

Administrators and Faculty

The ideology of equality predominated among State University’s top administrators. The president and provost were social scientists, and while the president in particular was fond of reminding people his academic background, his disciplinary lens was always evident in the way he talked about “gaps.” The provost’s disciplinary lens was less clearly evident in part because I encountered him less often in my fieldwork. However, I was made aware of his perspective through interviews with other participants, who described how he, with the support of a small group of faculty in one department, removed the language of “hate” from the campus’ hate and bias response team and their materials because of their fear that it would discourage white students from discussing race issues and prime students of color to think State University is a hateful place, a story I explore in-depth in chapter ten. Both publicly and behind the scene, the campus’ two most prominent leaders displayed a clear preference for statistical data for assessing problems and their solutions.

I do not have the data to definitively say that the ideology of equality predominated among the faculty at State University. The “personal epistemology” literature suggests that faculty’s epistemological beliefs vary across disciplines (e.g., Hofer, 2000) and that professors, particularly in the natural sciences and social sciences, are more often than not empiricists (Donald, 1990), but this literature tends to focus primarily on students’ rather than professors’ beliefs. I did see this logic at play on the Women’s Issues Committee, where statistical research related to gendered differences in tenure rates played an important role in how the body made sense of gender inequality among faculty. This allowed faculty to dominate the conversation because unrecognized group norms encouraged staff to confess they were commenting on these issues as non-researchers. However, it seems safe to assert that the financially dominant position of STEM disciplines and the natural sciences ensures that a positivist epistemology remains the dominant paradigm in higher education, positioning alternative epistemologies in the social sciences and humanities as a threat to science (e.g., Gross & Levitt, 1994; Sokal & Bricmont, 1998).

This ideology of equality was also on display in State University’s administrative division, which handled all of the responsibilities related to facilities and finances. The vice president created an initiative designed to ensure inclusion and engagement in the workplace. As a result of the initiative, this particular division did more surveying than the any other part of campus, and the surveys guided a host of policies and practices within the division. The initiative was often held up as a model to the rest of campus.

While diversity workers most often spoke in the language of care, it was almost impossible for them to not speak the language of equality. The two primary initiatives the CDO developed while I was in the field were a student climate survey and a digital tool called the

Diversity Database, which collected both qualitative and quantitative data about the hundreds of diversity efforts on campus. This is evidenced by how often his staff talked about data—a growing part of their job was to collect and disseminate data about their work, particularly in the scholarship and academic support programs. This data had its uses—it allowed diversity workers to identify students who were struggling academically and ensure they were getting the support and care they needed. But these practices were a double-edged sword. One of the biggest diversity controversies outside of the hate and bias incidents was an external assessment of one of the CDO's programs, which showed lower graduation rates for some of its cohorts. This report had material consequences for the program, whose scope was later reduced. It was apparent that data was playing an increasingly important role in surveilling and disciplining diversity programs at State University.

Origins

The ideology of equality is the result of the historical compromise that gave rise to the notion of diversity (which I explore in chapter two). As I lay out in that chapter, diversity supplanted discourses of civil rights, racial power, and multiculturalism on the one hand and white supremacist and colorblind discourses on the other and became the dominant way in which racial and other forms of difference are represented in institutional life. Under this logic, difference is no longer a threat, and instead difference-as-diversity becomes a potential resource to institutions. Using racial formation theory and a Gramscian understanding of hegemony, I explored how social movements and conflicts helped to produce the discursive formation of diversity.

What I have been attempting to demonstrate here is how diversity became operationalized within what Foucault (1970) would characterize as the modern episteme, where

human beings became an object of scientific knowledge, effectually producing what we now refer to as social science. It is only within these conditions that it is possible to produce a scientific knowledge of diversity (Baez, 2004). The ideology of equality makes sense of diversity through the lens of positivist social science. It is this epistemological framework that sets conditions for how to make truth claims about how diversity can be understood and managed.

While I explore how this ideology was mobilized at State University, the idea that diversity can be scientifically known and rationally managed did not originate among the faculty and administration at the university. This ideology emerged from two intellectual traditions—diversity scholarship and the rise of what anthropologists of higher education have referred to as “audit cultures” (Shore & Wright, 1999; Strathern, 2000). The science of diversity emerged in response to US Supreme Court challenges to affirmative action, as higher education scholars were forced to justify admissions policies designed to increase racial diversity by empirically demonstrating the educational and developmental benefits of a racially diverse college campus (Baez, 2004). This has spawned a whole field of research that continues to this day. The instrumental effect of this development is that it foreclosed other ways to know and argue for inclusion (Yosso, Parker, Solórzano, & Lynn, 2004).

At the same time, the 1990s and early 2000s saw the rise of a new administrative impulse in the academy, which borrowed managerialist technologies and discourses from the private sector. This included adopting auditing practices to discipline universities, departments, and individuals to improve quality while reducing cost and/or increasing revenue (Shore, 2010; Strathern, 2000; Wright & Ørberg, 2012). Dubbed “the new public management”, these techniques and technologies have also been applied to managing racial differences in service provision and institutions (Law, 1999; Swan & Fox, 2010). As public funding for higher

education continues to decline, universities must contend with how to remain financially stable. The irony that the managerialism literature makes so readily apparent is that states have found new ways to be intrusive and to discipline public services like education even as they provide them with fewer and fewer resources.

While these two discursive formations developed separately (the New Public Management phenomenon has been observed globally, particularly in Commonwealth nations while diversity is a decidedly U.S. discourse), their logics are entirely compatible. Both rely on a technical, rational, and scientific assessment of inputs and outputs in order to identify problems in service provision and to identify and validate the best practices designed to correct them. This is because both discourses are primarily concerned with the management of scarce institutional resources. This illuminates the linkages between the emergence of diversity scholarship and practice and the wider political economy of higher education—something often overlooked in the political economic literature. The material base for this ideology within the institution is revealed to be the underlying political and economic constraints with which institutional leaders contend and the academic socialization that occurs among the faculty from which the university draws its leadership.

Possibilities and Closures

The ideology of equality allows people to see particular kinds of institutional inequalities, particularly with regard to educational achievement and outcomes. As a result, it opens up space to make institutional claims about particular groups being ill served or underserved. And when one speaks within the discourse of scientific rationality, those claims are much more likely to be heard. Those claims can be marshaled to redirect institutional attention and resources towards addressing recognized forms of inequality. This is what made diversity research so effective in

affirmative action court cases and why diversity workers were invested in marshaling data to support their work.

But what makes these kinds of claims more effective is also the source of their limitation—turning human difference into data effectively de-politicizes racial difference. While this opens up a possibility to make statements in defense of diversity that are seemingly rational and uninterested, it also forecloses the possibility of naming racism (Law, 1999). This was devil’s bargain of the affirmative action debates, because in order to defend racial preferences in admissions possibilities, scholars and legal advocates had to abandon claims for redress of past and contemporary social inequity (Yosso, Parker, Solórzano, & Lynn, 2004).

To the extent that racism was still visible and knowable, the ideology of equality has effectively externalized it as something outside of the university. Thus, the ideology of equality is solely about higher education, not society at large. It can only make sense of and address intra-institutional forms of inequality and is incapable of knowing and confronting the deeper causes of social inequity. To put it another way, racism can only be seen through an individual lens—as the behavior of a minority who can be dismissed as statistically insignificant and whose behavior and attitudes can be remedied through scientifically validated interventions. In other words, the ideology of equality is particularly effective at foreclosing possibilities for discussing *institutional* racism. As I will demonstrate, this foreclosure overwhelmingly influenced the official policy reform process as State University grappled with the crisis on campus.

White Supremacy

There is one other diversity ideology that I encountered during my fieldwork at State University, but because I was embedded in the network of diversity workers on campus I only had a handful of opportunities to directly observe specific actors mobilizing around this

ideology. As a result, it was almost spectral in quality; its very absence in the diversity network exhibited a kind of presence. What I am speaking of is the ideology of white supremacy. I include a brief analysis here because while it was rare that I directly encountered people who espoused or demonstrated a white supremacist ideology in my fieldwork, it was a real, material force on campus with which my participants had to contend. Each of these ideologies had to confront the reality that there were powerful people and groups that fundamentally oppose the very existence of diversity policy and practice. These were the people that the Chief Diversity Officer regularly and euphemistically referred to as “the haters,” and every existing or proposed diversity effort had to at least be aware of how the ideological opponents of diversity would respond to their work.

Logics & Discourses

There has been a renewed interest in naming white supremacy, particularly as so-called alt-right organizations have begun to engage more publicly in the wake of Donald Trump’s presidential candidacy and subsequent election. The temptation has been to deploy the term haphazardly or else to limit its usage to explicitly neo-fascist or white nationalist leaders and organizations. It is this same logic that tends to overly-individualize racism and to miss the ways in which racism permeates institutions and the organization of our society. Instead, I see white supremacy as the racial ideology used by the dominant racial group—whites—to justify and defend the inequitable racial status quo:

“I reserve the term *racial ideology* for the segment of the ideological structure of a social system that crystallizes racial notions and stereotypes. Racial ideology provides the rationalization for social, political, and economic interactions among the races” (Bonilla-Silva, 2001, p. 43).

Thus, if we recognize racial inequality as being constitutive of American society in that it positions whiteness as normal and non-whiteness as aberrant and that this social fact operates independently of individual behavior or belief (Bonilla-Silva, 1997, 2001; Feagin, 2000, 2013; Omi & Winant, 2007), then white supremacy is the ideology used to justify this arrangement. This allows us to see white supremacy in ways that it was previously unintelligible if viewed only through an individualistic lens. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's work is particularly useful in this regard in that he demonstrates that supposedly race- or value-neutral frames like colorblindness, meritocracy, and equal opportunity can be marshaled to defend systems and structures that disadvantage and oppress people of color. The ultimate measure of white supremacist ideology is whether it legitimates the status quo, not whether people espouse explicitly racist beliefs about people of color.

Protecting the status quo is key to understanding the ideology of white supremacy with regard to diversity. White supremacy views diversity as a threat. As an example, one prominent state legislator, who often publicly criticized diversity programming, issued this statement after the State University System decided to implement a new cultural competency program:

If only our citizens and parents had a safe space that might shield them from the wasteful spending on political correctness. I have never met a business leader who thinks our citizens are culturally incompetent. Our university administrators, however, seem to think our students are backward and need cultural re-education...Across the country people are rejecting the demand for forced political correctness, but our universities insist that our parents are raising culturally incompetent children.

The threat of diversity can manifest in multiple domains—it threatens curriculum by replacing time-tested texts and pedagogy with inferior, “cultural re-education” and “forced political

correctness’; it threatens access by denying well-deserving white students of admissions spots in favor of academically unprepared minority students; it threatens the financial stability of the organization by “wasteful” spending on diversity programs; it threatens the reputation of the university and the residents of the state by daring to suggest that they are ignorant.

This ideology also reframes diversity as anti-white racism in large part by arguing that diversity actually opposes *intellectual* diversity—i.e., conservative thought. While the label of “political correctness” has long dogged diversity policy and practice, the tenor of these critiques has become more virulent. This has become increasingly evidence with public condemnations of safe spaces and trigger warnings or with “social justice warrior” and “snowflake” becoming widespread pejorative terms for student activists demanding that universities become more just and inclusive. A salient example is when the president of the University of Chicago sent a letter to its 2016 incoming class declaring:

“Our commitment to academic freedom means we do not support so-called “trigger warnings,” we do not cancel invited speakers because their topics might prove controversial, and we do not condone the creation of intellectual “safe spaces” where individuals can retreat from ideas and perspectives at odds with their own.”

Such rhetoric recasts critiques of institutional racism as signs of students’ intellectual and emotional fragility. Many institutions, including State University System, have framed student activists and students of color as threats to the academic virtue of free speech, justifying policies that constrain students’ speech so long as the speech of controversial conservative speakers and intellectuals is protected.

Contemporary & Historical White Supremacy

The belief in the superiority of whites and Western civilization is centuries old. Some scholars suggest that white supremacy was born at the moment of the first European colonial encounter in Latin America (e.g., Mignolo, 2000) while others suggest that its roots stretch back into antiquity (e.g., Robinson, 1983). Providing a genealogical account of white supremacy is an enormous undertaking in its own right, but what I am attempting to assert here is that American civilization has always been structured in part through unequal race relations and that this arrangement has relies on ideological justifications to appear normal or at least inevitable (Bonilla-Silva, 1997, 2001; Feagin, 2000, 2013). The argument I made in chapter two is that part of what allowed diversity to become the dominant discourse by which our society makes sense of difference in institutional life is that it allowed for minoritized groups to be recognized and included in institutions without fundamentally upending white dominance. This is because the justification for inclusion was that whites would benefit from diversity's presence on campus. This is not to suggest that diversity is not perceived as a threat by many white people, but that white supremacy works to provoke the feeling or perception of threat.

While white supremacy has been a consistent feature of American life, it's contours and the practices and discourses on which it relies have been subject to change. In his autobiography, the activist Reverend William Barber (& Wilson-Hartgrove, 2016) quips that after the Civil Rights Movement, Jim Crow refashioned itself as James Crow, Esquire. This makeover is what elsewhere has been described as the transition from overt to covert forms of systemic racism (Bonilla-Silva, 1997, 2001, 2010; Massey, 2007). Overt white supremacy did not disappear; rather, racial dominance was predominantly, rather than exclusively, perpetuated through less visible means. Under these conditions, diversity is predominantly challenged by using de-racialized language, making appeals to fairness, meritocracy, and color-blindness. Affirmative

action and diversity policies and programs are charged with engaging in “reverse-racism” against whites and in some cases, Asians. This allows opponents of diversity to challenge it on supposedly rational or neutral grounds, thus avoiding the language of overt white supremacy while still defending an unequal racial status quo.

State University has a long history of such challenges. For decades, white male faculty in departments like history, economics, and political science railed against the campus’ diversity efforts, arguing they were ineffective, a waste of money, and discriminated against white students. One professor was particularly prolific, authoring dozens upon dozens of op-eds, articles, and blog essays over multiple decades criticizing the university and its diversity programs. In addition, as I have already discussed above, there were also conservative state legislators who regularly condemned the university in general and individual instructors in particular, for what they perceive to be a liberal bias. These actors connected through personal and professional relationships or through think tank and political organizations, meaning the organizing base for the most vocal of these actors was largely outside the institution.

Diversity opponents were not confined to local actors, either on campus or in state government. Anti-diversity arguments have been advanced by a variety of entities, notably in the field of education by conservative politicians, intellectuals, popular writers, and think tanks (such as the Center for Equal Opportunity or the Leadership Institute). In addition to helping fuel legal cases against affirmative action, conservative organizations and think tanks also maintain an active presence on college campus through student organizations like Young Americans for Freedom (sponsored by the Young America’s Foundation) or through university news sites like Campus Reform (funded by the Leadership Institute). Founded in 2009, Campus Reform relies on students at colleges and universities to submit “tips” to the website, effectively recruiting

students into surveilling campus for supposed liberal biases and practices. Searching the term “diversity” on the site yields more than twenty five thousand results and what took place on State University’s campus received significant coverage on this website. It is important to recognize that conflicts at particular campuses are overdetermined by and intimately connected to larger political conflicts over the nature and meaning of diversity in American institutions. To borrow Gramsci’s language, individual institutions are sites within the larger war of position over the meaning of racial difference in society.

In recent years, however, we have also seen a resurgence of overt forms of white supremacy, and these white supremacists are attempting to assert themselves as the moral and intellectual leaders of a fractured neoliberal historical bloc. Often euphemistically referred to as the so-called “alt-right,” white nationalist and neo-fascist organizations and intellectuals have been largely successful in reestablishing themselves as legitimized political entities. These constituencies helped to elect and have been emboldened by Donald Trump’s presidency. This has in turn revitalized a more direct and active resistance to diversity on campus. For example, the day after the 2016 presidential election, a group proclaiming themselves the “Texas State Vigilantes” posted flyers on the San Marcos campus featuring a photo of young white men posing with guns in front of an American flag (taken from a comedy series on YouTube called “Vigilantes”) with the text: “Now that our man TRUMP is elected and republicans own both the senate and the house - - time to organize tar & feather VIGILANTE SQUADS to go arrest & torture those deviant university leaders spouting off all this Diversity Garbage.” On the State University campus, there was an uptick in reported hate and bias incidents in the wake of the election. And having attended a variety of protests during my fieldwork, the costume incident

protest days after the election was the first time in my fieldwork I witnessed heckling and antagonism from white students.

College campuses continue to be important sites of racial and political conflict. Even before Richard Spencer and white nationalists converged on the University of Virginia campus on August 14, 2017, there were conflicts between conservative and alt-right speakers and student activists, often minoritized students and their allies. Students have disrupted mainstream conservative figures like Ann Coulter as well as overt white supremacists like Richard Spencer, and this has provoked intense debates over the meaning of free speech and student safety on college campuses. Since my time in the field, the state legislature proposed a law requiring State University institutions to suspend and potentially expel students for repeatedly disrupting campus speakers—ostensibly curtailing students’ free expression in order to protect the speech of visiting speakers. This co-occurred with the establishment of a new center on the flagship campus that is supposed to promote intellectual diversity and will likely bring in controversial conservative speakers who will no doubt provoke student activists. As a result, what I witnessed during my time in the field is likely the preamble to future conflict as the state government attempts to curtail student protest and activism.

Implicit & Explicit White Supremacy

The logic of white supremacy forecloses the opportunity to see and recognize the systematic harms inflicted on minoritized students, staff, and faculty. In fact, minoritized peoples are recast as unfairly advantaged through diversity policy and practice. Thus, any failings in academic performance are the result of either individual defects or innate inferiority. The only group that is perceived as threatened or discriminated against is white people. In openly mocking the language used to describe the unequal conditions on campus—microaggressions, trigger

warnings, safe spaces, etc.--there is no space to articulate or represent either the overt or covert forms of discrimination that exist on college campus against people of color.

I have attempted to demonstrate that there are tensions between various forms of white supremacist ideology. Implicit white supremacy frames discrimination as bad, but is unable to acknowledge the systematic forms of discrimination experienced by people of color and other minoritized groups. These discriminations are dismissed as either aberrant or relegated to the past. In casting white people as the victims of “reverse racism”, it dislocates contemporary manifestations of systemic racism from view by centering the perceived slights and disadvantages experienced by whites. Its opposition to diversity then is in desire for negative freedom—freedom from the interference of policies and practices that unfairly advantage minoritized groups. The status quo is believed to be sufficiently fair as to make corrective action unnecessary. This form of white supremacy defends institutional arrangements that benefit whites and oppress minoritized groups while doing so with supposedly race-neutral language.

Ideological formations are never static, and they contain contradiction and conflict. This is evidenced by the resurgence of explicit white supremacy that views racism and discrimination as a social good that should be actively pursued against Jews, Blacks, immigrants, Muslims, etc. These groups are the Other into which the white supremacist pours all of his or her social anxieties. Rather than seeking a freedom *from*, it seeks a freedom *to* actively discriminate and even enact violence against the Other. It shares the logic that white people are threatened, but it advocates a more militant solution to the problem. To borrow from Foucault, implicit white supremacy seeks to “let die” diversity by starving it of resources, while explicit white supremacy seeks to “make die” by actively dismantling it.

These two ideological sub-formations remain in tension with each other, and it is unclear which will emerge the more dominant in the long term. What is relevant here is that each institutional ideological project I observed had to contend with the ideology of white supremacy and the projects it inspired—particularly policy reforms from the state government designed to discipline the university for its supposed liberal bias. Both the ideology of care and the ideology of racial justice were formulated in opposition to white supremacy. The ideology of equality shared logics with both the ideology of care (concern for student performance) and implicit white supremacy (freedom of speech, centering the needs of whites, concerns over inefficiencies, etc.).

At the beginning of this section, I noted white supremacy's spectral presence throughout my fieldwork. While on occasion it became corporeal—when state legislatures railed against cultural competency programs or when students engaged in hateful behavior—it was more often felt. On a daily basis, it was not always visible but its effects were. It was something actors were aware of and responded to even when they were in spaces surrounded by other diversity workers:

It's difficult cause you're always stuck in the middle of two diametrically opposed forces. One that thinks your existence should be struck from the face of the earth. You're a waste of taxpayers' resources. The other is, you aren't doing enough, right? You are not really fighting the good fight.

—Jordan, Upper Administrator

People on campus are coming from all different backgrounds, right? Just some people who, I know, would entirely justify like, if I were to be shot by a Zimmerman or something. No matter what's happening, like, if I'm sitting here talking to you, and what happened, people would justify it. Even for the simple fact, whether it's because of my skin or because I'm wearing a hoodie and I look menacing as a result, right? Those people

exist on this campus. And I know, and I have classes with some of those people. I walk past them every day.

—Nikki, Student

People engaged in diversity policy and practice were keenly aware that white supremacist ideology was a powerful force that directly impacted their lives. Students formulated their demands and projects to combat it. Staff and mid-administrators sought to shield students from it. Upper-level administrators knew it could provoke a backlash to proposed policy changes. The mere anticipation of a negative response was something to contend with. Thus, the arguments and insights I am attempting to offer here must be understood in light of this particular historical moment, where white supremacy was progressively moving from the shadows and margins and into the mainstream.

VI Care

On a cool day in late spring, I spent an evening in the Student Services Center, the campus building that houses the university's student government as well as provides offices for registered student organizations. I was attending a meeting of the student government's Grant Allocation Committee, the body that awards funds to student organizations that provide services or programming to the campus community. I was one of dozens of people who crammed into the conference room to watch the proceedings. This particular meeting drew a crowd because students of color and student activists were concerned about whether or not the committee would deny funds to the campus' Native student organization, Wonkis (an Algonquian word for Fox, borrowing from the school's mascot, Frankie the Fox), which was applying for a grant to fund their annual Round Dance. The event cost tens of thousands of dollars to organize, but the organization had struggled in recent years to secure adequate financial support and access to facilities on campus. Many perceived this situation as one more sign the campus was not committed to its Indigenous students and students of color more generally.

While many members of Wonkis showed up to speak during open forum, other students and staff were there as allies, including members of the Eclipse and the Muslim Student Union. Jessica, the Native Community Liaison from the CDO's office was there along with the diversity division's development officer, Sarah, who had once run the State Scholars program. Two other Native staff members from other offices on campus were also there. Any time something involving Native students was happening on campus, it was a safe bet that Jessica would also be there, usually with a small group of Native colleagues. A former Wonkis president once described her as an "auntie" —not only did she provide academic and social support as a part of her role, she was also a strong advocate and sought to help students advocate for themselves. I

witnessed her in “auntie” mode on other occasions, helping students think through what to say or what questions to ask in order to get the answers or resources they needed.

About twenty thousand dollars in funding was on the line that night, enough to make or break the event, which drew performers and visitors from across the state and country. The committee—a panel of five white women and one white man—were deciding on two technicalities. There was some debate as to whether the off-campus location qualified as being in the “campus area” and whether or not the event was run by Wonkis or by the CDO’s office, since the Diversity Division was listed on the campus calendar as the organizer (the office was almost always listed for any campus-wide diversity event). Either technicality could disqualify Wonkis from receiving a grant.

Student after student testified about the importance of the event as well as the significant challenges Native students face on campus. One witness connected the problem to past instances where organizations for students of color were denied funding. Eventually the committee moved on to hear other applications for money, and we were forced to vacate the room as the committee began their deliberations. Out in the hallway, I chatted with Jessica, who filled me in on what had happened the last time the students went before the committee. She pointed out the inconsistencies between how Wonkis was treated and how the committee handled other applications. Frustrated with the entire process, she called it “students of color begging for money.”

Eventually the assembled crowd was called back in. The committee asked Wonkis a few more questions and then voted to fund them most of the money they requested. Everyone who was there to support the organization filed out to the hallway to celebrate. Jessica flitted about

the hallway, excitedly talking to the group. Despite it being late and cold, Jessica and her colleagues rounded up the students to take them out for celebratory ice cream.

There is a lot to say about what was happening at this meeting, particularly the relationship between students of color and the structures of power in student government, and who those structures are best designed to serve. However, I want to move into the background of that meeting, to focus on the small group of staff who showed up to a student government meeting in the evening and stayed late into the night to care for, advise, support, and encourage the students in Wonkis, and who stayed out late to celebrate the students getting the funding they needed to keep their Round Dance alive. What these staff members did was not exceptional. As Kendall the mid-level administrator described:

the jobs that we have advocating for specific populations isn't just a job. It's like, this is most of our identities and issues that we're knowledgeable and passionate about, whether we're paid to do it or not. Whereas other people in this position, it's like, "Yes I do conduct from 8 to 5 and then I go home and I'm not a conduct officer anymore." Of course, but that's not how our jobs work.

This quote illuminates one of the underlying dynamics that makes diversity work different from other kinds of labor in the academy, and explains why staff members would stay on campus long after the work day is over in order to help the members of Wonkis and their allies.

In this chapter, I explore the first of the five identified institutional projects. This institutional project mobilized around a vision of a university that cares for minoritized students and the people who care for them. This project was carried forward by individuals working in a many roles in a variety of areas on campus, but they general shared a few characteristics. First, these individuals tended to work directly with minoritized students, in either an academic or

student development capacity. Second, this project was driven by what I refer to as *middle figures* in the institutional bureaucracy, meaning they were mid-level administrators (directors, assistant and associate deans), particularly in the campus' identity-based student centers and scholarship programs, or they worked in a position that was directly situated between two or more constituencies, such as the Diversity Division's community liaisons. The position of middle figures is particularly important because these individuals are awkwardly positioned within the institutional structures of power—they have some localized power and access to limited resources, but are often quite limited in their ability to affect institutional change or influence policy (Rosser, 2000). Below I explore how this structural position shaped how the institutional project was carried out as well as how it worked to frustrate diversity workers' attempts to make the institution more supportive and caring.

This institutional project was the most direct translation of the ideology of care into forms of action, realizing “care” as both noun and verb, affect and practice. This project was characterized both by an emotional attachment to minoritized students and by the ongoing practice of providing support for those students—engaging in emotional labor, creating community and safe spaces, providing financial and academic resources, offering mentorship and training, etc. It was also defined by the continued attempt to encourage the university to support diversity work and diversity workers through increasing its allocation of financial resources and by teaching others how to be more supportive and caring. As I demonstrate below, this support also extended to the staff and mid-level administrators themselves, who wanted to be cared for and to have the capacity to care for themselves. I use the term care intentionally because it was one I often heard from students as a critique of the institution—they wondered if university (usually meaning the president and other executive leaders) cared about minoritized

students. This critique raises intriguing questions about what it means for an institution to care about and care for. It was clear that the institution's care for minoritized students academically, emotionally, and socially, materialized in the daily actions of structurally disempowered middle figures and their interactions minoritized students.

Instituting Care

The attempt to realize a more equitable, caring, and supportive university entailed two strategies, one directly aimed at providing care for minoritized students and the other at increasing the university's capacity for care. On one hand, much of their work entailed providing direct services and support to students, particularly through programs in the Diversity Division or the campus' identity-based centers. On the other hand, these actors also worked extensively with their majoritarian peers in order to increase their ability to care for minoritized students.

Enacting Care

Whether in interviews or during participant observations, diversity workers described dozens of different activities and practices that constituted the campus' diversity efforts. These ranged from organizing events, to fundraising, to collecting data. Those engaged in this institutional project tended to describe certain practices more frequently, particularly providing direct support or care to students or organizing spaces in order to build community or to provide a sense of safety to students.

Support services. Direct care work for minoritized students took on a variety of forms. These supports were both academic and personal, formal and informal. These distinctions are not absolute—often they were bound up with and overlapped one another. However, I want to capture both the wide range of activities in which they engaged, as well as how these individuals made sense of their work and their place in the university.

Academic support for minoritized students was the purview of staff in the scholarship programs and initiatives organized within the Division of Diversity, but also included the Diversity Officers in the fourteen colleges. While the scholarship programs also provided a variety of social and community opportunities, their primary goal was to ensure student academic success and retention. Likewise, the Diversity Officer's often worked with or oversaw academic support programs in their respective colleges. Each of these programs had a unique identity and structure, but most included services such as tutoring and academic advising and engaged in monitoring and documenting students' academic progress. The scholarship programs also offered a variety of non-academic resources designed to promote student wellbeing and academic success. For example, one program hired a graduate assistant to provide mental health and counseling services. Several of the programs organized students into mentoring pairs in order to ensure that new students benefited from a close relationship with an older student.

The identity based student centers were primarily focused on personal and leadership development. These offices and the people who staffed them were dedicated to helping students understand and explore their identities, developing as student leaders and activists, and promoting and organizing cultural programming. Over the last decade or so, the Division of Student Life, particularly in the identity-based student centers, shifted from a model based on celebratory cultural programming to one focused on training students as social justice leaders and advocates. At the same time, they continued to offer a variety of social and cultural programs, such as weekly meals, guest speakers, and support groups for particular identities (e.g., students who identify as both queer and religious).

While this institutional project included the formal, institutionalized supports that diversity workers provide to minoritized students, the vignette above demonstrates that caring for

students entailed far more than administering centers, offering services, or organizing programming. Caring for students also included a variety of informal, relational supports, particularly when attempting to meet students' emotional and social needs. These were often duties that individuals took on rather than an explicit component of their formalized job duties. To return to a quote in the previous chapter, this work was largely driven by their personal connections to what students were experiencing:

When I have a meeting with a student who has been cut off financially, it's, I can't not worry about them when I go home. I can't not draw parallels from their story to my story, you know? So again that emotional, emotional labor is also, you know, I think it's harder to free oneself of. Um, so yeah very much the personal and the professional blend together and have very porous sort of, um, um, porous sort of borders and you know, I think that's also very unique to identity-based work.

—Stefanie, Mid-level Administrator

Creating space. In addition to the kinds of direct support work described above, these individuals spoke regularly about creating community or organizing safe spaces. In fact, this is one of the most frequent ways diversity work was framed. As Liz the mid-level administrator put it:

I would say, definitely, one of our priorities is international students um and also students of color, making sure that they're academically successful but also they're able to you know feel like they belong and that there's a place and space for them. Um, because you know when you're coming to a predominantly white institution, it's very hard to navigate, especially, specifically State University when you compare it to other institutions. It's very white and so as a student of color or international student, you may be the one of

one or one of few in your house floor. And that can be detrimental to one's experience.

And so, um, I think what we're trying to do...is making sure that we're inclusive of many identities but also we're being proactive in figuring out, ok, so how can we best reach out to these students and make sure that they, they feel like they belong and how do we create spaces for them?

These individuals recognized that institutional inequity manifests spatially. Campus safety was a dominant theme in the campus climate survey that was conducted toward the end of my fieldwork. Creating space that was inclusive of and safe for minoritized students could be physical—the Multicultural Student Union, the LGBTQ Resource Center, and the Housing division's multicultural offices all had physical spaces organized to resemble living rooms where minoritized students and their allies could congregate. But space is also conceptual, such as when Student Life staff organized opportunities for people of color to discuss, process, and grieve the mass shooting at the Pulse nightclub in Orlando. My conversations with minoritized students revealed that they recognized which spaces on and off campus were and were not for them. While minoritized students frequented the centers mentioned above, they also avoided places like fraternity row and certain bars near campus. Female-identified students avoided poorly lit parts of campus after sunset. These diversity workers recognized that campus was symbolically and spatially organized in a way that made it easy for majoritarian students to move through the vast majority of campus space with little effort or awareness while it was necessary to intentionally create spaces to meet minoritized students' needs and to ensure their safety.

Enabling Care

In addition to providing a variety of services, programs, and spaces to meet minoritized student's academic, social, and emotional needs, this institutional project also entailed working

with non-diversity workers and members of the majority in order to increase their capacity to serve and support minoritized students, to expand the institution's capacity to care. No form of diversity work came up more often in interviews and fieldwork than workshops, trainings, and other similar educational outreach efforts. Training, particularly in the form of 'cultural competency', was often framed as *the* solution to State University's campus climate challenges. Most of that training work, however, was actually carried out by staff and mid-level administrators in the Diversity Division and Student Life, often in addition to their other duties.

Organizing trainings for majoritarian community members was seen as key to accomplishing two goals. First, trainings directly advanced diversity workers' goal of supporting and safeguarding minoritized students. In one interview, a staff member named Alex described how people engaged in diversity work are often accused of only caring for minoritized students:

Like why are we just working for these individual populations? My answer is consistently, "I'm not." I'm actually working more outside of my population to make sure that my population has a safe spot.

Over the course of this conversation, this participant described cultural competency training not only as benefiting majority students—providing the necessary skills for success in the workplace—but also being necessary to ensure that campus is safe for and inclusive of minoritized students.

Training was also seen as a vehicle for advancing change, whether on the individual or institutional level. However, "training" could encompass a wide array of educational interventions. While much of these efforts were directed at promoting cultural competency, training could also entail promoting the most basic forms of social and cultural awareness. As

one person told me, it would be unlikely for leaders and policy makers to address issues that they did not understand or were not aware existed:

So a lot of the work that we do is helping people know what they do not know. Or, you know, discover what they hadn't known previously. That's the things that I didn't know that I didn't know. "Like, I didn't know that." For example, someone might say, "Oh I didn't know that trans students have to wait to use the restroom until they get to a building where there is an appropriate restroom." Right? So, it's about access, so um, and mitigating the barriers between a student and their educational achievement. And some people don't know what barriers exist. So it's helping them see what barriers exist.

—Rory, Mid-level Administrator

Although training was seen as a necessary step toward long-term change, the organizational structure of diversity work made it difficult to move beyond these basic attempts at raising awareness and fostering cultural competency. As trainers and localized advocates for institutional change, these individuals might be the only one in their unit or college advocating around these issues. One individual described it this way:

It's very siloed, as I'm sure you've—so how to build in—and there's this issue where people are like, "Yeah, I believe diversity should be integrated throughout." And I said this before, "Am I supposed to just sprinkle it on people's heads?" Like now you are sprinkled with diversity and you are good to go?

—Quinn, Mid-level Administrator

This quote captures two aspects of the structural dilemma of diversity work. First, being seen as the person authorized to “sprinkle” others with diversity, often meant that your colleagues perceived diversity as your job and not their own. Second, it was difficult to encourage

community members to see training as an ongoing task rather than the work of a one or two hour seminar, or to see participating in training as a means rather than an end. Requests for training workshops were both an opportunity and a risk. The quote calls to mind the image of a priest scattering holy water—diversity workers who engaged in training activities were keenly aware that when requests were made for workshops, oftentimes offices and departments were seeking a form of quick absolution, a check-the-box approach to addressing diversity that diversity workers tried to avoid. These dilemmas illustrate that the task of training others to be more supportive and caring could actually create new barriers to the kinds of change they sought.

The Cost of Care

Among the individuals who worked to actualize a caring and supporting State University, two particular themes arose again and again. Both entailed the cost of engaging in this type of work—participants spoke extensively about the need for more financial resources to support diversity work and about the personal costs they paid to support both students and their staff.

Financial Costs

When participants framed the problems that were hindering diversity work and undermining a positive campus climate, no theme was more common than the issue of institutional investment and commitment to diversity work. More than anyone else, mid-level administrators were the ones who framed the challenge of diversity work in financial terms, of the institution not being sufficiently invested in supporting their efforts. This highlights one of the unique challenges of being a mid-level administrator—they are expected to make due with the resources allocated to their program without having significant influence on the processes through which institutional resources are allocated.

In interview after interview, participants expressed their frustration that the institution was not willing to invest the financial resources necessary to support and sustain diversity work.

One conversation with a mid-level administrator named Ray is worth quoting at-length:

Um, then we're not going to be able to create the kinds of structures and support structures that allow for all students to grow in this way. We're just, we're gonna have a band aid approach. We're gonna under-resource. When people say, "Well we invest a lot of money." No, we invest less than 1% of the budget. That's not a lot of money. That's not a lot of money. So, it's how we frame resources. That is equivalent to, we invest equivalent to what we pay 12, maybe 10 STEM faculty. It's not a lot of money. So, even how we frame what the investment is tells us we need to rethink that. You know, uh, cause in most people's minds, they say, "Well that's a lot of money." No it's not. When you look at, when you think about a billion-dollar budget or billion-dollar industry. When you think about the total of the budget, it's less than one percent. So, is that a commitment?

He went on to say:

So you're trying to find opportunities that don't cost money, which means you're not committed. So you know, one of my, one of my colleagues always say, "Commitment without currency is counterfeit." And so, if you're coming in with commitment, I don't see money, cause that's not true in any other part of the enterprise. Commitment in research means money. Commitment in faculty means money. Commitment in all these other areas that we praise means there's gonna be some resources found. And so, it's only in this work that commitment means *some* money. (Laughs)

The problem identified in this statement is two fold. The first is that necessary institutional change will require the institution to invest money in programs and initiatives rather than taking what this participant calls a “band aid” approach, which is how this participant characterized the institution’s response to the crisis that unfolded during the spring semester. To put it differently, in order to realize a caring State University, where minoritized students received the support they need to be well and successful, would require significant resources. The other problem is that the lack of investment signaled a larger problem, namely that the institution (particularly executive leadership) was not really committed to the enterprise of making the campus more diverse and inclusive. If money signals a commitment, then the inverse is also true.

As a result of limited resources, mid-level administrators in particular were increasingly being pulled into fundraising activities. If they did not engage in fundraising at that time, many assumed that they soon would. Like many public universities, as the state increasingly withdrew financial support, the institution relied more and more on tuition revenue and development funds from alumni, donors, and corporate philanthropists:

Obviously like I said that there's a big initiative and push to look for other revenue streams in this state. And you know, which is really problematic cause I think what we do is, it's what we've, I mean, our real strength is to improving campus climate. That's what I think we do better than anything else. And there should be an investment for that from the university, which in this current day and age, where there's just such a sense of dislocation, um the rise of like direct, overt racism on our campus, you know the murder of black men on the streets of America, you know the whole, everything that's happening.

—Charlie, Mid-level Administrator

The capacity to fundraise is itself costly—it requires labor from programs and initiatives that are often run by small offices. Thus, mid-level administrators who were tasked with serving students, administering programs, supporting their staff, and training their peers were also being expected to dedicate time and energy to keeping their programs financially solvent even though they saw their work as providing sources of value for the campus community as a whole.

These participants' interpretation that the university was underinvested in diversity work stood in direct contrast to the chief diversity officer's public statements about the institution and senior leadership. I often heard him describe the president and provost as being "committed" and he cited the \$15 million dollars spent annually on the campus' various diversity programs and initiatives as proof that the institution was invested in its diversity efforts. In fact, at a social event for faculty of color, the CDO made a speech in which he proclaimed that the administration "puts its money where its mouth is." It is difficult to quantify the dollar amount that would signify that an institution is truly committed to diversity work—this study illustrates that 'commitment' can attach itself to a variety of institutional projects all aimed at fostering some form of diversity work but often toward different ends and with drastically different results. What is significant is the individuals engaged in the project to develop a more caring institution by and large did not believe the institution was allocating the resources necessary to help them be successful in their work.

Personal Costs

Why these particular figures would claim that the institution is underinvested financially is best understood in relation to how these individuals experienced their work and what it took to provide support and care for minoritized students on a daily basis. Another theme that arose repeatedly in interviews with middle figures is that these individuals pay a steep personal price,

often described in stark terms, to remain engaged in this project. For individuals serving students (and other campus members) based on their identity as people of color, LGBTQ people, people with disabilities, first-generation and working class people, etc., they were often helping students confront problems they experienced in their own lives. There is a unique form of identification that occurs between diversity workers and the students they serve. In the previous chapter, one participant described how they often draw parallels between their life story and students' stories. This identification is informed by shared hardship, and in some cases trauma. This makes it difficult for diversity workers to set emotional boundaries on their work and to not, in an affective sense, carry their work home with them.

A significant component of this work is what one of the diversity workers above calls “emotional labor.” This entails not only bearing witness to and being personally impacted by hateful incidents, both small and large, but also helping others to process and navigate those experiences. Emotion was another theme that often came up often in these conversations:

You know, and so really those couple of months from mid-March to mid-May um and before we went on break were pretty tumultuous and yeah, I felt the stress...I feel their pain even though I'm not the one experiencing it. I take on a little bit of it because I want to support them through it. So, it was rough on me, you know um emotionally, mentally.

—Valerie, Mid-Level Administrator

The pain was both the students' and their own. Other diversity workers I spoke with talked about how their emotional labor impacted them:

As a professional, I'm not afraid to go on record. I left work crying. It was intense. Your weekends were taken up. Students needed you. And you want to be able to have a professional uh boundaries, but we wouldn't be in this business if we were not passionate

about what we do. So, just meeting the students in their needs and, and, and trying to comfort them and support them, it was a challenge, particularly a disservice to students.

—Zoe, Staff Member

This was particularly true for diversity workers who had roles that brought them into regular and sustained contact with students. However, this emotional labor also occurred between staff members, particularly by mid-level administrators who had supervisees with emotional needs.

Blurring the line between the personal and professional also impacts the amount these individuals work. The story at the beginning of this chapter illustrates the common practice of staying late into the evening or working on weekends in order to support students. This occurred in addition to the fact that diversity workers are often performing the job duties of multiple people. For instance, many of the diversity officers were *the* diversity worker for their college or unit. Some directors and staff were an office of one. These burdens made their work exceedingly difficult:

I don't know anyone that's not overworked. And then that leads into a very difficult and challenging organizational climate. It becomes tedious and petty about who's doing work, whose workload, who's overworked, who's taking initiative. You find people checking out. You find people ready to just flee. Because essentially I just named it, you know, we have multiple staff, multiple staff members doing the actual work of two or three professional staff. And that's not sustainable.

—Sofia, Staff Member

Yeah. I don't know if this is appropriate to say, but I don't like my job and I don't want to do this, but it's a matter of loyalty to the student leaders who are one of the few locations of leadership in this moment in time.

—Cameron, Mid-level Administrator

This individual used the term “overworked;” another described it to me as “overperforming.”

The latter term speaks to the issue that not do diversity workers do extra work, there is an expectation that they do more.

Certainly these expectations increased as a result of the crisis on campus, particularly during the spring, but the evidence suggests that this is also a fundamental condition of labor in this particular institutional project. This could entail an expectation of doing additional committee work or being available to engage with members of “the community” (i.e., one’s identity group) outside the institution. These demands constrained how people lived and the choices they made for themselves and their families. This played out in a variety of ways. One person told me they had to give up their pets because they were never home. Others wanted to make career changes or struggled with getting time with partners and family.

What I have described so far largely entails efforts aimed at supporting minoritized students, and in some cases staff. However, there were also costs to engaging with members of the majority. The act of training and building capacity among majority members brought up a different set of issues. One interview exchange is particularly illuminating on this point:

Stefanie: Well for me and my staff first thing and our students, I think that we literally use our stories of trauma as teaching tools. So when I give an ally training or a training or something, I might tell my coming out story. And it's not a very happy story. (Laughs) So I'm literally reliving that experience, um, to teach people about how hard it is to come out. Right? And that's a very common experience. So, like, trans people will literally tell their stories and have their identities questioned, you know, as a teaching tool to teach people about what it means to have a trans life or a trans body. Like, same with people of

color or people with disabilities, right? You know, it's far less traumatic to tell a story about when you became a leader, right? So, the emotional labor of things, you know. And I think that unfortunately institutions, um, like that is a cycle that institutions use, is using the, the backs and lives and traumas of minoritized populations to teach majority populations, you know. That is...

Kirk: Your trauma is a resource.

Stefanie: Trauma is a resource. Right. That's why I often say, just, to colleagues or other, or professionals of color that *institutions literally burn through people of color and queer and queer people of color*. It's not sustainable. [Emphasis mine]

The idea that institutions “burn through people” stuck with me throughout the course of my fieldwork and beyond. I thought of this interview often as people on campus began to demand more training and educational opportunities as a response to what was happening on campus that spring. When the university created Our State University in response to students’ demands, one of the major criticisms in the conservative media and blogosphere was that the university was spending hundreds of thousands of dollars to purchase curriculum for the program. What was never publicly discussed were the personal costs that would be paid by those involved in running the training sessions.

Barriers to Care

Much of the good diversity work done on college and university campuses is embodied in this particular institutional project. Despite State University’s troubled history with engaging difference and its persistent institutional inequities, the work done by mid-level administrators and staff in scholarship and support programs and student centers has a profound impact on the individual lives of minoritized students. As I explore in the following chapter, the care work

performed by these individuals helped to make possible the institutional project carried out by students themselves. Many of the students I knew over the course of my research participated in the scholarship programs or were regular fixtures at the Multicultural Student Union. During the university's Multicultural Commencement ceremony at the end of the year, I saw student after student share testimonies of how these programs impacted their lives. The research on student centers and support programs for underrepresented students indicates that they can and do make a difference to individual students socially and academically (Museus & Yi, 2015; Patton, 2010; Pitcher, Camacho, Renn, & Woodford, 2016; Thomas, Cooper, Quin, 2003). What I consider below are the ways in which the conditions of labor for diversity workers, institutional structures, and daily practices served to frustrate and stymie attempts to make the university as a whole more caring and supportive of minoritized students. While this institutional project was able to persist in the cracks and fissures of institutional life, the prospect of institutional transformation remained frustratingly out of reach.

Exhaustion

The hidden personal costs of diversity work are one significant barrier to realizing a caring university. Burnout was an all too common problem, and I saw multiple people leave the university during my fieldwork. Many who stayed recognized that their time was limited. One person told me, "my shelf life is almost over." Others left the university after I finished conducting my fieldwork. Participants described this phenomenon different ways—as stress, or burnout, or a lack of sustainability. Their collective descriptions of the physical and emotional costs point to a social phenomenon that makes such outcomes not only possible, but likely—exhaustion.

In using the term *exhaustion* to describe this barrier to transformation, I am drawing on Elizabeth Povinelli (2011), who demonstrates how alternative social projects are made to languish as a condition of late liberal governmentality. In her work, exhaustion refers to the ways in which states allow social movements and social projects to wither away by withholding material support, the practice of “letting die” rather than “making die.” I have written about this dynamic elsewhere in relation to student activism (Anderson, forthcoming), but I have found Povinelli’s framework to be particularly useful in analyzing similar dynamics within colleges and universities. When the diversity workers engaged in this particular institutional project speak about the conditions of their labor, it is important to recognize that the lack of sufficient material resources and personal costs are two sides to the same coin. Under-investment precipitates exhaustion.

It is important to note that exhaustion is an ongoing condition rather than an end point. Lauren Berlant (2011) calls this dynamic *slow death*, which “refers to the physical wearing out of a population in a way that points to its deterioration as a defining condition of its experience and historical existence” (p. 95). The phenomenon is asymptotic; it continually approaches a final point but never reaches it. This ongoing condition of exhaustion is made possible in part by a surplus of willing new student affairs professionals, a pool of young emotional laborers who are always ready to fill positions at an elite flagship institution as others burn out. This is particularly true among Student Life staff, who tended to be in their 20s and early 30s, while the scholarship program administrators and diversity officers were more evenly split between people above and below middle age. As a result, this particular institutional project can occur under a constant state of exhaustion or burnout without ever reaching a moment of full collapse.

Structural Oppositions

Another major barrier to the success of this project was the fact that diversity workers are organized in structurally conflicting ways to one another and to other groups on campus. The individuals who engaged in this project were primarily clustered into three parts of the university: the Division of Student Life, the Division of Diversity, and the individual colleges. While all these people were ostensibly working toward the same goal—to help recruit and support minoritized students during their time at State University—there were instances where groups came into conflict with each other.

One site of conflict was between diversity workers in the Division of Student Life and those in the Division of Diversity. Despite the fact that the CDO and Dean of Students were regular, almost constant collaborators and that minoritized students regularly went back and forth between their programs and offices, the staff in each division were oriented toward different objectives in ways that sometimes created tensions. Student Life is focused on student development while the CDO's programs and the diversity officers' work is primarily oriented around academic advising and retention initiatives. The CDO was the point person for developing campus policy and initiatives, while student life staff worked closely with student leaders and student government to affect change. When the campus' diversity framework was developed in the years prior to my fieldwork, diversity workers in Student Life played a somewhat marginal role in drafting the document and some of these diversity workers resented being excluded. Staff in the centers tended to be more outspoken and direct about issues like racism and homophobia on campus, taking a more activist approach to addressing problems, particularly through training students to be activists. As a result, they were sometimes perceived by others as unwilling to play ball when it came to campus politics. I did observe friendships

across this structural divide, but these were the product of individual initiative and it was clear that there were tensions between how these two divisions operated.

There were also tensions between the scholarship programs and the colleges. This came to the forefront during a diversity officers' committee meeting during the spring semester. At one meeting, the diversity officers were in conversation with academic advising administrators as well as staff from the scholarship programs. While no one made direct accusations, it became clear that the scholarship staff perceived the academic advisors in the colleges to be culturally incompetent while some of the diversity officers intimated that the scholarship staff were not providing adequate academic advising. One member of the Division of Diversity claimed their program advisors build "more meaningful relationships" and went on to say (and I am paraphrasing based on my field notes): "We need to work with major advisors and do some trainings or workshops and help them know about what we do. A lot of our students don't have positive experiences." They then went on to share their frustration that departments changed degree requirements without alerting them and their staff.

It was a bold, although reasonable claim, to state that the scholarship programs have "more meaningful relationships" with the students in their programs than do the diversity officers or the colleges' academic advisors. Their comments shift the blame to the colleges for not keeping other advisors and staff up to date on degree requirements. While this is never explicitly stated, my reading of this particular argument is that these relationships are perceived to be more meaningful because the program staff is almost entirely people of color, whereas the colleges had far fewer advisors of color. Both sides are presumably concerned with providing academic support to minoritized students, but because of how that work is divided, diversity

workers form different kinds of relationships with students and then find themselves pitted against each other, suspicious of the other's ability to adequately serve minoritized students.

Competing Constituencies

Another basic condition of labor for many diversity workers who provide direct services to minoritized students, staff, and faculty is that they are awkwardly positioned between two or more constituencies in ways that ultimately intruded upon and frustrated their efforts. While this is particularly true for mid-level administrators, as evidenced by both the literature on college leadership and administration (Rosser, 2000; Tyrell 2014) and the business literature on middle managers (e.g., Huy, 2002; Westley, 1990), this inbetweenness was also a characteristic feature of other diversity workers who participated in this institutional project. This is why I have referred to these individuals as “middle figures.” I borrow this orientation toward “the middle” from the post-colonial and international development literature, a term used to describe the local peoples incorporated into the colonial bureaucracy, who were similarly awkwardly positioned, but between the colonized and the colonizer (Austen, 2011).

Above I illustrated how many of these middle figures served both minoritized students and their majority peers, providing on one hand direct support and services to students while on the other attempting to increase the capacities of others to provide culturally adequate (if not competent) care. One under-acknowledged reality of diversity work is that much of the time, effort, and resources that go into diversity work are utilized for majoritarian individuals' benefit. Another salient example is that the team that responded to hate and bias incidents also offered trainings about how to know what constitutes a hate crime, bias incident, and microaggression, and when and how to report these incidents. These trainings focused as much on understanding problematic behavior as they did on how to report it (although it is worth noting, the provost later

eliminated the educational component of the hate and bias training sessions). This creates a situation in which two different forms of emotional labor occur: servicing the emotional needs of minoritized students as well as using their own life histories, experiences, hardships, and even traumas to teach and train members of the majority.

These middle figures also helped the institution interact with “the community,” which most often referred to communities of color on the west side of Union City, although it might also include other parts of the state. Once the crisis began to unfold, community members took an active interest in what was happening on campus. Multiple town halls I attended over the course of the spring either included or were designed specifically for community members—for example, the community meeting after the anti-Semitic “prank” incident or the town hall meeting at the Boys and Girls Club on the west side. Because most administrators did not come from these communities, they relied on minoritized staff and administrators to help them interface with and manage the expectations of those communities. Here, Sofia the staff member describes what it was like to navigate those relationships:

The community is frustrated. And I'm the middle person, where I'm absorbing their frustration, communicating that to the superiors and they're not necessarily communicating to me consistently. I'm getting mixed messages from two or three different administrators and at that point in time I don't really have a clear, concise answer or, or, or communication to be able to deliver to the community. And as a result, they can see that I'm not in position to make it a, and then they'll essentially try to trump or go over the actual structure that was put in place. When that happens, it removes any kind of legitimacy or respect that I have built in my networks in the community, as well as then it frustrates the administration because why are community people directly

coming at us when we have this particular position in place to absorb that? So in theory, that's why you exist. But in execution on a day-to-day, I'm not in power to do the job.

This situation contributed to their precarity because, as is often the case with middle figures in complex institutions and bureaucracies, they are expected to be responsive to a variety of stakeholders without access to resources or decision-making power. While they are expected to help manage or contain the frustrations of the community, they have no power to address the community's demands. In the quote above, Sofia describes how there was no place to absorb community frustration, but in essence that was her role—the middle figure is in place to absorb or at least deflect those emotions. It is also worth pointing out that these middle figures were not always university employees. For instance, I learned that the university president would call on a prominent, local Black minister for help whenever Black faculty and administrators were looking to leave the university.

In programs that support students, many mid-level administrators also struggled to be responsive to their staff while also trying to support students. This was particular true during the heightened tensions during the spring and subsequent fall. I have already detailed the kinds of emotional and psychological challenges that diversity workers face, but what makes being a mid-level administrator unique is that they are called upon to support students as well as their staff. As such, many of them struggled to find ways to take care of themselves. While emotional labor is both outward and inward facing, the inward facing emotional labor is directed toward a variety of groups who are in need of support.

In addition to taking care of their students and staff, middle figures, especially mid-level administrators, were also enlisted to support upper-level administrators and this took on a unique dynamic as the student protest movement took off during the 2015-2016 school year. One way

this manifested was that staff and administrators who worked directly with students were expected to alert the upper administration about student activists' plans. While the surveillance of student activism is not unproblematic, the university also has a mandate to protect the safety and wellbeing of student protesters, and this was made easier when the upper administration had some idea of what to expect. However, mid-level administrators were also expected to be go-betweens for the administration. Here, Sarah describes an incident where she was expected to organize a group of student activists and leaders to have dinner with the President:

And then I would get um, every time there was like a demonstration, I would get an email saying, like, "Oh we need to have a dinner with the President. Can you send us ten students?" ...Students hated that dinner. They're like, "Why do you call us here to have dinner with you and you asked us questions and you don't listen." And so, students didn't want to go anymore. And they're like, "Quit asking me. I don't want to go." And the President thinks it's like, "It's an honor! You got invited to have dinner with the President!" And students are like, "I have homework. Bye." (Laughs) So it puts me in a bad position.

This role put their responsibilities in tension—when their duty to students and their staff comes into conflict with their responsibility to upper administrators, which wins out? As the story above illustrates, meeting the needs of administrators could come at the expense of students as well as mid-level administrator's relationship with those students.

In addition to helping executive leaders stay on top of the crisis and student protests, there was also an element of emotional labor toward their supervisors. Here, Valerie describes a meeting convened by the CDO in the wake of student protests. The CDO expressed his

frustrations when it was clear that many of his staff sympathized with student activists who had been lobbying the administration, including the CDO himself.

“You know I really could,” [the CDO] said there, “you know there are, I do feel like I have certain kinds of support here at the university but sometimes amongst the folks in this room, I don't totally feel that way. Um, when you know, students are attacking me on Twitter or they're coming to these town hall meetings and telling me that I'm not doing my job, you know, I need to have more, I need to have more backing or I would like that.” He said, “I would really appreciate having your, having of your support because sometimes I don't feel that way.”

These diversity workers were once again caught in the awkward position of needing to respond to the emotional needs of a variety of constituents. Is it their role to support and perhaps even encourage student protesters or to help defend and care for the CDO? It is important to note that these mid-level administrators were, at times, also the recipients of students' anger and frustration. But, as middle figures, these diversity workers are expected to care for students, their staff, as well as their supervisors. This is not to suggest that the CDO and upper-level administrators are not worthy of emotional support. My fieldwork helped me to appreciate how difficult their jobs can be. However, what my fieldwork and analysis revealed is that the obligation to care, the distribution of emotional labor, is fundamentally inequitable. While it is quite pronounced for the frontline diversity workers whose primary role is to meet with and support students, it is particularly pronounced for the members of the institutional hierarchy just above them, who not only meet with and engage with students, but also service their staff and are expected to respond to the emotional needs of their supervisors.

Conclusion

The institutional project I described in this chapter is perhaps most reflective of popular conceptions of diversity work—providing financial, academic, and social support to students of color and other minoritized groups. However, what I have sought to demonstrate is that these practices are connected to a larger attempt to mobilize people and knowledge in order to construct a more supportive and caring institution. The direct services are a kind of triage, to enable students to persist while ultimately working toward the goal of creating a different kind of institution.

While this project was often transformative for individual students and could make the difference between a student graduating from State University or leaving, the day-to-day challenges and conditions of doing this kind of work and the structural constraints in which it occurred worked to thwart the larger goal of institutional transformation. Much of this work was done at the expense of the diversity worker's themselves, both as a function of supporting struggling students and as an effect of their awkward positioning between the competing demands of students and staff, the local community, members of the majority, and campus leaders. Attempts to mitigate these conditions were undermined by what many of my participants perceived as a lack of institutional investment in their work and ultimately in them.

As I demonstrate in the subsequent chapters, this particular project intersected and collided with other institutional projects. However, the support and care that these individuals provided for students enabled and overlapped another institutional project, which sought to provoke the university into redistributing resources and power to minoritized students, a project driven primarily by student activists. Many of the individuals I describe above also participated in direct and indirect ways in this project. Of all the projects I describe, these two were the most

in alignment, although they also diverged in important ways. They sought to create a particular kind of institution, but went about doing so via drastically different means.

VII Redress

Introduction

In the fall of 2015, a group calling itself The Concerned Student 1950 Missouri spent much of the fall semester protesting acts of racism on campus and what they perceived to be the university chancellor's inadequate response. Calls for the chancellor to resign went unheeded until Black football players joined the protest, culminating in the chancellor resigning on November 9. Student activists around the country organized solidarity actions and protests, engaging with each other on social media using the hashtags #BlackOnCampus and #StandWithMizzou.

On November 12, 2015, students on more than a hundred campuses around the country organized protest actions in solidarity with the student activists at the University of Missouri. State University was one such campus. Hundreds of students marched from the central administration building on campus to downtown Union City. The organizers of the march, predominantly Black undergraduates, branded the event "The Eclipse." Students carried signs with slogans like "Black Lives Matter" and "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere." As they marched, they chanted, "No justice, no peace" and "Racism at Mizzou it's on our campus too." When they reached their destination downtown, student organizers took turns giving speeches with a megaphone, sharing stories of infamous racist incidents from State University's past and encouraging their peers to get more involved in advocating for change.

I did not set out to study student activism, but it quickly became apparent that student activism would play a defining role in shaping State University's diversity policies and practices. Over the course of my fieldwork, as student protests increased on State University's campus, I began to spend more and more time with student activists to get a sense for how they went about

organizing their peers, planning actions, and formulating demands. What at first appeared to me to be a relatively spontaneous action in response to student unrest at Missouri turned out to be one manifestation of a larger network of activists that included citywide and statewide political organizers. Older students who engaged in activism the previous year, alumni who spent years organizing in a statewide student government association, and graduate students connected to Black Lives Matters organizations mentored undergraduate student activists. These mentors helped link students to larger activist networks through conferences and training sessions. In addition, student activists were trained and mentored by student affairs professionals working in Student Life and the Multicultural Student Union. With the help and support of these mentors, students mobilized to advocate for institutional policies that would address both long-running and contemporary forms of inequity on State University's campus.

This chapter considers the second institutional project that mobilized around the ideology of racial justice: redress. Student activists and their allies collectively mobilized to persuade, shame, and cajole the university into improving minoritized students' material conditions. They sought to transform State University into a more just institution by mandating cultural competency training and punishment for perpetrators of hate and bias incidents, redistributing campus resources, and shifting power towards minoritized students, staff, and faculty. In doing so, they disrupted the ways other individuals and groups articulated diversity and the university's reputation as a progressive institution.

Student activists directly challenged the underlying premise of the diversity rationale for affirmative action:

The unquestioned majoritarian story within [the diversity] rationale is that students of color are admitted so that they can help White students become more racially tolerant,

liven up class dialogue, and prepare White students for getting a job in a multicultural, global economy (Yosso, Parker, & Solórzano, 2004, p. 8).

Student activists drew attention to the reality that this expectation burdened them with unpaid forms of labor and left them vulnerable to hateful interactions with majoritarian students. They used their protest actions to highlight the ongoing costs they paid to survive and persist at a predominantly white institution and to interact with their majoritarian peers. Not only did they demand that the institution take more active steps to educate majoritarian students, staff, and faculty so that the number of hateful interactions would decline, they also demanded that resources and power be redistributed to people of color. The logic of redress asserted not only that minoritized students were deserving of additional support, but that the institution also owed them recompense for the ongoing harms they experienced on campus. This was a claim not only for additional services, but for institutional justice.

While driven primarily by student activists, this project relied on support from staff and faculty, as well as community activists and external organizations. This project overlapped with and was supported by the project of care, as described in the previous chapter. In fact, it is unlikely that students would have been able to persist in their activist efforts without the direct support, encouragement, and mentorship of the staff and faculty who engaged in the project of care. Activism is exhausting and vulnerable work, and students depended on staff and faculty for advice, care, and support in order to endure in their efforts. Despite the guidance from staff and faculty, students relied on a drastically different set of tactics for advocating institutional change. While every other institutional project relied on institutional conventions and normal channels for dialogue, students disrupted meetings, shamed administrators on social media, marched in the streets and blocked traffic, and used media coverage to highlight what was happening on

campus. Even when they eventually utilized the official channels of student government, they defied conventions for how student government was supposed to operate.

Below I trace the origins, success, and ultimate collapse of this institutional project over the course of my 16 months of fieldwork. Rather than organize my findings thematically, this chapter is structured as an extended ethnographic narrative that attempts to do justice to the complex and shifting relations that undergirded this project. This story demonstrates diversity's status as an empty signifier that is subject to hegemonic articulations—what diversity means and diversity work entails at a given institution is not predetermined, but rather the product of institutional antagonisms that reshape discourse, policy, and practice. The project of reorienting the university toward redistribution and redress (and the concomitant attempts by upper-level administrators and their support staff to contain, suppress, and mollify this project) took place across physical and virtual spaces, from the streets, to meetings, town halls, websites, and social media. While student activists won key concessions from the university administration, many of their more radical demands remain unmet. The network of activists eventually fractured and collapsed. However, student activists were able to successfully change the language in which the crisis on campus was framed—other institutional projects could not hope to succeed without directly addressing the language and actions embodied in this institutional project.

State University's Protest Movement

The Student Activist Network

Student protests were carried out by a dynamic and complex network of activists that included current students on both the Union City campus and at other State University branches, alumni, community members, staff, and faculty. It was never a single organization, and while there were clear leaders, their positions within the movement changed over time. While the

group that came to be called the Eclipse (taking its name from the Missouri solidarity march) was often the public face of the movement, its structure and membership was fluid, and it never fully constituted itself as a registered student organization. A significant amount of training and organizing went on behind the scenes and included many important actors that were not always visible or recognizable during moments of visible public protest.

The Eclipse march in November was a crystallizing moment for this student movement, but the project also benefited from the university's rich history of student activism. Thousands of students marched and mobilized in response to the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., the Vietnam War, and the acquittal of the police officers in the Rodney King trial. As one former campus administrator quipped: they march and protest about something every day at State University. While this history was not always enough to legitimize student protests, it did help to normalize them. For example, during the previous school year a student named Malik⁶ organized a die-in at the campus' main library in response to the non-indictment of the police officer who killed Eric Garner. While the protests that developed in the spring of 2015 more or less dissolved by the beginning of the following school year, Malik eventually began collaborating with activists from the Student Government Association (SGA), a statewide organization that helped link student governments on each of the State University campuses. The SGA had once received state funding, but was defunded by the conservative legislature because of its liberal political leanings. These alumni hoped to revive the organization with the help of State University's student government and its sizeable budget. Three particular SGA staff members—Chris, Jasmine, and Andre —were extensively involved in training and guiding student government

⁶ It is impossible to tell the story of the student protest movement without reference to specific individuals. Thus, in this chapter I have elected to use pseudonyms for both students and groups in the narrative and when referencing observational data. These pseudonyms are different than those I chose to use for interview quotes.

leaders. Through his connection with these staff members and student activists on other campuses, Malik participated in a statewide training that brought together activists from organizations as wide-ranging as Black Lives Matter groups and farmers' unions. Malik and his peers in the SGA would go on to help train and mobilize activists in the Eclipse as well as student leaders in a variety of other organizations. The student activists I observed directly benefited from the experience and expertise of older students and alumni, particularly those with ties to the SGA.

When the 2015-2016 school year began, activists had significant resources on which to draw. There was an infrastructure for minoritized student activism in student government—student affairs professionals trained student government activists in how to formulate and execute activist campaigns. Every year a handful of interns were selected with the explicit purpose of carrying out activist projects. Student government also provided physical space and financial resources to support these campaigns. These resources and services were largely effective in fostering student activism (as were parallel resources in the Multicultural Student Union), but this can and did put these student affairs professionals at odds with their colleagues in other parts of campus.

The then current chair of the student government Racial Justice Committee, Amara, was recruited into student government the previous year at the library die-in and was committed to taking the committee in a more activist direction. A graduate assistant working in student government organized an informal network dubbed “the Alliance”, the goal of which was to help network student organizations that shared similar commitments to economic and social justice. These included local branches of established organizations like MEChA (Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlán, or the Chicano Student Movement of Aztlán) and Students for Justice in

Palestine, as well as local issue and identity-based groups like The Muslim Student Association and Wonkis. Some were formal student organizations, like a new group called Education for All that produced a few key leaders in the movement, while others were informal, like the Black Consciousness Collective, which helped to connect Black undergraduates to the Black community in Union City and served as an important point of connection between campus and community activists in the local Black Lives Matter movement.

Students in these groups had a variety of avenues through which to connect. This included the Multicultural Student Union and the campus' diversity scholarship programs. While not all of the activists and leaders were involved in these programs, many of the most visible leaders were. Unsurprisingly, many of these students were involved in either the Emcee Scholars program, which promotes activism, or the Crew Cohort program, which recognizes potential for leadership.⁷ While student organizations and student government played an important role, many other students connected to the movement because they knew someone socially—they met as assigned roommates in a residence hall or at the parties of mutual friends.

Finally, national social movements overdetermined what took place on SU's campus. It is difficult to imagine there being such a vibrant student protest movement on State University's campus had Black Lives Matter not materialized. It gave student activists at State University a vocabulary and set of tactics to draw on, and many students envisioned their work as part of this larger movement. Black Lives Matter inspired campus activists across the country, who in turn inspired each other. Social media and communications technology enabled protest movements on individual campuses to connect with each other.

⁷ While both programs were known for producing campus leaders and activists, the Emcee Scholars program temporarily suspended admissions for the 2018-2019 school year and is considering drastically reorganizing the program as the Division of Diversity evaluates and assesses its programs.

Mobilizing for Change

The students who organized the original Eclipse March viewed it as a success. However, the students involved in organizing the event began to consider what to do next. One student named Angela told me:

The university was clearly shaken. There was a lot of media around it, and we started getting emails from people like [The Dean of Students, the President, and the CDO].

What we decided was, well, I guess we should just create a movement, because we came at them again at the next board of governors meeting which was December. After that everybody was really hungry for, you know, wondering what's going on... That was where I would say the actual movement was created.

Once again, the seemingly spontaneous nature of their next action obscures the fact that substantive organizing was already going on behind the scenes. The movement this student describes was the product and beneficiary of that organizing.

While the turn from the campus to the system may seem surprising, like the march, it reflects a local manifestation of national trends. The students and their allies targeted the board of governors after it was announced it would vote on a resolution affirming free speech. This resolution directly threatened the organizing tactics that being utilized on a number of campuses by students of color. The policy that the State University System was considering was drafted by a conservative political science professor who, along with a group of peers, had spent decades engaged in institutional activism to fight policies like speech codes and anonymous reporting systems. This policy was one of many that institutions in Republican-held states across the country were considering as a response to nationwide student protests led by minoritized activists and their allies. Students saw these policies as inimical to the needs of students of color,

fearing that they would protect hateful speech and further contribute to the hostile environment they hoped to transform.

The Eclipse's first protest at the board of governor's meeting was a mostly unremarkable affair until the very end. For most of the proceedings, the students sat quietly in the front row of the audience, holding signs, some printed, others handwritten, on cardboard. There was little activity, except for a handful of organizers (both students and SGA staff) chatting and planning a few rows behind the protesters. I watched one student furiously scribble in a spiral-bound notebook as his peers looked over his shoulder and whispered comments. At the end of the meeting, the student with the notebook disrupted the proceedings by making a speech he read from the notebook as his peers passed out a list of demands to the assembled presidents, provosts, and governors. These included: mandatory cultural competency training for students and employees across the entire system, with the curriculum created and overseen by students, staff, and faculty of color; increased mental health services provided by counselors of color; an assessment of the system's strategic diversity plan; and a public statement from the system president acknowledging "the failure of progress on diversity in the State University System."

Despite its relatively small size, the protest garnered local, statewide, and national media attention. While national interest in free speech policies led to the initial press coverage, this protest put student activists on the radar of a variety of media organizations. Local media coverage, both from student newspapers, Union City's primary newspaper, and the alternative papers, was all decidedly positive for the protestors. National media likewise often provided a favorable portrayal of students' activities, even across a range of outlets, although conservative news media often disparaged student activists. These positive portrayals were a major asset to the movement.

By the time students showed up to protest the board of governors again in early February, both sides had learned a thing or two from their last encounter. The meeting moved to a different building, and this time a barrier was erected between the audience and the gathered officials. A plainclothes police officer guarded the small opening in the barrier. The chair of the board of governors, in his opening remarks, attempted to get out ahead of the protesters by welcoming the students to the meeting. The system president shared updates from her meeting with student activists, a meeting for which she was severely criticized by conservative state legislators. She assured the audience that the system was closing the achievement gap between white students and students of color and that, “all of us continue to work on these important and achievable action items to improve the experiences of *all* students, staff, and faculty.” She also announced that the governors were planning “conversations” at the various institutions to discuss diversity issues, and that the system was creating a Diversity Council and hiring a special assistant to work on diversity issues.

The students arrived in a significantly more drastic fashion, this time dressed in black dress clothes, many wearing sunglasses, a look reminiscent of Black Power activists from the 60s and 70s. An usher escorted them to their seats, where they stood in the audience, quietly holding their signs. The open portion of each board of governors’ meeting is recorded and posted in the board’s website. Later, when I reviewed the meeting footage on the board of governors’ website, I discovered that the camera trained on the audience immediately panned down so that the student protesters were no longer visible in the shot. At the previous meeting, the protest was not recorded because the students began protesting as the governors ended the open session. This time, the camera deliberately moved to hide the protesters. Except for briefly shouting, “Holla back!” and “I got yo back!” the students did very little until two broke rank to try and pass out a

list of their demands to the presidents, provosts, and governors. This time, a plainclothes officer, with the help of a uniformed policeman, was there to physically block the students.

The students, who sat down before this effort, rose to their feet again a few minutes later. One student called out “Ashe!” and the others responded “Power!”⁸ The students then shouted their demands, which this time included a test-neutral admissions policy, which has been shown to increase socioeconomic and racial diversity (Espenshade & Chung, 2011). Whenever the chair attempted to interrupt the protesters, students paused their speeches and took up the “Ashe! Power!” chant again until the governor stopped speaking. At one point, after repeated attempts by the chair to shout over the students, the protest leader shouted, “You passed free speech!” as a rejoinder. The video recording of the meeting cuts out at the exact moment the protest begins. The local press reported on the fact that the student protest didn’t show up in the video record, but a system spokesperson claimed that it was a technical problem.

From my perspective, the students seemed in control of the exchange, despite the measures that were taken to plan for the disruption. Once they were through delivering their demands, students exited the room dramatically. Outside, they were ready to give remarks to the members of the press who were waiting to take quotes and conduct interviews. With no small measure of irony, the meeting reconvened so the governors could give out the System Diversity Awards.

Local Responses to Student Activists

From the beginning, upper administrators at State University took an active interest in the Eclipse’s activities, likely in hopes of diffusing potential conflicts on campus before they began. Administrators across the country were closely monitoring what was happening at the University

⁸ “Ashe/Ase” is a Yoruba term meaning power. Students borrowed this chant from protesters at the University of Missouri.

of Missouri and other campuses where student activism was taking off. During a committee meeting the day before the Eclipse march, the CDO shared that he had spoken with the president and provost about what had happened at the University of Missouri, and he had assured them “we’re ok” and that he was working on “pressure release valves.” So even before the university became an active target of student protest, the institution was working on ways to respond both to local student protesters and the broader landscape of student unrest across the country.

The university’s primary response to student activism was to schedule face-to-face meetings with the activists themselves. This had been occurring since the original Eclipse March. Students were often critical of these meetings, which were viewed as attempts to placate students rather than genuine overtures to action:

I think what's happening is that the bureaucracy is playing a game. The bureaucracy is like the—like meeting with an important person don't mean that you going to get what you want done. If anything, they going to meet with you, so, they have less—so there's less animosity...It's like, “We gave you your meeting. We can't do nothing else.” And then, where do you go from there? You don't go nowhere.

—Jayden, Student

So many people get so excited. Like even grad students who don't have a strong history of organizing. You get a meeting and they think, "Oh my goodness. We were 10 steps closer. We got that meeting." I'm like, "No. This is how you know it's about to get worse."

—Monique, Student

Beginning in mid-February, the university organized a series of public conversations about what was happening nationally and on campus. The largest of these was a campus-wide

town hall to discuss campus climate and potential avenues to improve it, an event that had been in the works for some time (the event I describe at the beginning of the second chapter). While many student activists and organization leaders met with administrators behind the scenes, this was their first opportunity to publicly challenge and criticize the campus' executive leadership, and it resulted in several awkward and tense encounters. This event marked an important shift in the official institutional response, because the CDO began framing his office's attempts to implement the campus strategic diversity plan by borrowing language from the Eclipse's demands. For example, the Eclipse's demand for mandatory campus-wide cultural competency training was compared to a half-day training for college deans. The CDO claimed four of the five Eclipse demands were already in the diversity plan, although the plan in no way called for minoritized students, staff, and faculty to oversee and assess the campus' diversity efforts.

At the same time that the institution began to respond differently to students, the student movement itself was also changing. While the Eclipse may have been the public face of the student movement, other significant student organizing was happening on campus, particularly within student government. From the beginning of the year, the government's racial justice committee worked on a campaign to create a mandatory, online cultural competency training program for students, an idea they borrowed from other universities. A student government intern named Sydney also wrote a proposal for in-person cultural competency training and was individually campaigning to see it implemented. Recognizing an opportunity for collaboration, the Director of the Multicultural Student Union organized student activists and leaders from student government and various student organizations to put together a joint proposal to the university president to make this training mandatory. Student activists wrote the proposal with input from faculty and staff who supported the effort.

Calls for a mandatory cultural competency program was one of the primary demands student activists made. Here, Darius describes why such a program was necessary:

Yes, I think there should be a requirement for a cultural class here on campus, because there isn't one. Yes, I think there should be a cultural competency program, because there are a lot of people coming in to this school who have never even seen a black person in their lives. If this is supposed to be a diverse campus, we need to make sure that's happening, one, and two, making sure those people don't feel uncomfortable if we want to be inclusive, and diverse, and make that happen.

Like the individuals who participated in the institutional project of care, these students also recognized that their wellbeing depended on their majority peers knowing how to interact with them. Ultimately, the university president acquiesced to the proposal. In early March, Sydney announced to the racial justice committee that the president agreed to pilot a cultural competency program. Before the announcement went public, however, tensions on campus exploded.

This Is State U

Prior to early March, most of the activist energy on campus was directed publicly at the board of governors; for the most part, students put pressure on State University administrators behind the scenes in private meetings. This began to change two days after Sydney made her announcement to her friends in student government. First, during a Native ceremony on campus, white students disrupted the event by shouting stereotypical Indian war chants. Three days later, a Black woman was spat on in an altercation in a residence hall while being mocked for being on scholarship. Both incidents garnered significant local media attention.

In mid-March, students of color and their allies began using the hashtag #ThisIsStateU to spread news about the residence hall incident (and another incident where a Thai student was

spat on and told to go back to China) and to share their stories about the daily indignities of life on the State University campus. These experiences ranged from microaggressions to acts of overt bigotry and violence, expressed in thousands of tweets. Below are but a few examples:

When your instructor makes everyone form groups because no one wants to partner with the only POC in the class. #ThisIsStateU

#ThisIsStateU where people throw beer bottles at you while yelling “go back to Africa nigger”

People love when black people play sports but hate us when we protest for our lives. #ThisIsStateU

When you hear a sorority girls say: “Ferguson was more than a year ago, black people should get over it” #ThisIsStateU

Being told “I forget you’re hispanic” or “you’re one of the good ones.” #ThisIsStateU I told him “no” and he was like “But Mexican girls always want to have sex.”

#ThisIsStateU

#ThisIsStateU where you hear people say “I didn’t know terrorists could be beautiful.”

#ThisIsStateU that wants all students to pay the same tuition, but expects students of color to teach white students about racism without paying them.

This conversation sparked an immediate reaction. Faculty, staff, alumni, and white allies jumped into the conversation. Local media picked up on the story within the first twenty-four hours and the story soon went national.

The campus’ communication department, which runs the university’s official social media accounts, the president, CDO, dean of students and other administrators quickly responded to what students were posting. The official university account tweeted, “When

students share stories and frustrations about racial climate, we listen #ThisIsStateU” The CDO posted, “Tell us about what it’s like to be a student at State University. Be straight with me so we can make real change #ThisIsStateU.” The dean of students wrote, “Thank you for your honesty. Your pain and experience are real. I’m listening. We’ve got work to do. #ThisIsStateU.” The president responded by saying, “Thank you for sharing these troubling stories on #ThisIsStateU. I am listening and your willingness to share will make SU better.” These are certainly not the only comments they made, but they all echoed the same theme—we’re listening.

These comments provoked a strong and immediate backlash. While students and their allies continued to share stories about their negative experiences on campus, the conversation took on a new dimension, as students began to critique administrators for failing to adequately respond both to what was happening on campus and to the issues raised by the hashtag:

@StateUniversity loves to use hashtags without acknowledging what those hashtags mean. #ThisIsStateU

@[the president] are you going to actually listen? act? It’s clear to us that white students are your priority #ThisIsStateU

We want culturally competent students but the people leading the university aren’t culturally competent #ThisIsStateU

@[dean of students] has been giving students of color the same prepared answer for years, leaving us to make change. #ThisIsStateU

And @[the CDO] what have you actually done for POC lately? #ThisIsStateU

I’ve been at @StateUniversity forever and when leaders say they’re “listening,” that’s all it is. No action. #ThisIsStateU

This was the overwhelming sentiment toward administrators on the thread. In an article from a local newspaper, a student organization leader and activists said,

The reason why #ThisIsStateU has blown up is because students of color on this campus are tired,” [student] says. “We’re tired of messages. We’re tired of campus-wide conversations. Students of color come to these conversations...but the people who should be there most aren’t a part of the conversation. SU gets on Twitter and is like, ‘We’re listening! We hear you!’ We’ve heard this for so long. We want leaders to act...Our experience is being covered up because they don’t want to admit that racism, sexism, and classism are on this campus.

Administrators’ attempts to involve themselves in the #ThisIsStateU conversation were largely rebuffed. As a result, their involvement on social media moving forward was minimal. The day after the hashtag caught fire, the president published an open letter to the campus community announcing several new initiatives in response to what was happening on campus, including the cultural competency training he had promised to student activists. My assessment is that the negative publicity generated by the hashtag spurred his decision to concede to some of the other student protesters’ demands.

The hashtag was reinvigorated several times over the next month. The first instance was in response to a Black student finding a threatening note slipped under the door of her dorm room. Activity on the hashtag surged again in response to what was perhaps the most controversial moment that spring—a Black student arrested for anti-racist graffiti.

The Arrest

Over the course of the spring semester, a series of graffiti began appearing around State University’s campus. In bright orange letters, in all lower-case letters, the tagging proclaimed

messages about race and racism and were signed “black Jesus.” I first noticed the graffiti one day when passing by one of the campus’ main libraries. It read, “racism is a disease” Similar messages appeared elsewhere on campus: “america: land of the slaves”; “racism in the air don’t breathe” The artist also left more controversial messages, such as, “the pigs must die” and “satan is a white man”

In mid-April, the artist was arrested. The student, a young Black woman, was sitting in her African American Studies class when police officers entered the lecture auditorium where the class was being held. It is against State University policy to arrest a student in class. The police claimed they had made repeated, unsuccessful attempts to contact the student. They also claimed not to have known the class was in session, pointing to the fact that the professor, a younger woman of color, was seated in the auditorium while smaller discussions were taking place rather than lecturing in the front of the room.

The student’s friends immediately sprang into action, calling peers, including a graduate student who had taught the student and was involved in a local Black Lives Matter organization. Campus members and local activists began to lobby on her behalf. The graffiti totaled \$4,325 in damage, which meant the student faced potential felony charges. A small group began a fundraising page to collect “reparations” for the student. A professor circulated an open letter condemning the arrest. The letter quoted the student’s instructor:

If only the university cared as much about protecting students who are fighting for their lives and a better university as they it’s own symbols and buildings. The way the police came into my class wearing bulletproof vests and carrying guns was overtly aggressive. They terrified and humiliated my class. It is appalling that they did not respect my class as a space of learning.

More than 800 members of the campus community signed the letter and the incident revived the #ThisIsStateU conversation.

Top administrators responded publicly over the course of the next two days. Both the president and police chief reminded their audiences the student had committed a crime. The ways in which the student was criminalized for her actions struck a chord with many minoritized students and community members. While individual student conduct information is protected by the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA), it was generally believed that the students who had committed the “hate and bias incidents” during that semester had not been criminally charged. This upset many students of color because they felt that these racist acts should be decisively punished, preferably by expelling the perpetrators. They believed the university took a light touch with students committing racist acts but a heavy hand when dealing with a student protesting racism. I also heard echoes of the critique made by the student’s professor—namely, that the university valued its property over its students.

A week after the arrest, several hundred people gathered outside the central administration building to protest how the administration’s response to the incident. While I saw and spoke with many of the student activists I knew, I was surprised to see the wide swath of community members present at the protest—advisors, diversity workers, professors, graduate students, and non-academic staff. It was by far the most institutionally diverse protest event I attended that year. The graduate student who was called after the arrest and one of his peers from the local Black Lives Matter organization led the march. This community organization had protested and engaged in direct action against many of the major institutions in Union City, but this was the first time they led a protest against the university. As we waited for the march to begin, students handed out white, laminated signs. Some contained slogans like “Education not

Incarceration” while others included demands like “Drop the Charges.” Many signs reproduced messages the student had spray-painted. New demands were made, as a student climbed an iconic statue outside the administration building to tape a large, handwritten list of the demands to the statue. The demands included that the case be dismissed, that the student’s effects be returned, that the student be allowed to graduate the following month, that all administrators and officers involved in the incident resign, and that the university grant community control over the police through a review board run by students, staff, and faculty.

The crowd marched away from the administration building and toward a popular study spot on campus. The crowd streamed into the lobby of the building, chanting, clapping, and stomping. Students shouted, “This is our university! Fuck white supremacy!”; “[Student] couldn’t learn cause of y’all! Y’all ain’t gonna learn cause of me!”; and “Power! Transformation! I got to have it!”

The arrest and subsequent march once again brought national media attention to State University. Ultimately, the local district attorney dropped the criminal charges against the student and I watched her graduate at a ceremony held for students participating in the CDO’s scholarship programs. The semester and tensions began to wind down as students prepared for exams and the end of the school year.

From Protesters to Politicians

Over the course of the school year, a variety of students and student groups organized publicly and behind the scenes to lobby State University and the State University System. The protest movement was decentered and dynamic. Beginning early in the spring semester, student activists began to think about how they could leverage student government’s vast financial resources to achieve their goals. They decided to form “the Slate” to run a block of candidates

with ties to student activism and social justice-oriented student groups, effectively turning the Alliance into a student political party.

This turn is unsurprising given that administrators such as the governors and the president often encouraged student activists, to direct their efforts toward student government (and, as I read it, away from them). Here, Jayden describes a conversation with the CDO:

[The CDO] didn't tell me to run for student government, but it was in one meeting he was like, "You've got to really get the student body...You've got to get the student government to be behind y'all." When he said that, I was looking at him, and the way he said it to me was like ... I don't know if he knew that I interpreted it as, "You need to take over student government," but that's how I interpreted it.

Student Government Association staff members played a crucial role in encouraging student activists to turn their attention toward student government. Chris and Jasmine, who were SU alumni, participated in student government during their time at State University, and had also been members of a multicultural student organization with a half-a-million-dollar budget that was defunded by the student government. The story of what happened became something of a campus legend and I heard students reference the story multiple times over the course of my research to illustrate student government's hostility toward students of color. The SGA staffers and the student activists they mentored hoped to eventually revive both the SGA and build a new, equally well-funded multicultural student organization on campus.

When students decided to form the Slate to take over student government, their candidates were recruited from the Eclipse, organizations in the Alliance, and students already serving or volunteering in student government, particularly those involved in the campaigns I describe above. Their organizing efforts paid off—they successfully captured nearly two-thirds

of the seats on student council. This gave them the opportunity to populate every influential and paid student government position with candidates from the Slate. Students won their electoral victory the night before the Eclipse's final protest before the Board of Governors. After the protest was over, the students excitedly told me about the results of the election the previous night. Student voter turnout is relatively low, and positive press coverage in the campus newspapers made several activist leaders into household names. The student body's liberal political leanings was likely another reason the Slate was so successful.

While the Slate won an overwhelming victory, they would have to wait until the end of the school year to elect their members to specific positions in student government when the new student government convened for the first time in early May. At State University, students are elected to student council and then the council votes internally to fill its various executive offices and chairs of government sub-committees.

Once the campus-wide elections were over, however, the group encountered two interrelated problems. First, students who had no affiliation prior to the election attempted to align themselves with the Slate in hopes of being elected to influential positions on government committees. Before and after the election, the Slate intentionally remained open, allowing anyone to join at any time. This made it easier for new members to join and participate in what was happening in the organization. Many students I spoke with would later interpret this as "infiltration" by entitled student government insiders who felt threatened by the success of an outside, grassroots movement:

That's what it boils down to—people saw the Slate as a threat to their leadership, to their legitimacy, to their autonomy. So they had to do something to protect their own leadership.

—Angela, Student

Second, gendered tensions began to emerge within the Slate. A group of women, many of them women of color, formed a caucus that included members and non-members of the Slate, and these women expressed frustration about misogyny in student government in general, and the behavior of certain male members of the Slate in particular. These tensions came to a head at a Slate meeting two days before the new government held its leadership elections, one of the last weekends of the semester. The most coveted positions in student government come with power—particularly over the government’s multi-million dollar budget—but also with tuition stipends. Slate activists were hoping to use student government and its resources to further their cause and to have paid positions—including the position of chair—that would free them from their part time jobs, enabling them to dedicate more time to their activism. There were two candidates running for chair—Isaiah, the student who organized the solidarity march in November and a key leader of the Eclipse, and Mariah, a woman of color who was currently serving in student government. During the discussion at the final Slate meeting, Sydney brought forward allegations that Isaiah had committed multiple sexual assaults. While the specific nature of these allegations did not come out, it was enough to end any chance Isaiah had of being elected chair. As a result of the allegations, Mariah was elected and the student activist network split down the middle. The accusations went public in a hastily and confusingly written article in one of the campus’ newspapers. The reputation Isaiah and the Eclipse built over the course of the school year was irreparably damaged.

The powerful network of student activists fractured. On one side, students blamed the conflict on the male students who were oblivious to the ways their actions were impacting women in the movement and who were shielding their friend from the consequences of his

actions. On the other side, the remnant of the Eclipse interpreted the accusations as an attempt to undermine a grassroots movement that threatened to disrupt the power of the campus' political insiders. One student named Jamie described it to me this way:

It was just, it's just, the establishment verses the grassroots, like, mobilization. I think, a lot of things we've discussed amongst ourselves is that this is just a microcosm of a broader sociological pattern of like where you see Hillary Clinton and Bernie Sanders feuding over who's gonna have control of the Democratic Party now. So it's just like, it is happening on the state level as well and now just at smallest levels, locally it's happening as well.

Over time, I learned that the SGA staffers and alumni, who continued to work with what remained of the Eclipse, fostered this interpretation. All of the SGA staffers were student government alum and had served during similar periods of racial tension in student government on their respective campuses. I learned that sexual assault allegations had been levied at those times as well. Members of the Eclipse saw a pattern of using sexual assault allegations to undermine grassroots student movements. From their perspective, student government staffers and the Division of Student Life (student government is situated within the division) was complicit in destroying Isaiah's reputation.

Two important consequences emerged as a result of the schism. First, the Slate's monopoly over student government was disrupted, and those aligned with the Eclipse and Isaiah moved into an antagonistic position against Mariah and her allies. I saw these tensions play out when the government reconvened in the fall, and it was striking to see a group of mostly male students, most of whom were students of color, challenge the leadership of women of color who, despite their personal differences, largely had the same goal of using student government as a

vehicle for promoting racial justice on campus. This made it difficult for students with ties to both sides, which wanted to see their progressive racial agenda move forward:

I feel stuck in the middle is what I'm saying. Cause like, I do identify with, I'm not even gonna say I identify with both sides cause like, we're all student council, but I identify, like I understand both sides of, I don't want to say the argument because there's really no argument, but I get where both people are coming from, where both sides are coming from. And it's hard to like, like, I just want to tell people like, hey, just shut up for a second and just listen to them. Like, if you listen to them for five minutes you'll realize that y'all have more in common than apart because what I do like about this council is that we all want to get the same things done.

—Casey, Student

In fact, Mariah, who had not been a public activist that year, became increasingly outspoken about racial inequality on campus and the administration's failure to adequately address the problem. And, despite this infighting, the student government did pass resolutions put forward by former Eclipse members, including a Black Lives Matter-inspired bill to increase police transparency on campus.

Second, the schism also pushed those aligned with Isaiah and his friends to collaborate with people outside student government, including the CDO. In the past, these students had a complex and at times contentious relationship with the CDO, as he was often the spokesperson for the administration's response to their activism. They also became increasingly connected to outside activists and students on other campuses, forming a new organization called the State Student Coalition. The SSC was their attempt to revive the SGA, and they organized a training

that fall with progressive, statewide activists in order to get students involved in voter turnout efforts for the November elections.

It appeared that the two sides had formed an uneasy truce, but then Sydney organized a campaign to get Isaiah removed from student government. Students spoke out against Isaiah during the public forum portion of a meeting in October, where both the dean of students and president were in attendance. Ultimately, in a tense government meeting in early November, Isaiah publicly resigned. Toward the end of my fieldwork, I had a conversation with a student activist who reflected on the fallout of the accusations and resulting schism:

They don't really trust organizing spaces right now. Um, they don't really trust like, men right now. So it's difficult to, to do a, um, a lot of different things on campus. And all this ties into national conversations too, right? Like there's, nothing that we do regarding these issues that stands separate from somebody being killed by police on a national level or um even with sexual assault, is how sexual assault has played out in the current election, right? That's all tied into it and it makes people feel more unsafe and they trust you a little less because of what happened.

—Sabrina, Student

This is not to suggest that organizing and activism came to a standstill. Another high profile “hate and bias incident” occurred at a sporting the following fall, reigniting the tensions that had flared up the previous spring. The institution’s response to this incident, coupled with Donald Trump’s election, reenergized student protesters, as the Eclipse-aligned student government members continued to press forward progressive and at times controversial policies, such as a resolution inspired by the pro-Palestine movement to have U.S. universities divest from companies with ties to the Israeli government and a bill demanding the state provide reparations

in the form of guaranteed financial aid for Black state residents. These were controversial bills passed after heated debates, which hampered more systematic efforts to pass progressive legislation. Conflicts dragged on as one Eclipse leader was impeached from a committee and another resigned their seat on Student Council. While new student leaders and organizations emerged, the campus never again achieved the peak activism it saw during the spring of 2016.

Understanding the Student Movement

Rethorizing Student Activism

Student activism has long been a subject of historical and sociological inquiry. Historians of student activism in the U.S. tend to focus on the 1960s and 70s, particularly the Civil Rights and Black Power movements (e.g., Biondi, 2012; Cohen & Snyder, 2013). Historical accounts reveal that student activism is as old as universities themselves (Boren, 2001; Broadhurst, 2014). What these accounts demonstrate is that student protest is normal rather than aberrant, and can be a positive and creative force for change on campus (Anderson, forthcoming; Martin, 2014; Rhoads, 2009). Most useful here are more recent accounts of student activism in the 80s, 90s, and early 2000s, when students across the country engaged in a variety of struggles in order to build more just and inclusive campuses. These struggles led to the creation of ethnic studies programs and identity-based student centers and helped increase the number of minoritized faculty on campus (Rhoads, 1998, 2016). As a result, these movements fundamentally shifted the relationship between institutions and minoritized students.

But, despite these policy and programmatic shifts, inequity persists. As I argue in chapter two, diversity as we know it is the product of compromise between progressive movements, conservative opponents to affirmative action, the courts, and campus administrators (Rhoads, Saenz, Carducci, 2005). While the student protesters of today are the direct beneficiaries of these

previous movements, recent protests and the events to which they are responding signal that universities largely failed to address the underlying causes of inequality on their campuses.

Sociological studies of student activism are largely preoccupied with uncovering the determinants of student activism. Scholars tend to center either students' internal motivations and personal histories (e.g., Pascarella, Salisbury, Martin, & Blaich, 2012; Stake & Hoffman, 2001; Winston, 2013) or the external and institutional factors that make activism possible or likely (e.g., Barnhardt, Sheets, & Pasquesi, 2015; van Dyke, 1998). This study corroborates more recent shifts in the field that demonstrate how social networks play a fundamental role in facilitating student activism by linking similar-minded students to supportive staff and resources that sustain student movements (Biddix & Park, 2008; Crossley, 2008; Crossley & Ibrahim, 2012; Kezar, 2010). This research highlights the important role that faculty and staff play in supporting and advocating for student activists, complicating the very notion of what we mean by 'student' protest movements.

I extend these insights by demonstrating that these social networks reach far beyond any one individual campus, both into the community and into larger social movements like Black Lives Matter as well as to other campuses. I also reframe this particular student protest movement as an institutional project, one of a number of such projects attempting to transform the institution according to particular ideological conceptions about diversity. What unifies a project are a shared ideological conception of diversity and modes of action designed to leverage that ideology into institutional transformation. While a project depends on participants for access to institutional supports and channels for advocating change, they are not dependent on any one person and thus individuals can and do move between projects. A project's ultimate success or failure depends on the ways in which these various projects intersect, overlap, clash, and

compromise. Student activism in this context occurred within a larger institutional conflict around diversity.

Care and Redress

Before analyzing the particular modes of action utilized by this project, it is important to delineate this institutional project from the one described in the previous chapter. The student protest movement would not have been viable without the emotional labor enacted under the project of care. The support staff and faculty provided enabled students to engage in activism, and this ranged from offering emotional support to distraught activists, to academic services to ensure their grades did not slip, to providing trainings with the explicit purpose of helping students develop skills and strategies for their activism. Ostensibly, both projects had similar goals—to ensure that State University is a welcoming and inclusive space for minoritized students, staff, and faculty. This is evidenced by the shared desire for cultural competency training. However, these projects differed both in terms of tactics and the relational shifts they hoped to achieve, and these differences brought the two projects into tension.

One major point of contention was over how to respond to majoritarian students who committed hateful or racist acts. While these sorts of incidents occurred throughout the campus' history, they became significantly more visible over the course of the spring semester. Major incidents happened with such frequency that how to deal with them became an urgent topic of debate among members of the campus community. Students were prone to believe the perpetrators should be severely punished, preferably by expulsion. Many minoritized staff I spoke with who worked directly with students bristled at this idea:

I believe if a student who commits a racist act or demonstrates racist behavior is automatically kicked out on their ear, I think all they are going to learn is, or all they are

going to have from that experience is bitterness, resentment, anger, frustration. And who is going to be directed at? ...it might also be directed at those who they were demonstrating bias against or said hateful things toward.

—Parker, Upper Administrator

Jonathan expressed similar sentiments (see pages 144-145). Harsh punishments were framed as antithetical to the educative mission of the institution. Not only that, staff and administrators were concerned it would further exacerbate the underlying problem by encouraging majoritarian students to resent and act out against minoritized students.

While students were clearly concerned about ensuring that majority students were educated, as evidenced by their demands for cultural competency training, they were also concerned with what they perceived to be unjust differences between how conduct violations were handled between majoritized and minoritized students. Here Darius describes his perception of these differences:

[There was] an incident where a white fraternity decided to hang a black doll from a tree, and they called it a lynching. That was in 2003. Now tell me racism doesn't exist, right? It's there. The fact that that white fraternity didn't even get expelled from campus, their chapter wasn't even removed from the campus, they're still here, but okay. Let me tell you. Let's say the Alphas did that, but for a white doll. Let say the Alpha Phi Alphas, a traditionally black fraternity went and hung a white doll from a tree. What would happen to them? The differences between those two, that bothers me.

The desire for punishment stemmed in part from the perceived disparities between how the institution responded to white students and students of color. On multiple occasions, I heard students of color say if they had done similar things to white students, they would lose their

scholarships. This difference was brought to the forefront when the student was arrested for her anti-racist graffiti. This occurred after several hate and bias incidents where, as best people knew, the perpetrators were not criminally charged. In demanding justice for the victims of hate and bias incidents, students were not simply clamoring for punishment, they were seeking to correct what they believed were patterns of institutional practice that were unjust toward students of color. This conflict was exacerbated by the fact that student records are protected under the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act, commonly referred to as FERPA, which protects the privacy of students' educational records. Had any of these students been arrested, those arrest records would be public, but such arrests never occurred. Federal law prohibits campus leaders from discussing the outcomes of the conduct violation process around these incidents unless the perpetrators themselves made public statements or gave the university permission to share details. As a result, students often assumed that the perpetrators were getting off easy. This is not to suggest that students were misguided in their criticisms, but rather they brought a different set of concerns and assumptions to the question of how to handle hateful acts.

Critiquing Diversity

The conflict between punishing and educating perpetrators of hate and bias incidents underscores one fundamental difference between the project of care and the project of redress. These differences intensified over the course of the year, both as a result of the hate and bias incidents and the internal dynamics within the project. While students maintained their call for cultural competency training, the urgency and nature of the demand changed as a result of the hate and bias incidents and the outpouring of frustration in the #ThisIsStateU conversation. Training was no longer sufficient—punishment was also necessary.

There are strong parallels between this institutional project and the national Black Lives Matter movement—justice for victims of racialized violence has been an essential animating force behind the nationwide demands for criminal justice reform. These similarities increased over the course of the year as students refined and changed their demands. While many demands were constant, such as calls for training and for mental health services, students began to make demands that would shift power and resources within the institution. This was no accident—this was the direct result of coaching students received from more experienced activists, such as the SGA staffers, faculty, and graduate student. The initial demand for cultural competency was later accompanied by a demand that the program be developed and supervised by a committee of students, staff, and faculty of color. This condition was increasingly included with other demands over the course of the spring semester, the goal being not only to secure policy changes, but also to shift institutional power toward minoritized people.

Students also increasingly made demands that would shift financial resources. Certainly implementing a system-wide cultural competency program would be costly, but students also demanded that the university eliminate the use of standardized testing scores in admissions and grow its need-based financial aid in order to increase the number of minoritized students on campus. They also lobbied against the institution's relationship with a statewide organization that used prison labor to supply furniture and other materials to the university. As one might expect, the university and the system were far more resistant to demands that would shift power and resources.

These demands entailed both an implicit and explicit critique of the discourse and practice of diversity in higher education. Students were far more likely to use the terms like

“racist” or “racism” than any other population I spoke with and they were deeply skeptical of the ability of official diversity policy to address larger systems of inequity and oppression:

[We] feel that the word diversity is tokenistic and that it is overused, outdated, etc. We feel that equity and inclusion better describes what we're trying to do, because equity isn't equality where everyone's equal. Equity is more like everyone's more like, because you can't give the same solution to all people if everyone's not on the same playing field already, so equity is trying to address that...

—Casey, Student

That's why we were calling for community control over the police because that's a power shifting demand where we could have some sort of accountability. I think if I could, yeah that's overall it. That comes to any issue that exists on campus. I think, yeah again, I just said this, but the superficial. To me, they're superficial attempts at using diversity to deal with the issues.

—Monique, Student

This is not to suggest that students or people who participated in this project never used the term diversity. But by and large, the term was perceived to have associations that did not resonate with what students were trying to accomplish. When students did use the term, they often disarticulated and rearticulated diversity as encapsulating the power-shifting, justice-oriented work in which they were engaged.

Their criticism of the language and practice of diversity is perhaps most evident in their response to the CDO's attempt to create a diversity mission statement, a process I describe in detail in the next chapter. In addition to the protests and activism I describe above, one tool students had long deployed was refusing to sign off on institutional diversity texts—years prior,

they had refused to endorse the campus' strategic diversity plan. When a draft of the diversity mission statement was sent to the racial justice committee late in the spring semester, they provided a variety of critical comments to the draft and the student government refused to endorse it. Those participating in the redress institutional project were the least likely to believe that diversity, as it was traditionally practiced and decontextualized, would help them achieve the kinds of institutional transformation they desired.

Rearranging the Protest Movement

By framing shared ideologies and modes of actions as institutional projects, my aim is to demonstrate that the shape of diversity policy and practice within a given institution is the result of the institutional antagonisms that arise as a result of competing visions of what a diverse and inclusive institution looks like. As I have stated before, diversity has no predetermined meaning or content; rather, that meaning is determined by hegemonic and counter-hegemonic articulations. No one more forcefully disrupted the dominant meanings associated with diversity than student activists—they challenged State University's self-ascribed reputation as a progressive institution, and its ability to effectively leverage diversity policy. They also upended the "diversity rationale" which justifies bringing "diverse" bodies onto campus because of the benefits they bring to majoritarian students. Students did so by refusing to engage in this labor if it was unpaid and by illuminating the personal costs minoritized students pay to do such work. Where the diversity rationale seeks to justify the presence of racial diversity on campus, student activists claimed not only that they *deserved* to be there but also that they were entitled to recompense for their negative experiences on campus. By refusing to assent to mere inclusion, they sought to radically restructure how power was organized on campus.

Much of this conflict played out as a struggle over meaning and language. As I describe in chapter two, two theorists—Ernesto Laclau and Stuart Hall—are particularly helpful in understanding the role language games play in hegemonic conflicts. While I have primarily used their work to illuminate how institutional projects interact, below I consider how their theories illuminate the internal and external dynamics that ultimately constrained and frustrated this project.

Stuart Hall (1988a, 1988b) formulated a theory of articulation in response to the rise of Thatcherism in 1970s and 80s Britain. Drawing on Gramsci's theory of hegemony, Hall recognized that Margaret Thatcher and her allies were able to take up the language, meanings, and sense-making practices of working class and marginalized people and to rework them in order to win their consent for policies that were not in their interest. He calls this process of taking up and modifying meaning as disarticulation and rearticulation. This theory underscores that dominance can only be achieved by addressing the concerns and meaning-making practices of marginalized groups.

Ernesto Laclau (1996, 2005) offers a strikingly similar analysis of the role language plays in winning consent, and combined with Hall offers a theoretically rich understanding of how the strategic manipulation of language can be used to win consent. Laclau is primarily concerned with what he calls "empty signifiers," words with no predetermined definition that can be invested with meaning in order to win consent. Leaders and movements win legitimacy by being the one to define such terms. One need only consider recent examples such as the Tea Party Movement's successful rearticulation of the meaning of "freedom" to see the utility in this theory.

At State University, the struggle was in determining the meaning of diversity, as student activists directly threatened the official and dominant meaning of this word and thus threatened institutional power relations. Members of the upper administration met this challenge two different ways. When directly challenged by activists and protesters, the president almost always responded by citing the campus' retention and graduation rates as proof that the campus was actually a good place for minoritized students. This rearticulated diversity as equalized educational outcomes rather than equitable experiences. He also sought to externalize the source of the problem (the lack of racial diversity in the state) and to portray himself as someone's whose hands were largely tied when it came to meeting specific demands. The president was much more accommodating of new policies and programs that could be linked to academic success and that did not threaten existing power relations. Other demands and projects were not deemed worthy of institutional support—as evidenced by the refusal to accommodate any demands for ceding control to communities of color on campus. I characterize the president's response in chapter ten as depoliticizing diversity in an attempt to contain the crisis. The president's rhetoric was focused on rearticulating the nature of the problem (outcomes rather than experiences) and thus the nature of the solution.

The CDO took a different tack and during the spring semester he began to utilize the language of the Eclipse's demands. The first time I witnessed this was during the campus-wide town hall meeting I describe in the second chapter. He used their demands to describe what the institution was already doing around the strategic diversity plan, effectively disarticulating and rearticulating the students' demands in ways that disinvested them of their radical critique, a practice that has been observed in other studies of student activism (Hoffman & Mitchell, 2016). The campus' strategic diversity plan was never designed to restructure institutional relations by

giving minoritized staff, faculty, and students oversight of campus policy and programs. From the very beginning, students described these strategic plans as a failure and demanded that the system and institution evaluate its plans. The CDO spoke of unifying messaging, vocalizing commitment, and improving campus climate, but students demanded justice for ongoing symbolic and physical violence. Even a cursory reading of these two projects reveals different ideological commitments and divergent modes of action. Where the president primarily rearticulated the nature of the problem on campus, the CDO rearticulated the solution. Based on his public rhetoric, his assessment of the negative climate and experiences on campus were much closer to those of the students (he likely experienced these negative effects directly as a Black faculty member), but he sought to advance change through the established practice of implementing a strategic diversity plan.

While the president and CDO rearticulated the problem and its solution, the university communications department rearticulated who was engaged in advocating for change. Communications staff reported on the protests throughout the year. For example, the day after the original Eclipse march in November, the campus website featured a homepage story covering the protest. The story included the following statement from the president:

Here in Union City, last night's Eclipse March brought together hundreds of Foxes of all races and ethnicities. It was a powerful example of our community united to support those at Mizzou, fighting to end racism and pressing for improvements in our own institutional efforts. At State University, we are proud of our long history of activism and dedication to equity for marginalized groups. It is part of who we are and we have accomplished much through the hard work of many. But at the same time, we recognize

that there is much more work to be done. We seek to address these inequities in partnership with students, faculty, staff alumni, and community members.

What is striking about this article is the repeated use of an inclusive but ambiguous “we.” The protest is represented as something “we” as a university did rather than a group of students protesting *against* the university. While on a superficial level it is admirable that the university would celebrate student activism, a deeper analysis is far more troubling because it recognizes the significance of the university claiming to be a part of a protest movement that is protesting itself. Similar coverage throughout the year represented students’ efforts as belonging to a collective “we”—rearticulating not only what their activism means but who was doing the activism.

Endless Meetings

Rearticulating student protesters was a central strategy for publicly responding to student activists, both in print and in public forums. Campus leaders relied on a different tactic when engaging students face-to-face. Executive leaders used meetings with student activists strategically in an attempt to diffuse tensions and placate students. These meetings were an opportunity for the president, CDO, and dean of students to demonstrate responsiveness to student protesters, much in the same way they responded to #ThisIsStateU—by saying “we’re listening.” Elsewhere I have characterized this strategy as “thin responsiveness”, using overtures to dialogue as a substitute for engaging in substantive action (Anderson, forthcoming). The consequence of this approach is that students often exhausted themselves, much as I describe of staff members in the previous chapter. Activism is, after all, exhausting work, and students balanced their political involvement against their school and work commitments. Students were aware of this dynamic:

Monique: It's hard though. Yeah man, I don't know. All I do know is that I keep fighting. I fight with people who want to fight. But you get tired while fighting. And also you want to win the fight. You don't want to just keep going rounds and rounds and rounds.

Kirk: You'd like to land a knockout.

Monique: Right. Go into the corner, the ring, get your Vaseline, and get all done up to go back. Trying to win.

Student activists often view administrators as barriers to change (Ropers-Huilman, Carwile, & Barnett, 2005), a sentiment echoed by the students in my study. The students I encountered worried “administrators” as an abstract category were trying to run out the clock on the school year, knowing that the movement would be unable to sustain itself over the summer. And while there may be some truth to this fear, I suggest that more was going on than simply delaying action. The thin responsiveness of the president in particular to certain “power shifting demands” is the other side of the coin to the task of winning consent. While certain demands were allowed to die, the president and CDO also sought to persuade students that they were being responsive to their demands both by engaging with students through ongoing meetings and by rearticulating what it meant to be an inclusive university and the path toward becoming one.

When Projects Collapse

But what of the internal conflicts within the project itself? While there was significant resistance from members of the administration, the ultimate collapse of the project was spurred by conflicts between the activists themselves. Laclau’s analysis of language and hegemony is useful here as well. In *On Populist Reason*, Laclau (2005) demonstrates that social movements are constituted in and through difference. Successful movements are able to form linkages between the demands of various groups, what he calls a “chain of equivalence” that binds these

groups together in a unified cause. Once again, language plays an important role in this process, as certain signifiers must come to stand for and organize the various groups that form the movement. The empty signifier allows a diverse movement to become an “us.”

It is tempting to frame the student protests of recent years as unified movements. Scholarly and professional discourse often frames minoritized students as if they are one group. What I have attempted to demonstrate above is that this particular institutional project was a collective of various groups, organizations, actors, and demands that constituted a heterogeneous and at times, eclectic mix. Not only were there differences between male- and female-identified students and so-called government insiders and outsiders, but also between campus and community activists, the various student groups, new student activists and more seasoned veterans. Discursively, diversity is a homogenizing force, collapsing distinctions into simple terms like ‘minority’ or ‘underrepresented’ or even, simply, ‘diverse.’ Diversity establishes chains of equivalence that are constructed rather than given.

Isaiah and the Eclipse were prominent public faces of that movement, their demands binding together the chain of equivalence. Maintaining that movement was a struggle. Many activists I spoke with talked about the struggle of keeping their peers engaged:

People are more focused about the thing that get us the media attention, things that can get a spotlight, not the strategy, incorporating other people who want to be a part of it. Yeah, I think it's a lot of ... I don't even know what to call it. I just think right now we're at a place where we're not very sustainable, and that's one thing I fear, is that this isn't going to be sustainable just because I don't think people are willing to open this up enough with the same intensity that they would want to go protest a board of governors meeting.

—Jayden, Student

What the student is attempting to describe here is the difficulty of keeping one's peers engaged when activism moves beyond public demonstrations and marches. But on a deeper level, this quote illustrates how difficult it is to maintain an institutional project. Projects are not born, they are built, and they require upkeep to sustain.

What occurred at the end of the semester was the collapse of the chain of equivalence binding together the various factions of the student movement. The set of organized relations comprising the project disbanded. While these activists persisted in their work, attempts to organize broad coalitions like the Alliance were not successful, despite efforts to reconstitute the network. As a result of the vacuum, new groups and student leaders arose, as is often the case anyway since the undergraduate population turns over every year. Even so, old organizations persisted—the Eclipse continued to organize and work with groups in and outside of campus that were not antagonistic toward Isaiah.

Neither the accusations against Isaiah nor the collapse of the protest movement is ultimately surprising. While there is an institutional infrastructure designed to support activism in student government and the Multicultural Student Union, these structures were more or less at odds with the rest of the university. The staff members who offered these supports were used by the president and executive leadership to monitor students' activities but were largely shut out of policy-making decisions. As I have already demonstrated, the individuals most involved in supporting and caring for these students were themselves exhausted. As I will continue to elaborate in subsequent chapters, much of the institutional response to students was designed to contain and deflect their activism rather than foster it. For now, I turn to an institutional project that in many ways was the most removed from the project of redress, the project of commitment.

VIII Commitment

Introduction

State University is an institution of tens of thousands of students, staff, and faculty. The individuals who populate and move within the diversity apparatus are spread out across the nearly 850-acre campus and out into the community. The only place that regularly brought these actors together was diversity committee meetings. The following exchange took place at a fall meeting of the chairs of the campus' various college and unit-level diversity committees. This committee was preparing for a gathering the following month that would also include the Campus Climate Committee and the Diversity Officers' committee.

Chief Diversity Officer: The next agenda item is—what should we talk about at this joint meeting? I've already mentioned the statement. We might be ready to shop it around. Do we focus on policy recommendations?...What are your thoughts?

[Long pause.]

Chelsea: Ways to coordinate efforts between units and divisions.

CDO: Can I challenge you to tell me more?

Chelsea says its resources, etc. Everything.

Kara talks about the Campus Climate Committee chairs being very task oriented. She describes the working groups taking on individual things from the diversity framework. She suggests that this group could maybe form subcommittees.

CDO: What are the key challenges we want to solve?

Michelle: It's always the same people engaging in the conversation.

Chief Diversity Officer: Amen.

Michelle: There's a lot of great people on this campus who aren't engaged in this conversation.

—Fieldnotes, November 2015

This exchange encapsulates one of the key dynamics that came to characterize the third institutional project, which focused on fostering belief in and commitment to diversity. Michelle utilizes a sense-making practice that was common throughout this project—drawing a line between diversity workers and the rest of campus to frame the problem of diversity at State University. Many of the diversity workers I encountered throughout my research utilized these kinds of us vs. them framings, arguing that the problem was not enough people were engaged in and committed to diversity. The CDO's response—saying “amen”—illustrates how these framings were often infused with spiritual or religious significance.

This institutional project was defined by its participants' shared belief that diversity—as an abstract, and often ill-defined concept that was assumed more often than defined—could remake State University into a more just and inclusive institution. What prevented this from happening was the general lack of commitment and participation by the rest of campus in general and executive leaders in particular. Thus, the project's primary purpose was to secure the commitment of the unconverted, to ensure that it wasn't “the same people engaging in the conversation.” What makes this project unique from the ones I explore in other chapters is the way in which it centered attachment as a principle concern.

While there were dozens of local and campus-wide committees that engaged in diversity work, three in particular were key to carrying this project forward: the Campus Climate Committee, the Diversity Committee Chairs, and the Diversity Officers. Many of these individuals were not necessarily full-time diversity workers—they were staff and faculty who

volunteered their time for these committees. As a result, these committees were populated by both full-time diversity workers as well as other people who were committed enough to diversity to take on their committee work as an additional responsibility. The later group tended to be further removed from the daily realities of minoritized students and this is a defining difference between the project of care and the project of commitment. Where both projects mobilized around an ideology of care, the project of commitment did so within spaces few students frequented. Oftentimes the only student present was one of the CDO's interns whose role was to take notes, not to participate.

The individuals who participated in this project were committed to fostering change, but these committees and their members were structurally marginalized and had little if any power to actualize their vision. In order to remedy this situation, they sought both to increase their influence as policy-makers and advisors and to secure institutional commitment by creating a diversity mission statement for the university, goals which they were only partially able to achieve. As a result of being marginalized, committee members regularly turned their energies inward and engaged in the practice of—to use their words—“preaching to the choir” to make sense of what they were experiencing. This ritual reinforced their shared belief in and commitment to diversity and allowed them to persist despite of the challenges they regularly encountered in their work.

Using a set of concepts derived from affect theory (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010) to analyze data derived from meeting ethnography (Sandler & Thedvall, 2017; Schwartzmann 1987, 1989; Sprain & Boromisza-Habashi, 2012) among a variety of diversity committees, I demonstrate how institutional projects entail an emotional attachment to particular objects, which seemingly promise to help individuals construct the institutional worlds they desire. “Preaching to the

choir” then becomes an important ritual that allowed diversity workers to make sense of themselves, their work, and their relation to other diversity workers in a context where their institutional project was constantly being undermined. While preaching to the choir is perhaps necessary to sustain structurally marginalized diversity workers, it had the unintended consequence of shaping and limiting actors’ ability to question whether diversity as it is currently conceived and practiced is worthy of their affective attachments and able to realize what it promises. To bring this project into relief, I compare these committees to others who were oriented toward particular policy initiatives or communities rather than toward “diversity” as an abstract ideal. In concluding, I also consider how this project is linked to and reinforces the institutional project of effectiveness, which I consider in the following chapter.

Committees at State University

Committees are an enduring feature of daily life in large, bureaucratic organizations (Schwartzman, 1989) and State University is no exception. There are dozens upon dozens of shared governance and non-shared governance committees on campus. Much of the campus’ diversity apparatus is institutionalized in and through committees and I spent a significant amount of time in the field attending committee meetings. These committees played an important role in bringing together spatially diffuse diversity workers, students, staff, faculty, and administrators. If not for committee meetings, many of these actors would have little opportunity or incentive to meet outside of the events hosted by the CDO’s office.

As I stated in Chapter 4, it is impossible to understand the culture and politics of State University without an appreciation of student, faculty, and staff shared governance. Shared governance is widely revered as both means and end—in order for a project to be perceived as legitimate, it must first be recognized as the product of shared governance practices. When the

president and other upper-level administrators implemented policy changes without shared governance input, this was usually considered adequate grounds for resisting and, in some cases, overturning the policy. But while shared governance was widely revered, the attachment to shared governance was not universal—a few of the participants from my study argued that shared governance did not adequately serve the needs of students, staff, and faculty of color.

The focus of this chapter is on the diversity workers who participated in the Campus Climate Committee (CCC), the Diversity Officers' Committee, and the Committee for the Chair's of the localized diversity committees. Later in the chapter, I will contrast these bodies with the Women's Issues Committee, the LGBTQ Issues Committee, and the student government Racial Justice Committee, which made sense of their work and operated in very different ways. The Campus Climate Committee is a true shared governance committee, in that it includes students (who almost never attended), academic and non-academic staff, and faculty. Shared governance at State University invests the most power in faculty, and thus faculty tend to dominate shared governance committees. Staff and mid-level administrators, many of whom have a variety of non-diversity related duties, comprise a majority of the membership in the Diversity Officers and Diversity Chairs committees. While not every Diversity Officer does diversity work full time, many of the diversity committee chairs had no diversity-related job duties. Rather, they volunteered time to lead their local diversity committee. Most members of these three committees were people of color and white women. While the CDO and his staff convened the Diversity Officers and Chairs, the CCC was supposed to operate in an advisory and collaborative capacity with the Chief Diversity Officer, and so the CDO and his staff attended CCC meetings as ex-officio members.

Ostensibly, these three committees existed to recommend and shape institutional policy, to share information, and to help coordinate the campus' diversity efforts. In reality, these committees were structurally isolated and had little influence over campus policy. Outside the world of diversity work, few people knew about these committees and committee members often did not know about or understand the role of the other diversity committees. Thus, when new opportunities arose to recommend policy changes amidst the crisis during spring semester, these bodies struggled to exert influence over the policy-making process or its outcomes.

Securing Commitment

Preaching to the Choir

Early in my fieldwork, I was struck by how often I heard diversity workers use the idiom “preaching to the choir” to describe what happened when diversity workers convened in committees and spaces like the annual Diversity Conference. The expression refers to the practice of persuading people with whom you already agree, a variation on the older phrase, “preaching to the converted.” The saying simultaneously accomplishes two tasks—it draws a boundary between two groups—believers and non-believers—and infuses that division with sacred meaning.

On a cold, gray day toward the end of the fall semester, the CDO convened the first joint meeting of the Campus Climate Committee, the Diversity Committee Chairs, and the Diversity Officers. More than fifty of us, along with many of the CDO's staff, gathered in one of the campus' more luxurious conference rooms in the College of Business. The purpose of the meeting was not just to increase ties between these committees; it was to begin a major project that would occupy the CDO and his staff for the next year. The CDO decided the campus was in

need of a diversity mission statement that articulated the university's commitment to diversity, and this group would help launch that project.

Addressing the assembled crowd, the CDO described why the campus needed a statement explicating the institution's commitment to diversity. He told a story about when he first applied for his position as CDO—he asked for a clarifying statement of the campus' philosophy and values on the issue of diversity but was never given an answer. There are many celebratory statements on campus, he said, but we need to have accountability (without specifying who is being held accountable to what). He argued that his office was best positioned to develop such a statement and to then garner “buy in” from the rest of the campus community.

The entirety of the meeting was spent engaging in a rather confusing brainstorming exercise. In small groups, we generated a list of terms and phrases that best characterized the “mission, vision, and values” the university has toward diversity. I participated in the activity with a small group of people drawn from each of the committees. A member of our group repeatedly complained that we were just “preaching to the choir.” In response, one of CDO's staff said that the statement was designed to address this problem.

There were many other interesting conversations and debates that took place over the course of the meeting, but the overarching concern was about how to enact institutional change. Committee members suggested it was important to tie diversity to the campus' research and teaching mission, while others debated whether faculty or staff played a more central role in achieving policy change. At one point in the conversation, one scholarship program director declared “We are the converted” and suggested that the rest of the campus would need to be shown that engaging with diversity was in their self interest and would benefit their work.

The use of religious language to frame their identities as diversity workers was striking given that State University is a public university without any formal religious ties or history. If anything, based on the campus' history and political leanings, one would expect campus employees to draw on the language of labor power and leftist politics, using terms like "solidarity." This is not to suggest that every diversity worker framed their work using religious language. However, many of the Black diversity workers I encountered had strong ties to local Black churches; in fact, several of these churches were key community partners with the CDO's office. And yet, I never witnessed anyone contest or challenge the "preaching to the choir" metaphor or the use of religious language.

While it was common for participants to use us vs. them framings, I almost exclusively heard the idiom of "preaching to the choir" during observations when diversity workers were together. In interviews, diversity workers were more likely to make either direct or indirect comments about their coworkers and peers, and the critique was often more about a lack of cultural competency than a lack of commitment. Comments about preaching to the choir were made as a direct observation of who was present in particular spaces at particular times. It suggested that conversations geared toward changing the institution were not having the desired effect because they were only reaching those who already believed in and were committed to diversity.

The complaint also pointed toward a deeper problem besides the fact that most people were not engaged on issues of diversity—namely that diversity workers are marginalized by institutional configurations of power and have little access to the resources and decision-making processes needed to realize their vision on a grander scale. The CDO was their connection to the upper administration, but the CDO position at State University is not a part of the president's

executive cabinet. The office controls a relatively small budget, only a tiny portion of the over millions of dollars the university spends on its diversity initiatives. While the president and provost relied heavily on the CDO to help them respond to the crisis in the spring, it was clear that the president and CDO had different visions for the university, differences I elaborate in the next two chapters. Likewise in their respective colleges and units, my observational and interview data suggest that these diversity committees and diversity officers by and large did not have a significant influence on policy at the local level. Thus one of the major challenges this project encountered was attempting to actualize its vision at a higher level in the institution. In order to do so, actors attempted to secure a commitment from the institution by drafting the institutional statement and to secure influence by attempting to forge a closer relationship with the president and provost.

Securing Commitment

The process of drafting and approving the diversity mission statement began with the joint committee meeting and continued for almost a year. From the beginning, the CDO made it clear that the statement would need “buy-in” (a phrase he often used in relation to the statement) from the four shared governance bodies and executive leadership, the only way such a statement could have the desired effect of institutionalizing the university’s commitment to diversity. It is important to note that State University has two internally well-known statements, one pertaining to the campus’ commitment to serving the community (referred to as the State University Compact) and the other to the university’s commitment to pursuing truth. Much as the meaning of diversity is constantly subject to rearticulation, these statements are also commonly mobilized to justify a range of competing and conflicting policies, initiatives, and daily practices, and the CDO’s hope was to create a similarly important and widely utilized statement.

The first phase of the process entailed organizing two working groups, one made up of members of the Campus Climate Committee and the other of Diversity Officers and Diversity Committee chairs. I was able to secure access to the Campus Climate Committee working group. Observing a small group opened up an opportunity to participate in conversations in ways that were rarely possible when observing larger committees. As the only student present in the room, I was regularly drawn into conversations and debates. When the working group met for the first time in late February, I was surprised to discover that one of the assistant chief diversity officers had already created a first draft of the statement and our job was to help workshop the language (See Appendix B for drafts of the statement).

Our working group met several times over the course of the next six weeks. We were not given any clear direction on how to provide feedback on the statement, and so the group spent its time debating which terms to use when enumerating categories of difference, which aspects of the statement would be political contentious, how to link the statement to various other institutional statements, and wordsmithing the language provided by the CDO's office. The following exchange took place during the second meeting, and captures the kinds of debates that occurred while revising the statement (all names are pseudonyms except mine):

Jennifer: Alex raised the issue of including state agriculture, but I am worried that if we start naming one industry, we have to start including others, like business.

Sarah: Maybe he has another issue we can address more generally?

Jennifer: We can think beyond the space of campus.

Sarah: That's the State University Compact.

Jennifer: I'm concerned about raising the issue of citizenship.

Sarah & Kirk clarify that we were trying to address the issue of undocumented students.

Jennifer: How do we clarify this to make it clear what we're saying?

Kirk: Can we add language about documentation status?

Jennifer: That is a lightning rod. People at the capital will read this.

Alex arrives, and we get him up to speed on conversation. He suggests using both country of origin and citizenship.

Jennifer & Sarah: Country of origin is more inclusive?

Kirk points out that Alex was suggesting both terms. We go back and forth and Jennifer suggests we use both and then see how people react to it.

Jennifer raises the issue of spirituality, but we begin to debate if spirituality misses something. Alex suggests using "faith communities". Kirk raises the issue of the anti-Semitic incident [that took place in a campus residence hall] and asks if spirituality would capture this. Sarah says it wouldn't.

Jennifer asks which categories are covered under state statute.

—Fieldnotes, February 2016

This conversation reflects many of the challenges of moving from preaching to the choir to making statements that generate buy-in from the rest of the campus. Categories and terms are themselves contentious. Generational differences arose over which terms to use, at one point leading to an extensive debate about whether to use race, ethnicity, or color. Certain terms also carried legal weight (i.e., those protected by state anti-discrimination law) while others had no legal protections under state law (e.g., the undocumented).

A major challenge was producing a statement that articulates a controversial set of diversity values in a way that pleases a broad set of stakeholders. The CDO wisely realized that a statement created solely by his office would receive little "buy-in," and he stated on multiple

occasions that receiving collective support was one of the fundamental goals of the project. However, the stakeholders the group envisioned when making edits extended beyond shared governance and beyond campus. The group also considered how the business community and the conservative state government would react to the statement without ever being told to do so. This shaped group members' willingness to make politically risky moves, such as explicitly naming undocumented people.

In April, our team joined with the second working group of Diversity Officers and Diversity Committee Chairs. Early in the meeting, a quick decision was made to use the language they had drafted, thus largely jettisoning the comments and revisions the CCC group made. The merged group then began to continue the process of wordsmithing. Similar conversations ensued with this group:

Aurora: Who are we talking about with citizens?

We discuss why the word citizens was included, and Aurora says it's drawn from the strategic framework. We confirm that the text uses the term "citizen."

Brittney: Does that exclude undocumented students?

Helen: It does exclude undocumented students.

We discuss the term citizen.

Karen: How about we just say "people"?

Aurora: There's no political implication.

Amy: But again, the campus vision does say "citizen."

Brittney: That's may be an issue to raise. [Reading from a draft:] "State University strives to lead and fulfill its public mission by creating a welcoming, empowering, and inclusive community, opening new forms of access to people from every background, and serving

the state and the world.”

—Fieldnotes, April 2016

Other issues arose as the combined group continued to draft the statement. They wrestled with how to write the statement that was not framed as if the university already realized a perfectly diverse and inclusive institution, discussing negative aspects of campus history as well as current racial tensions. Despite the objection, the statement produced in this meeting reads as if the moment of fulfillment has already come.

As our joint group wrapped up its work, the statement passed on to an advisory group composed of representatives from each of the shared governance bodies. While I was not present for those meetings, the latest draft of the statement circulated at a meeting of the student government racial justice committee later that month. The student committee chairs represented student government on the CDO’s statement advisory team. They brought the statement back to their committee and passed it around during a meeting, asking for edits and inputs. The co-chair called the statement “surface level” and the group as a whole provided extensive critical feedback on the draft. They took issue with the fact that the language made declarations that the students felt weren’t true. They also called the statement “passive” and said there needed to be more accountability. Despite their objections and critiques, the students’ names were listed at the bottom of the penultimate draft of the statement along with the names of the other people who participated in drafting the statement.

After collecting input from the advisory team, the statement passed on to the president and his advisors. The statement was finalized over the summer and read as follows:

Diversity makes State University strong, creative, and innovative. We recognize that each person contributes to our university and that their identity, experiences, beliefs, and skills

make our university better. We reaffirm that diversity contributes to our goals in attaining excellence in research, teaching, and outreach. We achieve our mission as a public university by creating a community that is welcoming and inclusive for all people, who will then in turn serve our state and world.

Once finalized, the CDO began working with the shared governance bodies to endorse the statement, which they did with the exception of student government.

Securing Influence

In April, the Campus Climate Committee was given a unique opportunity to move beyond “preaching to the choir” by meeting with the president and provost. According to the committee’s charter, these meetings were to be held twice a year but such a meeting had never before taken place. Not only did the president and provost not attend diversity committee meetings, it was rare for them to make more than a brief appearance at diversity-related events. Throughout my time observing the CCC, it had struggled to define its purpose and scope as a deliberative body, but this meeting had the potential to help the group reconstitute itself as a committee with influence over policy and decision-making.

The meeting took place on a warm, sunny April morning. Attendance at the meeting was surprisingly low—many of those in attendance were the CDO’s staff. After the assembled group took turns introducing themselves, the floor was turned over to a member of the sub-committee that planned the meeting. The faculty member explained to the president and provost that they had a proposal for how the committee could partner with senior administration. They wanted to find a way to move into a leadership role and to leverage the committee’s vision. Reading from the agenda, she noted that the committee wanted to be, “Doing everything we can, to get all the information and perspective we can, to build all the social capital and trust we can, to think-

through, to create, to be our best.” I furiously scribbled in my notebook, trying to keep up with the professor, but found myself at something of a loss as to what was being said. The meeting then took a brief and bizarre detour as a visiting staff member, who I had never seen before, gave a short history of the State University Compact. When she was done, the professor addressed the president and provost once more:

You have the world stage. It’s as the students say, “Go big or go home.” What’s the big idea here? We also want to be sure that the partnership was carefully crafted, but we’re launching it. We’re not behind or inventing it. We’re proposing: lets get ahead of this. Let’s go. Since this is a partnership, we left space for you to talk about what we should do. We were worried about reporting since [the CDO] and [Dean of Students] are in the know and report to you. The last thing I’ll point out, why would the CCC take this on? But in honor of people who worked on the committee for many years, this committee has done a lot of work to get to this.

—Fieldnotes, April 2016

She concluded her remarks by asking the president and provost if they thought this was a good idea or not. While I was not at all clear on what the idea was exactly, I knew the professor and the committee were hoping to partner with the president and provost to help the university become a leader in addressing campus climate issues. The whole time the committee members had been talking, the provost had been leaning forward, listening intently with his face in his hands. The president, in contrast, was slouched down in his seat, arms folded across his chest, at times furrowing his brow and covering his mouth with his hand.

The provost’s was the first to respond, asking for more information about the committee’s history. This sparked an extended discussion about when the committee was

created, what its relationship was to the group that wrote the campus' strategic diversity plan, and how it related to other shared governance diversity committees. I watched the CDO become visibly nervous as the conversation became increasingly circular. The CDO attempted to talk up the group, explaining how much he was relying on them to help craft the diversity mission statement. The leaders of the committee seemed to be on the defensive. Rather than discussing concrete plans for partnering with the president and provost, they spent most of the meeting explaining who they were and inadvertently airing some of their dirty laundry about their lack of clear purpose and the troubled relationship they had with the previous CDO.

After remaining mostly silent, eventually the president entered the conversation. After the group spent a significant portion of the meeting making a fairly confusing appeal to partner with the president and provost to help lead the campus' efforts to address climate, the president rebuffed their request:

What I'm hearing is that you want to work on strategy and that is [the CDO's] office's role. Strategy includes a lot, like messaging, policy, etc. Having a broader group to do this is a great role. There's a second piece I would love; maybe you don't see this as part of your role. There are climate groups in every college—trying to ensure those groups are charged and active. In a big decentralized institution, we need leadership. The challenge will look different in the different units. I think it would be helpful to have those conversations in the colleges. This would be a useful conversation.

—Fieldnotes, April 2016

By this point in the meeting, the opportunity to form a sustained partnership with the president and provost seemingly evaporated, although the two administrators agreed to meet with the committee again in the fall. While the dean of students offered to have the committee provide

input on her division's efforts to design cultural competency training, the president made a vague commitment to partnering on one or two ideas. The meeting ended without any clear progress in fostering a substantive partnership with the president and provost.

Diversity and the Affective Project

Committees as Affective Communities

It is tempting to judge these committees based on their ability to influence or direct policy change. Certainly this was a central way in which committees judged themselves. However, the significance of meetings is not whether they are able to accomplish their explicit goals, but rather the role they play in organizing relationships (Schwartzman 1987, 1989). Helen Schwartzman's original insight when she formulated an ethnography of meetings was that meetings are the place in which institutional relationships are enacted, performed, and transformed. Others have extended this original insight by demonstrating the role meetings play in creating communities and networks of governance, drawing together spatially and temporally diffuse actors (Campbell, Corson, Gray, MacDonald, & Brosius, 2014; Corson, Campbell, & MacDonald, 2014; Garsten & Sörbom, 2017). These communities are born out of a shared orientation toward particular problems and proposed solutions (Sanders, 2017). Seen through this lens, all meetings accomplish something or do some kind of work, but that work may have little to do with groups' professed reasons for meetings. Instead, meetings help to organize individuals in relation to each other, to organizations, networks, and policies.

Where this study extends the insights of the meeting ethnography literature is in illuminating the role that meetings play in cultivating affective attachments toward certain objects and away from others. This insight combines meeting ethnography with affect theory, which draws on the double meaning of affect—emotion and impact—to illuminate how

emotional encounters and attachments shape us and in turn animate our actions and influence on the world (Seigworth & Gregg, 2010). The relationships that meetings help constitute are communities with shared emotional attachments to what Sara Ahmed (2010) calls “happy objects.” Happy objects are defined by positive emotional associations. Promises attach themselves to these “objects of desire,” enticing us because they seem to be the key to achieving the good life, whether individually, institutionally, or socially (Berlandt, 2011). Happy objects are future oriented—our emotional attachments to them are predicated on something they promise to give us but that we have not yet received (Ahmed, 2010). Committee meetings are sites of encounter not only between people and particular objects, but they also help to constitute what Ahmed (2010) calls “affective communities,” groups with shared affective attachments toward particular objects, in this case diversity.

All institutional projects have an affective dimension in that they organize individuals with shared affective attachments toward particular objects and away from others. The project of care was defined by the emotional attachments diversity workers formed with minoritized students, while the project of redress was animated by its attachment to a particular vision of institutional justice. What makes this institutional project a fundamentally affective one is that the shared emotional attachment to diversity as an ideal was both its defining logic and constitutive of the modes of actions in which participants engaged. Emotion was central to both what they were doing and what they were hoping to accomplish.

While participants bemoaned that they were “preaching to the choir” because it signaled that people who needed to hear the message were not present, this practice accomplished something else—reinforcing their commitment to diversity in the midst of institutional policies

and daily practices that often did little to advance their cause or support their work. As Elizabeth Povinelli (2011) writes,

“Preaching to the choir is always undervalued. But, as a world-confirming strategy of address that performs solidarity and asserts righteousness, it is absolutely necessary to do. When an intimate public is secreted in its own noise, it rehearses affectively what the world will feel like when its vision gains mass traction” (p. 238).

While this attachment created certain problems, which I explore below, it solved others, by allowing these individuals to persist in their work despite the significant institutional obstacles they faced.

While the object of attachment is problematic, as I demonstrate throughout this dissertation, the element of community was invaluable given that diversity workers often carry out their daily work in isolation from each other. When framing the problem of diversity work on State University’s campus, one common theme that came up was the disconnect between people engaged in diversity work:

As you may know, one of the biggest challenges that you’ll see across, is that being on a decentralized campus, everybody is doing their own thing. So we’re not really communicating well.

—Sofia, Staff Member

I think the State University is a little bit behind um just seeing how, everyone knows about functional silos, but I feel like this university lives and breathes those functional silos and it’s unfortunate.

—Jonathan, Mid-Level Administrator

Not only did these committee spaces temporarily transcend institutional silos, they also provided opportunities for like-minded diversity workers to momentarily inhabit spaces with people who shared similar values and orientations toward diversity.

It also made it possible for these disconnected actors to organize in order to advance their institutional project. The diversity mission statement and the Campus Climate Committee's attempts to foster closer ties with the president and provost were oriented toward moving from preaching to the choir to preaching to the masses. Seen through any other lens, the institutionalization of a vague statement makes little sense—the statement is neither a concrete policy nor a commitment to move resources. However, when one considers the affective dynamic of diversity work and the perception that the rest of campus does not care about or is not committed to diversity, a declaration of commitment can seem like a substantive win.

The diversity workers in these committees were thoughtful, engaged, and capable people. They were not Pollyannaish about the institutional barriers that stood between them and the success of their work. Nor would I characterize their belief in diversity as some form of false consciousness. Every one of us becomes invested in objects that we believe will help us build the personal, institutional, or social worlds we desire. What affect theory helps to illuminate is how we become attached to objects that cannot fulfill their promises. Lauren Berlandt (2011) calls this a relation of “cruel optimism”:

“Whatever the experience of optimism is in particular, then, the *affective structure* of an optimistic attachment involves a sustaining inclination to return to the scene of fantasy that enables you to expect that *this* time, nearness to *this* thing will help you or a world to become different in just the right way. But, again, optimism is cruel when the object/scene that ignores a sense of possibility actually makes it impossible to attain the

expansive transformation for which a person or a people risks striving; and, doubly, it is cruel insofar as the very pleasures of being inside a relation have become sustaining regardless of the content of the relation, such that a person or a world finds itself bound to a situation of profound threat that is, at the same time, profoundly confirming” (p. 2).

The pleasure of being one of the choir helps to sustain an affective community even as the moment of realization never comes. One can have one’s status as a diversity worker affirmed even as institutional history and daily reality continually disconfirms the idea that diversity as it is currently conceived and practiced is a vehicle for institutional transformation. Such contradictions are constitutive of our attachments to happy objects.

Alternative affective communities. Not every diversity committee was engaged in this institutional project. In fact, it is illuminating to compare these three committees to some of the other committees I observed. The Racial Justice Committee in student government was deeply embedded in the project of redress that I describe in the previous chapter. They were highly critical of the notion of diversity and early in the school year they voted to drop the word “diversity” from their committee name. Students in general were often disaffected when it came to the official language of diversity, acting as what Lauren Berlandt (2010) calls “affect aliens” who disrupt and undermine the positive associations people have to the happy object of diversity. Because they wanted the institution to engage in particular kinds of corrective action, the institutional statement held little value for them, and thus they withheld their endorsement. While these two projects might seem similar on the surface, students by and large did not have the same positive emotional attachments to diversity as an abstract object. They had experienced too much at the university to be convinced that diversity was a vehicle for achieving a more just and inclusive institution.

These three committees also operated quite differently from the Women's Issues Committee and the LGBTQ Issues committee, the other major campus-wide diversity committees. These bodies were affectively oriented toward particular communities—women and LGBTQ people—rather than toward diversity as a whole. What defined these committees was their commitment toward addressing the unique needs of specific groups to which most of them belonged (however, male-identified people served on the Women's Issues Committee and non-LGBTQ identified people served on the LGBTQ Issues Committee). These committees tended to spend their time engaging in actions designed to alter specific policies and practices. For example, the Women's Issues Committee published reports that highlighted gendered disparities in tenure rates and the LGBTQ Issues Committee lobbied the university provide access to transgender health care. These bodies took an overtly activist approach designed to address particular institutional policies and practices rather than trying to change the campus' affective relationship to their community or population.

One common theme that came up in both interviews and observations is that many minoritized people felt that the term diversity, as it was commonly used at State University, did not apply to them and their group. Here, one mid-level administrator describes their experience participating in a sub-committee that helped to write the campus' strategic diversity plan:

[We] talked about diversity a lot but really what we were talking about is racial diversity. And, in the framework it does list out probably 8-10 marginalized identities and I often had to say, like, "When we say diversity, can we redefine this?" And people acted like I didn't know what diverse's definition was. I was really just asking that question because the only thing people talked about was race. And then with race, we really only talked about Black people.

—Sarah, Mid-Level Administrator

The idea that diversity was really just about race or mostly about Black people was a common critique that came up throughout my fieldwork. This critique addressed both the ways people deployed diversity in everyday conversation but also the ways diversity was represented through policy texts and the events convened by the CDO. The daily practice of diversity for many diversity workers did not always align with the ways diversity was represented, and so many diversity workers did not share the affective attachments that were evidenced by the three committees I describe earlier in this chapter.

Barriers to Affective Change

Universities are organized around a variety of interests, goals, and practices, an observation captured by the term “multiversity” (Kerr, 1963). Chris Shore (2010) refers to this phenomenon as the “schizophrenic university”—these interests are at sometimes contradictory and in competition with one another, such as when schools attempt to provide a classic, liberal education while also maximizing revenue and prestige. Another way to frame this phenomenon is that actors across the institution are oriented toward different objects—research, prestige, money, knowledge—that they believe will help the institution achieve its ideal state. Diversity workers have very little access to institutional resources or decision-making power with which to change this situation. They are structurally isolated, both individually and in committees. It is difficult to affect change when those with more power and resources are oriented toward other objects. Diversity, as a set of discourses and practices, is only one of many objects that vie for students, staff, faculty, and administrators’ affections. This is the condition that made preaching to the choir both likely and necessary to sustain diversity workers in their efforts.

The non-performative statement. The two stories I tell above—creating the institutional

statement and attempting to collaborate with the president—demonstrate what can go wrong when attempting to win over new converts to diversity. The explicit goal of the statement was to hold the institution accountable to fulfill its commitment to diversity. There is little evidence that the statement had any effect on policy or decision-making any more than a university's mission statement is consulted when university leaders create policy. Declarations of institutional value are performances rather than binding policy documents. The performance is achieved at least in part through subtle and overt forms of intertextuality. In drafting the statement, the working groups referenced and pulled languages from other mission statements, policy documents, and declarations like the State University Compact. These kinds of references create an air of authority and legitimacy, lent to each new statement by the previous one. In reality they form a long-running chain of self-reference, which as the old saying goes, is “turtles all the way down” with no discernible foundation or origin point. While these kinds of declarations are performances, they are also non-performative:

“In my model of the non-performative, the failure of the speech act to do what it says is not a failure of intent or even circumstance, *but is actually what the speech act is doing*. Such speech acts are taken up *as if* they are performatives (as if they have brought about the effects they name), such that the names come to stand in for the effects. As a result, naming can be a way of not bringing something into effect” (Ahmed, 2012, p. 117).

The non-performative nature of the statement of institutional commitment to diversity is evidenced by what was happening on the campus during the time the statement was drafted and endorsed. The statement developed as major student protests were occurring in response to the institution's failure to prevent and adequately respond to acts of hatred and bigotry, or even to

name them as such. Particularly for minoritized students, the statement did not resonate with their daily experience of campus, which is why they were so critical of the statement.

So how is it that this statement could be perceived as performing anything? The performativity of the statement was and is dependent on linking the statement to what the institution is already doing. Throughout *On Being Included*, Ahmed (2012) demonstrates how diversity becomes attached to objects that the institution already values. In the case of State University, this includes, as the statement names, “excellence in research, teaching, and outreach.” Diversity is hollowed out of the meaning ascribed to it by members of the choir and becomes attached to what the others value and are already doing. However, in this instance it is the very act of rearticulating diversity in terms that appeal to the community as a whole that the project undermined its ability to achieve change.

What is perhaps missing from Ahmed’s account is how the appearance of performativity is achieved through articulations of tense. Here I turn again to the insights offered by Elizabeth Povinelli (2011), who argues that social articulations of time are used to shape perceptions of social reality in ways that have significant material effects. The institutional statement relies on the present tense: Diversity *makes* us strong. We *reaffirm* our commitment. State University *achieves* its public mission. The statement exists in an ever present now. Because these achievements are occurring now, it forecloses a reflection on either the past or the future. Acknowledging an institutional past would entail addressing the ways in which the university has failed in its commitment to diversity and diverse people. This is the critique that came up in the joint working group but never made it into the statement—that the statement would need to be able to account for or at least not obscure the fact that in both the past and present, the university has and continues to fail to meet the needs of minoritized people. With no sense of the

future, there is no way to gauge whether or not the institution accomplishes what it declares in the statement.

This is linked to the articulation of an institutional, second-person plural. The university becomes an undifferentiated “we” that makes the statement and holds it to be true. A similar rhetorical maneuver was used to claim the student protest as something the entire campus embraced and participated in. Had the bullet points from the earlier versions of the statement been left in, the “we” would have been split, at least between the campus at large and executive leadership. The “we” of any college campus is constructed rather than given, but this statement assumes a “we” that is uniformly committed to valuing and welcoming all members of the campus community. Thus, the statement is once more revealed to be non-performative, but not only in the effect it names, but also the subject it creates.

Preaching to the administration. The opposite problem occurred when the Campus Climate Committee attempted to forge a collaborative relationship with the president and provost. An uninitiated bystander might have interpreted what took place as a lack of preparation for the meeting. The group clearly lacked a coherent argument about the problems the campus was facing and why and how their committee should take a leadership role in addressing them. But rather than this being a failure to plan, this was the inevitable result of speaking to the president and provost *as if they were members of the choir*. As an institutional sub-culture, diversity workers have been socialized into a particular set of cultural norms and practices, including ways of thinking and talking about diversity. As with any group, certain ideas and norms become given. Once this occurs, those implicit norms and ideas become less visible and intelligible to an outsider. The members of the CCC wrongly assumed that the president and provost were interested in institutional transformation, not only addressing the crisis on campus but

positioning the university as a national leader on diversity issues. This explains why there seemed to be little confusion between the committee members while the president and provost were baffled.

The committee used the form of address I have been calling “preaching to the choir” when they were, in fact, addressing the kind of congregates that only show up for major holidays. Even though they drew on the institutional discourse of the State Compact, nothing was framed in the language and values that either of the leaders prioritized. My extended participant observations revealed that these two administrators have a clear preference for the language of positivistic social science and empirically measurable outcomes. As they often reminded people, both the president and provost are social scientists. When it came to diversity, these leaders were primarily concerned with equalizing measurable outcomes, such as retention and graduation rates. In this particular conversation, their concern was with educational interventions for incoming students in order to reduce the number of hateful incidents on campus. Otherwise, diversity took a backseat to other institutional goals. The committee wrongly assumed that the president and provost were driven by the same values and commitments that informed their affective attachment to diversity. As a result, the president largely rebuffed their request to collaborate, encouraging them to focus their efforts on the school and college level and on coordinating other diversity committees.

This turned their diversity work back upon itself. Sara Ahmed (2012) describes this phenomenon as institutions putting up “brick walls” to segregate and isolate diversity work, but that metaphor is static, and misses the ways in which energies and efforts are channeled towards something rather than simply being contained. While it is clear that the president was not actually interested in collaborating with the committee, there was no explicit attempt made to

stop their efforts. Just like with student protesters, the drive to act cannot easily be diffused. Instead, those energies are directed in such a way as to make diversity work about engaging other diversity workers. This is evident in the two suggestions the president made about what the committee should be doing with their time—advising the CDO on policy and coordinating other campus diversity committees. Each of these suggestions makes other diversity workers the target of their efforts. It keeps diversity workers talking amongst themselves—continuing the practice of preaching to the choir. As a result, their efforts are not directed at either the administration or at their peers on campus. The president (and the governors) used a similar strategy with student protesters—they were encouraged to focus their efforts within the structures and processes of student government. As a result, these two dynamics—redirection and preaching to the choir—helped reinforce the pre-existing structures of diversity work within the institution. The CCC’s efforts were redirected towards other diversity workers and the committee was unable to accomplish its goal of becoming a campus leader in addressing diversity and climate issues.

Conclusion

All institutional projects entail some form of affective attachment. In each of the projects I detail in this dissertation, actors were mobilized by their emotional orientation toward particular objects (groups, policies, etc.) and away from others. What made the project of commitment unique is that those who participated in the project not only shared a common orientation toward diversity, but engaged in action in order to secure others’ affective attachment to diversity. Despite their efforts to win over new converts to diversity by writing a diversity mission statement and attempting to forge closer ties to the upper administration, these diversity workers remained institutionally marginalized. While the inward-facing emotional labor they performed through “preaching to the choir” helped them to persist despite these obstacles and setbacks, it

also made it harder to question whether or not diversity could provide the benefits it promised. This is not to suggest that affective attachments are either good or bad, warranted or unwarranted. Affective attachments to happy objects, however, are dangerous in that we can become invested in objects unable to produce the future or outcomes we desire (a reality that advertisers understand well).

While the project of commitment was largely ineffective in realizing its vision on a grander scale, it played an important role in forming a constitutive base for the project I consider in the next chapter—the project of effectiveness. The diversity workers in these committees formed a base of support for the Chief Diversity Officer’s attempt to implement the campus’ strategic diversity plan, as evidenced by their participation in the efforts to write the statement. These diversity workers also attended his events, and in many cases volunteered to help run them. If these committees were the choir, then the CDO was the minister, and their work supported his attempts to realize the campus’ diversity plan.

IX Effectiveness

Introduction

One unexpected benefit of ethnographically studying diversity work is that I often found myself engaging in participant observations at catered meetings and social functions. The chief diversity officer and his staff saw me so frequently that they often joked they should be paying me—the implication being that I was both becoming integrated into the diversity apparatus and that they were eager to see the results of my study and what it might teach them about their work. Whenever such comments were made, I would usually respond by saying I felt more than compensated given how often they fed me, joking about being a starving graduate student. While I attempted to balance my obligations as an embedded ethnographer by participating and volunteering where I could, food helped to balance the obligation these individuals felt to me. One of the many occasions where my fieldwork provided a free meal was at a reception for faculty of color, one of the dozen or so events annually hosted by the CDO in early March.

In addition to bringing together faculty of color to socialize and eat hors d'oeuvres, the event also gives recognition to new faculty of color and faculty of color who recently received tenure. I spent the first part of the reception talking to a new faculty member who recently moved to Union City from another country. He had such a negative experience—the university failed to deliver a job for his partner, he could not secure childcare for his children, and he found himself suddenly racialized as a “person of color” (an identity he never acquired at home despite it being a predominantly white country)—that he wanted to move home but could not afford to because of the debt he incurred moving to the United States. Our conversation was interrupted by the beginning of the formal program—welcoming remarks from the CDO, the president, and a faculty member. At the end, the CDO took to the stage again to provide updates about the

implementation of the campus' strategic diversity plan. He went on to reference a half-dozen of the 21 initiatives in the implementation roadmap, including the campus' first climate survey, the creation of the Diversity Database, the diversity mission statement, and an effort to hire and retain more faculty of color. He concluded by inviting the faculty to be part of the "conversation."

I was struck then by how odd it was that the CDO was using a recognition ceremony to talk about the strategic diversity plan. It seemed, at least in that moment, far removed from the frustrations and experiences of the faculty member I had been engaging in conversation moments before and perhaps from the experiences of many people in the room. I had been in the field long enough by this point to have seen this stump speech on a variety of occasions, but I was so struck in that moment that I made a note in my notebook that it was odd to use a faculty recognition ceremony to promote the diversity plan, wondering how much faculty cared about the document. My curiosity was rooted in the fact that it was rare for anyone beside the CDO and his staff to talk about the diversity plan or the implementation roadmap. Why was the CDO's office so invested in a document that seemed to have so little purchase in the rest of campus?

This chapter attempts to answer this question by exploring the fourth institutional project, what I call the project of effectiveness. The chief diversity officer and his staff in the Office of Diversity were the primary actors engaged in this project. The goal of the project was to make diversity policy and practice more visible, coordinated, and effective at accomplishing discrete tasks (e.g., conducting climate surveys, institutionalizing statements, launching programs) with the ostensible goal of achieving culture change. However, while the explicit goal was to alter campus culture in order to make the university more diverse and inclusive, I argue that a more subtle motivation drove this project. The chief diversity officer and those who worked closely

with him were attempting to legitimize his office and diversity work in general by demonstrating their ability to complete the tasks outlined in the implementation roadmap. The need to appear effective and efficient in their work was driven by the internal and external criticism of diversity work by the people the CDO regularly referred to as “the haters”—those skeptical or critical of diversity work. While the CDO and his office were able to complete some of these tasks, they did so under challenging circumstances. This project was burdened by the need to be responsive to a variety of internal and external stakeholders with competing aims and priorities, such as student protesters and the upper administration. This included being responsive to the needs of all the various groups marked as “diverse.” This highly politicized project was carried out with limited access to institutional power or resources. In this light, I read the speech at the reception as part of an ongoing attempt to demonstrate that his office was living up to the obligations outlined in the campus’ primary diversity policy texts.

In describing this institutional project, I want to be cautious about not overly centering this particular chief diversity officer. The story and analysis I share in this chapter has less to do with any one person or office than it does with the ways in which a centralized diversity office and the people who populate it is situated within institutional configurations of power. What it means to be a chief diversity officer is shaped by institutional histories, practices, discourses, and struggles. To put it another way, the CDO position is overdetermined. Thus, analyzing the chief diversity officer should reveal at least as much about the institution as it does the person occupying that role. This way of seeing the chief diversity office runs counter to some of the scholarship on chief diversity officers and complicates the ability to utilize a particular professional model to understand what a CDO is and does.

The Chief Diversity Officer and Institutional Transformation

Understanding Campus Climate and Culture

Before turning to the role of the chief diversity officer and their position as an institutional cultural change agent, it is worth briefly revisiting the topic of what it means to change institutional culture or climate around diversity, both how it is framed in the scholarly literature as well as how my participants and the people I encountered in my research deployed these terms.

Campus climate and culture are important topics of scholarly inquiry, particularly over the last twenty-five years as an outgrowth of the research produced in support of affirmative action policies. One influential early formulation of campus climate came from Alexander Astin (1993) who theorized campus climate as the ‘emphasis’ the institution and its people place on diversity. Perhaps one of the most famous definitions of campus climate comes from Sylvia Hurtado and her team (1998) at the University of Michigan. They postulate that campus climate has four dimensions—historical legacies of segregation, structural or numerical diversity, attitudes toward and perceptions of inclusion or discrimination, and individuals’ actual behavior that is expressed through interaction. It is important to note that this framework separates campus climate from institutional practice (Hurtado, Alvarez, Guillermo-Wann, Cuellar, Arellano, 2012).

The notion of campus climate tends to include some psychological dimension—attitude, perceptions, and feelings. A quote from Lou, a mid-level administrator, illustrates this component of climate quite vividly:

Sometimes what we have, though, are more just like systemic issues, where it's not one student and it's not one behavior, it's more like this, just, a general "ick" feeling, to use a [laugh] scientific phrase. It just, it's not, it doesn't feel right. And many students are bringing this up. "This isn't feeling right."

The affective component of climate is important, because it clarifies that climate can remain negative even when practices are in place to improve it. But, like the concept of campus culture, it must also be shared—a single individual's perceptions do not make for an accurate representation of climate. This is why climate surveys have become such popular interventions—they enable institutions to map these perceptions in aggregate. There is also a clear but implicit interest in the perceptions and experiences of minoritized peoples, as members of the majority are more likely to perceive climate in a positive light (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2011; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Reid & Radhakrishnan, 2003).

Where campus climate denotes the way minoritized students experience and perceive discrimination on campus, the concept of campus culture refers to the shared values, practices, and artifacts that shape the experiences of different racial groups and which is most profoundly influenced by members of the majority (Museus, Ravello, & Vega, 2012). Campus culture is what is “deeply embedded” in the institution's norms, rituals, symbols, and practices (Jayakumar & Museus, 2012). Most formulations seem to discount the impact of students' culture norms and practices (Museus, Ravello, & Vega, 2012) and the multiplicity of campus cultures or subcultures (Museus, Lâm, Huang, Kem, & Tan, 2012). This homogenized understanding of culture is evidenced by the creation of classificatory schemes for campus culture, such as “Eurocentric campus cultures,” “diversity-oriented campus cultures,” and “equity-oriented campus cultures” (Jayakumar & Museus, 2012).

What is reflected across both bodies of literature is that campus climate and/or culture are real, that they can be empirically measured, and that they have a direct impact on educational outcomes (Hurtado, Alvarez, Guillermo-Wann, Cuellar, Arellano, 2012). For instance, negative campus climates can undermine the positive benefits of having a more numerically diverse

campus (Jayakumar, 2008). I have already noted that diversity scholarship tends to create the very objects it claims to study (Baez, 2004). What an ethnographic account of diversity work enables is an opportunity to discover how these concepts become ‘real’ in the discursive practices of individuals engaged in diversity work.

In that regard, there is significant semantic slippage between racial climate and culture. My participants and the people I encountered in my research used both these terms. Climate alone comes up hundreds and hundreds of times in my data. Culture was a frequent topic of concern but not nearly as often as climate. On a few occasions people referred to “climate or culture.” However, people very rarely defined what they meant by these terms. Here is the one of the rare moments where someone provided some definition of climate:

I think climate, um, I mean, we've really not, I think we've, treated climate issues with programs. And programs don't get at climate. It's, it's so much of an attitude, way we do business kind of thing when we're talking about climate that programming and throwing money at it really doesn't, you can't force people to have a good climate.

—Diane, Mid-level Administrator

Participants linked climate both to perceptions and feelings but also practices and behaviors, which are most often associated with campus culture. The one sense of shared understanding was that culture and climate change is difficult as the quote above illustrates, and this sentiment was echoed throughout my fieldwork.

I want to suggest that this is because the scholarly literature and my participants shared a similar understanding of climate and culture that was fundamentally non-agentic. While both are somehow tied to people’s behavior and actions, they seem to have taken on a life of their own, which is what makes changing climate and culture so difficult. One need not reach far to see the

parallels between how we think about campus climate and how we think about our planetary climate—we have a vague understanding that our individual actions damage our environment but little sense for how actions can positively transform it in a meaningful way. The perceived difficulty of changing climate is particularly important given that the chief diversity officer is the person tasked with improving campus climate.

The Chief Diversity Officer

The chief diversity officer is a relatively new position in higher education administration with significant growth since the turn of the millennium (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2007), and thus the scholarship on CDOs is less robust than research on campus climate and culture. The origin, institutional position, and function of the chief diversity officer vary widely between institutional types (Wilson, 2013), although the position has been greatly influenced by corporate forms of diversity leadership (Clark, Fasching-Varner, & Brimhall-Vargas, 2012).

Administrators of color are more likely to be in Chief Diversity Officer positions than most other executive-level leadership positions (Gasman, Abiola, & Travers, 2015). As I will also argue below, this literature demonstrates that the CDO's role, experiences, and practices is largely shaped by institutional history and context (Pittard, 2010; Takami, 2017).

In their influential book on Chief Diversity Officers, Williams and Wade-Golden (2013) argue that CDO's are "change management specialists." However the existing CDO literature demonstrates that these administrators face an uphill battle in being effective agents of climate and culture change (Pittard, 2010; Takami, 2017). The CDO is the primary position in which the institution signals its supposed commitment to diversity, and it is this very condition that makes the CDO's role so difficult (Brimhall-Vargas, 2012). Chief diversity officers are tasked with being change agents in institutions known for being resistant to change (Harvey, 2014). They are

often positioned in ways that minimize their effectiveness—they tend to have lower institutional ranks and they lack resources and authority (Leon, 2014)—when research suggests higher ranks matter both in terms of symbolically signaling the institution’s commitment to diversity (Arnold & Kowalski-Braun, 2012) and for their institutional effectiveness (Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013; Takami, 2017). One model suggests that CDO’s are better positioned as effective leaders and change agents when they are afforded higher institutional status and resources and their work is backed by institutional commitment (Pittard, 2010). However, the institutional change literature demonstrates that organizational change with regard to campus climate is not something that can be addressed by a single leader, but instead requires a widespread convergence of administrators and grassroots campus leaders (Kezar, 2012a, 2012b). CDO’s often need white “allies” and colleagues in order to advance their agendas (Takami, 2017). It is revealing that a CDO might in certain contexts be more effective if they possess a privileged social identity (Owen, 2009). Thus rather than being “change management specialists,” it might be more accurate to claim that the CDO is a specialized position through which institutions attempt to manage (i.e., contain and limit) change.

Culture Change at State University

Institutionalizing Diversity

I began my research a few years after a variety of significant changes occurred in how State University organizes its diversity efforts. The Office of Diversity was created by one of the current CDO’s predecessors, but the organization of the division and the programs it oversees had recently evolved to include programs that had previously been organized in other administrative units. The campus’ strategic diversity plan was still relatively new. While the

CDO was fond of claiming that State University had a long and rich history of diversity work, diversity's formal organization as a centralized unit was still something of a novelty.

This organizational transition was not without difficulty. I learned very early on that when you mentioned the previous CDO—Dr. Terry Smith (pseudonym)—you were bound to get a very strong reaction, positive or negative. The picture that emerged through conversations and interviews was of a strong, forceful personality. He insisted students refer to him as Dr. Smith, which ran afoul of cultural norms at the institution. Despite his professional expertise and research, his lack of experience as a professor did not endear him to the faculty. The process of creating the strategic diversity plan was fraught with conflict and politicking. When a new individual stepped into the role—this time a faculty member—they had to repair the relationships that had been damaged by the previous CDO and find a way to move the diversity plan forward. This is part of what led to a creative reworking of the plan into a 21-initiative implementation roadmap.

Where the first CDO was a career administrator and diversity professional, the new CDO was a member of the faculty, albeit one with work and research related to diversity. Where the first CDO was known for butting heads, the new CDO was known for getting along. Here, a staff member named Gwen describes their impressions about why the new CDO was hired:

I actually heard Terry Smith's name, the former chief diversity office. I heard his name probably more than I heard [the current CDO], right? And so people were saying how Terry um was um just not a good fit and how his approach to things wasn't a, wasn't fitting how people did things at the university. And um, his attitude and how he addressed people and just the way he communicated and kind of worked with people...It just

seemed, um, it seemed very much so like, we don't want someone like Terry, so let's keep someone what we do know and we do, and we do trust within house.

This was an interpretation I heard from several other participants over the course of my fieldwork. I raise this point because it demonstrates how from the beginning, the chief diversity officer was invested with set of cultural and institutional expectations, namely that he be more diplomatic in his work in order to correct what many saw as the deficits of the previous CDO. Thus from the very beginning, the task of implementing the strategic plan would need to be done in a way that did not generate conflict. Getting things done meant getting along.

Implementing Diversity

By the time I was engaged in fieldwork, the campus was already following its implementation roadmap for the strategic diversity plan. This document more or less supplanted the strategic diversity plan, although ostensibly it was created to help actualize the plan. The document lays out 21 different initiatives to roll out over the course of a decade. This new document jettisoned ideas from the plan (e.g., making the Campus Climate Committee more powerful or improving linguistic translation services for employees) and introduced others. However, one of the striking aspects of the plan is that 16 of the 21 initiatives are labeled as “in Progress.” The plan was supposed to complete seven initiatives in roughly three-year phases, progressing in a particular order. However, within the first year of following the implementation roadmap, under the direction of the president, the CDO decided to push forward two major initiatives: conducting the first-ever campus-wide climate survey and creating a database for tracking all of the campus’ diversity efforts. These initiatives were from phases three and two respectively. I share this to demonstrate that diversity policy creation at State University is

constantly subject to translation and transformation, as will be further evidenced later in this chapter.

As the story from the beginning of the chapter demonstrates, one of the CDO's primary tasks was to promote the diversity plan and implementation roadmap to the rest of campus. Doing so helped accomplish a variety of goals. Take, as another example, these comments, made at a breakout session during the Fall 2015 Diversity Conference. The session focus was on effectively recruiting people of color, but the session devolved into complaints that the campus' senior administrators were not present at the conference. The CDO, who had not been present during most of the conversation but who had been eavesdropping from the doorway at the end of session, stepped in to address the collective frustration:

There is commitment from leaders. This is the blessing and curse of a decentralized campus. We're building the infrastructure. It's about getting down to those individual interactions. There's a commitment from senior leadership. I'm working with deans—they're committed to a half-day training. It won't solve everything, but it's the first time they've all done a training. We can say it's a glass half full or half empty, but I'm just glad we still have a glass. We have 21 major initiatives, but for the first time we're not doing everything at once. It's a marathon not a sprint. There are tons of conversations and we want everyone to be aware of what's happening. That's why we're doing the survey and database project. That's never been done before.

—Fieldnotes, November 2015

In addition to promoting the diversity framework and implementation plan, these comments reflect two other major themes that were hallmarks of the CDO's public remarks. The first is that the chief diversity officer regularly talked up (or in many cases defended) upper administrators to

the rest of campus and the community, particularly the president and provost. “These brothers are committed,” he declared at a multicultural homecoming dinner the month before. Whether this was an obligation he took on of his own accord or whether it was an obligation put on him (and this was a topic of debate among some I spoke to), throughout my fieldwork he regularly assured people that the institution and its leaders were committed to diversity, despite the widespread belief among many diversity workers and minoritized people that they were not.

The second common theme was that the campus was intensively engaged in creating a more diverse and inclusive campus but that people were often not aware of that fact because the campus is large and decentralized and because the institution did not do enough to share what was being done. This created inefficiencies and redundancies as disconnected actors and offices might be engaged in the same work but not be aware of each other’s efforts. One of the initiatives in the implementation plan is to “Strategically engage the campus and Union City community by crafting a consistent message about inclusion and diversity in all forms of communication.” The CDO often talked about the need to improve the campus’ messaging about its diversity efforts and referred to this challenge as needing to let “the left hand know what the right hand is doing.”⁹ In other words, one of his primary tasks in promoting the strategic framework and implementation plan was to highlight what was already being done. This would address two issues—telegraphing the campus’ commitment to and investment in diversity and allowing diversity workers to go about their work more collaboratively and efficiently.

⁹ The CDO’s catchphrase is an inversion of a passage from the sixth chapter of the Gospel of Matthew: “So when you give to the poor, do not sound a trumpet before you, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, so that they may be honored by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. But when you give to the poor, *do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing*, so that your giving will be in secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you.” The passage suggests that doing good is more important than being seen doing good. In contrast, the CDO was arguing that the institution needed to do a better job telegraphing all that it was doing to improve diversity and inclusion on campus.

The CDO's regular practice of promoting the plan is less surprising when one understands how the campus' previous strategic diversity plan wrapped up. Early in his tenure, the previous CDO quietly wrote a report about the impact of the plan. In it, he admits that the campus did not achieve what it set out to do: "Although we have fallen short of achieving our diversity goals, our intent remains focused and consistent in our commitment to build a diverse, inclusive, and equitable campus." The document proclaims that progress is being made even as it fails to marshal evidence to support the claim, even showing evidence to the contrary, such as declining numbers of Black faculty. Given the controversy of the previous CDO's tenure and the fact that the institution had failed to achieve the goals it put in place under its previous strategic diversity plan, the process of revision and translation that occurred in implementing the new plan makes sense—the new CDO needed to outline achievable goals in order to prevent a repeat of the shortcomings of the previous plan.

But for most diversity workers I encountered in my research, the strategic plan had little purchase in their daily lives. This in part had to do with the fact that many diversity workers on campus were aware of the political and contentious processes by which the document was written:

I don't put a lot of faith in documents like this. Uh, first of all, this particular framework was fraught with, um, structural problems, meaning, like how they came about doing this was, again, it was like, you know I never want to watch sausage being made or laws being passed. Sort of the same thing. I'm glad that they got some place, but I don't know that the, the actors within the framework can give it any real authority, power to do things. I don't anticipate it having a very direct impact on my work. Now, does that not, does that mean that we won't invoke the name of the framework to try and get some work

done? No, we will.

—Rory, Mid-Level Administrator

But in reality, I did not observe diversity workers invoke the framework to advance their own agendas, although it is possible this did occur in meetings where I was not present. The actors I describe in the previous three chapters engaged in a variety of strategies in order to advance their institutional projects, but in none of these did they attempt to use the strategic plan or implementation roadmap to advance their work or agendas, with the exception of the university's executive leadership, as I describe in the following chapter. For the projects of care, redress, and commitment, the diversity plan wasn't worth rearticulating.

Hosting Diversity

In many of the instances where I observed the chief diversity officer promoting the strategic framework and implementation plan, he was speaking at events his office was hosting. In addition to his policy and administrative work, one of the major functions his office fulfilled was convening more than a dozen annual, campus-wide diversity events. These included everything from receptions for “diversity leaders” and faculty of color, to award ceremonies, to social events like “Dinner at Mama's Table,” to Multicultural Homecoming, to the campus' Diversity Conference. These events were often the moments when the CDO and his office were most visible.

These were also the moments when it became apparent how difficult the practice of inclusion truly is—the CDO and his staff members were expected to represent a wide array of human differences under the banner of diversity. Such a task was inevitably fraught with difficulty and the optics of every Office of Diversity event was subject to scrutiny:

I think if we get too caught up in "checking all the boxes" or "making sure we have every

background represented", we can have some difficulty in finding, for example, a Laotian blind person. I mean, I'm being facetious, but how can we make sure all these intersectional identities have a seat at the table?

—Logan, Staff Member

While the quote above can be read as flippant, in this passage of the interview, the participant is being quite serious in considering what it looks like to be inclusive of all minoritized people at the university and they express sympathy for people who might take offense at small details at these events. The humorous comment about having a blind Laotian person raises a question that is fundamental to the challenge of diversity work—who or what is able to represent all people who are marginalized because of their race, ability, gender, sexuality, etc.?

The other side to these concerns was another criticism that was spoken about both directly and indirectly by many people I spoke to: the Office of Diversity is only focused on Black people. Such claims were not without evidence. Dinner at Mama's Kitchen was a networking event with a local Black community organization. Multicultural Homecoming was primarily built around Black fraternities and sororities and included a brunch modeled on a Black church service. The keynote speakers at Diversity Conference and the Diversity Leadership event for students were both Black men. In addition, the most prominent administrators of color on campus were Black men.

On multiple occasions, participants made comments to me about how they felt diversity spaces failed to recognize or include their group. One suggested that the problem was the CDO's overreliance on his own social network—reaching out to Black churches and community organizations because those were the ones he knew. Another participant offered another explanation, suggesting that there was a specific reason for the centrality of Blackness:

Rory: I would see the institution holding those people [prominent Black administrators like the CDO] forward and saying, like, "Look at what we're doing! Look how diverse we are! This is our..." and I would say especially it's, institutions want to make sure that there's a Black face in doing that too. You know.

Kirk: Specifically a Black face.

Rory: Specifically a Black face.

This interpretation suggested that the institution (i.e., the upper administration) viewed the Black body as the universal signifier for diversity, capable of encapsulating and encompassing all forms of human difference. Such an interpretation suggests that a focus on Blackness was exactly what the institution intended rather than a failure or shortcoming of the CDO or his office. This interpretation gains more weight when one considers how the chief diversity officer was utilized to respond to the crisis that unfolded over the course of the spring semester.

Containing the Crisis

When the crisis initiated by hate and bias incidents and student protests began to unfold, the CDO was at the center of the attempt to mitigate and contain what was happening. Both in private meetings and public fora, the CDO was there to speak back to student protesters and to explain what was happening on campus and how the institution responded. This included appearing on local news channels and writing op-ed pieces for the state's major newspapers. While the president also made public statements in response to the crisis—which I explore in-depth in the following chapter—the CDO was the public face of the response, and a result, was also a lightning rod for student unrest.

Three examples of this role this took place during the month of February, when the campus held three different events to dialogue about what was taking place on campus and

across the country. The first was an event called “Coffee Chats”, an informal dialogue with students at the Multicultural Student Union. The second was a public town hall about the anti-Semitic “prank” that took place in one of the residence halls. The final gathering was the campus-wide town hall that I describe at the beginning of chapter two. The CDO referenced the Eclipse’s demands at each of these events, but the most telling is his opening remarks at the campus town hall meeting:

I want to update you on the 21 initiatives. We’re targeting 2-3 initiatives every year. [He explains that we are doing the first ever campus wide climate survey. He also references the Diversity Database project.] The database will help us understand the full landscape of our commitment. It’s not just resources, it’s “people power.” There are seven initiatives we’re targeting next year: #8—communications. There’s a lot going on. You’d be hard pressed not to find someone who cares about diversity. I’m challenging people to establish our core principles and create a place to have accountability. That’s a process under way. We’re also focused on capacity building. 4 of the 5 Eclipse demands are in the diversity plan...We’re talking about the cultural competency workshops. We can talk about the pros and cons of making it mandatory, but we’re having that dialogue. It is more effective if you want to do it...“It’s not just talking for the sake of talking.” I can’t do it alone. I need your help. Are you willing to help me?

—Fieldnotes February 2016

The rhetorical shift is an important one, because it rearticulates the demands student protesters made from their vision of a more just and equitable institution as work the campus is already doing. The final question—“Are you willing to help me?”—also shifts the moral obligation from responding to student protesters to getting on board with the work of his office. The strategy may

not seem to be a particularly effective one given that students themselves were not invested in the implementation plan. However, it allowed the CDO to claim that his office was and had been addressing students' concerns through the initiatives they were already accomplishing.

In addition to rearticulating student demands, the CDO also tried to align the campus' response to the crisis with the diversity plan and implementation roadmap. When the president decided to concede to several of the students' demands, she also called for the community to submit new ideas for improving campus climate. One might expect the Chief Diversity Officer to lead the committee that vetted the proposals, or at least participate, but this was not the case. The process was overseen directly by the president's office, and while it included many diversity workers, the CDO's office did not participate in the process. This issue came up in the Campus Climate Committee meetings at the end of the school year, as the CCC was also excluded from the vetting processes. The CDO shared he had lobbied the president to evaluate the proposals based on their alignment with the diversity plan—another moment of strategic rearticulation. A month later, he shared that his staff was looking at the proposals to identify alignment with the framework. His key concern was not “reinventing the wheel” for the campus' diversity efforts when implementation of the campus' current plan was already underway.

Working Toward Culture Change

Why then was the CDO so concerned with implementing the strategic diversity plan when the rest of the campus was seemingly unconcerned with the document? I do not believe the chief diversity officer was slavishly devoted to the framework and implementation plan for its own sake. What I have sought to demonstrate throughout this dissertation is that institutional projects are driven by their own internal logics—all institutional projects are reasonable even if their reasons are not compelling to those on the outside.

Adhering to the campus' diversity plan and implementation roadmap was the vehicle for achieving institutional transformation, what he often referred to as a "culture shift" toward a more diverse and inclusive institution. For example, when describing the purpose of the diversity mission statement, he characterized the campus as moving in the *same* direction, but not yet pointing in the *right* direction. The initiatives and benchmarks outlined in these texts were an opportunity to, in his words, "galvanize" the campus' efforts toward institutional transformation.

The following fall, the CDO made a long address to the hundreds of assembled students, staff, faculty, administrators, and community members. In the middle of that speech, he made a familiar return to the diversity framework:

During this past year, my office has moved to implement key initiatives contained in the diversity plan. That is the blueprint, y'all. So if you want to know what we're up to, take a look at it. We're focusing on that to improve our campus climate. And we've launched two of our most ambitious projects to date: the campus climate survey and the diversity database project, Initiatives 3 and 7. There are 21 of them so I have em memorized, so forgive me if I use the numbers. *I just want you to know I'm doing my job, right?*

[Scattered laughter]

He then went on to describe in greater detail the ways they had completed several of the initiatives. The statement, "I just want you to know I'm doing my job," while a joke, reveals the precarity of being the public face of diversity, and this is the issue I consider below.

The Chief Diversity Officer and the Organization of Commitment

Colleges and universities organize their commitment to diversity through the distribution of labor and responsibility among institutional actors (Ahmed, 2006)—"By implication, working on diversity and equity requires an *acceptance of the uneven distribution of*

commitment, rather than a fantasy that ‘everyone’ can share responsibility” (p. 759). The chief diversity officer is the primary actor through which the commitment is organized and instantiated. This is what is meant by the assertion that the chief diversity officer is overdetermined: above and beyond the person and personality that inhabits the role, the role itself is invested with meaning—what Ahmed refers to as commitment—that is not determined by the CDO.

Ahmed’s (2006, 2012) critique of diversity work is centered on language games. Her understanding of diversity is quite similar to Laclau’s (1996, 2005) notion of the empty signifier. Diversity has no predetermined meaning, and its effectiveness at a given institution is dependent on becoming associated with terms the institution already values. I illustrated this phenomenon in the last chapter with my discussion of the university’s diversity mission statement. But what is perhaps missing from Ahmed’s analysis is the final consequence of these linguistic games—once diversity becomes associated with institutional values like excellence or productivity, that fundamentally alters the conditions under which diversity workers labor. Once the signifying link between diversity and these other values has been made, it only holds if diversity workers are then able to perform excellence and be productive. If the chief diversity officer and their department, office, or division is the primary space in which the institutional commitment to diversity is organized, then it follows that diversity’s merits will be evaluated primarily based on their performance.

This complicates the ability to hold the institution accountable through policy texts like the diversity plan and implementation roadmap. Ahmed (2012) argues that diversity workers can turn these texts back on the institution to make claims that the school is not doing what it claims to be doing. Indeed, the CDO at State University regularly talked about using the framework and

the institutional statement for accountability purposes—although he was rarely, if ever, explicit about who was being held accountable. The chief diversity officer position complicates the accountability mechanism because the failure of the institution can be reframed as the failure of the chief diversity officer. One need only consider the case of State University's previous CDO to see how this can be true—many of the campus' problems were blamed on his personality rather than on the institution's inability to engage in transformational diversity work.

What it meant for the CDO to demonstrate excellence was at once both typical of how research intensive institutions operate as well as a product of the unique struggles at State University. Top tier research universities in the United States perform excellence by producing steady streams of scholarship in high-impact journals, garnering external research dollars, patenting research, etc. While the CDO's office was not a research enterprise, it was increasingly expected to generate data and to align its operation with best practices and to subject itself to evaluation. To associate diversity with excellence meant being excellent according to the university's criteria.

State University was also engaged in a struggle with the state government and conservative social movements over funding for the system. The governor and legislature sought to discipline all of the state university campuses to use public resources more efficiently and effectively. While diversity work at State University was another casualty of the public withdraw of financial support for higher education in the state, it was also singled out by its critics, those the CDO called "the haters." Even at the time I am writing this chapter, a handful of state legislators are attempting to add an item to the state budget that would prevent state colleges from spending money on diversity training. So in addition to living up to the general expectations of excellence, the CDO and his office also had to demonstrate their effectiveness

and efficient use of state revenue. The continued survival and legitimacy of diversity work at State University was dependent on being able to demonstrate that it could set goals and accomplish them. It was no joke that the Chief Diversity Officer needed to be able to let the community know he was doing his job.

Transforming Campus Climate

While the Chief Diversity Officer was attempting to create a “culture shift” and to improve campus climate for minoritized students, staff, and faculty, documenting changes in campus climate and demonstrating one had a role in making those changes is an incredibly difficult task. As I demonstrated above, our understanding of what constitutes campus climate remains undertheorized, particularly at the link between campus climate and human agency. So while I believe the CDO was deeply committed to trying to make State University a better place for minoritized people, demonstrating clear, verifiable improvements in campus climate was not a realistic avenue for demonstrating his office’s ability to work effectively. Instead, his office had to rely on accomplishing discrete tasks (such as launching a climate survey or creating a database) to demonstrate its value to the institution.

This was particularly the case given that, as is the case with all diversity workers, the CDO is not structurally positioned to have access to the power and resources needed to realize their vision of change. As the CDO was fond of pointing out, his office only controlled a tiny portion of the millions of dollars the campus spends on its diversity efforts. As a vice provost, the CDO did not have direct access to the president like other more senior administrators. In other words, the CDO was forced to demonstrate effectiveness within the realm of possibility for his office. This entailed not only fulfilling the diversity plan, but formulating a strategy for

implementation that was largely based on what the university was already doing, signified by the number of initiatives already “in progress.”

Another way to consider this problem is that the chief diversity officer had little power to coerce, and instead had to rely on persuasion to win support for his work. This explains why he was so much time messaging about his office’s work and why he was so concerned with getting “buy in” for his projects. In addition to being beholden to the president and his priorities, the chief diversity officer was also constrained by the power of the faculty. Without their approval for his work, it had little chance of succeeding. This is why a faculty member with a reputation for being diplomatic was appointed to the CDO position. This dynamic was nowhere more true than in debates over implementing a mandatory cultural competency training—everyone on campus knew that faculty would be the most resistant to mandatory interventions.

All of these institutional dynamics worked to significantly constrain what was and was not possible for the chief diversity officer and his office. They were overdetermined by the discourses of excellence and productivity that circulate at prestigious research universities, by the long-running trend of declining funding for the university, and by their lack of institutional power vis-à-vis the president and faculty. Thus, the chief diversity officer chose to focus on accomplishing a set of institutionally approved tasks in order to demonstrate his office’s ability to fulfill its obligations.

The Black Face of Diversity

The Chief Diversity Officer position also reflects the fundamental necessity and absurdity of addressing inequalities through the discourses and practice of diversity as a universal signifier of human difference. As I discuss in chapter seven, the empty signifier establishes a chain of equivalence between various demands (Laclau, 2005). In this case, those are the demands of all

institutional actors who are marginalized because of some aspect or aspects of their identity—race, ethnicity, language, ability, sexuality, gender identity, documentation status, etc. When I suggest that diversity is necessary, I am simply acknowledging the legitimacy of these demands, particularly at a predominantly white institution like State University that is organized primarily to meet the needs of white students, staff, and faculty. When I suggest that diversity is absurd, I mean that it is farcical to believe that any one term or person can hold together such a long chain of equivalence. This is what was meant by the joke that perhaps the office should use a blind Laotian person as a keynote speaker. The elevation of one link in the chain of equivalence to occupy the position of the empty signifier—here, the Black face—by necessity entails a subordination of other groups and their demands.

To return to Ahmed's notion of the organization of commitment, the acknowledgement of the fantasy that everyone can be engaged in diversity work is traded for another fantasy—that that a college or university can organize its commitment to all minoritized people through a single administrator or centralized office. As a result, the organization of commitment to diversity is ultimately revealed as a non-commitment or under-commitment to specific groups or populations. This has profound implications for institutional transformation because it creates a dynamic in which minoritized groups compete amongst each other for resources and attention:

Also the, the, the visuals, the optics. You know, um, when populations of color uh are already marginalized, it's difficult when you don't necessarily see yourself visually represented. So, in this particular case, the community, students, faculty, and staff of [racial/ethnic group] feel frustrated because even in the minority representation, it's predominantly African American males um that are in positions of leadership across the campus. And those are very few to begin with. So, there's a challenge to work within

communities and intersections, um, because essentially, essentially we're pitted against one another for, for minimal resources to begin with. And one of the biggest challenges is simply optics. People are visual. And when you don't see people that look like you in any kind of position of leadership or authority, it becomes a challenge. So you start finger pointing.

—Zoe, Staff Member

When this occurs, the problem becomes about the organization of commitment under a particular figure—the chief diversity officer—rather than the problematic nature of that commitment. The critique is centered on what food is served at events or who is brought in as a speaker rather than the institution's failure to see, acknowledge, and address the needs of particular populations. This is not to suggest that there is no need to provide culturally sensitive events or to reproduce the popular critique of diverse people and diversity workers as “snowflakes” making petty demands. Rather, it is that the organization of commitment at State University ensured that certain groups would be elevated over others and that these differences appear to be the problem of who is put in positions of power or which symbols of difference are utilized at events, when in fact these are the natural result of the problematic nature of using diversity as a universal signifier of the institution's commitment to human difference.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have demonstrated that the chief diversity officer is the primary site in which colleges and universities publicly organize their commitment to diversity, but that that commitment is shaped by a set of expectations that go far beyond their ostensible duties to administer programs and to advocate for policy. On one hand, institutional actors shared an interpretation that campus climate and culture was difficult, if not almost impossible, to change

and yet the CDO is the primary actor tasked with changing climate and culture despite not being empowered and resourced to do so. In the case of State University's CDO, these expectations are rooted in institutional norms of excellence, productivity as well as external pressures to be cost-effective. As a result, the CDO's institutional project revolved around constructing a reputation for effectiveness and efficiency which sought to legitimize diversity policy and practice by successfully accomplishing tasks laid out by the campus' diversity plan and implementation roadmap. This story empirically validates the scholarship on chief diversity officers that explicates the significant obstacles they encounter in their work while also troubling the assertion that particular forms of leadership or CDO models are vehicles for institutional change. To do so, I demonstrate how institutional histories, values, norms, and expectations are invested in the position irrespective of who holds the office, and that uncovering these can illuminate what kinds of commitments the institution is organizing.

In the next chapter, I explore the final institutional project—the project of equality—that was carried forward primarily by State University's executive leadership. This project was organized around the technical and administrative logics of efficiency, measurable outcomes, and best practices with which the regime of effectiveness was forced to contend.

X Equality

Student: So what would you say the incentive would be for students of color to attend this university given the racial incidents?

President: Well, I mean, I continue to say the main reason for anyone to come to this university is the quality of education and classes and the breadth of opportunities that we provide. And I do think that, that State provides you know, I would say as good an education as any of our peers and better than many. And you have to want to come for that and that is the first reason why anyone should come to this campus, alright? Um, what is clear is that students of color who come here will face some challenges and I don't think it's any different now, you know, that's what you, you know, what's different is people are calling this out, right? Not that nothing was happening five years ago and now suddenly a lot is happening. What is happening now is people are calling it out. And I actually think that's a good thing and as I say, it's not different on our campus than if you're going to be looking at you know, [neighboring state] or there's things going on in [neighboring state], you know, the other schools around here. Um, if this is the group of schools you're looking at um, you're gonna have to ask yourself, you know, how am I going to get involved in these issues and in what way or do I want to at all? And those are the same choices students on this campus are making and is that fair? Is that not fair? I don't know. I don't think it's going to be different on other campuses than it is here.

Introduction

This exchange took place in late April, the day after people mobilized to protest the arrest

of the graffiti artist. State University's president recorded a video interview with two students from *The Ebony Voice*, an online magazine run by Black students at State University. The interview was a unique opportunity because while the president often met with students of color and student activists, it was the only occasion where the exchange was recorded and made publicly available. In the interview, he engages in rhetorical strategies that were hallmarks of his public responses to the crisis, namely that the real issue at stake was the quality of education students received and that what was happening at State University was happening around the country. The first strategy worked to depoliticize the crises while the latter dislocated the locus of control to external factors beyond the influence of the president and the university.

In this chapter, I consider the final institutional project—the project of equality. This project encapsulates what we might call the “official” response to the crisis on campus, meaning that this project was directed by the actors with the most access to institutional resources and who were authorized to speak with the university's voice—the university president, provost, the system governors, as well as other executive leaders. These actors, though powerful, did not act alone—they worked in concert with staff, faculty, and administrators across the campus, including an informal collective called the Diversity Communication Group. This project pursued two interrelated goals—to manage, contain, and diffuse the crisis as well as to ensure an equality of educational outcomes across majority and minoritized student groups.

In examining this final institutional project, I engage Joan Acker's (2006) notion of “inequality regimes,” which captures how daily and mundane institutional practices produce and organize inequalities driven by race, class, and gender. While Sara Ahmed (2012) uses this notion to critique university engagement with diversity, saying that “an equality regime *can be* an inequality regime given new form” (p. 8), I argue that equality regimes, in contrast to

equity regimes, are always inequality regimes dressed in the guise of institutional transformation. This occurs because institutional inequities are, to use James Ferguson's (1994) phrase, "rendered technical." Diversity becomes de-politicized by shifting the focus from addressing the underlying causes of inequity to equalizing empirically verifiable educational outcomes. Thus the equality regime is predicated on a particular positivist logic that cannot see, acknowledge, or address the underlying social and institutional relations that produce institutional inequity and thus does not threaten the constituencies best served by those institutional structures and practices.

Framing the official response in this light addresses two challenges in understanding how an institution's engagement with diversity can fail to produce institutional transformation that results in greater equity and justice. First, it identifies the actions of particular actors whose actions and practices work to stymie institutional change. Second, it addresses a critique I often heard from students, namely, that the institution did not "care" about diversity and diverse students. Instead of asking whether institutions really care about diversity, this chapter considers what it means for institutions to care and what form that care takes.

Agency and Institutional Resistance to Change

In their paper, "Beyond national states, markets, and systems of higher education," Marginson and Rhoads (2002) argue that higher education scholarship needs to retheorize agency in higher education. While I agree with this argument, I am troubled by their assertion that institutions themselves should be seen as agents. The anthropomorphizing of institutions as agents undergirds some of the rich critical and qualitative research on diversity work. For instance, in *On Being Included*, Sara Ahmed (2012) argues against viewing institutions as actors but then proceeds to explicate how institutions put up brick walls. Scholars have deployed other

metaphors—Bryan Brayboy (2003) talks about diversity as “window dressing” and Gregory Anderson (2005) applies the concept of the commodity fetish to the production and extraction of cultural value through diversity. All of these frames imply agents without naming them—window dressings imply a window dresser and cultural commodities suggest a cultural capitalist. To say that these actions are carried out by institutions is to recreate the very problem the concept of the commodity fetish was developed to correct—namely, to illuminate the social relations and actors which helped to produce the commodity.

Anderson’s argument is a theoretical one, but both Ahmed and Brayboy formulate their critiques based on empirical research, one focused on diversity officers the other on faculty of color. The benefit of the approach I have called a critical ethnography of the university is that it traces a phenomenon like diversity work throughout the institution, allowing the researcher to point to particular actors instead of referring broadly to “the institution.” The institution instead is understood as a set of relations, or “ruling relations” in the language of institutional ethnography, in which struggles occur. As such, the institution itself does not have agency but instead is the arena in which agencies collide. Instead of seeing the institution as a subject that acts and speaks, we can then begin to understand how claims to act on the university’s behalf or to speak with the institution’s voice are exercises of power.

This is not to trade an agonistic or decentered conception of power for a centered one—while my focus here on top administrators demonstrates that certain institutional actors demonstrably have more access to power and resources, the story of the project of equality is also the story of how particular forms of knowledge were privileged in the institutional response to the crises. These forms of knowledge had powerful and instrumental effects that had

widespread institutional consequences, particularly for strengthening existing, uneven institutional relations.

Managing the Diversity Crisis

At the beginning of the 2015-2016 school year, executive administrators at State University and the State University System were contending with a completely different set of crises. The university system was experiencing a set of deep budget cuts handed down by the conservative state government, and administrators knew these budget cuts would touch every corner of their institutions. This budget also included stipulations that changed the nature of shared governance and academic protections and altered the relationship between presidents and the faculty. This sparked an intense conflict between the faculty and the presidents and governors. In addition, State University participated in a survey designed to measure instances of sexual assault and harassment on campus. The results of that survey were released early in the fall semester. State University students experienced higher rates of assaults than the national average, and the results were particularly concerning for certain minoritized groups. These issues garnered significant press coverage and were important topics of conversation and debate on campus throughout the year. These were the controversial issues that the campus community was wrestling with and administrators were responding to as I began my field work.

While, as I have demonstrated, diversity is always politically contentious, the crisis of diversity did not begin to unfold until the Eclipse protest in mid-November. And while the diversity apparatus was adversely impacted by the budget cuts, it was not unique in this regard. As a result, university and system administrators were preoccupied with other issues at the beginning of the school year. While the president and provost did attend events the CDO hosted early in the school year—the reception for women of color, multicultural homecoming, and the

diversity conference—their presence was fairly minimal and their energies seemed to be directed toward managing these other crises.

Messaging the Crisis

All of this changed beginning with the Eclipse’s march in November. The following day, the president responded to the march with an email sent to the entire campus community. I quote this email in chapter seven, but it is worth revisiting here because it is representative of how administrators and members of the campus communications office used the institution’s media apparatus to manage the crisis:

Here in Union City, last night’s Eclipse March brought together hundreds of Foxes of all races and ethnicities. It was a powerful example of our community united to support those at Mizzou, fighting to end racism and pressing for improvements in our own institutional efforts. At State University, we are proud of our long history of activism and dedication to equity for marginalized groups. It is part of who we are and we have accomplished much through the hard work of many. But at the same time, we recognize that there is much more work to be done. We seek to address these inequities in partnership with students, faculty, staff alumni, and community members.

In addition to this email, the protest was featured in a photo on the university’s homepage and the story about the protest was highlighted in the next edition of the campus’ weekly newsletter email with the headline, “Eclipse March raises awareness about racial issues.”

Throughout the year, student protesters were regularly featured in campus newsletters and on the campus website. These representations frame students’ attempts to improve campus as something “we” are doing rather than as acts of resistance to the institution or to particular policies or leaders. These practices reflect a concerted effort to protect the institution’s image by

obscuring the source of the problem on campus and by making it appear as if there was a unified response to addressing racism on campus. Projecting a unified image in response to the problem worked to obscure the underlying sources of the problem, because if “we” are all working to fix the problem then “we” cannot be responsible for the problem.

As the crisis began to unfold, a new group emerged to address the conflict by determining how to message it. The collective—informally dubbed the Diversity Communications Group—met weekly to formulate the campus’ messaging around diversity. It was led by the president’s chief of staff and included several important administrators—the CDO, the dean of students, and the heads of University Relations, Legal Affairs, and University Communications—as well as the provost’s chief of staff. As such it included some of the most powerful and influential administrators on campus. The group also included and engaged some of the campus’ diversity workers when their insight or perspective was needed. So in addition to the campus’ communications department, which handles all of the university’s official messaging, including the website, press releases, and social media, other top administrators were actively engaged in formulating and orchestrating the campus’ messaging in response to the crisis. This is the group that spoke with the university’s voice.

While it is perhaps unsurprising that the university would respond to the crisis by forming a committee, it is revealing that the purpose of the group was to determine messaging rather than to formulate policy. One participant described their interactions with the group this way:

And all it really is is like, how do we pretend like things are perfect here? And it's like, you know, "Oh! Who's got a good story to share about diversity? Like, oh who's got..." and I was like, "Oh gosh. This is not what it's really about." So I struggle in that meeting with um, to me it's like a meeting where people are talking about like, "Oh we have a

broken pipe? How are we gonna fix it?" Like it's so dehumanizing and not connected to our real students.

—Sarah, Mid-level Administrator

I was able to secure access to one of their meetings at the end of the summer, just before the start of the 2016-2017 school year. Several guests were invited because the group was previewing the Our State University program, the new cultural competency training for incoming students. At one point in the preview, the facilitator modeled an exercise where they explained what it meant for groups to be “socially disadvantaged” and then asked people to call out names of groups that fit the definition. After participants called out “people of color,” “Muslims,” and “transgendered people,” the head of legal affairs—a white man—joked that lawyers fit the bill. The individual seemed oblivious to the seriousness of the question and the discussion in general. And yet, this figure was a key player in formulating the campus’ message about diversity.

The communications group played an important gatekeeping role that shaped how the institution’s communication apparatus disseminated information about what was taking place on campus. This including reframing both the sources of problems, who was engaged in addressing them, and what the ultimate solution or solutions were. Here, one diversity worker describes how information about hate and bias incidents were reframed as a result of passing through the university’s communication apparatus:

They were the ones that were communicating with the media. Um, they were the ones that were making some decisions about (sighs) gosh. I don't, it was just, so we have this hate and bias response group and we would process different incidents um and figure out, ok, so this is what's happening. But then upper administration would say, “Ok, we're going to handle the communications with the media, um, and provide the information that

we know.” And for us, especially [colleague] and I who were dealing with the incidents first hand, we would say, "Actually, you know, this is what's going on and this is how we're handling it" And, um, for example, [colleague] would provide talking points for the president including words like "racism" but every single time they submitted it that word, [the president] has never said that word....Um, which is why I can understand why students are frustrated. These are their lived experiences and the administration is not affirming like their lived experiences. So. Yeah.

—Jonathan, Mid-level Administrator

This translation of events is perhaps unsurprising—with the exception of the CDO, all of the administrators in the communications group were white. Most were also in positions far removed from students in general and minoritized students in particular.

Depoliticizing the Crisis

Over the course of the school year, I tracked these communications both at the public events I observed as well as in the various print and electronic communications that appeared across the university website, emails, and social media. The data I drew from these sources corroborates the criticisms above that executive leaders working with the communications apparatus were rearticulating the crisis in ways that were far removed from the language and experiences of those experiencing and responding to the hate and bias incidents. Over time, I began to observe a series of regularly deployed rhetorical strategies that ultimately worked to depoliticize the crisis and deflect responsibility from the president and provost.

Reframing the problem. Throughout his public remarks, both in person and electronically, the president repeatedly relied on a handful of frames to represent the causes and solutions to the campus’ problems. The first rhetorical strategy was to externalize the source or sources of the

problem on campus. In his comments to the student reporters at the beginning of the chapter, he states, “I don't think it's going to be different on other campuses than it is here.” This framing suggested that the causes of the problem were external to the campus rather than the result of particular practices or structures at State University. He was also fond of comparing the State to more populous and diverse states. When he met with the Campus Climate Committee, he told them:

In a state like State, there is always an agenda around diversity. We're not California or Texas. It's just harder (Fieldnotes, April 2016).

The president often used Texas and California as foils for the state. These comments had a similar effect—it framed the challenge of diversity on campus as a problem driven by the state's demographic rather than something endemic to the institution. In a subtle way, this actually worked to shift the blame to communities of color—if there were more of them, this wouldn't be an issue.

The second set of rhetorical strategies he deployed undercut the idea that he or anyone at the institution would be able to change what was happening. In the email above, he states: “we are and we have accomplished much through the hard work of many. But at the same time, we recognize that there is much more work to be done.” This statement simultaneously deflects two criticisms, one that the university is not engaged or does not care, and the other that administrators are not recognizing that things need to change. The Board of Governors echoed these kinds of sentiments in February and March when students continued to protest their meetings. During the March meeting, the President of the System stated, “While there is still valued criticism about what hasn't been accomplished, there is also a lot that has. There is also an

eagerness to work together toward our shared value and we all welcome the open, ongoing dialogue.”

The university president also commented on the pace of change. In early march, he posted in his blog after the campus-wide town hall:

I would love to be in a post-racial society where these issues are no longer in front of us.

But we aren't there yet. We aren't even close. Social and economic change comes slowly.

As an institutional leader, I will often have to share contexts as to why things can't happen quite as fast as others might wish them to happen. I appreciate that sense of urgency and the energy of those who want to push faster.

The chief diversity officer also made these kinds of statements (Example: “Anything that we put up overnight in one day, can be taken away overnight and in one day”). These statements lower expectations about the speed of institutional transformation.

Finally, president often stated that he did not have the power to implement particular kinds of change. At a community town hall meeting after the arrest and protest in April, a heated exchange took place between the president, the campus chief of police, and other administrators and a predominantly Black and Brown group of community members. When a grad student complained about colorblindness in the curriculum, the president responded, “The president has zero control of curriculum.” In the interview with the paper, when asked about the possibility of creating an anti-racist mural, he responded by saying, “I'm not the one who decides where [art] gets posted and in what ways.”

Crisis or success story? I am not suggesting that the president was being misleading or false in these statements. There are limits to a university president's power. What I am attempting to demonstrate is that months of observation of his public statement reveals a particular way of

framing the problems on campus that dislocated the underlying causes of the crisis as something external to the institution while simultaneously presenting an image that he and other top administrators are unable to do much to change that problem. This picture is not a particularly pleasant one, nor is it flattering for his administration. But there was one final rhetorical strategy that he utilized throughout the spring and fall during and in the aftermath of the crisis, and that was to recast the issue as one of educational outcomes—particularly retention and graduation rates for minoritized students.

At the Diversity Conference in November 2016—a moment of heightened tensions around his failure to adequately condemn a racist incident at a sporting event the weekend before—he used his remarks to highlight the campus' progress:

I'm delighted to tell you that we've set a new record for retention among our targeted minority students. A decade ago we were retaining 88% of them. Today we're retaining almost 96%. That's as good as it gets anywhere in the country. And actually this last year, our retention rate for our targeted minority students was above our retention rate for all other students. That comes on the heels of the good news from the [national education organization] that singled out State University for remarkable improvements over the last decade in reducing the graduation gap between targeted minority students and others. We still have a gap. It's too big. We need to keep working on reducing that further, but we have made substantial progress over the last five to ten years.

The president made these kinds of remarks over and over again. He used them to respond to students' criticism during the campus-wide town hall meeting in February. He highlighted statistical improvements at the Faculty of Color Reception. He also used them to defend against criticism at the town hall meeting with community members after the arrest. These kinds of

statements were echoed on his blog and by the communication department's coverage of events on campus.

Recasting the problem on campus as one of statistically verifiable educational outcomes is unsurprising for two reasons. First, the president of State University is a social scientist, something he often brought up. Discussing empirical findings about educational outcomes was intelligible to him in ways that students' testimonies of their experiences perhaps were not. It also allowed him to talk about State University as a success story—after all, “gaps” between majority and minoritized students were shrinking, and along some measures they had more or less been eliminated. Seen through this lens, State University was becoming a *better* place for minoritized students.

As I argue below, this rhetoric served to depoliticize the crisis on campus, by externalizing the causes, dislocating responsibility, and recasting the issue in the more politically neutral language of statistically measurable educational outcomes. However, these administrators still had to contend with the “hate and bias incidents” that continued to plague the campus throughout the spring semester. While the president's rhetoric recast the crisis on campus in subtle and indirect ways, the administration also took a more direct hand in reshaping how the institution talked about and responded to the hate and bias incidents.

From Hate to Bias

When I began my time at State University, the official label given to acts of bigotry and prejudice was “hate and bias incidents.” An online portal allowed anyone—although the reporting system was primarily for students—to report an incident they experienced or witnessed, and a member of the dean of student's response team, usually the chair, would follow up if the incident report was not submitted anonymously and the filer requested a response. The

filing system and the team were relatively new, and their time was spent handling the incident reports, meeting as a team to discuss the incidents, and compiling an end-of-semester report of all the incidents. The team also worked to promote their work, conducting trainings that covered both how to file incident reports and educated people on the difference between hate crimes, bias incidents, and microaggressions. These efforts were in response to the fact that the reporting system was vastly underutilized. The student climate survey conducted during the 2016-2017 school year revealed that roughly a tenth of students who witnessed such incidents reported them, and only a tenth of those that reported did so to the response group. In other words, only 1% of incidents were reported to the team.

Erasing “hate.” Despite the fact that it was underutilized, the team and its work became highly politicized. The team created a set of marketing materials—posters and brochures—to advertise its efforts. They settled on a simple but striking visual: the words “Hate & Bias” in large white letters against a black background. These materials provoked a strong reaction. For example, the materials were circulated during one of the meetings of the Diversity Committee chairs; the reactions ranged from approval to revulsion. One committee member said that their office put the posters up right away. Another said the materials made them feel “sad” and wondered if they could add “Addressing” before “Hate & Bias.” A few people joked that a rival university printed the materials. One suggested that it would make people “uncomfortable” and that they wouldn’t want to use the service—he didn’t want it to be something students saw right away when they entered his office.

The negative response to the materials went much higher—eventually the provost took an active role in changing the marketing materials as well as the way the team operated. The provost expressed concern with how the term “hate” would impact students. The concern was the

term “hate” was too negative would make white students disengage and minority students perceive the campus as more hostile. As one participant quipped, “So here's your job: make hate crimes positive. It's a good marketing test, right?”

The provost made several changes, citing the research of a few white faculty members who did work on diversity interventions. First, the term “hate” was dropped and the group became the Bias Response Group. Second, the educational component of the team’s workshops that taught participants about hate and microaggressions was cut and the presentation was reorganized to focus solely on helping targeted populations understand how to use the reporting system. Third, the marketing materials were replaced by a more positive campaign called “The State University Challenge.” These posters featured colorful images of diverse faces engaged in a variety of tasks—picking out produce at a farm stand, engaging in cultural/ethnic dances, playing instruments, graduating, etc. The tag line for the campaign read: “Creating inclusion and overcoming bias to foster a better university and a better world” and in smaller letters: “We are empathic. We are humble. We are curious. We are intellectually confident. We engage in purposeful action.”

Because I was embedded in the diversity apparatus, I heard about the conflict around the use of the word “hate” over the course of several months. Many people I spoke with expressed their frustrations about the direction the work took after the changes were implemented. One participant reflected on this change and what it said about the campus’ commitment to addressing these issues:

[Isn’t] that very reflective of what the administration wants to do? To tone down these incidents and downplay them? To not affirm that these things are actually happening to our students? So when they say that I don't want our students to see this when they walk

into the classroom or into my office, then we're covering up, that these things aren't happening or they don't happen as much.

—Jonathan, Mid-level Administrator

Relabeling these incidents was a transformation in “official knowledge.” How the incidents were talked about altered not only institutional practice but also institutional relations.

Disempowering responders. The response team included students, staff, and faculty, among them the MSU and LGBTQ Resource Center directors, the Housing Diversity Director, and representative from the CDO’s office, and the chair of the student government Racial Justice Committee. These were the kinds of individuals involved in the project of care. When the provost intervened to change the group’s name, scope, and activities, he disempowered people with both professional and experiential knowledge of how to serve marginalized student populations. Instead, he chose to listen to a group of white faculty with academic expertise but who were removed from the work of responding to these incidents and supporting the students impacted by them, ultimately reinscribing the power imbalances between white people and people of color and between upper-administrators and faculty, and mid-level diversity workers and student affairs staff. While the response team was expected to handle the people impacted by the incidents, they weren’t entrusted to shape policy.

The relationships between the provost, the faculty, and the members of the team mirrored the ways in which these changes also shifted who the interventions were designed to serve by making white students rather than the students impacted by the incidents the primary concern. While it is legitimate to worry that interventions will backfire and exacerbate the problems they were designed to address, the provost centered and prioritized the emotional and developmental needs of white students rather than the needs of the students who were the targets of hate and

bigotry. He was suggesting that it was the branding rather than the events themselves that were making the students perceive the campus climate as hostile. In that sense, the academic knowledge offered by the professors also outweighed lived experiences of students themselves. Ensuring that the branding did not negatively impact white students was deemed more important. **Caring for the majority.** The provost's oversight of the response team was consistent with larger patterns of how top administrators responded to the fallout of the hate and bias incidents. While the team reported dozens of incidents over the course of the school year, a handful of these incidents garnered local, statewide, and in some cases national media attention and were major catalysts for the student protest movement. When asked about how the university responds to conflicts around diversity, Rory the mid-level administrator put it bluntly:

With great care! But not the kind of care, so, with great care and the intention behind that care is probably a little conflicted. So, I could say with great care because they care for the students involved. They want to make sure these students feel good and like the community is healed. Or I could talk about the great care because they know they want to cover their ass. So I would say it's in that order: Cover your ass. Are the students ok? And I've literally been in meetings that they do that.

This complicates a critique that was often given by students, namely that the institution in general or administrators in particular do not care about diversity or diverse people. The quote above and this story illustrate that both can be a concern but which concern is prioritized has significance consequences for the ways in which diversity work is carried out and how institutional inequalities are recreated and reinforced. Institutional care can take many forms and be directed towards many things. It is not necessarily a zero sum game, but which objects of care

are centered or prioritized communicates far more than a public pronouncement about the institution's commitment to diversity.

To that end, the ultimate product of this conflict—the State University Challenge campaign—is one more in a long line of non-performative statements that is unable to actualize what it describes. Multiple people told me they thought the posters were part of a capital campaign and I myself would have overlooked the campaign had I not spent several minutes next to a poster while waiting for a bus. The statement actually obscured the very problem it was seeking to address by claiming that the university was a place that valued diversity and sought to overcome bias. It met the problem of bigoted speech and action with a declaration that the university is a diverse and inclusive space. It would not even affirm the existence of the incidents that the campaign was hoping to prevent. Bias became a faceless, agentless problem that could be solved by committing to the challenge.

Depoliticizing Diversity

Inequality Regimes

Feminist sociologist Joan Acker (2006) developed the concept of “inequality regimes” in order to account for the role institutions play in producing and perpetuating social inequalities. She defines inequality regimes as follows:

All organizations have inequality regimes, defined as loosely interrelated practices, processes, actions, and meanings that result in and maintain class, gender, and racial inequalities within organizations. ...I define inequality in organizations as systematic disparities between participants in power and control over goals, resources, and outcomes; workplace decisions such as how to organize work; opportunities for promotion and interesting work; security in employment and benefits; pay and other

monetary rewards; respect; and pleasures in work and work relations” (p. 443).

The concept is particularly useful for analyzing the State University president’s rhetoric and for understanding the changes in the hate and bias response system. Acker demonstrates that institutions are not passive recipients of social inequality, but rather are key producers of it. Institutions produce inequality by organizing people and enacting processes—in other words, inequality requires activity to maintain. She also recognizes that outcomes are not the only signifier of inequality—inequality is rooted in power relations and the distribution of institutional resources.

At the beginning of the chapter, I quoted Sara Ahmed’s critique that inequality regimes can be dressed up as equality regimes—this is fundamental to her critique of diversity in *On Being Included*. I have a slightly different reading of Acker’s understanding of institutional inequalities. Acker’s framing of inequality accounts for both power and the effects of power, or what I have been referring to as instrumental effects. Building on Acker and Ahmed, I would like to suggest a distinction between *equality* regimes and *equity* regimes. The former refers to practices designed to change outcomes without naming and addressing the power relations that produce them. In this light, an equality regime will always be an inequality regime “given new form” because it will rename, reorganize, and reproduce inequalities rather altering their underlying causes. This occurs, as Acker demonstrates, because reducing inequity is often at odds with institutional priorities, such as maximizing profit or reducing costs. In contrast, an equity regime is one that seeks to reorganize the institutional power relations that produce inequalities—the institutional project of redress is an example of an attempted equity regime.

I discovered there was a subtle mechanism that allowed inequality at State University to flourish even as a variety of institutional projects carried out attempts to make the university

more diverse and inclusive. While it is clear that both the president and provost engaged in intentional actions that reinforced existing power relations, I argue below that the issue was not only procedural, it was epistemological. The influence of this particular project was not simply driven by the president and provost's access to institutional power and resources, but by the way in which actors accepted and promulgated knowledge of the crisis that turned institutional inequity into a technical, de-politicized problem. One instrumental effect of this practice was to reinscribe the power of faculty, which included the president and provost, and further marginalized the knowledge and expertise of diversity workers.

Rendering Technical

One surprising discovery in my analysis was how often participants discussed data. I coded for the different kinds of diversity work my participants described—everything from creating safe spaces to training to fundraising. Other than training and education, the most common work my participants described was collecting, analyzing, and disseminating data. This included the campus climate survey that the CDO and his team were planning, as well as the Diversity Database, which catalogues and provides metrics for various diversity efforts and programs around campus. But data also seemed to arise from and circulate within every node of the diversity apparatus. The administrative division that oversaw most of the campus' facilities and services regularly engaged in climate surveys and closely tracked the demographics of their employees. Scholarship programs tracked their students' achievement. Some of the CDO's staff regularly monitored students' of color academic performance so they could intervene if they fell into the "Yellow Zone" or "Red Zone." The hate and bias incidents that occurred each semester were compiled into a report each semester.

There was a constant clamor for assessment. One criticism of the CDO's office both from

within and outside of the diversity apparatus is that it did not do enough to collect data for assessment—a criticism that was bolstered when one of their longest running programs released an external assessment that included a mixed evaluation of its effectiveness. Everyone I encountered seemed to have some hope or plan for what the campus climate survey could assess and help address. A significant challenge in launching the campus climate survey was the sheer number of people who were weighing in on what items to include in the survey in order get the data they wanted.

Discourses of data and assessment shaped how the institution approached its diversity policy and practice, and it played an essential role in constituting State University's equality regime. The obsession with and reliance on data in managing human differences and addressing institutional inequalities is a process James Ferguson (1994) refers to as “rendering technical.” Ferguson developed this concept examining international development work in Lesotho, where he discovered that development organizations working in the country tended to construct objects and problems that they themselves were capable of fixing. They utilized a discourse that made political and economic problems unthinkable and unknowable and instead recast the nation's challenges as technical problems. This was not the intentional actions of any particular actor or organization, but instead the unintended consequence of relying on a technocratic logic to assess problems and formulate interventions.

The same dynamic was at play at State University—the propensity to frame problems around diversity in terms of statistics—particularly grades and retention and graduation rates—made other issues at State University unintelligible, at least within this discourse. As an example, contrast the retention and graduation rates, which the president was fond of quoting as a signal of institutional progress, with the issues students raised using the *ThisIsStateU* hashtag. The daily

slights as well as physical and symbolic violence these students documented is not intelligible through the language of data and gaps. In fact, it directly defies the institutional image of improvement and progress that is constructed through its statistics. When the president used numbers to counter claims made by students, the two parties were talking about two fundamentally different institutions—one constructed through official reports and the other lived by minoritized students.

Students were not the only ones whose voices were silenced as a result of rendering diversity technical. One of the instrumental effects of rendering diversity technical was that it also marginalized the diversity workers who worked most closely with students. This is evident in the story above where diversity workers provided talking points with the word “racism” that were re-worded by the communications group. When technical discourses are dominant, one’s ability to speak intelligibly to institutional leaders is dependent upon utilizing the codes associated with that discourse.

The final consequence is that diversity becomes de-politicized even as the depoliticizing discourse is having political effects—students and diversity workers are marginalized because institutional power circulates among those who are perceived as having technical expertise—namely faculty. I witnessed this phenomenon in committees that took on research projects. Faculty would dominate the conversation and when staff would interject, they would undercut their own statements by saying, “I’m not a researcher, but...” In the case of diversity at State University, these distinctions are raced and gendered, as diversity workers are more likely to be people of color and women while faculty are more likely to be white and male. Another salient example of this is when the MSU director had to advocate for students to design and implement

the campus' new cultural competency program instead of a group of white faculty working with the provost.

Audit Cultures and Ethnic Managerialism

The reliance on data and assessment is not unique to State University. The discourse of data is overdetermined by more fundamental shifts in the management of public institutions in both the United States and elsewhere. Anthropologists of higher education have been documenting the rise of techno-administrative reforms that have been described as “audit cultures” (Shore & Wright, 1999; Strathern, 2000; Wright & Rabo, 2010). These scholars trace how auditing discourses and technologies traveled from the business sector to public institutions like universities (which parallels the movement of diversity officers into the academy). These transformations occurred as a result of reforms designed to make public institutions more effective and efficient, in essence, to behave like private firms. Central to the audit culture is the measurement and assessment of performance—research output, grant dollars, and in this case, retention and graduation. The question, “What does it mean to be good at equality or diversity, or for equality or diversity to be a measure of the good?” (Ahmed, 2012, p. 85) is recast in technical terms—being good at equality entails equalizing educational outcomes that can be documented and assessed.

As the audit culture literature demonstrates, these transformations bring with them not only discourses, but also technologies and infrastructures. The audit culture literature in the anthropology of higher education is an outgrowth of the scholarship on the “new public management” in the United Kingdom. The new public management, although a heterogeneous set of discourses and practices, nonetheless centers around a series of impulses: cutting budgets and outsourcing costs, contracting out service provision, relying on competition, decentralization

and flexible management, depoliticization, and accountability and assessment (Gruening, 2001). While Ahmed (2012) draws on the audit culture literature in her critique of diversity work, the new public management literature has also spawned a conversation about “ethnic managerialism” (Law 1999; Ahmed; Swan & Fox 2010), or how “Diversity work becomes inextricably linked to professional and managerial technologies” (Swan & Fox, p. 569). This is where the rationality of the new public management and audit cultures becomes incorporated in the project of managing human differences in institutional life.

Unacknowledged Racism

These literatures illustrate Ferguson’s notion of rendering technical—problems in institutions are reoriented around the logics of rationality and managerialism. In the case of diversity, the depoliticization of the problems of diversity limits the ability to recognize and address the issue of racism. Sean Harper (2012) criticizes higher education scholars for studying “everything but racism,” arguing that they have been trained to study symptoms rather than the disease. Bonnie Urciuoli (2009) notes that, “Only racialized subjects can produce diversity, yet institutions whose very structures reproduce so much of the opposition underlying racism do not know what to do with these racialized subjects” (p. 34). Ahmed (2012) found that even mentioning the word “racism” was enough to provoke resistance to diversity work. Rendering diversity technical removes the discomfort of discussing racism and replaces it with the language of educational outcomes, or “gaps” between majority and minoritized students.

The use of the word “racism” was so uncommon in the university’s official communications that on the few occasions I did encounter the word it was jarring. If administrators were hesitant to use the term “hate,” it is unsurprising that they would be cautious about using “racist” or “racism.” Often racism was referenced as a topic of discussion or an

object of interest—protests addressed racism or town hall meetings included discussions about racism. It was rare for incidents themselves to be referred to as racist when an actor spoke with the institution's voice. One of the very few exceptions was after someone attended a campus-wide event in the fall of 2016 dressed in an unambiguously racist costume. The president was harshly criticized for repeatedly framing the costume as free speech. Eventually, the campus rewrote its policies for event conduct to specify that, "racist and other offensive behavior is not appropriate for our venues." Even this is non-threatening, because if it is only behavior that is racist, the source of the problem is aberrant individuals. It elides a discussion about institutional or systemic racism.

Discourses of racism simply did not fit within the technical logics of the project of equality. Just as with the technocrats in Ferguson's study, leaders oriented themselves toward objects and outcomes they felt they could understand and address. Racism, societal, institutional, and personal, is far more difficult to address than a so-called achievement gap. Addressing achievement gaps also does not threaten other constituencies and institutional priorities. If anything, shrinking achievement gaps is constituent with the institutional drive for excellence. Elite universities are certainly driven by revenue considerations, but they also compete in prestige markets (Marginson, 2004, 2006). An equality regime allows an institution to thread the needle between two threats: on one hand, engaging in substantive and transformational reforms that would potentially disrupt both its position as an elite, highly-ranked institution and its relationship with white alumni and donors, and on the other, ignoring the problem and contending with the fallout of the continued negative press coverage, which would also damage its reputation.

An illustrative point of comparison is how the institution responded to two different student demands: one, the call for cultural competency training and the other a demand to adopt a test-optional admissions policy, meaning students would no longer need to take the SAT or ACT in order to apply. Implementing a cultural competency program allowed the administration to address the individualized problem of hate and bias incidents, but also to reframe the new program in terms of excellence. A prominent institutional tale diversity workers often told was that particular businesses (which businesses often changed with the telling) had once stopped recruiting State University's graduates because they were perceived to be culturally incompetent. The idea that the business community wanted more competent graduates was used to defend the new cultural competency program from external criticism, particularly from conservative state legislators. In contrast, allowing students to apply without test scores would upend a system of admissions that favors majority applicants. It would be a potentially substantive step in addressing the implicit racism of college admissions policies but would likely undermine State University's standing in national and international rankings. It would harm its image of academic excellence, at least according to one of the primary metrics that signals excellence.

The project of equality was only ever partially successful in rearticulating diversity as a technical problem. Students referenced racism over and over again in their interviews, more than all other institutional groups combined. Student activists and their allies continually re-politicized what was taking place on campus and reinserted the language of racism, white supremacy, and oppression into the conversation. The most prominent example of this was the student's graffiti ("racism in the air—don't breathe") as well as students' reaction to her arrest—it was framed as anti-Black racism. At the community town hall meeting held after the arrest and protest, graduate student activists continually pressed the president and chief of police, asking

them to detail their anti-racist reforms, particularly with regard to curriculum, or to explain how they had brought racial justice to campus. The president responded by saying she doesn't control curriculum and encouraging the students to take their voice to student government.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I have laid out how top administrators at State University responded to the crisis on campus. In contrast to the criticism that campus leaders did not care about diversity, I have demonstrated that the form this care took was an institutional project I call the project of equality. Equality regimes rely on positivist, technical logic that reduces institutional inequities to measurable differences in particular educational outcomes—gaps in retention and graduation rates. The project of equality sought to equalize these outcomes, using data to frame, track, and signal institutional progress. However, these reforms allowed other institutional inequities with regard to power and resources to remain unchallenged.

This project was enabled by the discursive practice of “rendering technical.” Only claims made with data were knowable in this discourse, which made student and staff’s experiential understanding of inequality on campus unintelligible. Words like “hate” no longer had a place in the official discourse the university employed. The president and provost simultaneously employed rhetorical practices that both externalized the causes of the crisis and abrogated their ability to address it. As a result, the reforms and measures implemented by the crises not only left institutional inequalities unaddressed, but further marginalized students and staff of color.

Thus far, I have largely analyzed these institutional projects in isolation from each other. In the next and final chapter, I bring the analysis together, to examine how the contours of diversity work at State University were shaped by how these institutional projects overlapped, intersected, and conflicted.

XI Conclusion

Occasionally I hear people say, “SU doesn’t care.” If we didn’t care, we wouldn’t be spending the time, money, and energy that that we do. Have we done everything we hoped to do? No. Can we come together to reaffirm our shared commitment to diversity and inclusion? Yes.

—President

Cause this university, it doesn't love you. It doesn't care for you. And a lot of people in administration don't care for you either.

—Kaleigh, Student

How do we make sense of two seemingly incompatible observations: on the one hand, the “time, money, and energy” State University invests in its diversity efforts and on the other, that how these resources are spent does not seem to produce lasting change for minoritized students, staff, and faculty on campus? Throughout this dissertation, I have traced the ways groups of students, staff, faculty, administrators, and community members mobilized and invested their time, money, and energy in order to transform the institution into a more diverse and inclusive space. In this final chapter, I bring these five institutional projects into motion with each other. First, I will consider how these five projects interacted to shape the contours of diversity policy and practice at State University and what this meant for institutional transformation. Then, I will turn to the larger question of what can be learned from this specific institutional case for those of us who hope to foster colleges and universities that are not only more “diverse” but more radically just.

The More Things Change...

At the very end of my fieldwork, I found myself observing one last student government committee meeting. This committee convened a handful of student government officers and student volunteers who serve on shared governance committees. This meeting was of interest to me because the president was coming to address student government leaders in the wake of yet another racialized scandal. A white student had attempted to form a local student chapter of a white nationalist organization and it soon came out that the student had served jail time for racially motivated crimes. Once again, race relations on campus were thrust into the spotlight and students were frustrated by the president's response to the situation.

In his remarks to the assembled group of students, the president repeated a line of argument he had used many times over the preceding months: he reiterated that he found the student's views offensive but that the student was entitled to express his views as free speech. He compared the situation to McCarthyism and attempted to reassure students that it was a positive thing that the university was not limiting the student's freedom of speech. The president took questions from students in the audience, and over the course of the next twenty or so minutes, tensions in the room escalated as students repeatedly lobbed accusatory questions at the administrator. Eventually, a group of fifteen or so students, most of them white, rushed into the room chanting, "This is our university! Fuck white supremacy!" While I recognized one of the students participating in the disruption—I had seen him at other protests that fall—I was not familiar with this new group of activists. I later learned these students were calling themselves the Progressive Student Alliance, the latest in a long line of student activist groups challenging inequity on campus.

Before beginning his remarks, the president mentioned he had another engagement that evening and that he would be leaving the meeting early. By this point in the evening, he began to

make his way out of the room even as students continued to pepper him with questions. Before exiting the room, he paused in the aisle just next to me and I could see that he was visibly agitated. His hands shook as he continued to respond to students' questions about the line between free speech and hate speech. After answering another question, he made a hasty retreat even as students continued to shout questions.

This meeting occurred just as I was wrapping up my time at State University. By this point, the scene was deeply familiar, even if the specific controversy was different. Like many other campuses at the time, State University was embroiled in free speech debates triggered by local and national instances of student activists disrupting conservative and controversial speakers on campus. What made this meeting noteworthy for me was that the campus had undertaken a series of policy reforms in order to address what took place on campus during the previous spring semester, and yet racial tensions at State University seemed as bad as ever.

When Institutional Projects Collide

What I have attempted to demonstrate throughout this dissertation is that diversity policy and practice is neither a centered nor unified institutional process, but instead is the product of both competing visions of what a diverse and inclusive institution looks like and the specific practices institutional actors employ to advance these visions. The students, staff, faculty, administrators, and community members I encountered during my time at State University offered a host of competing interpretations of both what was wrong at and with the university, what needed to be done, and what the university would look like if their visions were realized. As a result of these interpretations, institutional actors engaged in very modes of action to try and advance their agendas in hopes of transforming the institution, engaging in what I call institutional projects. The trajectory of State University's diversity reforms as well as the

contours of daily practice are irreducible to any single actor, office, or policy text. Rather, how the university did and did not transform itself was relationally determined through the interaction of overlapping and competing institutional projects. In order to demonstrate what I mean by this, it is worth revisiting both the policy reforms that resulted from the conflict during the 2015-2016 school year as well as the ways in which the university enacted and represented those reforms during the following school year.

The university's signature reform was the creation of the Our State University program for first-year students. Other major changes include hiring mental health professionals of color, building a Black Cultural Center, creating a cultural competency workshop for graduate teaching assistants, and forming a president's community advisory council to name a few of the more prominent reforms. It is highly unlikely that any of these changes would have been made had the crisis of the spring semester not occurred—the policy reform process was a reactive one, an attempt to manage and contain the crisis. This interpretation was widely shared by my participants:

We've seen it; it was student-to-student issues. Students offending other students and that's a challenge. Because the administration then turns their attention to that and we end up doing a band aid approach. We appease the students running [to the administrative building]. We don't want to cause, we don't want to ruin the SU name but we're not looking at the solution to this. We're just smacking a band aid on it and praying and hoping that it goes for a little bit.

—Sofia, Staff Member

It's reactive. You know, always reactive. Um...again I just, I'm repeating myself. So if people, people in power who do these things, if they had done some of their own self

reflection and self work, we wouldn't be going through these cycles. What we would be doing is being in an iterative posture to continue to see what's going on and what do we need more of. And start again, the process of continuing that with yet another you know, cohort of people. That is a different thing than, “Oh my god! Here's a crisis. (Snaps) Let's throw something at it and what can we throw at it to put this fire down? Oh we can have workshops. We'll be just fine after that.” How many times you know, do you see the same thing and you continue to have the same response. Is just the brochure has a different color, you know. How many times are we gonna do that?

—Michael, Mid-level Administrator

Cause all of diversity, no matter where you are, but especially here is all about reacting to the next fire.

—Peyton, Student

While I agree that the policy reforms were initiated as a reaction to the crisis, where I am attempting to complicate the picture is by demonstrating that how the campus reacted was shaped by a more complex dynamic than a crisis and band aid approach. To extend the metaphor—there were a variety of band aids to choose from, and which were selected and how they were applied was shaped by the ways in which institutional projects engaged one another.

Consider the reactionary process of implementing a cultural competency program. Student activists were quite effective in leveraging negative publicity surrounding hate and bias incidents to force a response from leading administrators. Over the course of multiple interviews and observations, I watched and listened as students demonstrated increasing sophistication in their analysis of how to use the crisis to pressure the administration. As one student told me:

All right, this is a funny thing too. I should say, in the second meeting we had with the president, he was like "I don't think you guys should call it demands." He was really trying to force us away from calling ... not force us but, really recommend us not calling it a demand. I didn't understand why he didn't want us to call it a demand until I realized that when you call it a demand, that's what creates the tension that they don't want.

—Jayden, Student

Unsurprisingly, students continued to make demands rather than soften their language. Over the course of the 2015-2016 school year, these ranged from relatively non-controversial requests (hiring more mental health professionals of color) to more radical demands (community control and administrators' resignations) to those somewhere in between (implementing cultural competency training). As tensions continued to escalate and publicized acts of bigotry continued to occur, the president had little choice but to make strategic concessions.

The demand for cultural competency brought all five institutional projects into alignment: it met a direct demand from students, it extended the efforts of student affairs professionals and faculty who were already working to improve the capacity of majoritarian staff and faculty to serve minoritized students, it mirrored similar proposals for training under the CDO's strategic diversity plan, it provided an opportunity to "preach" to the congregation rather than the choir, and trainings could be measured and evaluated as best practices. This alignment gave the institution cover from external critics, particularly conservative politicians, who claimed cultural competency trainings were offensive and a waste of taxpayer money.

While this might appear to validate the Critical Race Theory tenant of interest convergence—that positive shifts in race relations only occur when majoritarian and minoritarian interests align (Bell, 1980, 2005)—looking through the lens of hegemonic politics allows us to

see that interests are built rather than given (Laclau, 2005). Institutional projects worked out their interests both internally among those who participated in them and in relation to other institutional projects. Interests are dynamic rather than fixed. In addition, the picture becomes more complex as we consider how this and other demands were and were not met. There were ongoing negotiations about how to implement the demand for cultural competency training. The president limited the program to first-year and transfer students, and then slowly scaled back the commitment to a pilot of roughly a thousand students—the intervention would need to be empirically validated before it was scaled up. At the same time, the administration hedged its bets by supporting other training initiatives led by expert faculty. While the Our State University program expanded the following year to include more first year students, the program never became mandatory and no campus wide programs were implemented. The university's executive leadership only ever partially took up these demands and the president and provost were effective in setting the limits on these reforms.

In most cases, institutional projects conflicted rather than aligned. The friction between them is what created the need for strategic rearticulation. The preceding chapters are replete with examples of this, but a several are worth revisiting here. First, as the public face of the response to the crisis, the chief diversity officer was one of the point people for responding to student activists. This put his office in tension with students he was hoping to serve and support. The crisis and policy reform process threatened to undermine years of work developing the strategic diversity plan and implementation roadmap as, to use his words, the university once again began to “reinvent the wheel” with its diversity policy and programs. In order to win students over to his cause, he began rearticulating their demands using the language of the implementation roadmap, arguing his office was already doing most of what they were demanding. As the

description of their different ideologies and projects attests, students and the CDO had points of commonality but were articulating radically different visions of the purpose of diversity and what a transformed institution would look like. Claiming that their demands were contained in the roadmap was strategic rather than descriptive. While the CDO was partially successful in winning students over as collaborators, it was most likely the collapse of the student activist network that diffused the conflict between the CDO and student activists.

Another example of how institutional projects interacted comes from the ways in which diversity care workers increasingly collected and disseminated data and used the language of data to represent their programs. Program administrators often spoke about graduation and retention rates without prompting. While they were clearly concerned about the academic success of their students, the sheer amount of “data talk” points to a larger issue—that in order to justify the ongoing existence of their programs, they needed to speak in a language that senior administrators understood and responded to. The kind of care work they were committed to performing needed to be explained in terms of metrics that could be tracked and improved. The project of care’s persistence was dependent upon rearticulating their work in the language of the project of equality.

While institutional projects are forced to contend with one another, it is clear that not every project engages from equal positions of power, and this unevenness played a prominent role in determining outcomes. The president and other executive administrators—through their control of institutional resources and decision-making processes—were able to constrain and limit the extent of these reforms, which students recognized:

In my mind, we should be much more "radical". Air quotations are being put up, "radical" or "revolutionary", because that's what's necessary at this PWI and that's what's

necessary in context to this community, but I don't feel like State University as an entity, as an institution, is prepared to have an expansion of [intergroup dialogue courses]. I don't feel like they're prepared to have a large expansion to the ethnic studies requirement. I don't think that they're prepared for those things, and I think that there's a lot of fluff and a lot of rhetoric that will prolong and stall the conversation until I graduate.

—Elliot, Student

The unevenness between institutional projects shaped policy and practice and the extent to which institutional projects were or were not successful. For example, while the university did hire mental health professionals of color, these positions were largely funded through student segregated fees rather than university dollars, meaning that students bore the financial burden of meeting their own psychological needs. The university established a Black Cultural Center, but did not take steps to establish cultural centers for other groups, fostering some resentment between racialized groups on campus. Given that the university had twice allowed its Black Cultural Center to close in the past, it's long-term future seemed uncertain.

Each institutional project varied in its effectiveness, but in the final instance, the president largely retained control over final decisions. The president approved the Our State University program, the final version of the diversity mission statement, and the climate improvement initiatives recommended by committee. I describe in chapter eight how the Campus Climate Committee was largely ineffective in positioning itself to influence policy on campus because it did not rearticulate its vision in language that appealed to the president and provost. They preached to the president and provost as if they were members of the choir and thus failed to adequately justify why they should have a greater voice in policy-making

conversations. Even the CDO, who was, by all appearances, quite savvy in engaging executive leaders was cut out of the process of vetting new campus climate initiatives. I saw him express frustration on multiple occasions that the campus was proposing new initiatives while he and his staff were in the process of implementing the campus' current diversity plan. He had his staff look for points of alignment between the new initiatives and the existing diversity plan and then used these new initiatives as proof that the plan was being fulfilled. The CDO's office began publishing twice annual Climate Improvement Updates, reports detailing what was happening on campus to improve campus climate and to implement the diversity plan. These reports listed the student climate survey and Diversity Database alongside other responses to the crisis when these initiatives had been planned years in advance. One report even rearticulated a system-wide free speech policy designed to suppress student protesters like the Eclipse as being crafted to protect 1st Amendment Rights and the needs of underrepresented students.

While rearticulating other institutional projects was necessary in order to achieve a project's goals, it did not guarantee success. For example, rearticulating other activities as being in alignment with the strategic diversity plan was enough to keep the CDO in high-level conversations, but did not necessarily provide the leverage needed to influence policy. In fact the president and provost seemed content to let the CDO respond to upset students and community members but unwilling to give him more influence over policy. When diversity workers in the project of commitment drafted the campus' diversity mission statement, they intentionally used language that they knew would appeal to important internal and external stakeholders, but this resulted in a statement stripped of any substantive mechanism for holding leadership accountable.

Those most marginalized in the policy-making process were students attempting to survive the negative climate and the student affairs professionals sacrificing their own wellbeing to care for these students. While a few were asked to participate in the committee that recommended climate improvement initiatives, the president and provost made final decisions. Even as those participating in the project of care tried to speak upper-level administrators' language by collecting and disseminating data, they were not treated as experts on the lives of minoritized students. Students' calls for community oversight and the transfer of institutional power to students, staff, and faculty of color were completely ignored. While the president convened a community advisory council populated by local community leaders of color, an advisory council has no policy-making power. New initiatives and programs were created in direct response to the efforts of those participating in institutional projects, but the institution's ruling relations remained in place.

Toward Radical Diversity Politics

Diversity work is incredibly complicated. You never get it right. You are answering to stakeholders who have conflicting agendas, conflicting values, and interests. And you are never going to make them happy and you're trying to fight the good fight and sometimes you don't even know what the good fight is anymore.

—Tatum, Staff Member

Throughout this dissertation, I have attempted to trace the “conflicting agendas, conflicting values, and interests” and how they in turn shaped diversity policy and practice at State University. While the university and system's executive leadership were able to contain attempts at more radical forms of transformation, it would be overly simplistic to assert that they, in Sara Ahmed's (2012) terms, put up “brick walls” to prevent institutional change. Not only is

this metaphor static, but it also presents the picture as a binary conflict between change agents and institutional leaders. As I have demonstrated here, there were multiple visions, interpretations, and agendas at play—what I have called institutional projects—and the final outcomes were relationally produced through these projects.

In retrospect, it is tempting to assume that it was inevitable that calls for radical change would be largely coopted or contained. This, I believe, would be to succumb to unwarranted deterministic thinking—the outcome of this crisis at State University could not have been predicted in advance. The conditions of possibility shifted with each new hateful incident, protest, and call for change. Actors at State University were responding to dynamic national and local contexts. Such a perspective also diminishes the small but hard-fought victories that students, staff, and faculty achieved. Given that the administration was working on “pressure release valves,” as the CDO called them, prior to the first Eclipse protest, it is clear that State University’s president had not planned to initiate policy reforms or propose new initiatives and was pressured into doing so.

This is where the lenses of hegemony and racial formation theory are so useful—change is the result of disequilibrium and compromise. While we might prefer and long for a Gramscian “war of maneuver” where sweeping changes usher in radical transformation, we are far more likely to find ourselves in a “war of position” where gains are small and gradual. If Omi and Winant’s (1994)’s notion of racial projects captures the larger war of position over race relations in a given society, racial institutional projects are what Hall (199ab) refers to as struggles in the trenches of the war of position. They are the specific sites in which larger social struggles are waged, sutured together through the dynamic of complex mutual overdetermination.

Why so many critical scholars and I continue to find Gramsci's framework useful is that he recognized that a philosophy of praxis, or a strategy of action informed by deep theoretical insight, must contend with the world as it is, with deep attention to the specific and concrete dynamics of local political struggle. Pie-in-the-sky Marxist determinism, he recognized, would not provide the kind of insight needed to make strategic political interventions.

I find a striking parallel between Gramsci's approach and the philosophical practice of non-ideal theory articulated by John Rawls (1971). Non-ideal theory seeks to understand how to apply abstract values and ideals to concrete, messy, and often undesirable circumstances. Political philosophers move from the ideal to the non-ideal, first establishing the nature of an ideal value (e.g., What is justice?) and then examining how it can be applied given the myriad of constraints of a given context (e.g., How can justice be applied in this instance?). It seems to me that critical social scientists, critical ethnographers among them, often move in the opposite direction—examining the non-ideal circumstances of our participants' daily realities and then concluding by making calls to dismantle systems of oppression, an ideal situation if there ever was one. In keeping my political commitments to a Gramscian philosophy of praxis, I want to conclude by keeping both of my feet firmly planted in the non-ideal contexts of the conflict that took place at State University and offer speculation and recommendations for students, staff, faculty, administrators, and community members who are committed to engaging in the long struggle to make institutions of higher education not only inclusive of previously excluded groups, but moving beyond inclusion toward radical alternatives. There is no easy path between here and there, but I believe there are key lessons that can be learned from what took State University that can help us advance this struggle. I briefly consider each of these lessons below.

First, contrary to some excellent scholarship on organizational leadership and institutional change, I remain unconvinced that “leadership” is the paradigm needed for advancing diversity reform, as the case of State University demonstrates that the reform processes is neither centralized nor linear. One temptation is to overly focus on the leadership of chief diversity officers or other executive leaders (e.g., Williams, 2013; Williams & Wade-Golden, 2013). Kezar’s (2012a, 2012b, 2014a, 2014b) work offers a refreshing alternative to much of this literature by demonstrating that any campus community member can participate in instigating and driving change, but the framework of convergence leadership relies on a top/bottom binary. By analyzing the dynamic at State University through the lens of social movement theory and policy ethnography, I have demonstrated that the institutional hierarchy does not neatly map onto the heterarchical power relations that manifest in and across organizational structures. And while this study corroborates that executive leaders can have enormous influence, an issue I will return to in a moment, I find these leadership frameworks overly individualistic.

In his long-running Ideology and Curriculum seminar, Michael Apple was fond of declaring that movements, not individuals, change history. The decentered and relational approach I have utilized here demonstrates that struggles to make colleges and universities more diverse, inclusive, and just are diffuse and the work of groups, not just individuals. The focus on the individualized frame of “leadership” obscures some of the group dynamics that both foster and hamper attempts at institutional transformation. As I argued in chapter nine, the chief diversity officer position at State University was invested with institutional history and expectations, and thus the role was more than the person occupying it. The campus’ strategic diversity plan was constantly being disarticulated and rearticulated in response to what was

taking place on campus in order to make the text relevant to what was taking place. Even policy texts are far from solid and static. Recognizing the complexity of these institutional dynamics is the first step toward formulating strategic interventions for promoting organizational change.

The second lesson is closely related to the first—much of the struggle between groups, or institutional projects, is waged at the level of language. Drawing on the work of Antonio Gramsci, Stuart Hall, and Ernesto Laclau, I argue that one of the central practices by which institutional projects advance their agendas is by strategically disarticulating and rearticulating the language of other institutional projects. In chapter two, I explored both mainstream and critical scholarship on diversity in higher education. The latter is rightfully distrustful of how diversity is used to extract value from racialized bodies (Leong, 2013; Urciuoli, 1999) and to constrain progressive institutional reforms (Ahmed, 2012; Brayboy, 2013; Yosso, Parker, Solórzano, & Lynn, 2004). While I agree with these critiques, I have also sought to demonstrate that diversity has no predetermined content or form.

As an empty signifier, diversity is subject to the “the constant overflowing of every discourse by the infinitude of the field of discursivity” (Laclau & Mouffe, 1985, p. 100). This means there will always be multiple ways to articulate what diversity is and means. While Ahmed (2006, 2012) has argued that diversity is associated with non-controversial terms or with pre-existing institutional values, these associations are never permanent or fixed. Student activists in particular are well positioned to rearticulate the meaning of diversity. I may personally prefer to use terms like social justice or equity, but these too are not immune from the politics of rearticulation. Whether or not diversity is the right term is less important than intentionally working to rearticulate diversity in relation to more radical and just institutional policies and practices. As long as the term is en vogue, progressive reformers will need to engage

with the language of diversity, but they should do so strategically by reimagining what diversity might mean and entail.

The third lesson is that institutional reforms must focus on the concrete relations between institutional groups. This is related to the issue of language, because at State University, the problem was predominantly framed using the term “campus climate.” As I have argued, this language is largely non-agentic and obscured what institutional ethnographers call “ruling relations” (Smith, 2005). It reinforces the static image of higher education institutions that I seek to disrupt in chapter three by retheorizing what institutions are—institutions are ordered through ruling relations that require upkeep. The institution must continually be called into being, which means it is perhaps more susceptible to disruption than a framework like campus climate might lead us to believe. Institutional actors can and do resist changes to ruling relations, making them difficult to change. However, as theorists like Gramsci and J. K. Gibson-Graham demonstrate, our ability to enact change is often limited by our theories of the object we are seeking to change.

Campus climate is epiphenomenal to ruling relations. The reforms State University made to address campus climate further obscured institutional relations. For example, one participant stated that the university burns through minoritized people like fuel. They were speaking specifically about trainings and services minoritized staff offer to majoritarian members of campus. To put it differently, the relationship between majoritarian staff and faculty and minoritized staff was one of fuel consumption. When that relationship is recognized and named, it shifts the policy conversation about what can and should be done. Another salient example is how white faculty attempted to take charge of implementing the cultural competency program as “experts,” which would have excluded the very students who fought to establish the program. While faculty’s program may have addressed climate, it would have maintained a subject-object

relationship between white faculty and minoritized students. A similar critique was recently made by a group of scholars who have argued that the relationship between universities and Black bodies is primarily one of property ownership (Dancy, Edwards, Davis, 2018). Naming these concrete relationships radically alters the conversation around both what the problem is and what solutions can be proposed. Given this, it is time that reformers jettison the language of campus climate to focus instead on specific and concrete institutional relationships.

The fourth lesson also speaks to the issue of relations—faculty wield an enormous amount of power, both as key leaders in shared governance and because executive leadership is usually drawn from the ranks of the faculty. The relation between professors and diversity workers is predominantly one between white faculty and minoritized staff. This relationship is predicated on an epistemic power that positions faculty as “experts” and diversity workers as laborers, knowers vs. racialized doers. I have encountered this perspective outside my fieldwork—I once attended an academic labor forum where critical graduate students and faculty members sought to conceptualize academics as laborers. After hours of debate, the group collectively concluded that we as scholars had little in common with other laborers on campus because our labor was uncovering “truth.” While I was shocked by this conclusion at the time, I now see that this is a widespread misconception. I have been in other similar settings where other groups of laborers in the academy were overlooked and ignored. What this study illuminates is that the academic division of labor is often a racialized one, particularly when it comes to diversity work.

The German physicist Max Planck once opined that, “a new scientific truth does not triumph by convincing its opponents and making them see the light, but rather because its opponents eventually die, and a new generation grows up that is familiar with it” (as cited in

Kuhn, 1962, p. 150). Sometimes change requires death. I suspect that there is some truth to this when it comes to racial justice in the academy, that older generations of scholars and institutional leaders will need to retire and leave for certain transformations in the academy to occur.

However, as Posselt's (2016) study of graduate admissions demonstrates, for all their lip-service to diversity, faculty tend to perpetuate old notions of merit that work to reproduce racialized disparities in admissions to elite graduate programs. And as studies of minoritized faculty demonstrate, even as the ranks of the professoriate become more open, minoritized faculty are often marginalized, particularly when engaged in diversity work (Brayboy, 2003; Harley, 2007; Stanley, 2006; Turner, González, & Wood, 2008). My participants often debated who was more effective at achieving institutional change—students, staff, or faculty. My reading of the student activism literature is that students are key to instigating change (Boren, 2001; Rhoads, 1998), but my research suggests staff are key to sustaining it through their labor and faculty play a fundamental role in advancing or constraining it. As a result, faculty will need to play an active role in shifting institutional relations, and I suggest that future reforms will need to focus on enlisting majoritarian faculty as allies in the struggle to reorganize institutional relations rather than simply focusing on training faculty to not commit microaggressions.

Finally, we cannot divorce institutional transformation from political transformation. Conservative state politicians were engaged in their own racial institutional projects, attempting to remake the university according to what I characterize in chapter five as a white supremacist ideology. My participants had to contend on a daily basis both with policy decisions made by the state as well as the threat of new policies that might undermine their work. Even the president, with all his power to influence what was happening on campus, had to be responsive to state government. I employ the rather unimaginative pseudonym “State University,” because what is

happening at this institution is representative of similar struggles at the state level at public colleges and universities around the country.

As the academic capitalism and audit culture literatures so clearly demonstrate, state colleges and universities are awkwardly positioned between the state, the market, and the rest of society. They are not wholly public institutions, but neither are they free of the state's influence. Transformation on campus is overdetermined by state institutions, which, the case of State University attests, can play a powerful role in constraining (or enabling) progressive reforms. Thus, attempts at changing institutions need to be waged in coordination with larger struggles over political institutions. While I can offer no easy prescriptions for how to do this, I do know that this will require that institutional groups see themselves as part of larger coalitions—linking institutional projects to racial projects. Student activists were quite conscious and intentional of this as evidenced by how they linked up with broader social movements. While political shifts at the state and federal level do not guarantee progressive reforms at the institutional level—the state *overdetermines* rather than determines institutional policy and practice—such reforms will likely not be successful or sustainable in the long term without them.

Conclusion

None of the approaches I outline above are easy or will likely be achieved quickly. The nature of these struggles will look different depending on the institution—ethnography does not lend itself to easily generalizable findings or “best practices.” My final hope is that this dissertation will not be the final ethnographic word on diversity policy and practice. As I stated in the third chapter, there are far too few ethnographies of higher education, institutional or otherwise. And yet, ethnography has much to offer our understanding of how colleges and universities operate and what this means for the most marginalized studying and working at these

institutions. I see this particular study as the beginning of a lifelong ethnographic project of examining how colleges and universities engage human difference as well as exploring possibilities for radical alternatives. My hope is that this work will inspire others to engage in similar forms of ethnographic work at institutions of all shapes and sizes, from for-profits to non-profits, from community colleges to elite research institutions. While we are in desperate need of critical and engaged public scholarship in higher education and elsewhere, given the frightening political shifts our nation is currently undergoing, anthropologists and ethnographers of higher education have a unique contribution to make to these conversations and their perspectives are sorely lacking. My desire is that others will critique and extend the theoretical and methodological contributions here and work with me to use ethnography as a vehicle for illuminating hidden voices in the academy so that these voices can help us imagine compelling alternatives. Diversity workers have a great deal of insight and expertise to offer. Their experiences and voices are far too often overlooked, and it is high time we began to listen.

Appendix A

On the Use of Pseudonyms

In the original draft of this dissertation, I elected not to use pseudonyms when quoting directly from interviews. Instead, I referred to participants generically as students, staff members, mid-level administrators, upper-level administrators, and faculty. My primary concern was protecting the confidentiality and safety of my participants who, as this narrative attests, work in highly precarious and hyper-politicized positions. My fear was that by using pseudonyms, I would risk outing the individuals who participated in my study. I felt comfortable using pseudonyms when excerpting my field notes, because this data was derived from publicly accessible events. In those cases I also referred to certain individuals by their title (such as the president, CDO, or dean of students).

I received insightful feedback that made me question this decision. Some of my readers worried that not using names dehumanized my participants, directly contradicting the goal of ethnography more generally and this ethnography in particular. This dissertation seeks to illuminate the daily lives of diversity workers, and not using pseudonyms clearly undermined this goal by transforming my participants into nameless cogs in the diversity apparatus. My readers speculated it would enhance the narrative to be able to connect quotes from the same participant throughout the dissertation. They also wondered if it was important to know the racial identity of particular participants or at least to be able to distinguish between racially majoritized and minoritized individuals.

In response to their feedback, I have elected to use pseudonyms when excerpting interviews. However, in some cases, I have intentionally altered their gender, used a unisex name, or used two different names for the same participant in order to add an additional layer of

confidentiality. These are also different pseudonyms than I use when excerpting field notes or in the chapter on student activists. Students in particular would be too readily identifiable based on the narrative I present in chapter seven.

I have chosen not to provide any information indicating whether the person is racially minoritized. Specific racial designations would likely out several of my participants, particularly those belonging to groups that are significantly underrepresented on campus. Distinguishing between majoritized and minoritized individuals would also likely out some of my white participants since many of them work in spaces where most of their colleagues are people of color.

Whenever I have confronted the tensions between providing a rich, fully realized narrative and protecting the confidentiality of my participants, I have sought to err on the side of protecting my participants. As I express in the acknowledgements, I am deeply indebted to them for their honesty and vulnerability and my ethical commitments as a critical ethnographer require that I do everything in my power to protect their confidentiality, especially given that most of them already occupy vulnerable positions within the academy. I welcome any methodological critiques that may emerge from future readings of this work and hope to be part of future dialogue and debates in developing new methodological approaches for anthropological and ethnographic research in higher education.

Appendix B

Original Draft Diversity Mission

Our strategic diversity plan is designed to embed inclusivity and diversity into the fabric of campus culture.

It draws on individual differences to form a strong foundation for State University to continue into the 21st Century as an innovative, creative, and adaptable institution of higher learning.

Broadly embraced within our core values are those differences that profoundly enrich our community—in race and ethnicity; sex and gender; gender identity or expression; age; sexual orientation; country of origin and language; ability; emotional health; socio-economic status; and affiliations based on cultural, political, religious, or other identities.

We are committed to

- the pursuit of excellence and diversity as inextricably linked goals
- diversity as an organizing principle at the core of institutional policy and process
- a high level of engagement and unwavering intentionality to ensure that every member of this campus community achieves full potential

We will hold ourselves accountable by

- thoughtfully gauging our compositional diversity and validating the aspirations of individuals underrepresented in our campus community
- upholding the diversity of thought as essential to our creation of new knowledge and the rigor of our research endeavors
- the judicious stewardship of our human and capital assets to ensure social justice prevails in our campus community

Draft Diversity Mission Statement
Joint Working Group
April 2016

State University-Union City strives to lead and fulfill its public mission by creating a welcoming, empowered, and inclusive community, opening new forms of access to people from every background, by serving the state and the world.

To realize our vision, we rely on our people to weave diversity into all we do and advance meaningful change throughout our university and beyond. State University realizes that diversity is a source of strength, creativity, innovation, and adaptability. We value all aspects of identity, including culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and thought to profoundly enrich our community.

Draft Diversity Mission Statement
April 2016

We, State University-Union City strive to lead and fulfill our public mission by creating a welcoming, empowered, and inclusive community of people from every background, who are esteemed and nurtured as students, faculty, and staff in service to the state and the world.

To realize this vision, we rely on our people to imbue diversity and inclusion into all we do and advance meaningful change throughout the university and beyond. Acknowledging that diversity is a source of SU's strength, creativity, innovation and adaptability, we value all aspects of identity, including culture, background, experience, status, abilities, and thought that profoundly enrich our community.

We are committed to:

- The pursuit of excellence and diversity as inextricably linked goals;
- Diversity and inclusion as an organizing principle at the core of institutional policy and process; and
- A high level of engagement and unwavering intentionality to ensure a welcoming environment in which every member of this campus community achieves full potential.

We hold ourselves accountable by:

- Thoughtfully gauging our compositional diversity and validating the aspirations of all individuals who are underrepresented in our campus community;
- Upholding diversity of thought as essential to our creation of new knowledge, the rigor of our research, teaching, and our daily work; and
- Ensuring that social justice prevails in our community through the development of our people and judicious and equitable stewardship of our resources.

We hold leaders accountable for diversity and inclusion at all levels of the university by regularly evaluating progress on:

- Achievement of concrete, measurable diversity and inclusion goals;
- Transparency in decision-making; and
- Equitable administration of resources, policies, and procedures.

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