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Old Ideas in New Skins: Examining Discourses of Diversity on the Websites of 10 Urban-Serving Universities

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OLD IDEAS IN NEW SKINS? EXAMINING DISCOURSES OF DIVERSITY ON THE
WEBSITES OF 10 URBAN-SERVING UNIVERSITIES

by

Simone Smith

A Thesis Submitted in
Partial Fulfillment of the
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ABSTRACT

OLD IDEAS IN NEW SKINS: EXAMINING DISCOURSES OF DIVERSITY ON THE WEBSITES OF 10 URBAN-SERVING UNIVERSITIES

by

Simone Smith

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2015
Under the Supervision of Professor Richard Popp

Deficit discourse, the idea that minorities “lack” intellectually, runs through current ideas about diversity in higher education. Diversity is viewed as a policy that helps the deficient. Recent litigation about diversity, *Fisher v. University of Texas (2013)*, embodied the alignment of deficit and diversity. This study examined portrayals, visual and textual, of diversity on the websites of ten urban-serving universities, using a method of critical discourse analysis and a lens of critical race theory, to uncover the ways they defined diversity and if notions of deficit were attached. This study also addressed the ways these universities, a part of the Coalition of Urban-Serving Universities, discussed their communities and if deficit was attached. Diversity was defined as deficient racial minorities and communities as well as diversity as tokens and a form of compliance. The findings of this study show that these college websites, through their portrayals of racial minorities as deficient, duplicate inequality and encourage the maintenance of White hegemony.

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Chapter 1

Despite the validity of any arguments for or against diversity in higher education, an undercurrent runs through the way it's currently conceptualized. Recent discourse around diversity in higher education has at its core deficit, especially regarding students of color in admissions. Pitzer (2014) defines the deficit discourse: "The deficit discourse is a racialized frame that constructs poor urban students as lacking..."¹ Ideas about deficits and people of color, specifically African Americans, is not new and has its origins in slavery. Ronald Takaki, in his book *A Different Mirror*, wrote of the inferiority Whites believed African-Americans had: "The color black was freighted with negative images: sinister, wicked, [and] foul. The color White on the other hand signified purity, innocence, and goodness."² Contemporary ideas about African-Americans and people of color are similar. Some researchers, like Ashar-Mohajer and Sung (2002) and Sullivan (2006) have criticized the ways diversity and inclusion are practiced in higher education, specifically accusing certain college institutions of being paternalist and segregationist towards people of color.³ The current diversity discourse, using the aftermath of the 2013 Supreme Court case of *Fisher v. University of Texas* as an example, encapsulates the approach some institutions of higher education take with diversity: that minority students are inherently deficient and must be helped. In *Fisher v. University of Texas*, an applicant to the University of Texas-Austin, Abigail Fisher, was denied admission. Fisher maintained that

¹ Heidi Pitzer. "The authority of experience, deficit discourse and Teach for America: The risks of urban education" in *Learning Teaching From Experience: Multiple Perspectives and International Contexts* eds.. Viv Ellis and Janet Orchard (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 128

² Ronald Takaki *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993), 52

³ Ramin Afshar-Mohajer and Evelyn Sung (2002) "The Stigma of Inclusion: Racial Paternalism and Separatism in Higher Education" Report for the New York Civil Rights Coalition <http://nycivilrights.org/wp-content/themes/civilrights/pdf/Report4.pdf> i-28, iii

unqualified minorities “took” her spot in the incoming class.⁴ One of the biggest questions posed in the public sphere during and after the court case was how Fisher knew that the race of other applicants played a factor in her denial to the university, and how did she seem to “know” they were unqualified? This discourse of deficient people of color benefiting from diversity policies and practices may have been at play.

This thesis will conduct a critical discourse analysis of diversity, as referenced through images and text, on the websites of 10 urban-serving universities. A lens of critical race theory will be used to examine the discourses of people of color as it relates to diversity in higher education to point out inequality or deficit positioning. The methods of critical discourse analysis and critical race theory used in tandem will also help uncover the meanings behind the terms “diversity” and “urban.”

Epistemology of Diversity: How Does Diversity Mean ‘Race’?

One major way that diversity has become equated with race is through its use as leverage against discriminatory practices in institutions of power in the interests of marginalized groups.⁵ In fact, diversity scholars believe that the notion of diversity as race came forth after the 1964 Civil Rights Act.⁶ Historically, the groups that have been discriminated against have been people of color, and this, diversity scholars say, directly informs modern conceptions of what diversity is: “it is about ensuring equality of opportunity, fairness, social justice and righting historical

⁴ Nikole Hannah-Jones. “A Colorblind Constitution: What Abigail Fisher’s Affirmative Action Case is Really About” <http://www.propublica.org/article/a-colorblind-constitution-what-abigail-fishers-affirmative-action-case-is-r> *ProPublica* March 18, 2013. Accessed August 31, 2014

⁵ Pasi Ahonen, Janne Tienari, Susan Meriläinen, and Alison Pullen (2014) “Hidden Contexts and invisible power relations: A Foucauldian reading of diversity research” *Human Relations* 67 (3): 263-286, 268

⁶ Luis Ricardo-Fraga and Jorge Ruiz-de-Velasco “Civil Rights in a Multicultural Society” in *Legacies of the 1964 Civil Rights Act* ed. Bernard Grofman (Charlottesville: University Press of Virginia, 2006), 191

wrongs.”⁷ The notion of “righting historical wrongs” was central to one of the earliest diversity-focused U.S. Supreme Court cases, *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* (1978).⁸ In the Bakke case, a rejected White medical school applicant claimed the admissions policies of UC-Davis Medical School favored racial minorities, and that he was a victim of ‘reverse discrimination.’ The Supreme Court ruled that uses of racial quotas to address past racial inequities were unconstitutional, but that race could be taken into account in admissions as a “plus factor among many in its admissions decisions.”⁹ Some claim that the Bakke decision left the door open for colleges to decide on their own how best to approach the topic, but scholars maintain that over time diversity has come to be synonymous with race.¹⁰ However, there are other, newer ways that the idea of diversity as race could have been legitimated.

The Internet and Epistemology: How Does the Internet Contribute to Knowledge?

The Internet has become a staple in the routines of millions, and for a lot of people it’s a source of information and knowledge. In 2011, the internet was estimated to be used in 71% of American households.¹¹ Since its inception, the internet has been thought to possess epistemic authority.¹² However, the ways knowledge sources are legitimized on the internet remains contentious. One site of such contention is Wikipedia, the online encyclopedia, which can be

⁷ Ibid, 270

⁸ Peter Schmidt “Bakke Set a New Path to Diversity for Colleges” June 20, 2008 *Chronicle of Higher Education* 54 (41) A1-A19

⁹ Supreme Court History: Expanding Civil Rights “Landmark Cases: Regents of University of California v. Bakke (1978) PBS. http://www.pbs.org/wnet/supremecourt/rights/landmark_regents.html. N.d. Accessed January 9, 2015

¹⁰ Joon K. Kim (2005) “From Bakke to Grutter: Rearticulating Diversity and Affirmative Action in Higher Education” *Multicultural Perspectives* 7(2): 12-19, 13

¹¹ Figure 1 “Computer and Internet Use in the United States: Population Characteristics” U.S. Census Bureau May 2013, pp. 20-569, p. 2

¹² Thomas S. Valovic *Digital Mythologies: The Hidden Complexities of the Internet* (New Brunswick: Rutgers University Press, 2000), 22

edited by users with or without valid credentials.¹³ Therefore, users of the internet must rely on already legitimate sources on the internet, or those institutions which already hold a considerable amount of authority. One such site of authority is higher education. Yet, more interesting than *what* information is on the internet is *how* information is presented on webpages. Many websites contain visual and textual elements and thus contribute to web users' knowledge overall, but also have the potential to contribute to their knowledge about power relationships.

The Urban 13/Coalition of Urban-Serving Universities and Deficit Discourse

U.S. universities have turned inward and focused on their communities and the possibility of their communities to contribute to research growth and output. In contemporary higher education culture, being considered “community engaged” is a prized status marker. “These universities commit to serving residents from their region including diverse and underserved students, students of all ages and the ‘place-bound’ students that cannot travel long distances for their education, according to David Soo.”¹⁴ These colleges have a focus on service, minority student access and urban scholarship.¹⁵ Yet, as stated previously, the tone which some these universities use to discuss their communities and the ways they address people of color in those communities appears paternalistic, which can be problematic.

In 2008, Nancy L. Zimpher, president and chairwoman of the Coalition of Urban-Serving Universities, wrote a letter to the editor of *Education Week*. In her letter, she discussed what the coalition was and its importance “The higher education leadership is not only talking about the

¹³ Marcia Clemmit (2008) “Internet Accuracy: Is Information on the Web Reliable?” *CQ Researcher* 18 (27): 625-648, 627

¹⁴ David Soo (2010). An Added Dimension of Mission: Metropolitan Colleges and Universities *Perspectives on Urban Education* 8 (1): 35-40, 36

¹⁵ John A. Powell and Marguerite L. Spencer (1997) “Remaking the Urban University for the Urban Student: Talking About Race *Connecticut Law Review* 30: 1247-1300, 1276

gaps and failures in the K-12 system and colleges' need to attract and better retain a diverse graduating class, we're doing something about it.”¹⁶ The coalition formed in 2005 and is an offshoot of the “Urban 13” of the 1970s, a partnership between 13 universities that shared research.¹⁷ In 1997, the “Urban 13” grew into the 19-member Great Cities’ Universities Coalition. Currently, the Coalition of Urban-Serving Universities has 40 members, and the universities vary in geographic location and vocation.¹⁸ The coalition believes that its formation is a matter of “national prosperity” due to the shifting of America’s populations to urban, metropolitan areas and the issues those urban areas face.

In its 2010 publication, “A Vital Partnership: Great Cities, Great Universities” the coalition laid bare what issues were of most importance to them and their urban communities, and made clear that those issues were a part of its goals and initiatives: “creating a competitive workforce, building strong communities, and improving the health of a diverse population.”¹⁹ Of key importance to the coalition is improving what it calls “leaks in the educational pipeline.”²⁰ Cited within the publication are dropout rates and other statistics with the mention of people of color. Many of the Urban-Serving Universities’ initiatives include providing their communities with a service. City College of New York (CCNY) has an Urban Scholars program where students have access to workshops and guest speakers in addition to a six-week residential program with enrichment classes.²¹ The publication adds at the end of the description of CCNY’s description that the participants have defining characteristics: “most are African American and

¹⁶ Nancy L. Zimpher. “Some Presidents Not Only Say, But Do Something” *Education Week* 27(23) February 13, 2008, p.34

¹⁷ R. D. Kidder. “The evolution of research mission in urban state universities in post-World War II America: A comparative case study.” (Dissertation, University of Massachusetts Boston, 2006), 386

¹⁸ Nancy L. Zimpher and Kenneth L. Howey (eds.) Introduction to *University Leadership in Urban School Renewal* (ACE/Praeger 2004: Westport), 1

¹⁹ Coalition of Urban-Serving Universities (2010) “A Vital Partnership: Great Cities, Great Universities” pp. 1-48, 2

²⁰ Ibid, 4

²¹ Ibid, 24

Hispanic and come from disadvantaged areas.”²² California State University-East Bay included information and summed up its community involvement along racial lines: “CSU-East Bay is working with a large Latino population at a local community college to create a pathway to a liberal arts program.”²³ Florida International University included information for the need to provide medical insurance to its local population, but stressed this importance because “half the population is of Latino origin and one-fifth is African-American.”²⁴ It is clear from these statements that the racial compositions of the communities they serve is an important component to their missions of urban-service.

From the coalition’s use of words like “create, provide and disadvantage” one can surmise that the coalition is discussing these urban communities from a position of deficit, lack and scarcity—the communities and people of color are missing something and it is up to the universities to help them attain them. The coalition, speaking from a place of deficit about persons of color as a group, in an easily accessible publication, causes concern about how these universities address them away from the coalition in their own, equally accessible domains, especially since the Coalition prides itself on serving diverse populations of students.²⁵

Websites and Colleges

One area where colleges can exercise autonomy in their own domains is on their institutional websites. McAllister and Taylor (2007), Meyer (2008), McAllister (2012) and Tucciarone (2008) all looked at college websites as functions of public relations that communicate key ideas about their institutions. Websites are now known as “digital handshakes”

²² Ibid

²³ Ibid, 9

²⁴ Ibid, 25

²⁵ Coalition of Urban-Serving Universities “Quick Facts” <http://usucoalition.org/about/quickfacts> Accessed September 5, 2014

or the first impressions of an entity's online presence.²⁶ Such first impressions are even more important to the younger, college-aged demographic. Children born after 1980 are referred to as “digital natives” due to their upbringing and willingness to adapt to the various uses of the internet.²⁷ College websites must present a quality first impression to prospective students. Saichie and Morpew (2014) write that over 80% of prospective students use college websites to gauge their interest in an institution and is one of the top ways they find information about a college.²⁸ The internet is also a choice for students because it cuts down on the need to physically visit a school-- instead of scheduling an on-foot tour of a campus, students can peruse the institution's official website.²⁹ It benefits colleges to reach students this way as well, making it “easier, faster and cheaper than using telephones or postal mail” and is the most preferred method of communication for institutions of higher education.³⁰

Literature Review

Diversity on the Internet

It has been said that the word diversity is used as “cultural capital” for colleges in marketing.³¹ Uricuoli (2009), Boyer, Brunner, Charles and Coleman (2006), Brunner and Brown (2007) and Brunner and Boyer (2007) are all examples of research examining the websites of colleges and universities and discourses of diversity and inclusiveness. The discourses of

²⁶ Kem Saichaie. “Representation on college and university websites: an approach using critical discourse analysis” (MA thesis, University of Iowa, 2011), 3

²⁷ John Palfrey and Urs Gasser. *Born Digital: Understanding the First Generation of Digital Natives* (New York: Perseus, 2008), 1 and 239.

²⁸ Kem Saichaie and Christopher C. Morpew (2014). What College and University Websites Reveal About the Purposes of Higher Education *Journal of Higher Education* 85 (4): 499-530, 500

²⁹ Vincent Mosco. *The Digital Sublime: Myth, Power, and Cyberspace* (Cambridge: MIT Press, 2004), 31

³⁰ Andrea L. Foster. “Colleges Find More Applicants Through Personalized Web Reporting” *Chronicle of Higher Education* 49 (37) A37. May 2, 2003

³¹ Liz Morrish and Kathleen O'Mara (2011) “Queering the Discourse of Diversity” *Journal of Homosexuality* 58 (6): 974-991, 978.

diversity on websites have been critiqued both in the United States and abroad. The work of Christiansen and Just (2012) and Morrish and O'Mara (2011) encapsulate previous research in this area. Christiansen and Just (2012) studied the homepages of companies for diversity discourses and created a framework of: address, categorization and invitation. According to Christian and Just (2012), "address" is the mention of diversity, "categorization" involves demographic groupings into the address of diversity, or those who bring diversity to the organization, and "invitation" refers to the preferred performance/interpolation of the demographic groups identified as being 'diverse.'³² Morrish and O'Mara (2011) found that the diversity statements on the websites of top-tier colleges and universities in the U.S. and the U.K. avoided "categorizing" or naming who exactly was included in the LGBT community. The diversity statements did not refer explicitly to members of the LGBT community, but referred to members of this group in a blanketed discourse of "gender identity."³³ The research of Morrish and O'Mara (2011) also showed that even in diversity statements certain group identities can be moderated or reduced; their work also illustrates that close examinations of websites should be repeated, but may need to be extended beyond online diversity statements to get a more complete assessment of the discourses present. Thousands of colleges are in the U.S. and they represent a vast area of scholarship. Researchers have used a few different characteristics of universities to choose which colleges to examine. Brunner and Brown (2007) conducted research on diversity on college websites, but used the sports classification of NCAA Division 1.³⁴ Boyer, Brunner,

³² Tanja Juul Christiansen and Sine Norhulm Just (2012) "Regularities of diversity discourse: address, categorization, and invitation" *Journal of Management and Organization* 18 (3): 398-411, 404-409.

³³ Moorish and O'Mara, 982

³⁴ Brigitta Brunner and Mary Helen Brown. "Web Sights: Images of Diversity on College and University Homepages" (paper presented at the annual meeting for the National Communication Association Conference, Chicago, Illinois), November 15-18, 2007

Charles and Coleman (2006) used U.S. collegiate rankings to justify their research.³⁵ Yet, scant research in this area has included the combination of surrounding communities and mission that the Urban 13/Coalition of Urban-Serving Universities presents as justification for research, despite the possibility that it may have bearing on diversity within the institution.

Diversity as a Problem

The previously mentioned U.S. Supreme Court cases of *Regents of University of California v. Bakke* (1978), and *Fisher V. University of Texas* (2013) are examples of the importance racial diversity has played in the collegiate context. Matsuda (1993) believes that claims of “reverse discrimination,” as seen in both cases, is a form of racism.³⁶ The courts have attempted to quash contention by urging colleges to utilize a colorblind approach to college admissions; however, colleges see racial diversity as an educational benefit to their students.³⁷ In the case of urban-serving universities, the coalition makes it clear that it sees diversity as a benefit, but also as something in their communities that is lacking and needs to be “fixed.”³⁸ Frederick and Katz (2002) write that this approach can have its pitfalls: “This ‘problem to be solved’ approach leads to organizational blindness...”³⁹ Moreover, some have pointed out that in an effort to “solve” diversity, institutions reduce people of color to just their race in exchange for authority on the matter of race and social justice.⁴⁰ This shows that in universities’ attempt to

³⁵ Lori Boyer, Brigitta Brunner, Tiffany Charles and Patrice Coleman (2006) “Managing Impressions in a Virtual Environment: Is Ethnic Diversity a Self-Presentation Strategy for Colleges and Universities?” *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 12: 136-154

³⁶ Mari J. Matsuda “Public Response to Racist Speech: Considering the Victim’s Story” in *Words That Wound* Mari Matsuda et al. (eds..) (Boulder: Westview Press, 1993), 24

³⁷ Peter Schmidt “Bakke Set a New Path to Diversity for Colleges” June 20, 2008 *Chronicle of Higher Education* 54 (41) A1-A19

³⁸ Howey and Zimpher, 8

³⁹ Frederick A. Miller and Judith H. Katz. *The Inclusion Breakthrough: Unleashing the Real Power of Diversity*. (Berrett-Koehler: San Francisco, 2002), 12

⁴⁰ Shelby Steele *White Guilt: How Blacks and Whites Together Destroyed the Promise of the Civil Rights Era* (New York: HarperCollins, 2006), 174

‘solve’ diversity and the issues related to it, little to no attention is given to an organization’s own method of broaching the topic.

The Internet and Inequality

High hopes existed for the internet when it was first introduced—especially when it came to solving the problems of inequality.⁴¹ Yet, internet studies scholars maintain that since its inception and widespread adoption, the internet has shown its propensity to duplicate inequality: “Race today has been liberated, but only so it may persist in a purely digital form.”⁴² Jessie Daniels (2012) believes that a lot of the internet is stratified along racial lines, even down to the “white hand pointer” that acts as a cursor on some sites.⁴³ He argues, too, that the internet’s “digital divide” is split along racial lines, citing that African Americans were both slower to adapt to the internet, slower to own technology, and less likely to have access to the internet.⁴⁴ Knowing what previous scholarship says about collegiate recruitment and websites, could it be that college websites are created with White students in mind? If college websites are marketed anything like college brochures, one could surmise the affirmative would be true.⁴⁵ The U.S. Census Bureau reported in 2013 that African-American and Hispanic household internet use lags behind the usage of Whites and Asian households.⁴⁶ The creation of college webpages towards a primarily White audience could impact the ways in which a college or university discusses

⁴¹ Jessie Daniels (2012) “Race and Racism: A Review and Critique” *New Media Studies and Society* pp. 1-25, 14 DOI: 10.1177/1461444812462849

⁴² Alexander Galloway “Does the Whatever Speak?” in *Race After the Internet* eds.. Lisa Nakamura and Peter Chow-White. (New York: Routledge, 2012) , 113

⁴³ Daniels, 2

⁴⁴ Ibid, 4

⁴⁵ Nana Osei-Kofi (2013) “Practices of Whiteness: Racialization in College Admissions Viewbooks” *Race, Ethnicity and Education* 16 (3): 386-405

⁴⁶ Figure 2 “Computer and Internet Use in the United States: Population Characteristics” U.S. Census Bureau May 2013 , pp. 20-569, p. 3

diversity and persons of color, if at all. Using the discourse analysis methodology also bodes well with a study of the internet because it is considered an “ongoing conversation.”⁴⁷

Text and Images

The proposed study would analyze both text and visual elements of the websites. While text is a large part of discourse analysis, including a visual analysis can complement any findings. Foucault says that visual elements, bodies in texts, called bio-power, can illustrate a lot about power relations: “the body [is] a basic text upon which the relations of power are inscribed.”⁴⁸ Tang (2011), who analyzed Chinese representations, says that colleges in the U.S. rely heavily on bio-power as opposed to universities abroad and that pictures have a considerable impact, even more than text in appeal.⁴⁹ Wang and Cooper-Chen (2010) conducted a discourse analysis of the portrayal of Asian students on college websites and found that both Asian men and women were portrayed stereotypically.⁵⁰ Their findings show that university websites have the propensity to further marginalize groups through using their physical bodies as statements. Yosso (2002) writes that media images can be particularly harmful: “images are racialized, gendered and classed, and they effect racialized, gendered and classed communities.”⁵¹ The parts of the websites in the proposed analysis will include the visual and textual elements on the following parts of the websites: the university homepages, service activities, research and community partnerships, and their ‘about’ pages which often detail institutional missions and

⁴⁷ Valovic, 23

⁴⁸ Schenk, 25

⁴⁹ Tang Tang (2011) “Marketing Higher Education Across Borders: A Cross-Cultural Analysis of University Websites in the US and China” *Chinese Journal of Communication* 4 (4): 417-429, 426

⁵⁰ Xiaopeng Wang and Anne Cooper-Chen (2010). “Gendered Stereotypes of Asians Portrayed on the Websites of U.S. Higher Education Institutions” *Visual Communication Quarterly* 17: 77-90, 85

⁵¹ Tara J. Yosso (2002) “Challenging Deficit Discourses About Chicanas/os” *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 30 (1): 52-62, 59

diversity statements; attention will be paid to any discourses of race, diversity and urban communities.

Methods

Critical Discourse Analysis

The method of critical discourse analysis (CDA) allows researchers to examine relationships of power in a few ways: "...a description, explanation, or critique." CDA stems from the epistemic tradition in that it asks *how do we know what we know* and examines the ways "dominant discourses indirectly influence shared knowledge, attitudes, and ideologies..."⁵² Cultural theorist Michel Foucault said that with knowledge comes a "drawing of the lines"; for something to be accepted as knowledge there has to be something else that is not accepted. CDA helps reveal where "lines" are drawn, but also shows how and in what ways they are drawn. Patton (2014) conducted a critical discourse analysis on a college's dress code and found that the dress code promoted rigid gender roles and respectability politics; some modes of dress were acceptable while others were not. Iverson (2011) used CDA as well and found that college policies on diversity discussed it in four ways: marketplace, access, democracy and disadvantage.⁵³ According to Iverson, diversity was a way to compete in the marketplace, gave access to those without it, was important to democracy and was presented as a panacea for the disadvantaged. Iverson also found that at the center of diversity discourse at the college level was focused on people of color and writes, "the discursive representation of people of color in these policies is neither natural nor neutral."⁵⁴ This suggests that there is a hierarchy in the discourse and that people of color are on one side of it and Whites on the other.

⁵² Teun Van Dijk (1993) "Principles of Critical Discourse Analysis" *Discourse and Society* 4 (2): 249-283, 258

⁵³ Susan VanDeventer Iverson (2007). "Camouflaging power and privilege: A critical race analysis of university diversity policies" *Educational Administration Quarterly* 43(5): 586-611.

⁵⁴ Ibid, 587

Colleges in the United States are considered microcosms of the larger U.S. society so they may duplicate the same inequalities that exist for marginalized groups (women, people of color, members of the LGBT community, etc.)⁵⁵ Thus, the drawing of the lines at the college level of who and what constitutes diversity could come from its larger, accepted discourse. A benefit to using CDA is that it remains rooted in the reality of the discourse being studied, as Emily Robertson (2013) puts it “Epistemologists’ focus is on our actual epistemic situation rather than on ideal knowers and necessary truths.”⁵⁶ The internet is regarded as a site of epistemology with contentious issues, such as diversity, at its center.⁵⁷

Critical Race Theory

The lens of (CRT) will be used in the study. Critical Race Theory, which grew out of critical legal studies in the 1970s, can be useful in a critical discourse analysis because a major function of CRT is deconstructing power relationships, especially those that contribute to what Crenshaw (2011) calls “epistemic authority.”⁵⁸ Universities contribute to epistemic authority because they yield the power to literally legitimate ideas and people and disqualify others. CRT emerged after the Civil Rights movement of the 1960s and posits that despite the progress made, race still matters and is a large part of the experience of people of color.⁵⁹ Crenshaw says that in the post-civil rights era, race is discussed as “baggage” and in its place a colorblind rhetoric is adopted and encouraged.⁶⁰ Similar colorblind rhetoric surrounds the current American discourse.

⁵⁵ Nolan Cabrera (2014) “But We’re Not Laughing: White Male College Students’ Racial Joking and What This Says About ‘Post-Racial’ Discourse” *Journal of College Student Development* 55 (1): 1-15,1

⁵⁶ Emily Robertson (2013) “The Epistemic Value of Diversity” *Journal of Philosophy of Education* 47 (2): 299-310, 300

⁵⁷ Daniels, 10

⁵⁸ Kimberle Williams Crenshaw (2011). “Twenty Years of Critical Race Theory: Looking Back to Move Forward” *Connecticut Law Review* 43 (5): 1253-1352, 1264

⁵⁹ Ibid, 1336

⁶⁰ Ibid, 1318

The election of the first Black U.S. president has inspired some to earmark the post-2008 era as one that is post-racial or color-blind where race is no longer problematic.⁶¹ However, race relations in the United States, especially in the collegiate context, illustrate otherwise. The litigation involving race and colleges use of race in such court cases as Bakke (1978) and Fisher (2013) illustrate that race is still a contentious issue in postsecondary education both in a post-Civil Rights Act and in the aftermath of a Black U.S president.

Using critical race theory in a collegiate context makes sense because the academy was a large part of its origin. Crenshaw (2011) says that one of the first meeting places of CRT scholars (called “Crits”) was at the University of Wisconsin-Madison in 1989, and further that its development was spurred by discontent at the college level at a locale that epitomizes collegiate legitimacy and power--Harvard University Law School.⁶² In addition, the use of critical race theory can assist in the analysis because it can make clear where the “drawing of the lines” exists in the discourses of diversity and urban communities: If they are not about race then what are those discourses about? Ladson-Billings (1998) says that critical race theorists believe that racism is immovable in U.S. society, yet to avoid conflict, is discussed differently where “denotations are submerged and hidden in ways that are offensive though without identification.”⁶³ Crenshaw (2011) echoes this sentiment and says that race discourses tend to shift and are often “old ideas in new skins.”⁶⁴ To this end, finding possible explanations for what these colleges *really* mean in their discourses of diversity, abetted by their approaches to urban

⁶¹ Rachel E. Dubrofsky (2013) “Jewishness, Whiteness and Blackness on Glee: Singing to the tune of postracism” *Communication, Culture and Critique* 6: 82-102,85

⁶² Crenshaw, 1299

⁶³ Gloria Ladson-Billings (1998) “What is Critical Race Theory and What is it doing in a nice field like education?” *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education* 11(1): 7-24

⁶⁴ Crenshaw, 1315

communities through the coalition of urban-serving universities, is imperative in this “post-racial” society.

In addition, applying a lens of CRT could explicate what is meant by the phrase urban-serving: who is “urban” and who is doing the “serving”? Nneka Logan (2011) wrote of the White leader prototype which she defines as “a historically constituted, ideological discursive formation that organized professional roles along racialized lines in ways that privilege people who are considered a part of the White racial category.”⁶⁵ The white racial category is attributed to those who are upwardly mobile, while the Black racial category is attributed to those who commit crimes and are not upwardly mobile; related to this, since colleges are sites of upward mobility it can be said that the urban-serving colleges are ‘White’ and their surrounding communities—plagued with issues—are Black.⁶⁶ CRT holds that U.S. society already has a rigid White/Black paradigm with whites on top and Blacks at the bottom; because prior research shows that colleges can marginalize groups in similar ways, the colleges in the analysis may approach the topic of diversity the same way they approach community service in their ‘urban’ habitats—as something that was originally lacking, but is being “fixed”.⁶⁷ Abbate-Vaughn and Degennaro wrote that: “the term urban is often used as a euphemism for people of color and communities of low socioeconomic background.”⁶⁸

Critical race theory has been applied in previous media research. Yosso (2002) examined the influence of deficit discourses surrounding Chicano/as in film and television on Chicano/a youth. Yosso says, “Media, through repetition of negative portrayals, teach Chicanas/os that they

⁶⁵ Nneka Logan (2011) “The White Leader Prototype: A Critical Analysis of Race in Public Relations” *Journal of Public Relations Research* 23(4): 442-457, 443

⁶⁶ Leonard M. Baynes (2002) “Racial Profiling, September 11th and the Media: A Critical Race Theory Analysis” 2 *Virginia Sports and Entertainment Law Journal* 1

⁶⁷ Ibid

⁶⁸ Jorgelina Abbate-Vaughn and Donna Degennaro “Urban Support Networks: Commuter Urban Universities in Global Times” in *Universities and Global Diversity: Preparing Educators for Tomorrow* eds., Beverly Lindsay and Wanda Blanchett (New York: Routledge, 2012), 143

are inferior to whites, and in turn, Whites learn they are better than Chicanas/os.”⁶⁹ Internet scholars encourage critical race analysis of computer-mediated experiences, including the web. Nakamura (2012) writes: “critical race scholarship....must expand its scope to digital media and computer-based technologies.”⁷⁰ As stated previously, the internet can be a place where racial inequality is duplicated, and without a CRT lens, an understanding of what contributes to this duplication could be missed or misunderstood. Daniels writes: “new forms of Internet practices will emerge quickly and, with them, new expressions of race and racism.”⁷¹ News of such adaptations of computer-mediated racism has emerged. In late-2013 executive Justine Sacco, on a flight to Africa, tweeted: “Hope I don’t get AIDS” Just Kidding I’m White.”⁷² Such expressions of racism can mimic real-life effects: “virtual forms of racial violence relate to chilling lived experiences while remaining in the ‘other world’ of computer simulation.”⁷³ Yet, critical race theory holds that racism can be covert and not as blatant as Sacco’s tweet. Therefore, websites like those of postsecondary institutions that lend what Crenshaw (2011) called ‘epistemic authority’ should be analyzed for racial inequalities with a lens of CRT since it is possible for internet users to turn to those sites for knowledge.

Study Sites

⁶⁹ Yosso, 59

⁷⁰ Lisa Nakamura and Peter A. Chow-White. “Code, the Color Line, and the Information Society” in *Race After the Internet* (New York: Routledge, 2012), 5

⁷¹ Daniels, 17

⁷² Kima Dimitrova, Shahrirar Rahmanzadeh and Jane Lipman. “Justine Sacco, Fired After Tweet on AIDS, Issues an Apology” ABCNews December 22, 2013 <http://abcnews.go.com/International/justine-sacco-fired-tweet-aids-africa-issues-apology/story?id=21301833> Accessed August 31, 2014

⁷³ Les Back (2002) “Aryans Reading Adorno: Cyber-Culture and Twenty-First Century Racism” *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 25 (4): 628-651, 634

Ten universities, all once a part of the original “Urban 13” and now a part of the Coalition of Urban-Serving Universities, will be analyzed in the proposed study. Colleges from the coalition were chosen because they all are bound by their belonging to this group and they may or may not discuss diversity and race in similar ways. These colleges were identified by the coalition as being urban and in metropolitan areas.⁷⁴ The researcher will look specifically at university homepages, service activities, student organizations, community partnerships, and their ‘about’ pages which often detail institutional missions and diversity statements. Attention will be paid to any and all visual or textual discourses of race and diversity. If there are no references to diversity on the aforementioned webpages, the researcher will use the search tool that enables one to search for terms on the entire website—inaccessible or ‘hidden’ discourses about diversity can say a lot about its importance to a college or university and perhaps its imagined university audience. Hidden discourses are important since web visitors may search for them.

Urban Universities in Study

College/University	Website Address
Temple University	www.temple.edu
University of Missouri-Kansas City (UMKC)	www.umkc.edu
Cleveland State University	www.csuohio.edu
University of Illinois-Chicago (UIC)	www.uic.edu
University of Massachusetts-Boston	www.umb.edu
University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee (UWM)	www.uwm.edu
University of Cincinnati	www.uc.edu
Wayne State University	www.wayne.edu
Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis (IUPUI)	www.iupui.edu
Georgia State University	www.gsu.edu

⁷⁴ There are currently about 40 colleges in the Coalition of Urban-Serving Universities. All but three of the original urban 13 are a part of the current version of the group. The 10 original members who are currently part of the coalition are: Georgia State University, University of Massachusetts-Boston, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, Wayne State University, University of Illinois-Chicago, Temple University, Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis, University of Cincinnati, Cleveland State University, and University of Missouri-Kansas City.

The researcher is interested in diversity discourses on the websites of the 10 universities described above. Ideas about the capabilities of students of color in urban environments, drawn from historical beliefs, inform the present-day conversation around diversity and what it means in higher education. The current study, since it straddles academic disciplines, can be beneficial to those in the fields of education, media studies, internet studies, critical race theory, and discourse studies. It also addresses the conceptualization of diversity in the current culture which can be useful for cultural theorists. Past rulings on diversity in higher education have left this matter up to universities without giving credence to any institutional bias--assuming that whatever the university chooses to do about the issue is the correct approach; the current study may be of interest to law scholars who wish to analyze any mismatch between the legal definitions of diversity and its practices in higher education. A lens of critical race theory is a good one to use since it would better explicate the meanings within the webpages and hopefully answer the following research questions: What does it mean to be urban? What role does diversity play in promoting the university? Will they discuss students of color as coming from a place of deficit?

Chapter 2: Diversity as Urban, Minority, and Deficient

Urban Universities and Urban Bodies

The concept of “urbaneness” directly relates to the concept of race, specifically Whiteness. Whiteness has always conferred a higher status to those who were able to claim this identity: property rights, the ability to vote, the opportunity to attend the best schools. Since this identity includes these benefits, it has been the subject of contestation. Historically the question has focused on who is white and who is not white and how that identity is ascribed. Race theorists Michael Omi and Howard Winant (1986) wrote that racial paradigms shifted after the abolishment of slavery and after large waves of immigration to provide justification for the mistreatment and systematic barring of European foreigners and ex-slaves in politics, industry and education. They theorize that to do this, an “ethnicity-based” concept of race emerged where “differences in intelligence, temperament, and sexuality ... were deemed to be racial in character.”⁷⁵ As a result of this new definition of race, there was a reordering of the races: “Ethnicity theory assigned to blacks and other racial minority groups the roles which earlier generations of European immigrants had played in the great waves of Atlantic migration.”⁷⁶ The concept of the ‘urban university’ aligns with this going back as far as the 19th century as universities, encumbered by the number of immigrants, opened their doors to the immigrant’s college-aged children. “New York ... instituted the CUNY system which made education available to tens of thousands of urban poor, including many immigrants, at virtually no cost.”⁷⁷

⁷⁵ Michael Omi and Howard Winant *Racial Formation in the United States: 1960s to the 1980s* (Routledge: New York, 1986), 15

⁷⁶ Ibid, 20

⁷⁷ Powell and Spencer, 1248

The European immigrants were the original “urban,” often relegated to low-status jobs, living in poor areas and competing for urban housing. These new immigrants were looked at as a “problem.” Jacob Riis’ essay and photojournalism expose “How the Other Half Lives” called for social reform of these urban areas. “How the Other Half Lives” detailed the horrid conditions of urban living in New York City which was populated mostly by European immigrants.⁷⁸ Riis’ expose created a discourse of urban living and urban areas as sites of deficit that needed fixing. However, as the decades passed, European immigrant groups began to prosper and began to be assimilated and given the privileges associated with White identity. On the other hand, Blacks and other groups like the Chinese came to occupy the former spaces of these newly assimilated Whites, both physically and figuratively, by moving to urban areas, and were similarly shutout from opportunities for upward mobility because of their status. Acquiring this status of Whiteness hinged upon the new immigrants subscribing to this ethnicity-based racial order; to be accepted as White, immigrant groups had to learn to shun Blacks and view them as “less than.” For example, Irish immigrants, who had at one time been called abolitionists and sympathized with the experiences of African-Americans, came to treat Blacks similarly to native-born Whites: they invoked racial slurs and even incited violence against them.⁷⁹ One of the last impediments to obtaining “Whiteness” and assimilating into mainstream, American culture was education. Takaki (1993) wrote of the ways the Irish immigrants, once excluded, were welcomed into the halls of Harvard University and were assimilated simultaneously.⁸⁰ Yet, when Blacks began to migrate to similar northern, urban enclaves from Southern states, they were not met with such

⁷⁸ Jacob A. Riis. *How the Other Half Lives: Studies Among the Tenements of New York*. Hypertext Edition. (New York: Scribner and Sons, 1890)

⁷⁹ Ronald Takaki *A Different Mirror: A History of Multicultural America* (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1993), 151-152

⁸⁰ Takaki, 160

enthusiasm and barred from making the same strides as the Irish.⁸¹ The acceptance of the Irish as White and the classification of Blacks and Chinese groups as undesirable “others” illustrates Omi and Winant’s point, that the ethnicity based racial structure is rather fluid and is susceptible to shifting classifications. While other conceptions and ideas about race have come forth, Omi and Winant say that ethnicity-based race theory is still in place with Whites as “pure” and everyone else as “nonwhite.”⁸² In tandem with this racial order, one common thread remains: racial undesirables’ concentration in urban areas and those urban areas being linked to ideas about deficit.

Not much has changed; the current conception of urban universities is still very dependent on the presence of “urban” minority bodies; that references to their presence or absence incurs a level of performativity. Photos are representational in nature, and photo subjects in this study stand-in to act as representatives of students on campus. This level of performativity has the power to confirm beliefs about urban, minority groups or refute them as non-urban, non-minority audiences through representation. The presence of deficit discourse on these websites could mark how much change has occurred regarding race relations in urban college settings, or how much has remained the same. One criticism of the urban university in the 19th century was its treatment and exclusion of people of color: “despite this boom in urban education, the communities of color were excluded from it.”⁸³ Contemporary urban universities, it seems, welcome diverse student populations and extol the ways these students contribute to their campuses. Urban students possibly make the universities more attractive for funding opportunities, and the presence of urban bodies could also make universities look more attractive to prospective students. Armed with the previous scholarship on urban universities, and knowing

⁸¹ Ibid, 348

⁸² Ibid, 60

⁸³ Powell and Spencer, 1248

that these institutions historically had a less than favorable view of communities of color, this study will critically examine the invocations of diversity and race used on the webpages of urban universities, if any, with special attention paid to the reliance on urban, minority bodies.

Diversity in Urban University Settings

Diversity is at the core of this study, and it is important that an accepted definition of the concept is used so as not to cause confusion or misunderstanding. Diversity, as it's currently conceptualized, is considered a form of social capital for institutions and the cities they live in. It's considered a form of cooperation with "social life networks, associated networks, norms and trustworthiness—that enable participants to work together more effectively to pursue shared objectives."⁸⁴ Scholars accept the definition of diversity as being about "race, ethnicity, gender, age, physical abilities/qualities, and sexual orientation."⁸⁵ It would appear that colleges and universities have also accepted this definition evidenced by the allocation of resources to assist students who identify along these identifications while they are matriculating through their universities—and these resources are often cultural centers and advisement offices.⁸⁶ Uricuoli (2009) writes that when colleges discuss diversity and 'multicultural' students they are often making specific references to one's identity. However, some colleges avoid being specific about their target audience.⁸⁷ Morrish and O'Mara (2011) found that the diversity statements on the websites of top-tier colleges and universities avoided naming who exactly was included in the

⁸⁴ Ravi Pendakur and Fernando Mato (2012) "Social Capital Formation and Diversity: Impacts of Individual and Place Related Characteristics" *Journal of Ethnic and Migration Studies* 38 (10): 1491-1511, 1492

⁸⁵ Belle Rose Ragins and Jorge A. Gonzalez (2003) "Understanding diversity in organizations: Getting a grip on a slippery construct". In J. Greenberg (Ed.) *Organizational behavior: The state of the science* 3rd ed., pp. 125-163. (Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum), 129

⁸⁶ Ben Gose. "Diversity Offices Aren't What They Used To Be." June 24, 2013. *Chronicle of Higher Education* 59 (39) A14-A17.

⁸⁷ Bonnie Uricuoli (2009). "Talking/Not Talking About Race: The Enregistrations of Culture in Higher Education Discourses." *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 19 (1): 21-29

LGBT community. The diversity statements did not refer explicitly to members of the LGBT community, but referred to members of this group in a blanketed discourse of ‘gender identity.’⁸⁸ Such vague, blanketed references to minority populations will be noted and analyzed for possible meaning.

However, diversity is also used as a marketing tool. Uricuoli (2003) examined the uses of words in higher education and asserts that because higher education is considered a commodity to be sold these buzzwords are attached to them.⁸⁹ Uricuoli includes a few in her article-- leadership, excellence and diversity are among them.⁹⁰ She says diversity specifically, employed by colleges in her study to appeal to multicultural students through brochures and websites, was viewed as “a goal for the school.”⁹¹ This shows that diversity is not a good by itself, but instead a tool to be used to reach a tangible goal. Interestingly, in her study diversity was viewed as “fixed properties of students” however what students “have diversity” was not mentioned.⁹² The current study may help reveal, through the use of diversity as a marketing tool, what students have diversity and what students do not.

Homepages

The homepage of a college’s website is extremely important—it is the first thing an internet user encounters when they inquire into an institution. Website homepages are considered “gateways” of information that provide pertinent clues about the ways an institution views

⁸⁸Liz Morrish and Kathleen O’Mara (2011) “Queering the Discourse of Diversity” *Journal of Homosexuality* 58 (6): 974-991, 982

⁸⁹ Bonnie Uricuoli (2003) “Excellence, leadership, skills and diversity: marketing liberal arts education” *Language and Communication* 23: 385-408

⁹⁰ Ibid

⁹¹ Ibid, 396

⁹² Ibid, 391

itself.⁹³ The importance of a college or university's homepage may weigh even heavier: "The home page is the view that colleges and universities choose to present first to virtual visitors, which makes it a valuable window on the institution, its priorities, and how it wishes to be seen."⁹⁴ College websites are often the first "places" college students are recommended to assess when researching which colleges to apply to. Teachers and guidance counselors were advised to provide their students with links to college websites for their assessment in the College Board's guide to finding a compatible institution.⁹⁵ Minorities, often thought to be disadvantaged when it came to the internet, now make up a large part of internet users, even more than users believed to be economically advantaged.⁹⁶ With that said, minorities are possibly an audience colleges hope to capture. Meyer (2008) found that colleges use their web homepages for disseminating general information about the institution and information for the current student, but also that colleges used photos of minority students as 'proof' of a commitment to servicing them, perhaps in hopes that minority students will apply.⁹⁷ Meyer wrote that little research has been conducted on university homepages, and one avenue she suggested was an evaluation of the consistency of messaging on these sites.⁹⁸ The current study is an attempt to do that: critically evaluating the messaging of diversity, both textual and visual, on the homepages and about pages of ten urban U.S. universities.

Textual

⁹³ Yiqiong Zhang (2012) "The gate of the gateway: A hypermodal approach to university homepages" *Semiotica* 190 (1): 87-109, 88

⁹⁴ Katrina Meyer (2008) "The 'Virtual Face' of Institutions: What Do Homepages Reveal About Higher Education?" *Innovative Higher Education* 33: 141-157, 142

⁹⁵ College Board "Helping Students Research Colleges"
<http://professionals.collegeboard.com/guidance/college/research>.

⁹⁶ Sean McCollum (2011) "Getting Past The Digital Divide" *Education Digest* 75 (2): 52-55

⁹⁷ Ibid, 155

⁹⁸ Ibid

Diversity as Cosmopolitan Compliance

Many homepages look the same from college to college because they share similar elements. Institutions, such as University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, have website standards and templates that are not deviated from often throughout the site; these templates are used for “layout, design, color, font, graphics, and navigation links.”⁹⁹ During the analysis a pattern of key terms emerged; several of the college homepages made reference to accessibility, diversity and affirmative action, student services and/or resources and veterans. These references were often hyperlinked at the bottom of the homepages. These hyperlinks led to other pages internally on the college’s website, so they are not a part of the current analysis which examined homepages and about pages. On the homepages of the websites there were more pictures of “diversity” than words. However, the University of Illinois-Chicago’s news and event sidebar did include news items referencing one of its ‘diverse’ student populations, which may or may not be of interest to targeted diverse groups: “Fellowships for students with disabilities make art accessible.”¹⁰⁰ IUPUI did mention its potentially large international student population, noting that members of “146 different countries” are a part of its student body.¹⁰¹ University of Massachusetts-Boston, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and Temple University did not have any text about diversity on their homepages, but only the hyperlinks on the bottom of their pages referenced “Diversity/ADA,” “Affirmative Action/Diversity” or “Accessibility.”¹⁰² Wayne State University did not include text about “diversity” on its homepage, and unlike the other colleges, did not mention it in its homepage footer menu either.¹⁰³ The textual elements of these

⁹⁹ Kate Peterson (2006) “Academic Website Design and Academic Templates: Where does the Library Fit In?” *Information Technology and Libraries* 25 (4): 217-221, 217

¹⁰⁰ The University of Illinois at Chicago. <http://www.uic.edu/uic/> Accessed October 12, 2014

¹⁰¹ Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis. <http://www.iupui.edu/> Accessed October 12, 2014

¹⁰² The University of Massachusetts-Boston <http://www.umb.edu/> Accessed October 12, 2014

¹⁰³ Wayne State University <http://wayne.edu/> Accessed October 12, 2014

homepages illustrates that though these colleges, while they may value diversity, it is perhaps not a valuable enough concept to discuss at length on those institutional homepages or that due to spatial constraints on the homepages, it is better to address them elsewhere on the site.

What's even more interesting is the placement and location of these terms on homepages. References to institutional policies were grouped together at the very bottom of the homepages, in small print. Cleveland State University placed its "diversity" and "affirmative action" hyperlinks next to another that led to institutional language about being a "Tobacco Free" campus.¹⁰⁴ College or university "tobacco free" policies "prohibit the sale, advertising, sampling and distribution of tobacco products on their campuses and prohibit smoking in all campus buildings, including residence halls and other student housing."¹⁰⁵ These policies have been recommended by health associations such as the American Cancer Society, as well as some states, suggesting that these policies and their placement on university homepages are to illustrate institutional compliance with laws. This also suggests, too, that diversity and affirmative action policies' presence on university homepages are for compliance purposes.

Moreover, colleges like the University of Missouri-Kansas City, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, and the University of Massachusetts-Boston included similar hyperlinks on their homepages.¹⁰⁶ Only this time, instead of the links being about a tobacco-free campus, the links were named "accessibility" or "disability services." Accessibility broadly refers to access for those students with disabilities; researchers have said that colleges and universities are still inadequate in this area.¹⁰⁷ Disability is defined in the American Disabilities Act (ADA) as

¹⁰⁴ Cleveland State University <http://www.csuohio.edu/> Accessed October 12, 2014

¹⁰⁵ Abigail.C. Halperin and Nancy A Rigotti (2003) "US public universities' compliance with recommended tobacco-control policies." *Journal of American College Health*, 51(5):181-188, 182

¹⁰⁶ University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee <http://www4.uwm.edu/> Accessed October 12, 2014

¹⁰⁷ Nancy Hollins and Alan R. Foley (2013) "The experiences of students with learning disabilities in a higher education virtual campus" *Educational Technology Research and Development* 61: 607-624, 622

“physical or mental impairment that substantially limited one or more life activities...”¹⁰⁸ The American Disabilities Act of 1990 mandated all places receiving federal funding to make their locations accessible to those with physical disabilities, including the installation of ramps and elevators.¹⁰⁹ The universities only provided language; no pictorial references for accessibility or disability were provided. Tania Friedel (2008) says a mark of cosmopolitanism is the focus on individual identity as opposed to group identity: “[cosmopolitanism] takes individuals—not nations, tribes or ‘peoples’ as the proper object of moral concern.” The listing of “diversity” and “accessibility” in the same location as “tobacco-free” suggests a shift away from diversity as race, or that diversity is no longer for the perceived benefit of a few groups, but that its perceived racial overtones are passé. This is cosmopolitan rhetoric. Homepages can be considered a location where universities place relevant institutional policies for their various audiences, including those who may be looking for certain information to ensure compliance. Previous research shows that diversity is defined as race. The interspersing of references to ‘diverse’ groups and ideas of race and ability in with information about their college being tobacco-free and valuing sustainability, and even including a link to campus emergency numbers possibly illustrates an institutional desire to downplay the racial aspects of diversity and an intermingling of both diversity/race and diversity/cosmopolitan paradigms.

Students visiting these university homepages may interpret these textual references to diversity in a number of different ways. The concept as seen on these pages was linked and presented a few different ways: as racial minorities and as compliance linked to affirmative action. While the former association of diversity as racial minorities has deleterious

¹⁰⁸ Suzanne Abram (2003) “The Americans with Disabilities Act in Higher Education: The Plight of Disable Faculty” *Journal of Law and Education* 32 (1): 1-20, 3

¹⁰⁹ Scott Lafee (2011) “Giving Good Intentions A Push: The Americans with Disabilities at 20” *Education Digest* pp. 52-55, 52

consequences, so too does diversity's association with affirmative action. The linking of diversity and affirmative action may further conflate the confusion surrounding the two terms. Affirmative Action is defined as a provision that allows for historical injustices to be considered in employment and education.¹¹⁰ Diversity on the other hand is defined as the various differences between people along the lines of gender, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, religion, race and even appearance. While some marginalized groups may be the recipients of affirmative action not all of them benefit from the policy and affirmative action policies are not the only ways a "diverse" student population can be achieved. Previous research shows that in higher education, discourse surrounding diversity is about race. Linking affirmative action and diversity policies together on these webpages gives credence to the notion that affirmative action benefits solely racial minorities as opposed to other marginalized groups. This also contributes to the epistemology of diversity as race; this could be a major takeaway from these websites. This linking can be dangerous as it can confirm that racial minorities are deficient and "need" affirmative action policies to gain entry to universities. This then can be internalized by viewers of these webpages who may go on to view minorities on campus as being deficient and as beneficiaries of what they perceive as unwarranted merit. This, it can be said, was Abigail Fisher's view of minority applicants to the University of Texas: that minority students admitted to the school didn't "deserve" it because they were only admitted due to the affordance of affirmative action, ascribed to them solely because of their race. Even more concerning is that this linkage occurs immediately on the homepages. These universities put forth this discourse the same time internet viewers are still getting acquainted with the messaging of the institution. This may have consequences for the ways prospective students interact with the rest of the

¹¹⁰ Stony Brook University Office of Diversity and Affirmative Action "Diversity and Affirmative Action: Difference" para. 3 <http://www.stonybrook.edu/diversity/aboutus/difference.html>

institutional website. Further, this illustrates a disconnect between the Coalition of Urban-Serving Universities mission of uplift and the messaging of its member institutions. Instead, it reinforces the idea that urban minorities are deficient.

Since the 2008 and 2012 elections of current United States President Barack Obama, some have wanted to call the current era one where race no longer matters. University homepages interspersing the diversity/race and diversity/cosmopolitan paradigms may support the idea that diversity is a minimal issue. This may encourage non-minority and minority website visitors alike to think of racial issues and diversity on college campuses as passé, or no longer of any great importance. This is harmful, because minority students, as Cabrera (2014) points out, still encounter racism in college through off-putting jokes and remarks.¹¹¹ Further, the diversity discourse as passé or no longer important may allow non-minority applicants the space to believe that making comments about those who are is okay since there was little to nothing on the website barring insensitive language or that issues of diversity were presented in a way that minimized their egregiousness. Anecdotal evidence supports that harmful racialized language is not passé and is a real issue that college students contend with. The Tumblr page, *microaggressions*, gives an opportunity for people to provide anecdotes that attest to the subtle racism that they experience. Some posts imply that it occurs on college campuses as well. One post reads: “You got a C in PreCalculus I? You’re Asian! You should have gotten an A.” The submitter then provides context for the quote: “One of my classmates when they asked me about my class grade. I am a third- year college student, math has never been my best subject.”¹¹² This avoidance and downplaying of racial differences on websites may create a false sense of a secure

¹¹¹Nolan Cabrera (2014) “But We’re Not Laughing: White Male College Students’ Racial Joking and What This Says About ‘Post-Racial’ Discourse” *Journal of College Student Development* 55 (1): 1-15

¹¹²Microaggressions. Power, Privilege and Everyday Life. <http://microaggressions.tumblr.com/> Accessed November 23, 2014.

campus climate, and may lead to “culture shock” when the student finally arrives on campus, especially since the Tumblr suggests that these types of comments are made.

Visual

Photos have become an integral part of the internet experience, with Pew Research reporting in 2013 that almost half of adults have taken and posted original photos and another 41% of adults reported they had experienced reposting photos found online.¹¹³ However, Nakamura writes that the internet’s visual properties allow it to duplicate inequality saying, “It’s transformation from a primarily textual form to an increasingly and irreversibly graphical one ... remediates video and other pictorially representational practices.”¹¹⁴ The homepages of the websites made pictorial references to racial and ethnic diversity. Several of the colleges included elaborate photo slideshows that included, and at times even emphasized, people of color. Foucault says that bodies are inscribed with meaning, and that this meaning is called ‘biopower.’¹¹⁵ The university homepages utilized minority biopower to demonstrate their diversity. Though no textual clues were presented on these university homepages as to how they define diversity, the visual references were there. It was clear from the pictures included on these pages that these universities defined diversity along the lines of the accepted definition; that ‘diversity’ comes from parts of one’s identity, which aligns with previous research: race and gender primarily.¹¹⁶ However, a deeper reading of these photos revealed something much

¹¹³ “Photos and Videos as Social Currency” Pew Research Center, September 2013, 2

¹¹⁴ Nakamura, *Digitizing Race*, 1

¹¹⁵ Stephen Frederick Schneck (1987) “Michel Foucault on Power Discourse, Theory and Practice” *Human Studies* 10 (1): 15-33, 25

¹¹⁶ Bonnie Uricuoli (2009). “Talking/Not Talking About Race: The Enregisterments of Culture in Higher Education Discourses.” *Journal of Linguistic Anthropology* 19 (1): 21-29

bigger: along with the presentation of diversity were stereotypes associated with the different groups.

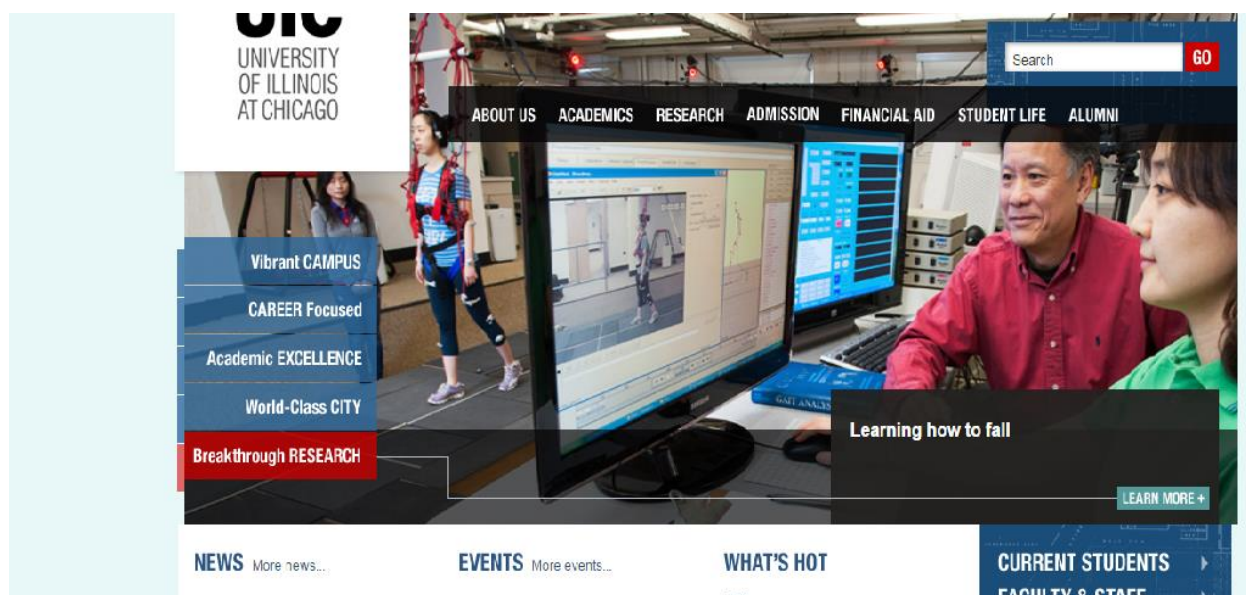


Figure 1.1

The University of Illinois-Chicago prominently featured an Asian professor with an Asian student conducting research on its homepage.¹¹⁷ This group of minorities—Asians—being portrayed on urban university webpages, could show that they are welcomed at UIC. Yet, what they are doing in the photo is troubling. In Figure 1.1 all of the people present are Asian and are engaged in scholarly activity. Historically, minorities have had deficient ideas attached to them, yet this group does not have such messaging accompanying them--this could show that the less deficient they are portrayed the less minority and more White they will be perceived. This illustration reinforces the model minority stereotype—the idea that all Asians have high intellectual capacities--and because of this capacity, are not deficient.

¹¹⁷ The University of Illinois-Chicago. <http://www.uic.edu/uic/> Accessed October 12, 2014

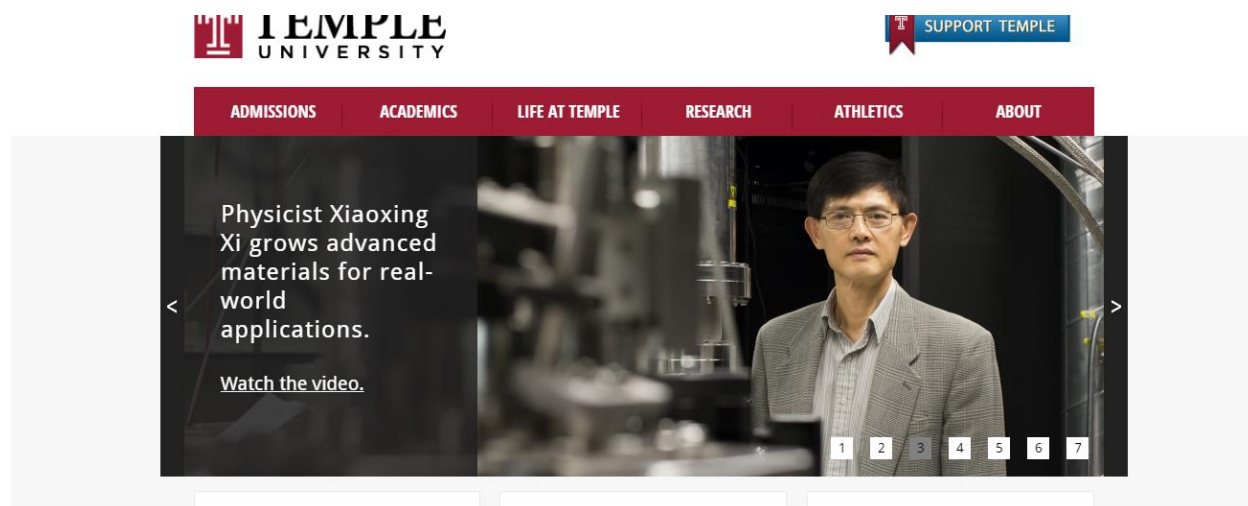


Figure 1.2

Temple University featured an Asian professor on its webpage featuring his research and to illustrate the university's global reach.¹¹⁸ Like UIC, the usage of the Asian professor shows that it defines diversity as racial identity. Like UIC, the usage of the Asian professor in Figure 1.2 shows that it chooses to highlight that Asians contribute to the knowledge economies of their colleges and universities. There is no deficit attached in this picture; it may communicate that Asians are "special."

It's worth mentioning at this juncture that most of the homepage photos depicting the model minority stereotype/non-deficit discourse are focused largely on Asian men, and Asian women are relegated to supporting depictions as assistants or research subjects as seen in Figure 1.1. While stereotypical portrayals of all groups can be harmful, the inclusion of Asian men as productive/non-deficient at the expense of Asian women can be doubly harmful. This discourse

¹¹⁸ Temple University. <http://temple.edu/> Accessed October 12, 2014

illustrates what Foucault calls “where the lines are drawn.” The intersecting identity of Asian women as Asian and female linked to support roles or being invisible, could put forth messaging that supports the idea that a) Asian women are not as productive as Asian men on college campuses and b) that Asian women are deficient in some ways since they are not depicted as contributors. This speaks to the hegemonic gender roles that may be present on these college campuses, and contradicts the Urban 13/Coalition of Urban-Serving Universities mission of creating equality. These portrayals support the idea that some groups are deficient.

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and the IUPUI included racially ambiguous student images, where it is hard to determine one’s race, on their homepages. The use of racial ambiguity on these homepages aligns with previous research on race and diversity in higher education. Morrish and O’Mara (2011) found that colleges avoided being specific about who was included and who was not included in discourse on matters of race and inclusion—the use of the racially ambiguous, those who cannot fit neatly into one racial category, appears to emulate that pattern.

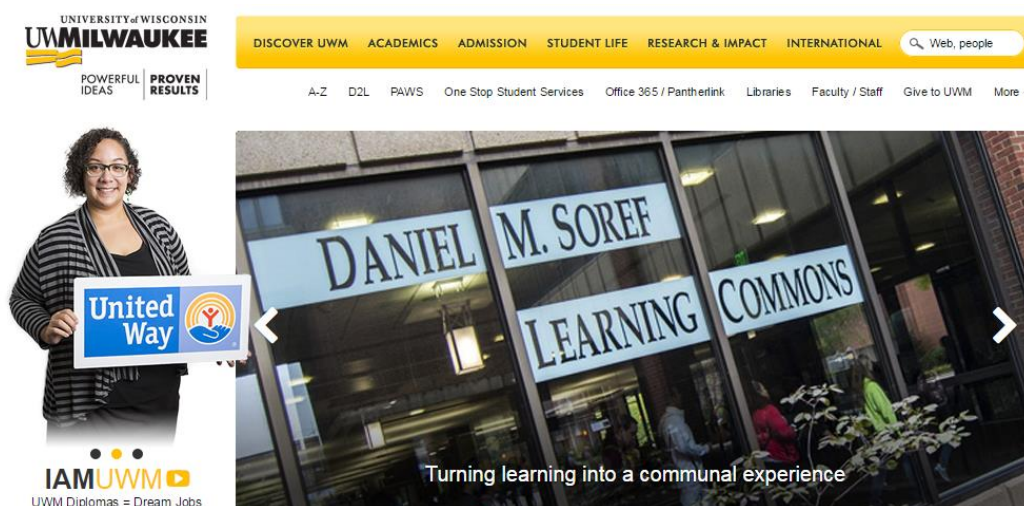


Figure 1. 3

The identity of this young woman, featured on University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee’s homepage, is ambiguous because viewers cannot tell where she fits in Omi and Winant’s

ethnicity-based race paradigm of white/black.¹¹⁹ She doesn't have the common African-American characteristic of darker skin or kinky hair. She is depicted as productive holding the sign of her place of employment. Her photo sits above the words "UWM Diplomas. Dream Jobs." This illustrates that she contributes to her university by graduating and furthers its reputation on the job market. Her portrayal as being productive may "place" her identity closer to non-minority White in the Black/White paradigm since she is not being portrayed as deficient. Website viewers may interpret this as meaning that racially ambiguous students who may contribute to their universities in similar ways represent "good" diversity.

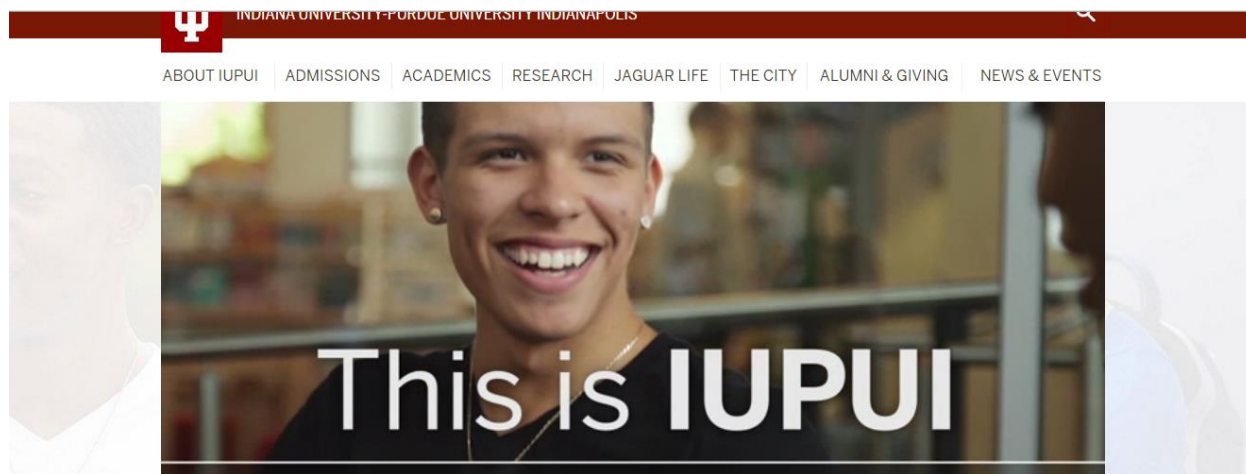


Figure 1.4

¹¹⁹ University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. <http://www4.uwm.edu/> Accessed October 12, 2014

In the IUPUI photo above, it is clear that the student is not Black—lacking dark skin and other African American features.¹²⁰ But it is also clear that he is not White—lacking the features associated with Whiteness. He does not fit neatly into either of these categories, hence the ambiguity. However, his photo is juxtaposed with a shadowy photo of an African-American male. This could possibly show his race as black by association. His attire: earrings and gold chain could also be a hint to his “urban” background. Although web viewers can’t place him racially either in Omi and Winant’s black/white ethnicity paradigm, he could be categorized as ‘black’ due to his association with the black male in the photo as well as through his jewelry. Moreover, in the photo he is not engaged in scholarship. Instead, he is socializing with other students. His portrayal in Figure 1.4 as non-productive runs counter to the portrayal of the woman above as productive. Both representations of racially ambiguous students are in contrast to the pictorial representations of Asian male students and faculty engaged in scholarship. This creates a dichotomy of Asian/productive and non-Asian/non-productive; good and bad minorities and thus good (acceptable) and bad (unacceptable) racial diversity.

A critical look at the visual and textual elements of the homepages reveals a replication of the model minority stereotype and the promotion of cosmopolitanism through the reliance on the bodies of racially ambiguous students. The model minority stereotype is largely centered on Asian-American students, and it stems from the belief that Asian students are “super-bright, highly motivated overachievers who come from well-to-do families.”¹²¹ Scholars say that the model minority stereotype has been a media script used for Asian-Americans for at least the past

¹²⁰ Indiana University-Purdue University Indianapolis <http://www.iupui.edu/> Accessed October 12, 2014

¹²¹ Bob H. Suzuki (2002) “Revisiting the Model Minority Stereotype: Implications for Student Affairs Practice and Higher Education” *New Directions for Student Services* 97: 21-32, 26

50 years.¹²² Some say that the use of the model minority script erases the hardship and inequality Asian-Americans face, lumps all peoples of Asian-descent together, and creates a false sense of American merit.¹²³ In the current study, universities made use of this stereotype for both students and faculty. If a student of Asian-descent was featured on a website, as is the case of the UIC (Figure 1.1), they were engaged in scholarly activity in a research laboratory; if a professor or faculty member was referenced on the homepage, as was the case with Temple University (Figure 1.2), they were being recognized for their scholarship, and it appears that the photo was taken in a research laboratory as well. In the UIC photo (figure 1.1) the research participants were Asian as well, and they add to the model minority stereotype by being research assistants and/or research subjects. This shows that Asian students are involved in scholarly activity, even when it may be extra-curricular, or not pertinent to their studies. On both university homepages, the faculty and students of Asian-descent were featured solely for their intellectual capacity; this fits with the script of the Asian being “super-bright” and academically superior. This shows two things: 1) that Asian students and faculty are valued for their intellect and 2) that they are exempt from deficit discourse.

Nakamura (2007) wrote that racial ambiguity in popular culture, specifically for Hollywood actors and actresses, is advantageous. In a nutshell, those whose race is ambiguous “possess a face whose heritage is hard to pin down.”¹²⁴ This means that their race membership is unclear based on their features. Two colleges in the current study, University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee and IUPUI prominently featured racially ambiguous students on their homepages. The researcher would like to stress that while students and faculty of other races were featured

¹²² Paul Wong, Chienpeing Faith Lai, Richard Nagasawa, and Tieming Ling (1998) “Asian-Americans as a Model Minority: Self-Perceptions and Perceptions by Other Racial Groups” *Sociological Perspectives* 41 (1): 95-118, 96

¹²³ Ibid, 100

¹²⁴ Lisa Nakamura (2007) “Mixedfolks.com, Celebrity Outing and the Internet” (paper presented at the annual meeting of the International Communication Association), San Francisco, California, May 23, 2007, 3

on the homepages, the location of the racially ambiguous students was so that they were either the centerpiece, as in IUPUI, or the sole human featured on the homepage, as in UW-Milwaukee. The researcher believes that the usage of racial ambiguity is an example of the cosmopolitan idea that there is no such thing as “race” and that we are all one race. The photos of racially ambiguous students points to this idea of colorblindness since the photo subjects are not Black nor White. Nakamura (2008) writes: “Colorblindness is a symptom of racism. Rather than see and acknowledge racial difference, we would rather not see at all.”¹²⁵ U.S. higher education has had its share of contentious issues surrounding race and equity, including the 2013 *Fisher V. Texas* Supreme Court case. Perhaps the Fisher case and popular discourse on race in higher education prompted the use of these racially ambiguous photo subjects and thus the universities’ portrayal of cosmopolitanism.

Though it was clear that the racially ambiguous young man was not Black nor White, his location, evidenced through his proximity to the African American male as well as the earrings and gold chain, classified him as “Black.” He was pictured in what appeared to be a group of African-Americans. This placement reinforced the association between him and the rest of the group. This could be interpreted by racially ambiguous applicants as illustrating what their place would be at IUPUI and what script they are expected to enact. Interestingly, when using photos of students who are racially ambiguous, these institutions classed the male in a stereotypical role of being unengaged in schoolwork, yet the racially ambiguous woman in the UWM example was represented as being a productive student and alumna. These representations of men of color, especially Black men, as unproductive aligns with historical scripts of deficit.

¹²⁵ Lisa Nakamura *Digitizing Race: Visual Cultures of the Internet* (Minneapolis: University Minneapolis Press, 2008), 3

Diversity as Able-Bodied

Related to this point of cosmopolitanism is erasure. The colleges in this study mentioned disability and accessibility on their homepages and about pages. Yet, there were no pictorial/visual references to disability on any of the home or about pages of these universities. An estimated 50 million people have a disability in the United States alone.¹²⁶ One can only speculate on the reasons why there were none, but that the visual erasure of students with physical disabilities, especially since the population of people with disabilities is so high, is surprising. On the other hand, media exclusion of persons with disabilities is nothing new.¹²⁷ The colleges may have avoided using photos of students with disabilities for the same reasons they avoided using photos of students with a specific race—to avoid using distasteful photos that would be construed as discriminatory. However, the absence of such representations may cause harm. Prior research on media images suggests that “mass media teach social roles” and when a representation of a social group is absent then those who belong to it may “not envision such roles for themselves.”¹²⁸ If an applicant does not see a visual representation of themselves on a campus website, then perhaps they won’t see themselves as being students at that college. That these urban universities neglected to use visual representations of students with physical disabilities on their webpages, but used textual representations, may inadvertently reveal the campus climate for persons with physical disabilities on campus as being a place where they are invisible. The lack of visual representations of members from this group also points to the idea that when urban universities “show” diversity, they are showing racial and gender identity.

¹²⁶ Lingling Zhang and Beth Haller (2013) “Consuming Image: How Mass Media Impact the Identity of People with Disabilities” *Communication Quarterly* 61 (3): 319-334, 319

¹²⁷ Ibid, 324

¹²⁸ Joy Donaldson (1998) “The Visibility and Image of Handicapped People on Television” *Exceptional Children* 47 (6): 413-416, 415

Diversity as “At-Risk”

Anecdotal evidence supports the idea that colleges have long struggled to retain and graduate students of color; at one university it was revealed last fall that the African American graduation rate at the urban University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee is below 20 percent.¹²⁹ While it’s important for colleges like Cleveland State University to present an accurate account of their university, the choice of language used when accompanying photos of students of color is at issue. Cleveland State University’s usage of the words “student success” underneath the picture of what appears to be students of African-American and Latino/a descent can be construed as saying that these students in particular need extra help, or that there is a need for a more watchful institutional eye on students from these backgrounds. This could be considered a visual microaggression. Microaggressions, coined by critical race theorists, are defined as “subtle, stunning, often automatic and nonverbal ‘put-downs’ of blacks by offenders.”¹³⁰

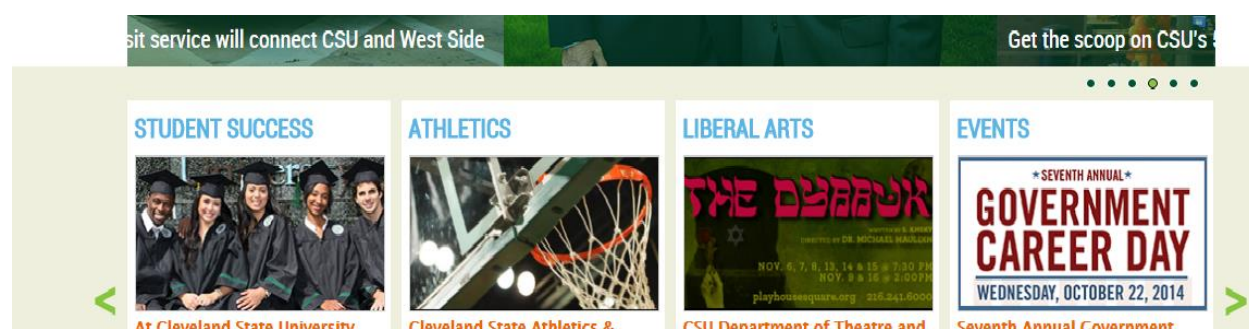


Figure 1.5

¹²⁹ Jamaal Abdul-Alim “Dropouts Tell No Tales” September/October 2013 *Washington Monthly* http://www.washingtonmonthly.com/magazine/september_october_2013/features/dropouts_tell_no_tales046451.php?page=all Accessed October 20, 2014

¹³⁰ Daniel Solarzano, Miguel Ceja, and Tara Yosso (2000) “Critical Race Theory, Racial Microaggressions, and Campus Racial Climate: Experiences of African-American College Students” *Journal of Negro Education* 69 (1): 60-73, 60

Cleveland State University featured, in Figure 1.5, African-American and Latino/a students in their graduation attire under the words “student success.”¹³¹ This reinforces the idea of minority students as deficient academically, inferior to non-minority students, and could be interpreted as saying that students from these backgrounds need extra attention or that the university needs to exhibit extra commitment to seeing these students graduate.

FLY IN 4



Temple's innovative plan to fast-track
your future and limit your debt.

Figure 1. 6

The photo from Temple University (figure 1.6) is focused on an Asian student and the messaging accompanying it “Fly in 4” could be interpreted as being “for” Asian students.¹³² This suggests that perhaps students like the one pictured (Asian) may “need” a specialized institutional plan for them to graduate in four years. On the other hand, this photo could be interpreted as extolling Asian students for graduating in four years. This could be considered a continuation of the model minority stereotype. Asian students are probably not the only students who graduate in four years at Temple University. Much like the model minority stereotype

¹³¹ Cleveland State University <http://www.csuohio.edu/> Accessed October 12, 2014

¹³² Temple University <http://temple.edu/> Accessed October 12, 2014

though, African-American and Latino/a students have stereotypes pertaining to their academic acumen as well. According to Pica-Smith and Veloria (2012) these stereotypes are communicated in a way that avoids detection and the modifiers “at risk,” “urban,” and “inner city” are used “to discuss youth of color without referencing race.”¹³³ Portrayals of minority students as “at risk” has the power to confirm deficit discourses about students from these backgrounds. It reiterates that minorities are intellectually inferior to Whites; solidifies White academic and intellectual superiority. Being considered “at risk” can accompany the script of being non-productive on campus, which can be associated with the idea that there is such a thing as “good” diversity and “bad” diversity. Figure 1.6 could also be interpreted as a continuation of the model minority stereotype. This photo may be interpreted as encouraging at-risk students to emulate the Asian student in graduating in four years with little debt. This photo reinforces a hierarchy of “good” diversity with Asian, male students at the top. Either interpretation portrays Asian males stereotypically.

The location of the homepage as the premier space for institutional messaging has the potential to set the tone for other messaging within the site. The homepage acts as an introduction to an entire website, so the way images and text are presented are important elements to consider. Prospective students encountering this messaging early on could be influenced by these visuals and text both of which could be compounded by any authority the legitimacy and authority the university may yield; the legitimacy of these institutions give credence to these stereotypes since they are presented authoritatively as the ‘true’ representation of these schools and the students that attend them. These representations also can confirm and give credence to larger societal stereotypes as seen in this analysis. The amount of stereotypes

¹³³ Cinzia Pica-Smith and Carmen Veloria (2012) “At risk means minority kid: Deconstructing deficit discourses in the study of risk in education and human services” *Pedagogy and the Human Sciences* 1 (2): 33-48, 35

on these pages could indicate that they are so inherent within the institutional brand that it goes unnoticed by website content managers and designers. The pictorial and textual elements of these websites reflect conscious decision-making on the part of possibly several people and deserve further institutional examination.

Diversity on “About” Pages

“About” Pages, webpages that often detail the founding of the university and its mission and values, are linked closely to university homepages. An “about” page is usually close to the homepage in visual proximity. Prospective students and their parents may be interested in visiting a university’s “about” page to find out its mission and values, its history and its leadership. University mission statements have been the subject of previous research. Firmin and Gilson (2010) found that Christian colleges used similar words in the mission statements found on their websites and write that mission statements are crucial to the strategic planning of a university as well as its various funding streams.¹³⁴ Taylor and Morphew (2014) conducted a content analysis of 300 college mission statements and found that colleges avoided using specific language and opted instead for “non-precise” descriptors in their mission statements—especially when it came to making references to diversity.¹³⁵ Wilson, Meyer and McNeal (2012) found that 75 percent of the colleges in their sample made references to diversity in their mission statements

¹³⁴ Michael W. Firmin and Krista Merrick Gilson (2010). “Mission Statement Analysis of CCCU Member Institutions” *Christian Higher Education* 9: 60-70, 61.

¹³⁵ Barrett J. Taylor and Christopher C. Morphew (2010). “An Analysis of Baccalaureate Mission Statements” *Research in Higher Education* 51 (5): 483-503, 500

and that 65 percent had a stand-alone diversity statement.¹³⁶ So, the researcher expected to find specific references to diversity and minorities on the about pages and mission statements of the colleges.

Textual

The “about” pages of the ten universities in this project made specific, detailed textual references to diversity. The University of Massachusetts-Boston wrote: “UMASS Boston’s diverse student body provides a global context for student learning, and its location in a major U.S. city provides connections to employers in industries such as finance, health care, technology, service, and education.”¹³⁷ The University of Missouri-Kansas City listed its accomplishments on its about page and among them was the accolade of being “one of the top five gay-friendly universities.”¹³⁸ University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee described itself “as the most diverse institution in the UW system, we’re a learning institution for more than 28k students” and “we make learning accessible at any age, location or station in life.”¹³⁹ Georgia State had similar language: “Georgia State is among the most diverse universities in the nation.”¹⁴⁰ It’s clear that these colleges see differences in race, age, gender and sexual orientation as a benefit and that the location of their institutions plays a vital role in the makeup of their student demographics. The location of this discourse on the “about” pages points to whom these colleges imagine their audiences to be.

¹³⁶ Jeffrey L. Wilson, Katrina Meyer, and Larry McNeal (2012) “Mission and Diversity Statements; What They Do and Do Not Say” *Innovation in Higher Education* 37: 125-139, 137

¹³⁷ University of Massachusetts-Boston. “The University.” http://www.umb.edu/the_university Accessed October 12, 2014

¹³⁸ University of Missouri-Kansas City. “About UMKC” <http://www.umkc.edu/aboutumkc/> Accessed October 12, 2014

¹³⁹ University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee “About UWM” <http://www4.uwm.edu/discover/about.cfm> Accessed October 12, 2014

¹⁴⁰ Georgia State University “About Georgia State University” <http://www.gsu.edu/about/> Accessed October 12, 2014

Diversity on college campuses is a large issue, and it is often communicated as being a responsibility of an entire institution. Yet, this analysis showed that the responsibility of diversity is relegated to a few offices as opposed to the entire institution. Some colleges and universities provided clues as to whose “job” it is on their campuses to promote and encourage diversity. Moreover, they illustrated which groups these resources catered to. For example, University of Illinois-Chicago listed several campus entities: African American Network, Women’s Leadership and Resource Center, Disability Resource Center, Latino Cultural Center, TRIO Academic Support and a Native American Support Program among others.¹⁴¹ Related to this idea, these various centers and programs are related to deficit discourse in that they show that women and students of color may “need” these support resources. It should be noted that none of the centers are for White male students, just everyone else. The listing and link of these groups and campus entities show that while the universities possibly serve several thousand students with just as many faculty and staff with their own personal, social, identity and community needs., the onus of responsibility of “diversity” is placed on the shoulders of a handful of campus resources as opposed to being a campus-wide effort. Further, student affairs practitioners support the hiring of advisors and counselors who reflect the students they serve, meaning that a campus entity serving Latino/a students would probably have a large proportion of Latino/a staff. From a critical race perspective, UIC’s listing of campus entities and resources inadvertently puts the responsibility of educating the entire campus community on the matters of race, gender, sexual orientation and ability to minority groups. The UIC about page did not mention any other campus groups outside of the typical “diversity” campus entities that would act in this role. Some colleges have instituted diversity offices as well, and it’s implied that these webpage’s purpose is

¹⁴¹ University of Illinois-Chicago “UIC-At a Glance” <http://www.uic.edu/uic/about/index.shtml> Accessed October 12, 2014

to ensure institutional compliance with federal laws and to govern or oversee complaints and grievances within the institution. However, not all colleges have these resources or offices—many American colleges and universities in the wake of the Great Recession have opted to cut their diversity offices altogether or decrease their institutional budgets.¹⁴² Though links may be placed on these pages that direct users to separate internal websites, no references to diversity officers were made on the homepages or about pages of the current study.

Visual

The “about” pages of these colleges and universities often did not have visual elements to them. They included mostly text and sometimes the logos of awards or rankings they had been given. However, those that did feature the photos, they included racial minorities. Figure 1.7 (below) shows how UIC prominently displayed a photo of Latino/a students on its “UIC Today” page, even though it made no mention of diversity or minority students within the body of the “UIC Today” text. On the sidebar, the page lists “diversity resources” including centers, women’s leadership and resource centers and academic support programs and offices.

¹⁴²Ben Gose. “Diversity Offices Aren’t What They Used To Be.” June 24, 2013. *Chronicle of Higher Education* 59 (39) A14-A17.

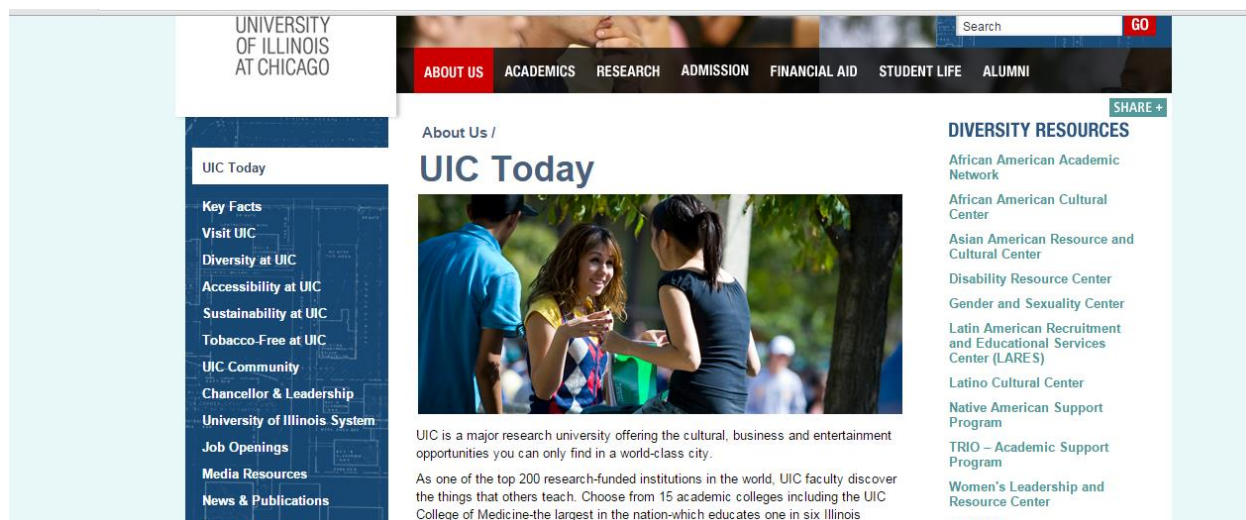


Figure 1.7



Pioneering Research with Global Connections

Figure 1.8

Georgia State University, as seen in Figure 1.8, presented an Asian student as the epitome of cosmopolitan racial transcendence.¹⁴³ As the text caption suggests, he is global. This global reference is indicative of cosmopolitan discourse because he is not featured for his race, but for his performativity/biopower as a “citizen of the world.” The cosmopolitan discourse surrounding this student suggests that only through being from another country can minorities escape the deficit discourse that accompanies them.

Urban Mission and Diversity as Deficit¹⁴⁴

The mission and vision statements were posted within the “about” pages of some of the universities in this study. University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee mentioned diversity in its mission and values statement extensively. The UW-Milwaukee said that it values “diversity in all of its definitions, including who we are, how we think, and what we do.”¹⁴⁵ The University of Cincinnati wrote: “We are committed to excellence and diversity in our students, faculty, staff, and all of our activities.”¹⁴⁶ The University of Massachusetts-Boston wrote: “We value and *provide* a learning environment that nurtures respect for differences, excites curiosity, and embodies civility. We seek to serve as a model for inclusive community-building.”¹⁴⁷ To do this, in their missions these universities stress that their missions of diversity are based on the implicit “needs.” of marginalized groups. Further, the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee wrote that its mission of diversity is to “*serve the needs*. of women, minority, disadvantaged, disabled and nontraditional students and seek racial and ethnic diversification of the student body and the

¹⁴³ Georgia State University “About Georgia State University” <http://www.gsu.edu/> Accessed October 12, 2014

¹⁴⁴ Italics in this section are the author’s for emphasis. They were not a part of the original online text.

¹⁴⁵ The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee “UWM’s Mission, Values, and Mission Statements” <http://www4.uwm.edu/discover/mission.cfm> Accessed October 12, 2014

¹⁴⁶ University of Cincinnati “Mission Statement” <http://www.uc.edu/about/mission.html> Accessed October 12, 2014

¹⁴⁷ The University of Massachusetts-Boston “Mission & Values” http://www.umb.edu/the_university/mission_values Accessed October 12, 2014

professional faculty and staff.”¹⁴⁸ The University of Cincinnati discussed the ways it provided diversity: “through scholarship, service, partnerships, and leadership, we *create* opportunity, *develop* educated and engaged citizens, *enhance* the economy and enrich our University, city, state and global community.”¹⁴⁹ University of Massachusetts-Boston wrote: “We value and *provide* a learning environment that nurtures respect for differences, excites curiosity, and embodies civility. We seek to serve as a model for inclusive community-building.”¹⁵⁰ The framing of diversity in mission statements as responding to a lack or deficit on their campuses and in their communities implies that the diverse groups these universities serve, need something extra that they don’t possess.

Of particular interest is the way the colleges discussed diversity in relation to their communities and global engagement. Several of the colleges communicated through their mission and vision statements on their “about” pages that diversity and global engagement are closely related. Wayne State University’s “about” page had such language: “Wayne State’s mission is to create knowledge and prepare a diverse body of students in an increasingly complex and global society.”¹⁵¹ The University of Cincinnati also made this connection between its institution and the local and global communities: “The University of Cincinnati serves the people of Ohio, the nation, and the world as a premier, public, urban research university dedicated to undergraduate, graduate, and professional education, experience-based learning, and research.”¹⁵² IUPUI, too, connected its institution to local and global communities: “IUPUI’s mission is to advance the state of Indiana and the intellectual growth of its citizens to the highest

¹⁴⁸ The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee UWM’s Mission, Values, and Mission Statements” <http://www4.uwm.edu/discover/mission.cfm> Accessed October 12, 2014

¹⁴⁹ University of Cincinnati “Mission Statement” <http://www.uc.edu/about/mission.html> Accessed October 12, 2014

¹⁵⁰ The University of Massachusetts-Boston “Mission & Values” http://www.umb.edu/the_university/mission_values Accessed October 12, 2014

¹⁵¹ Wayne State University “About” <http://wayne.edu/about/> Accessed October 12, 2014

¹⁵² University of Cincinnati “Mission Statement” <http://www.uc.edu/about/mission.html> Accessed October 12, 2014

levels nationally and internationally through research and creative activity, teaching and learning, and civic engagement.”¹⁵³ Georgia State University went as far to say that it helps bring investments to the Atlanta area: “The university is central to the revitalization of downtown Atlanta.”¹⁵⁴ The location of these urban universities and the global connections they may have is clearly a point of pride; providing something smaller, rural colleges can’t provide is a clear, positive part of their messaging. It appears that the universities believe that the communities that surround them provide their universities with the diversity and civic activity they desire. However, what is also clear is that even as early as their ‘about’ and mission pages these universities are using deficit and paternalistic language to describe their communities (e.g. advance, revitalize and create). These colleges are implying that they are providing the cities with something, whether it’s attracting investors or a global reach, and without their presence the cities wouldn’t or couldn’t possess those things. This notion will be revisited in Chapter 3 of this thesis, where I critically examine the language used to discuss “service” to the community.

Similar to the discourse of ethnically diverse students as being “at-risk” on the homepages, discourse of “help” on the about pages, through the offering of institutional resources runs counter to the discourse of diversity as global and a transcendence of racial issues. The ideas present on these institutional sites contribute to what we know about specific groups. The discourses of minority students as “at risk” and needing help combined to confirm the stereotypes about students of color as being less capable than other, non-minority students to excel in college settings. At the beginning of this thesis, there was mention of Abigail Fisher, a wealthy college applicant rejected from the University of Texas-Austin, who later claimed her

¹⁵³ Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis “IUPUI Mission” <http://www.iupui.edu/about/vision-mission.html> Accessed October 12, 2014

¹⁵⁴ Georgia State University “About Georgia State University” <http://www.gsu.edu/about/> Accessed October 12, 2014

spot in that year's incoming class was "taken" by unqualified minorities. I posed the question how did she know they were unqualified? The "at-risk" trope present on these university websites may provide credence to their beliefs about the capabilities of minorities in college. Schools in urban areas, often called "inner city" schools are densely populated with minority students. The schools in these areas may be under-resourced, understaffed and even underfunded compared to the schools in suburban areas. Yet, the location of this discourse---on the internet---provides no context for why some students may be deemed "at-risk" and others not. Further, the location of the discourse on the internet does not provide any room for presenting in-group differences, but instead applies the blanketed scripts of "at-risk" to all Black and Latino students portrayed, despite the applicability of this script to their actual lives. Despite the hope that the usage of the internet could lessen prejudice and discrimination towards marginalized groups, what the "at-risk" trope on these webpages shows, is that web developers, designers, writers and photographers are willing to mirror the same discrimination prevalent in larger U.S. society of African-American and Latino deficit and inferiority and the concurrent maintenance of White hegemony. If Fisher were to look at the webpages in the current study, her assumptions about students of color in college would be confirmed possibly even compounding what she thought she originally "knew" about their capacity for college.

On the other hand, prospective minority students viewing these websites might view these webpages as discriminatory. The usage of the "at-risk" and model minority stereotypes reinforce the "place" of collegiate students of color; they could view these portrayals as invitations to perform these stereotypical roles. From these portrayals they "know" what role, if any, they are expected to play on the college campus. They might also view these roles as being something to strive for, after all, the students present on the webpages were "acceptable." To this

end, through the interpretation of the resource centers as extra “help” minority students may believe that they are dependent on them for their academic success and thus develop a sense of inferiority in the classroom. Moreover, this perceived need for extra help is based solely on one facet of a student’s identity—race or disability. Also, the about pages listing these resource centers don’t provide any clues as to what these centers actually accomplish. No description of services was available on these webpages furthering the racialized, sexist deficient discourse. This could be interpreted as: because you are minority/disabled/woman/non-heterosexual you need “help” while on campus either academically, socially or both. This furthers the idea that these universities in the Coalition of Urban-Serving Universities further marginalize the very groups they purport to help and uplift.

The universities used visuals—photos—more than text to illustrate their diversity and the presence of marginalized groups on campus. This may point to universities’ desire to mimic the internet habits of their target audience—young people well-versed on the usages of the internet—as well as a desire to stay current with internet trends. Yet, what the amount of photos on these pages shows is that they rely on photographic imagery to tell a story about their universities. What this analysis shows is that it’s to the detriment of students of color. Nakamura (2008) says that the use of photos on the internet creates “identity tourism” which she says helps “define an empowered and central self against an exotic and distant Other.”¹⁵⁵ The presentation or (re) presentation of various identities on these webpages may contribute to epistemology by illustrating through these images what it means to be Black, Latino, or biracial.

What’s present on these webpages is just as important as what’s not present on them. There were very little to no visual or textual references or representations of members of the

¹⁵⁵ Nakamura, *Digitizing Race* , 13

LGBTQ community on the homepages or about pages. While potential heterosexual students may not notice this absence, the same may not be true for potential applicants who fall into this group. This may show that members of this group are not considered “diverse” or that they are not a part of the college experience at these universities. Anecdotal evidence supports the idea that members of this community already face a reality of silence and invisibility in a society that presents a heterosexual experience as normative.¹⁵⁶ This invisibility may exacerbate any feelings of inferiority prospective students in this community may experience offline. The lack of photos of LGBTQ students may undermine the idea that these universities are “gay friendly,” despite the textual references on their homepages. Homosexual students may interpret this erasure as communicating that they are better off not sharing this part of their identity with the campus community. It may even deter LGBTQ applicants. This may also point to there being certain groups that are “safe” to portray and others that aren’t safe to portray; that there is a “good” diversity and a “bad” diversity.

Conclusion

The purpose of this chapter was to critically examine the visual and textual discourses of diversity on the home and about webpages of urban universities, and to discuss the findings using a critical-race-theory lens. The researcher found that there are several competing discourses of diversity on these pages. Discourses of diversity as compliance, through the use of hyperlinks, were at the very bottom of the pages and grouped together with other institutional policies like “tobacco-free” statements. The researcher believes this was possibly to downplay and minimize the racial overtones associated with diversity. The colleges also linked diversity

¹⁵⁶ Seth Stephen-Davidowitz “How Many American Men Are Gay?” December 7, 2013. *New York Times*. <http://www.nytimes.com/2013/12/08/opinion/sunday/how-many-american-men-are-gay.html?pagewanted=all&r=0> Accessed November 24, 2014

and affirmative action together which, when combined with the other visual and textual elements of these webpages, presented affirmative action as a racial issue.

Visually, university homepages used images of minorities to say something about their intellectual capacity, particularly with Asian male students and faculty. Asian women for the most part were excluded from discourse about intellectual capacity and contribution. In contrast, there were photos of racially ambiguous students. However, through the attachment or lack thereof of deficit and other cultural markers associated with them, they were able to be classified as black or white according to Omi and Winant's black/white racial paradigm. Minority students were portrayed as being "at-risk" on the homepages of these institutions communicated through graduation photos of Black, Latino and Asian students and the words "success" or implied graduation in close proximity. There were no White students in these photos which further illustrated that being "at-risk" largely concerns minorities.

The "about" pages and mission statements made extensive textual references to diversity, but didn't really make any visual references to it. When the universities did include photos, however, the photos were of minority students. The "about" pages also revealed whose job or responsibility diversity was on campus; some colleges included student affairs links to illustrate this and others like University of Chicago-Illinois specifically listed the offices that were expected to be responsible for diversity on the campus. All of the campus entities responsible for diversity included discourse about racial minorities or other marginalized groups; there were no White groups that were referenced in these support centers. This discourse furthered the idea that minorities are in need of "help" at the college level. The discourses of both minorities as needing help and being "at-risk" presented relatively early on institutional websites could confirm that

these students lack the intellectual and social capacity to succeed on their own in college. These discourses could also exacerbate any feelings of academic inferiority within these groups.

Diversity was a key term used in the mission and vision statements of the universities. When they included how diversity was accomplished it referenced the service of minority/marginalized students. Overall, the visual and textual elements of diversity on the homepages and the “about” pages of urban universities illustrate that the colleges define diversity as race and gender; the online discourse surrounding these groups are tied to ideas of deficit. Further, while these institutions accept some groups and their diversity, they shut out others, specifically the those of the physically disabled, lesbian, gay, transgender, and queer communities. This again reinforces that diversity in higher education is a purely racial issue.

Nakamura (2007) writes that much is contested on the internet and that it is a peculiar place to seek truth.¹⁵⁷ However, the internet has already become a dominant source of general information that users seek out for information. Web users trust that the information is accurate. Universities themselves are considered authoritative with regard to knowledge and social issues, and the institutional information on their websites is taken as indisputable fact. The presence of stereotypes and inequality on these pages could be interpreted as factual representations. The most troubling revelation of this analysis is the inadvertent willingness of these universities, where diversity is supposedly a point of pride, to replicate inequality.

¹⁵⁷ Nakamura, *MixedFolks*, 3

Chapter 3: College Student Organizations and Community Service

Urban Problems/ Urban Edginess

This chapter examines the textual and visual references to minorities, diversity and urban communities on university student organization and community service webpages. These webpages were chosen since they may include numerous references to minorities and urban communities and the issues they navigate. Since the 1970s there has been a focus on solving urban problems with little or no government involvement.¹⁵⁸ Urban universities have presented themselves as a source of problem-solving since then with the formation of the “Urban 13” and its contemporary version, the Coalition of Urban-Serving Universities.¹⁵⁹ Dye and Hurley (1978) wrote that some of the problems facing urban communities were: population, including the proportion of nonwhite members; age and mobility; housing, income inequality; poverty; crime; and education.¹⁶⁰ A look at the publications of the Coalition of Urban-Serving Universities reveals that these issues are still prevalent in U.S. society and see themselves as being able to help alleviate them. In its 2008 publication “A Vital Partnership: Great Cities, Great Universities” the Coalition listed its strategic initiatives and included information detailing what each member institution was doing to solve these issues: creating a competitive workforce, building strong communities, and improving the health of a diverse population.¹⁶¹ These initiatives in a lot of ways are the same, and as the items in Dye and Hurley’s list illustrate: indirectly refer to people of color. Scholarship on urban initiatives asserts that the word “urban”

¹⁵⁸ Thomas R. Dye and Thomas L. Dye (1978) “The Responsiveness of Federal and State Governments to Urban Problems” *Journal of Politics* 40 (1): 196-207, 198

¹⁵⁹ Gregory M. St. L. O’Brien “Foreword” in *University Leadership in Urban School Renewal* (Praeger: Westport, 2004) pp. ix-xiii, ix

¹⁶⁰ Ibid, 199

¹⁶¹ Coalition of Urban-Serving Universities “A Vital Partnership: Great Cities, Great Universities” July 2008 <http://usucoalition.org/initiatives/publications> p. 3

is just a code word for racial minorities and that most of the issues in “urban” areas stem from racism and the inequalities that accompany it.¹⁶²

These urban issues; however, formed their own popular culture phenomenon--hip-hop. Hip-hop emerged at about the same time as the Urban 13, in the 1970s, as a way for oppressed groups to express themselves through song, poetry, art, and dance.¹⁶³ Urban problems were often the focus of hip-hop music. Some say the song, “The Message,” performed by rap artist Grandmaster Flash and the Furious Five first encapsulated the essence of hip hop as a vehicle to express discontent about urban life.¹⁶⁴ In the song, they rap about the same issues that Dye and Hurley label urban: education, poverty, crime and poor housing. Contemporary hip-hop songs like Tupac’s “Changes” and Kanye West’s “Crack Music” reflect this trend, discussing racism and poverty and the impact of drugs on minority communities respectively. Yet, scholars say that hip-hop’s urban connection is deeper, “laden with race-age-gender and class-based significance as suffering breeds. the sort of authentic hardness that validates ‘ghetto/young’ and street people’s credentials.”¹⁶⁵ However, a few decades after the success of hip-hop was realized as a money-maker, it was re-marketed as something else, something more inclusive than just the voices of marginalized racial groups about their oppression—it became something “cool.” Michael Jeffries (2014) wrote: “As the new millennium approached, music companies exported American rap music out to the suburbs and across the oceans, and the content and tenor of ‘real’ hip-hop changed.”¹⁶⁶ Hip-hop along with its urban content was soon produced and re-packaged

¹⁶² Hillel W. Cohen and Mary E. Northridge (2000) “Getting Political: Racism and Urban Health” *American Journal of Public Health* 90 (6): 841-842, 841

¹⁶³ Geneva Smitherman (1997) “The Chain Remain the Same :Communicative Practices in the Hip Hop Nation” *Journal of Black Studies* 28 (1): 3-25, 3

¹⁶⁴ Ibid, 5

¹⁶⁵ Michael Jeffries (2014) “Hip-Hop Urbanism Old and New” *International Journal of Urban and Regional Research* 38 (2): 706-715, 708

¹⁶⁶ Ibid, 706

for White audiences. Jeffries attributes this shift to white, urban ‘hipsters’ who desired to experience something “edgy and new.”¹⁶⁷ This same shifting of music via hip-hop also parallels the shifting of *actual* urban neighborhoods and spaces and the subsequent exclusion of people of color.

Authentic Urban Space

Reports show that millennials are attending college in urban places and remain in those places after college.¹⁶⁸ Similar to the transition of hip-hop from an authentic expression of urban life to something more marketable for White audiences, urban spaces are also transformed. Sharon Zukin (2008) wrote about the upholstering of urban spaces as “authentic.” Authentic, according to Zukin means performing a certain type of consumption in urban spaces in spite of (and sometimes even because of) the urban problems aforementioned.¹⁶⁹ However, once a space is ordained authentic, Zukin says this allows for the newly minted urbanites to claim “rights” to the area which she says leads to an inadvertent “marginalization of the poor and the ethnic residents of the neighborhood, which then results in “power in diversity and power over diversity.”¹⁷⁰ Zukin maintains that authentic spaces are money generators for the urban spaces.¹⁷¹ Related to this idea of authentic space is gentrification. Gentrification is “the arrival of wealthier people in an existing urban district, a related increase in rents and property values and changes in

¹⁶⁷ Ibid, 709

¹⁶⁸ Beau Dure. “Millennials Continue Urbanization of America, Leaving Small Towns” *NPR*. October 21, 2014 <http://www.npr.org/2014/10/21/357723069/millennials-continue-urbanization-of-america-leaving-small-towns> Accessed November 2, 2014.

¹⁶⁹ Sharon Zukin (2008) “Consuming Authenticity: From Outposts of Difference to Means of Exclusion” *Cultural Studies* 22 (5): 734-738, 730

¹⁷⁰ Sharon Zukin. *Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change* (Baltimore: John Hopkins University Press, 1982), 190

¹⁷¹ Ibid, 734

the district's character and culture.”¹⁷² Perhaps the report about millennials staying in their urban college towns points to the idea that these urban cities are now places that are in process of becoming authentic, gentrified places. Since the property value of the city increases with gentrification, this provides a justification for colleges to get involved with issues in their cities and even to present their institutions as authentic, urban space to make themselves more attractive to this generation. Colleges may do this in a variety of ways online. Urban colleges may encourage their students to participate in community service to become familiar with and help to alleviate any problems in these areas.

Given that prior research asserts that the word “urban” is racially loaded, how these “urban” institutions discuss minority groups and their endeavors in servicing them merits a closer look. Colleges may address any race/discrimination issue through its cultural/ethnic and religious student organizations. This chapter is concerned with these issues and how universities invoke diversity in text and pictures as “proof” of community diversity. Moreover, this chapter analyzes the discourses linking diversity and urbaneness on student organizations pages and urban discourse as gentrified reality on community service pages. Special attention will be paid to such markers of diversity as gender, age, race and socioeconomic status and the power given to these groups, if any.

Community Service/Community Partnerships

Extant literature shows that volunteer work in college is increasing, and there are a number of motivations behind which this trend ranges from community connectedness to

¹⁷² “What is Gentrification?” PBS. N.d. http://www.pbs.org/pov/flagwars/special_gentrification.php Accessed November 30, 2014

fulfilling requirements for college courses.¹⁷³ Community service is defined simply as the improvement of a community.¹⁷⁴ Service is central to the Coalition of Urban Serving Universities; it mentions the service its member institutions in a few of its publications. In its 2010 report “Urban Universities: Anchors Generating Prosperity for America’s Cities” the coalition wrote: “As they deepen their partnerships with public, nonprofit, and for-profit organizations, urban universities use their resources to build community capacity for assessing, documenting, discussing, and solving local problems.”¹⁷⁵ Several of the colleges in this study included a community service/community partnerships page. These webpages were fairly difficult to find within the institutional pages, and the words “community service” were used in the search bar to locate them.

Textual

Gentrified Community Service

Some of the colleges stressed community service at their institutions and that service was even a college tradition. However, the colleges avoided mentioning the communities they currently serve. Discussing its community service, UIC prefaced its relationship to Jane Addams, the founder of Hull House, which housed the poor and immigrants in Chicago.¹⁷⁶ This reference is significant because it may be included to show a steady commitment to the urban poor surrounding the UIC campus. However, it did not make any specific references to whom it

¹⁷³ Alyssa Bryant Rockenbach, Tara D. Hudson, and Jeremy B. Tuchmayer (2014) “Fostering Meaning, Purpose, and Enduring Commitments to Community Service in College: A Multidimensional Conceptual Model” *Journal of Higher Education* 85 (3): 312-338, 315

¹⁷⁴ Chan M. Hellman, Steve Hoppes, Geraldine C. Ellison (2006) “Factors Associated with College Student Intent to Engage in Community Service” *The Journal of Psychology* 140 (1): 29-39, 29

¹⁷⁵ Coalition of Urban-Serving Universities “Urban Universities: Anchors Generating Prosperity for America’s Cities” <http://usucoalition.org/initiatives/publication>, p. 9

¹⁷⁶ The University of Illinois-Chicago “Serving Campus and Community” <http://www.uic.edu/depts/sldvs/service.shtml> Accessed October 12, 2014

currently serves through its community service: “Service programs promote community engagement while helping students develop a sense of personal responsibility to community progress.”¹⁷⁷ While this sentence says what community service accomplishes with its students, it is vague about how it goes about doing that. IUPUI also mentioned that volunteerism was a part of its tradition stating, “As one of the best campuses in the country to be involved in community service and civic engagement, IUPUI provides numerous ways for students, faculty, and staff to connect with our Indianapolis community.”¹⁷⁸ Yet, it doesn’t mention specifically what opportunities are available or why IUPUI is one of the best campuses to conduct community service. It also doesn’t mention who it’s servicing. Cleveland State University mentioned its annual events “Do-Gooder Day” and “Make a Difference Day” writing of Do-Gooder Day: “Do-Gooder Day has grown into Cleveland State University’s largest spring service day with over 250 participants coming together to go out and give back to the community.”¹⁷⁹ However, the pages don’t mention specifically who the recipients of student community service are. The University of Missouri-Kansas City wrote: “UMKC was named among the top 25 ‘Best Neighbor’ institutions for its community partnerships by the New England Board of Higher Education. The university has also been recognized by the President’s Higher Education Community Service Honor Roll since the honor roll’s inception in 2006.” Georgia State wrote of community service as an accomplishment for students to achieve, “getting involved with student organizations is a great way to meet people, make a difference and add to your resume.” The University of Massachusetts-Boston’s community service page included information about Federal Work Study. These references to community service are specific about their actions, yet

¹⁷⁷ Ibid

¹⁷⁸ Indiana-Purdue University Indianapolis “Volunteering, Community Service and Civic Engagement” <http://studentaffairs.iupui.edu/involved/volunteering-engagement/index.shtml> Accessed October 13, 2014

¹⁷⁹ Cleveland State University “Service Programs: Do-Gooder Day” <http://csuw3.csuohio.edu/studentlife/service/do-gooder.html> Accessed October 13, 2014

vague about the recipients of service. This illustrates that the universities don't "see" their communities in terms of race and class nor do the universities burden their institutions with solving specific urban issues.

A few of the universities' centers were attached to missions of community service and engagement, and have established centers for community service. The University of Cincinnati wrote that the Center for Community Engagement "works to connect campus and the community through service. The CCE works with students, staff, faculty, and community partners to make a meaningful impact on our community while helping students learn to serve, and serve to learn."¹⁸⁰ The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee established its Center for Community-Based Learning, Leadership and Research whose mission is to "develop deep partnerships with the non-profit sector, providing student opportunities for volunteerism, service-learning, and community-based work-study options."¹⁸¹ IUPUI established an extension of its student affairs to reach students interested in community service through its Community Service and Civic Engagement staff whose mission is to "support and connect IUPUI students, faculty and staff with service opportunities in the Indianapolis community" and "in finding, planning, or funding an educationally meaningful community service project."¹⁸² Centers like these may be an attempt to illustrate the university's mission to service, but it is still general, vague and appears to reflect the gentrified language similar to the other institutions.

The lack of specificity about these service activities could be interpreted in a few ways. One of the major things that could be communicated is that any minority, poor or other

¹⁸⁰ The University of Cincinnati Center for Community Engagement "About Us" <http://www.uc.edu/cce/about.html> Accessed October 13, 2014

¹⁸¹ The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Center for Community-Based Learning, Leadership and Research "About the CBLLR" <http://www4.uwm.edu/community/about/> Accessed October 20, 2014

¹⁸² Indiana University Purdue University Indianapolis "Volunteering, Community Service and Civic Engagement" <http://studentaffairs.iupui.edu/involved/volunteering-engagement/meet-cscc-team.shtml> Accessed October 13, 2014

marginalized groups surrounding these universities are not in need of help because they are not specifically mentioned. Not mentioning these communities on their service webpages could downplay any major issues facing these urban communities as well as any contributions the universities make to solving these urban problems. This presents a disconnect between the universities' participation in the Urban 13/Coalition of Urban-Serving Universities and their self-reported service. These universities have a mission of service per the Coalition of Urban-Serving Universities, but little to no specifics are on these pages that explain how these missions are achieved through service. The various documents published by the Coalition of Urban-Serving Universities purport that all of its member institutions participate and contribute to their urban, minority communities through solution-based service and research. Yet, there is little to no mention of such service activities in these community service webpages. Instead, the universities chose to erase their communities by not mentioning them. Like the mention of diversity on the homepages, prospective students may interpret this erasure as the universities' way of minimizing the same urban issues the Urban 13 were intended to absolve. Minimizing these issues this way is on par with saying that the problems in these areas are not that egregious.

Visual

A small number of photos were on these webpages. Universities were more explicit about their service activities and the community members being helped using photos than they were using text. Both photos and text about community service relegated minorities and their urban communities to stereotypes and linked them to deficits.

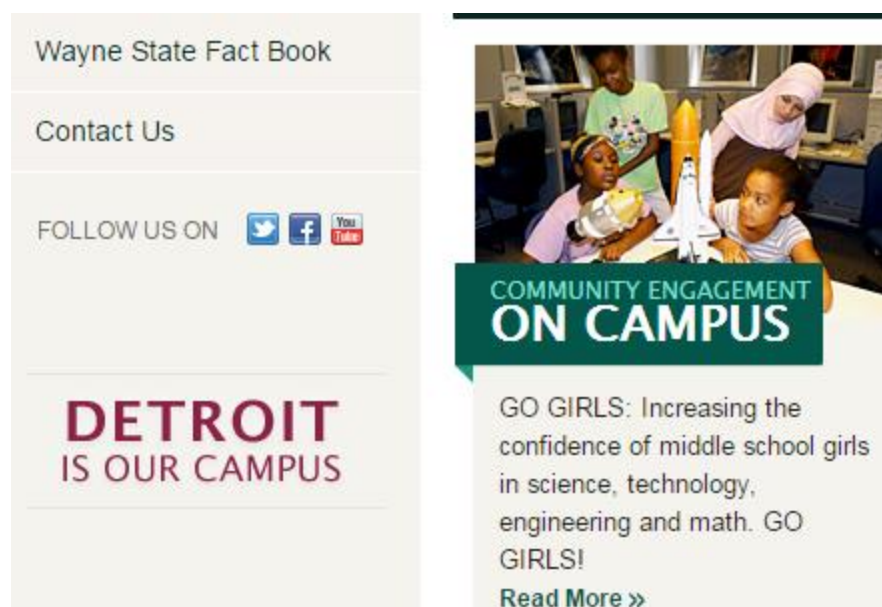


Figure 1.9

Wayne State University in its photo (figure 1.9) shows that all of the recipients of Wayne State's community service are African-American, and the person giving their time to the community appears to be a minority, a Muslim woman.¹⁸³ This image could relegate improving the participation of girls in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) fields as a gender and racialized issue, particularly an issue that should be 'fixed' by women of color. This also paints the issue as an issue that solely affects girls of color. Also, the power differentials in the photo marginalize both groups in stereotypical ways. As stated previously, African-Americans are seen as being "at-risk." The photo does nothing to dispute that script. Figure 1.9 also marginalizes women of Arab or Middle Eastern descent. The model minority stereotype while it affects Asians, also influences the way international students are perceived—particularly South Asian students. South Asians were deemed model minorities in the 1960s as a trope that compared ethnic minority achievement and subsequently blamed African-Americans, fighting to

¹⁸³ Wayne State University "Community Engagement and Outreach" <http://communityoutreach.wayne.edu/> Accessed October 13, 2014

gain Civil Rights in the Jim Crow South, for their own perceived deficiency: disenfranchisement, lack of opportunities and the problems they faced in general.¹⁸⁴

Wayne State University continued stereotypical portrayals of the woman in Figure 1.9. In the photo, she is performing Muslim identity through the wearing of a hijab, a headdress worn by Muslim women. It appears that she is cautiously assessing the African American girls' work as they gaze suspiciously at the rocket. This positions the Muslim woman as empowered because she has the knowledge and social capital to be able to assess the work of the students and the student are powerless because their work is being assessed. This photo could also be read along racialized lines--the woman is powerful because she is not black and is a model minority (anti-blackness), and the students are powerless because they are black. While the photo is intended to show uplift and service, it reiterates stereotypes as well.



Photo 2.0

¹⁸⁴ Vani Kannan (2014) "Model Minority or Potential Terrorist?: Affective Economies, Rhetorics of Silence, and the Murder of Sunando Sen" *Studies on Asia* 4 (1): 7-43, 13

Wayne State University continued its stereotypical portrayals in Figure 2.0 which again shows that deficit discourse is present. The text says “WSU Math Corps helps children realize their own particular greatness” as if to say that outside of this community service, participants in the program won’t realize their potential.¹⁸⁵ This photo shows African-American girls again being helped in the subject of math. This sends the message a second time that African-American women are deficient, especially in the area of mathematics. It’s intended to show that the university cares about minority students, but it reinforces the script of African-Americans being deficient intellectually by presenting that they “need help.” Further, the smiling face of the girl in the center may suggest that the African-Americans in the photo are happy to be helped. It should also be noted that neither of the Wayne State photos portrayed other minorities in position of receiving help. This further illustrates the point that this “help” in STEM is intended for African-Americans.



Figure 2.1

¹⁸⁵ Ibid

Georgia State used Figure 2.1 where the recipient of the service is unclear.¹⁸⁶ It appears that the college students are giving their time, and that the recipient is the older person. However, it could easily be interpreted either way. All of the people in the photo are minorities. This photo may relegate the issue of urban service to something that should be solved or alleviated by urban minorities. This photo is in contrast to the textual elements of service, it specifically shows who is being helped and who is acting as the helper. Moreover, it also shows in what capacity the university services the community (food donation). The fact that the photo includes mostly minorities could be interpreted by non-minority students that serving these communities is not ‘their problem’ and instead rests on the shoulders of minority students. Similarly, minority students may see this photo and believe that the responsibility of serving these communities, despite their attachment to them in their own lives, rests with them.

The usage of photos illustrating service activities indicates a desire to show, rather than tell, web visitors of a) who they serve and b) how they serve. The reliance on photos to do this aligns with the growing visual nature of the internet. However, the dependence on visuals to show service activities allows room for stereotypes to be duplicated over and over again without much context accompanying them. This can be dangerous as web visitors, prospective students, parents, donors, and researchers may read these pictures in a way that aligns with their beliefs which, through power differentials and repetition as seen in the Wayne State examples, can send messages that further marginalize minorities. Yet, there may be reciprocity between the stereotypes present and the reimagining of these cities as urban, authentic and gentrified spaces. These urban universities and their students could signify a certain level of gentrification in that they are wealthier than those who may be permanent residents of their cities and demand certain

¹⁸⁶ Georgia State University “Volunteer Opportunities” <http://service.gsu.edu/get-involved/volunteer-opportunities/> Accessed October 13, 2014

accoutrements: restaurants, coffee shops, bookstores and bars to maintain their lifestyle. Similar to hip-hop and rap music, these new urban, authentic and gentrified spaces have a certain “edginess” that stems from the marginalization and erasure of the poor and people of color. Erasure is a hallmark of gentrification as the wealthier residents drive up costs which drive poorer residents out of these spaces. Daniel Jose Older wrote a piece on gentrification for *Salon* where he surmised: “When communities of color aren’t being pathologized they’re being erased.”¹⁸⁷ This was encapsulated on the community service webpages: The textual elements made no mention of communities of color, which is erasure and the visual elements on these webpages illustrated deficit, which is pathology.

On the other hand, such urban problems and subsequent erasure of undesirables may be attractive to young college students seeking to become “edgy.” This may be the case with the urban universities and the universities seeking to attract affluent students. So with regard to the textual elements, instead of showing the way that these universities are attempting to solve the urban issues through showcasing their work as part of the Urban 13/Coalition of Urban-Serving Universities they make no mention of them, likely because the performance of this type of urbaneness depends on the maintenance, erasure and further duplication of the issues and stereotypes for the benefit of non-minority students and non-minority/marginalized members of their communities.

Diversity and Student Organizations

Student-led organizations are an integral part of the collegiate experience, and many colleges proudly display these organizations on their webpages; the colleges in the current study are no

¹⁸⁷ Daniel Jose Older “Gentrification’s insidious violence: the truth about America’s cities” *Salon*. April 8, 2014. http://www.salon.com/2014/04/08/gentrifications_insidious_violence_the_truth_about_american_cities/ Accessed November 30, 2014

different. Student affairs is believed to be a key component in the success of college students. Argrawal, Calvo and Kumar wrote that “extracurricular activities, student organizations, and campus-wide programs are ways to help alleviate feelings of isolation by allowing the opportunity to develop social attachments.”¹⁸⁸ Student organizations can act as sites of diversity. Baker (2008) writes that “many underrepresented students rely on the support of minority-based organizations while attending college, and feel that such organizations are important to their success as students on a predominately White campus”¹⁸⁹ Despite the idyllic pictures on college websites, campuses are not exempt from racism; in fact, racism may even be concentrated on campus since scholarship shows “within institutions of higher education, the racial dynamics of the larger society frequently play out on the college campus.”¹⁹⁰ After holding focus-groups with African-American college students, Solarzano, et al. (2000) found that they create same-race organizations to counter negative stereotypes that may persist on their campuses.¹⁹¹ So, students interested in a college or university, who also belong to marginalized groups, may seek these organizations out.

The universities in this study had organizations that might appeal to minority students. Several of the universities organized their student organizations into categories: academic groups, political groups, sororities and fraternities, ethnic/multicultural groups, and religious/spiritual groups. The categories of interest to the researcher were cultural/ethnic and religious/spiritual since they may include the most references to diverse groups. University

¹⁸⁸Neelam Argawal, Beverley A. Calvo, Vinod Kumar “Paving the Road to Student Success: A Students with Disabilities Organization” *College Student Journal* 48 (1): 34-44, 36

¹⁸⁹ Christina N. Baker (2008) “Underrepresented college students and extracurricular involvement: the effects of various student organizations on academic performance” *Social Psychology Education* 11: 273-298, 296

¹⁹⁰ Nolan Cabrera (2014) “But We’re Not Laughing: White Male College Students’ Racial Joking and What This Says About ‘Post-Racial’ Discourse” *Journal of College Student Development* 55 (1): 1-15

¹⁹¹ Daniel Solarzano., Miguel Ceja, & Tara Yosso. (2000). Critical Race Theory, Racial Microaggressions, and Campus Racial Climate: The Experiences of African American College Students *Journal of Negro Education*, 69(1): 60-73, 70

webpages pertaining to student organizations were examined; these categorizations could potentially be a place universities provide clues pictorially and textually about their student demographics. Harper and Quaye (2007) found that minority identity was key for students who were involved in these extra-curricular activities, specifically those targeted to African-American students; these organizations appeal to student identity which illustrates that a level of identity attached to getting involved in these organizations, how they are portrayed is important.¹⁹² Student organizations may provide hints at what groups are present on university campuses, which is pertinent to the idea of urban community. NPR reported in October 2014 that younger Americans are increasingly moving to urban areas for college and remain in those places after graduation, so presenting an image of “edgy” urban diversity in the student body may be an institutional priority to attract more students.¹⁹³

Textual

The webpages of the universities in this study all included information about their student organizations. However, for several of the universities, finding the webpages proved difficult and the search tool was used to locate the proper pages. The universities split up the organizations into categories according to targeted group, mission and purpose on campus: political, academic, fraternities and sororities, cultural/ethnic and religious/spiritual were among them. Each category was listed separately, however in the case of minority fraternities and sororities, these organizations could realistically count as both Greek organizations as well as cultural organizations. Often, the university included the number of organizations included in

¹⁹² Shaun R. Harper and Stephen J. Quaye (2007) “Student Organizations as Venues for Black Identity Expression and Development among African-American Male Student Leaders” *Journal of College Student Development* 48 (2): 127-144, 135

¹⁹³ Beau Dure. “Millenials Continue Urbanization of America, Leaving Small Towns” *NPR*. October 21, 2014 <http://www.npr.org/2014/10/21/357723069/millennials-continue-urbanization-of-america-leaving-small-towns> Accessed November 2, 2014.

each organization category. Some of the organizations in the cultural/ethnic category included: Black Student Union also called Black Student Association, Lebanese Student Union, Center for Students with disABILITIES, GLBT Alliance, also sometimes called Pride, Taiwanese Student Union, and Latinos Unidos or Latinos En Accion. Religious/spiritual organizations included: Muslim Student Organization, Chabad (Jewish) Student Organization, and various Christian groups such as InterVarsity and Lutheran Student Organization. Religious/spiritual organizations are included in the current study because these different organizations may reflect the various parts of student's identity, and certain groups, like Muslims, are marginalized in U.S. society which places them as 'black' in Omi and Winant's racial paradigm.

The student organization webpages also included organization mission and purpose. Several of the organizations included references to educating their university and being a location of support for targeted students. The mission of the Arab Student Organization at Cleveland State University reflects this, "The purpose of the organization shall be to unite and serve the Arab community on campus while educating the general student body about Arab culture. The association is committed to benefiting both Arab and Non-Arab communities while promoting Arabic heritage, thus adding to the diversity of the campus, as well as increasing public awareness about Arabs."¹⁹⁴ Latinos Unidos also included similar language in its mission: "Latinos Unidos shall be open to students who are interested in the Latino Culture. The organization is dedicated to promoting an understanding of Latino Culture and developing Latino unification, empowerment, morale, and leadership."¹⁹⁵ The language of Latinos Unidos "promoting an understanding" implies that there is not an understanding of Latina/o culture on

¹⁹⁴ Cleveland State University "Welcome to Student Organizations at CSU" <http://csuohio.orgsync.com/home>
Accessed October 13, 2014

¹⁹⁵ Ibid

campus, which contradicts other messages of diversity on the site. The Arab Student Association appears to have an understanding of its role on campus and knows it adds diversity. This discourse of student organizations as educators of diversity was present across universities, and extended to other groups. Pride, a gender and sexuality group at UIC defined itself: “as an educational group that strives to promote community building as well as an open forum for all topics.”¹⁹⁶ These student organizations appeal to the Ragins and Gonzalez (2003) definition of diversity given at the beginning of chapter 2: race, sexual orientation, religion and ability. This also shows that student organizations can show diversity at institutions and, because of their missions of education, could be used strategically to offset accusations of having a homogenous student population. They may also provide urban edginess by providing a cultural smorgasbord of “difference” through activities and opportunities for education presented to both for the student body and larger communities.

In addition, some student affairs webpages discussed minority groups as deficient and created programmatic groups to ‘address’ the deficiencies of these groups on campus. The University of Cincinnati devoted a webpage to its ‘Emerging Ethnic Leaders’ program which was created and designed to: “increase, retain, and support student of color leadership development...”¹⁹⁷ The webpage did not explicitly say that non-minorities *could not* apply, but the messaging and the visuals on the webpage did not appear to refer to White students. The learning outcomes of the program called for participants to: “gain knowledge of their cultural awareness and its influence on their leadership style” and to: “identify their personal strengths as

¹⁹⁶ The University of Illinois-Chicago “ Student Organization List”
<http://www.uic.edu/depts/campusprograms/solist.shtml> Accessed October 13, 2014

¹⁹⁷ University of Cincinnati. “Emerging Ethnic Leaders.” <http://www.uc.edu/sald/EmergingEthnicLeaders.html>
 Accessed December 1, 2014

leaders.”¹⁹⁸ UIC included information about its CHANCE program. The CHANCE program is intended to: “assist the campus with recruitment, retention and graduation of underrepresented students. The CHANCE program is committed to providing academic, personal and professional assistance to students with demonstrated academic and personal needs..”¹⁹⁹ The descriptions of these programs and their proximity to the “student life” webpages further compounds the discourses of race, diversity and deficiency.

Visual

Diversity as Minorities and ‘Tokens’

The visual references to diversity on the student organizations pages were few. However, the photos that were present tell visitors what or who needs. these organizations. In the photos, minority students and the white students accompanying them were not pictured in classes or near a classroom or library. They were featured socializing, blowing bubbles, and smiling while posing for a photo in a dormitory, posing together at a multicultural and/or Greek-lettered organization event, sitting together, and walking on campus. These photos were probably incorporated into the websites to illustrate cultural harmony and to give prospective students an idea of campus life. However, in the pictures minority students were the majority or were the focal points of the photos. Their overwhelming presence may show that student organizations are primarily for minority students. Further, in photos where the group was racially integrated, students were tokenized due to a singular representation, being the only one of their group.

¹⁹⁸ Ibid

¹⁹⁹ University of Illinois-Chicago. The CHANCE Program. “About the CHANCE Program.” <http://www.uic.edu/depts/oa/chance/index.html> Accessed December 1, 2014

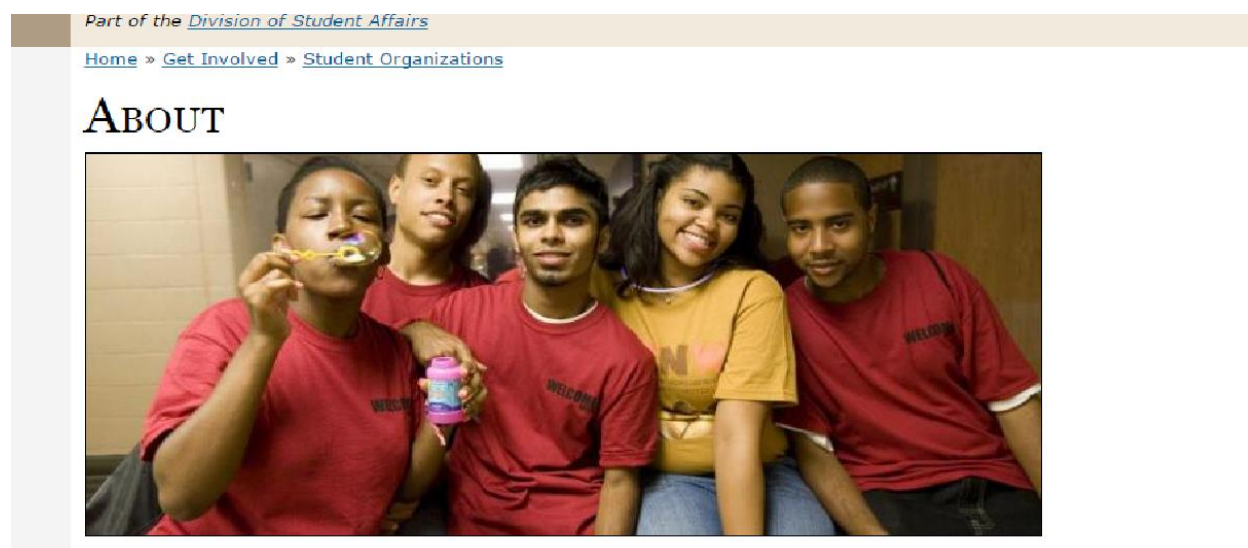


Figure 2.2

Minority students at Temple University pose in figure 2.2.²⁰⁰ This photo was found on Temple's student affairs webpage (often student affairs departments oversee student organizations). The students in this photo appear to be African-American, but there is also a young man of Middle Eastern descent. No White students are included. The lack of White students in the photo signifies a certain level of exclusion, and that perhaps the activities they are engaged in are intended to appeal to students of color. This may be interpreted as a statement of intentional exclusion and that non-minority students are not welcome at cultural/ethnic student organization events. This says that these organizations may be welcoming of other non-minority students, but not White students. This photo may also show that students of these groups need student organizations in order to have this unity. This may further exclude White students.

²⁰⁰ Temple University Student Activities "About." <http://studentactivities.temple.edu/get-involved/student-organizations/about> Accessed October 13, 2014



Figure 2.3

While some photos depicted interracial groups, some photos like the one Temple University included on its student organizations page (figure 2.3) depicted only minority students.²⁰¹ Figure 2.3 shows minority students at a campus event, the focal subjects and their identities are made even clearer through the “I love Latinos” shirt both young men are wearing. Moreover, the embrace of one man by another signifies that this is a welcoming place for Latino students. However, the lack of White students in this photo points to the idea that student organizations are for minority students, specifically Latinos. This also points to the idea of cultural/ethnic student organizations being overwhelmingly, perhaps exclusively, for minority students.

²⁰¹ Temple University “Student Organizations” <http://studentactivities.temple.edu/get-involved/student-organizations> Accessed October 13, 2014



Figure 2.4

UIC included a photo (figure 2.4) on its student affairs/student organizations page. It included a photo of South Asian students accompanying the text: “Culturally diverse student organizations.”²⁰² The photo and text together further the idea that culturally diverse student organizations mean ethnic minority organizations. This photo and text combination continues the discourse of diversity as race and diversity as minority. This photo is problematic since it represents South Asian students as arbiters of cultural diversity, as if no other racial groups are considered diverse. The lack of other racial groups illustrates that being nonwhite is pertinent to these organizations. The photo also incurs performativity; the students are literally performing their South Asian identity for an invisible audience. South Asian and minority students could read this as an indicator of what their experience may be on UIC’s campus--a performance of their cultural identity. Media-literate students may be averse to these images, though some students may see them as inclusive.

²⁰² University of Illinois-Chicago. “UIC Campus Programs” <http://www.uic.edu/depts/campusprograms/> Accessed December 5, 2014



Figure 2.5

Cleveland State University's student organizations page featured African-American female participants of an organization in figure 2.5.²⁰³ The women appear to be a part of a Black Greek-Lettered Organization. While it's true that historically black Greek organizations were founded by and for African-Americans, this photo reinforces that minority organizations on campus are only for certain groups. This photo may be interpreted as a sign of inclusiveness for Black-female students, but not so much for White female students or even other minority students.

The visual portrayal of diversity as people of color on student organizations/student affairs webpages reinforces the idea that diversity in higher education means race or belonging to a marginalized group. The textual elements of these sites mentioned non-racialized groups such as Catholic Student Organizations and LGBT groups called Pride. These groups were not depicted

²⁰³ Cleveland State University "Student Life" <http://www.csuohio.edu/studentlife/studentlife> Accessed December 4, 2014

on the student organizations webpages. The universities in this study communicate contradictory discourses surrounding student organizations. Textually they are all-encompassing and intercultural, but visually student organizations are for minorities exclusively. The visuals on these pages communicate not only that cultural/ethnic groups are exclusionary and only for those with shared identity, but also that minority students perhaps “need” these organizations due to the amount of visuals referencing them. This is similar to the diversity as resource/help discourse found earlier on institutional about pages, and this addition to that discourse may compound its effects on audience members of these groups. The lack of portrayals of White, homosexual, and disabled bodies in these web spaces communicates that White students, homosexual students, and disabled students don’t need student organizations as much as ethnic and religious minorities need them. From this idea of necessity, one could infer that this approach is one of deficit; these colleges are communicating that minority students need something that other students don’t. Or that they have something that non-minority students don’t have.

Diversity as “Tokens”

In any setting some groups are dominant and others are subordinate. However, subordinate groups, especially those whose identity markers counter those of the dominant group, risk being “tokenized.” The risk of tokenization increases when “members of a minority group ... are visibly different from those in the majority.”²⁰⁴ According to Wingfield and Wingfield (2014), who conducted research on tokenization and African-American males, tokenization can occur across gender and racial lines, and that its consequences can result in

²⁰⁴ Adia Harvey Wingfield and John Harvey Wingfield (2014). “When Visibility Hurts and Helps: How Intersections of Race and Gender Shape Black Professional Men’s Experiences With Tokenization” *Cultural Diversity and Ethnic Minority Psychology* <http://dx.doi.org/10.1037/a0035761> pp. 1-8, 1

“unspoken taboos like having a smaller margin for error.”²⁰⁵ In a college setting, tokenization can and does take place and the photos included in this chapter illustrate that. Some of the photos found on the student organizations’ pages tokenized certain groups.

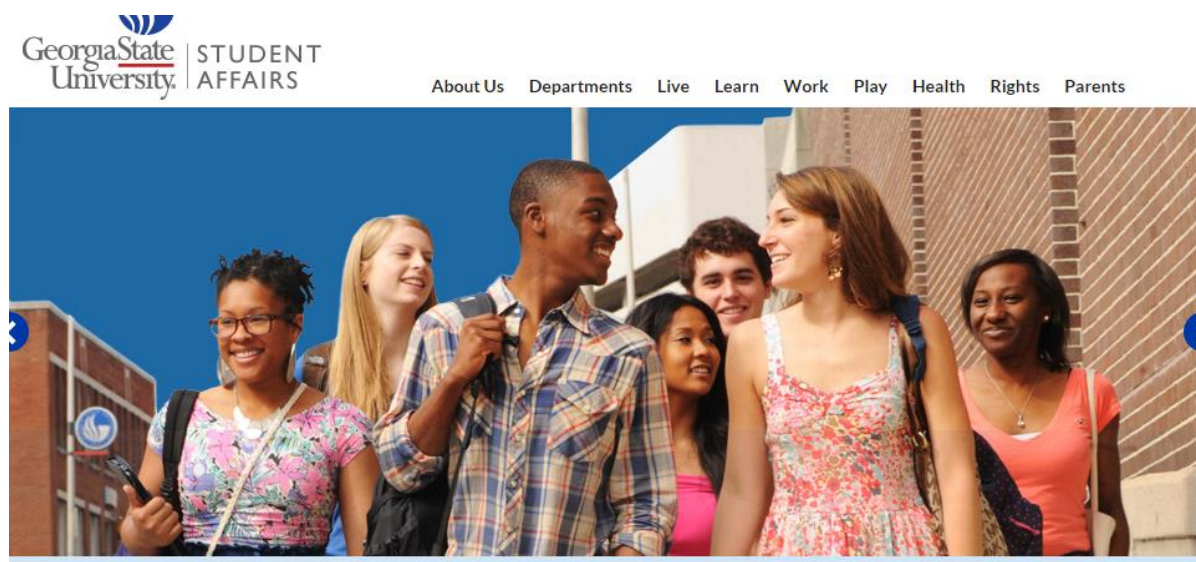


Figure 2.6

Georgia State included figure 2.6 on its student affairs webpage that included both minority and non-minority students.²⁰⁶ There appears to be no racial animosity; quite the opposite of this: racial harmony is depicted. Everyone in the photo is smiling and happy. However, a deeper reading of this image shows that both the African-American male, the White male as well as the woman of Asian-descent are minority “tokens” because they are hypervisible and are the only portrayals of their groups: Asian female, White male, and Black male. This photo may be interpreted by some as being an adequate, non-offensive portrayal of campus because most of the variation in race and gender, yet to others it may illustrate what their campus experience might

²⁰⁵ Ibid, 4

²⁰⁶ Georgia State University “Student Affairs” <http://studentaffairs.gsu.edu/> Accessed October 13, 2014

entail: isolation. In the photo the Asian woman is looking away from the camera as opposed to staring straight ahead or at another student in the group, hinting at passivity. Peggy Li (2014) says that the stereotype of Asian female passivity has ancient roots, and that the Asian female in the group could be performing the “Lotus Blossom Baby” script which she describes as Asian women portrayed as “shy and diminutive.”²⁰⁷ This representation of Asian women may discourage Asian women who are not passive from applying. Also, the White male is a token as well. He is depicted in the background, but he is the only member of his group: White and male. Though his identity as a White male is one of hegemony, his presence in the photo is tokenized. His White male tokenization, though, may take on a different meaning than the tokenization of the minority groups in the photo: one that perhaps tempers the representation of the campus as “too minority.”



Figure 2.7

University of Massachusetts-Boston’s student life page also included tokenization. Figure 2.7 shows tokenization.²⁰⁸ All of the students portrayed in the photo are tokens though they signify different things. The African-American male with his backwards-facing hat and the placement of

²⁰⁷ Peggy Li (2014) “Recent Developments Hitting the Ceiling: An Examination of Barriers to Success for Asian-American Women” *Berkeley Journal of Gender, Law and Justice* 29 (1): 141-159, 154

²⁰⁸ University of Massachusetts-Boston “Student Affairs” http://www.umb.edu/life_on_campus/student_affairs
Accessed November 15, 2014

his arms signifies urbaneness; his inclusion in the photo signifies urbaneness and contrasts the representation of the White woman in the photo as well as the girl of South Asian descent. The two women in the photo signify racial harmony. This contrast is illustrative of difference. He is different from them in almost every way: gender, race, skin color, urbaneness and is on the opposite side of the mascot. The combination of ‘opposites’ and the model minority stereotype of South Asian students, in conjunction with the hegemonic power of the White woman is at play in the photo, and paints the African-American male as the antithesis to their representations: intellectually inferior and lacking power.



Figure 2.8

In Figure 2.8 from the University of Cincinnati’s student activities and leadership development webpage the African-American male, the Asian woman carrying him and the African-American female are all being tokenized.²⁰⁹ They are all singular representations. In this

²⁰⁹ University of Cincinnati. Student Activities and Leadership Development. “Student Organizations Information and Resources” http://www.uc.edu/sald/student_organization.html Accessed December 3, 2014

photo again, the Asian woman is looking in the opposite direction of the others and the camera. This could hint at passivity and the “Lotus Blossom Baby” script of Asian female shyness as well.²¹⁰ The African-American male in this photo is also the most muscular.²¹¹ His build in addition to being the muscular may hint that he may be expected to perform sportsmanship or participate in sports more than the others in the photo would be. This representation of Black male sportsmanship can be damaging. College athletics are perceived to be an alternate route to college admission; associating the African-American male in the photo with athletics gives credence to this idea and ties him to deficit discourse that purports this was possibly his avenue into the college.²¹² This reinforces deficit since the idea of alternate admission implies lack of college readiness or academic acumen.

This photo also clearly shows who the majority is: White males. Further, the African-American male is hunched over and appears “lower” than the White male next to him. In addition to that, the White males in the photo appear to literally be on top of or “higher” than everyone else: the African American male is hunched over and the other White males are being carried by women, an Asian student and an African-American woman. This points to power elements that reflect White male hegemony despite the intended message of diversity. The visibility of all of the students in this photo may allow website visitors to interpret it as racial harmony, but a closer examination shows that groups historically marginalized are again being marginalized/tokenized.

²¹⁰ Peggy Li, 154

²¹¹ Michael A. Messner, Michele Dunbar and Darnell Hunt (2000) “The Televised Sports Manhood Formula” *Journal of Sport and Social Issues* 24 (4): 380-394, 382

²¹² Michele Hernandez “In College Admissions, Athletes Are the Problem” *New York Times*. November 13, 2011. <http://www.nytimes.com/roomfordebate/2011/11/13/why-do-top-schools-still-take-legacy-applicants/in-college-admissions-athletes-are-the-problem>. Accessed December 5, 2014



Figure 2.9

Wayne State University also tokenized students on its “students” page.²¹³ The White males in the photo outnumber everyone else in the photo, making them the dominant group. The South Asian woman, the African-American male, the African-American female, and the White woman in the group are all tokens since they are singular representations. The South Asian woman appears to be an instructor or group leader which is a continuation of the model minority stereotype. She signifies this stereotype because she is in an intellectual position to oversee the work of the other students. The African-American male in the photo is also tokenized. It appears that they are laughing at something he said because their laughter and smiles are directed toward him. In this photo it is very clear that his presence is performative and his performance is the social script of “cool.” “Coolness” also called “cool pose” is defined as: “... ritualized expression of masculinity that involves speech, style, and physical and emotional posturing... being cool produces and explains, in part, why black males struggle in school.”²¹⁴ Coolness

²¹³ Wayne State University “Students” <http://wayne.edu/students/> Accessed November 15, 2014

²¹⁴ David E. Kirkland and Austin Jackson (2009) “We Real Cool” : Toward a Theory of Black Masculine Literacies” *Reading Research Quarterly* 44 (3): 278-297, 280

conveys certain messages such as “control, toughness and detachment.”²¹⁵ In the photo above, it appears that the African-American male is physically posturing and performing “coolness” possibly to seem as if he is different from them, and perhaps even posturing for the African-American female in the group. He appears detached from the academic work at hand. According to Kirkland and Jackson (2009), talk, which includes jokes, can indicate “coolness.”²¹⁶ His detachment and telling a joke reinforces ideas about deficit and black males.



Lounges & Hanging out

Figure 3.0

²¹⁵ Herman Beavers “The Cool Pose: Intersectionality, Masculinity, and Quiescence in the Comedy and Films of Richard Pryor and Eddie Murphy” in *Race and the Subject of Masculinities* Harry Stecopoulos and Michael Uebel (eds..) pp. 253-286 (Durham: Duke University Press, 1997), 257

²¹⁶ Ibid, 294

UW-Milwaukee's student life webpage shows students of all races comingling at an event. However, they appear to be the only racial minorities in the photo.²¹⁷ They are in the middle of what appears to be an all-White student assembly and the White students seem to be enveloping them. The African-American students also appear to be the epitome of difference both racially as the only non-Whites in the photo and in clothing through the wearing of different T-shirts. Though it is difficult to see the T-shirts of those around them, this group of African-American students shows 'sameness' through wearing identical T-shirts and since the shirts are different from those around them it creates a distinction. This photo signifies racial harmony: no one appears upset or slighted, and no one in the photo is frowning. It would be easy for this photo to be interpreted as a happy setting. However, this photo shows, and appears to even emphasize the differences and distinctions between these groups of students.

The usage of minority bodies through pictures and the textual references to diversity through student organizations illustrates that these colleges would rather show diversity than explicitly say how it's accomplished. Pippert, Essenberg and Matchett analyzed 10,000 photos included in college brochures and found that colleges use photographs to show representations of diversity, even if those representations are not as accurate as what is portrayed.²¹⁸ Some have said that inclusion of photos of minorities is solely for the purpose of targeting applicants of similar racial backgrounds.²¹⁹ Determining whether the pictorial references to diversity are accurate is not a part of the current study. However, maintaining a level of accuracy may be important for ethical reasons. The visual and textual references to

²¹⁷ University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee "Student Experience" <http://www4.uwm.edu/life/experience.cfm> Accessed November 15, 2014

²¹⁸ Timothy D. Pippert, Laura J. Essenberg and Edward J. Matchett "We've Got Minorities, Yes We Do: Visual Representations of Racial and Ethnic Diversity in College Recruitment Materials" *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education* 23 (2): 258-282

²¹⁹ Joseph Erba, Laurie Phillips, Mugus V. Geana (2012) "Am I In? Influence of Viewers' Race and Sex on Image Appeal for Higher Education Advertising" *Online Journal of Communication and Media Technologies* 2 (4): 1-31, 7

diversity on the student organization pages shows that these institutions believe that student organizations and student affairs is where diversity “happens” and the apparent institutional reliance on these organizations to educate their peers, revealed through a look at organizational mission statements, supports this idea.

Similar to the “at-risk” and “help” discourses found on the home and about pages, the student organizations as students of color discourse illustrates that minority students are deficient to White students—here it shows they congregate together in student organizations whereas White students don’t “have” to the way that it appears minority students do. This reinforces White hegemony since it once again depicts minority students as the recipients of deficit discourse who are compared against an invisible White majority. This could be harmful because student organizations, while integral to student development, are not required academic aspects of college. From this, one could assume that since student organizations are not integral to academic life, neither are the minority students so heavily portrayed in them. This could pose a problem since it reinforces that minority students are not somehow up to par to participate fully in academic life and that their presence is purely social. Also, this discourse reinforces that diversity is a racial issue.

Conclusion

This chapter analyzed the textual and visual elements of community service and student organizations. Discourse surrounding community service made no mention of marginalized communities, but instead discussed their communities using broad generalities that reflected gentrification. Yet, when there were visual representations of service, they were largely

stereotypical. This could be because, like the transfer of hip-hop music from being about the urban voices to being about the masses who desired “edginess,” the urban communities have been coopted by younger, whiter residents who desire the same edginess, but at the expense of communities of color. This chapter found that student organizations can also contribute to this urban edginess by promoting activities and providing education and awareness of marginalized groups for the non-marginalized student body members and community members. There was a large amount of students of color represented in the photos of student organizations which could solidify the notion that these organizations are exclusively for minority students. The discourses of student organizations as people of color and the subsequent discourse of students of color as tokens work together to create a discourse of deficit. In both discourses minority students are contrasted against visible and invisible non-minority students. The lack of portrayals of White students involved in cultural/ethnic student organizations shows that ‘ethnic’ students need them. Although organizations referencing non-raced, non-marginalized groups were mentioned in the listing of student organizations, they were not portrayed. This makes the dichotomy of deficient/minority and non-deficient/non-minority even clearer. Compounding this issue was the listing and descriptions of organizations specifically for students of color that addressed deficiencies with names like Emerging Ethnic Leaders; this group and the CHANCE program at UIC could conflate the issue of diversity, race and deficiency.

The students of color as tokens discourse also creates a notion of deficit through difference. This discourse shifts minority admission and involvement in college from one of empowerment to a few racialized scripts—their presence on campus is in part due to their racial identity. African-American males and Asian females were tokenized on the student organizations pages as athletes and passive participants respectively. Similar to the model minority stereotype,

tokenism spurs anxiety about presentation, this anxiety surrounds the fear of proving racialized stereotypes true also known as the stereotype threat.²²⁰ Minority students, specifically media-literate Black male students may be averse to these depictions, and choose not to apply to these colleges. However, White prospective students might view these webpages as inclusive due to the inclusion of the minorities that they do see. Critical examination should reveal these inequities. Overall, the analysis in Chapter 3 revealed a continuation of similar discourses found in Chapter 2: diversity as help and model minority stereotypes; only in Chapter 3 they changed forms to be diversity as minority student organizations and diversity as tokenism. This repackaging of discourses and ideas about deficit, diversity and racial minorities indicate that not much has changed regarding portrayals of minorities from the early 1800s.

²²⁰ Wingfield and Wingfield, 1

Chapter 4: Conclusion

This thesis examined the visual and textual portrayals of diversity on the websites of 10 colleges and universities that were once a part of the original “Urban 13” and are currently members in the Coalition of Urban-Serving Colleges and Universities. In chapter one, I introduced and discussed the concepts of diversity and urban. In chapter two, a few discourses were found on university homepages: diversity as race through the use of photos of minorities, diversity as cosmopolitan compliance through the association of diversity and affirmative action with other legal university/social policies, and diversity as resource/help for students of color. University mission statements were also examined for references to diversity and deficit. Universities spoke of their communities in these statements using deficit language. In chapter 3, I found the discourses of diversity as minority student organizations and diversity as tokenization and authenticity. I also found a discourse of gentrified community service where people of color were erased or pathologised. The discourses revealed in chapter 3 could be considered a continuation of those found in chapter 2. Though the presentation of the discourses serve different purposes on the institutional websites they could be read as reinforcing the same stereotypes and their uses could encourage replication of these portrayals elsewhere. The researcher understands that these portrayals are probably not intended to egregiously offend nor marginalize minorities. The position this project takes is that through efforts to reach out to several different demographics of prospective students, the portrayals of minority students and faculty stereotypically is lazy at best and contradictory to the missions of urban service at worst.

Especially jarring on these webpages was the reliance on minority bodies to show diversity. Sarah Banet-Weiser wrote that race and diversity were used in the marketing and

advertising with the selling of dolls as “flavas,” urban dolls in varying skin tones.²²¹ She wrote that the dolls made race “a kind of product one can buy or try on.”²²² Colleges use race and diversity in identical ways. These websites are used as portals of advertising and marketing for their institutions, and the various representations of urban racial groups within them are similar to “flavas” in that they are intended to appeal to minority and White audiences for consumption. The invocations of the term diversity on these websites points to it being a “selling” point--particularly in the context of gentrification and urban areas. Potential applicants are invited to consume urban diversity on these webpages, but as the discourses on community service show, they are not seriously encouraged to help alleviate the marginalization of people of color that this type of consumption creates. From an advertising standpoint, the word diversity has value to these institutions, and they assume that diversity means something to potential applicants as well. Callahan (2005) writes that in using advertising strategies to attract applicants: “the university becomes a commodity and its prospective students become consumers.”²²³ This consumer approach to diversity, something that can be “sold,” could help convolute the idea of diversity. It becomes an end to be achieved (increased number of applicants) and measured as opposed to a good of itself—an ideal presented in the mission and vision statements of these universities. Research supports the idea that traditional college applicants are impressionable: “...students come to college at a critical time in their development as human beings.”²²⁴ Sending these messages to impressionable applicants could influence their ideas about what diversity is and what roles minorities are intended to perform for the sake of diversity. To combat this, higher

²²¹ Sarah Banet-Weiser. “What’s Your Flava?: Race and Postfeminism in Media Culture” in *Media Studies Reader* Laurie Ouelette (ed.) pp. 379-393 (New York: Routledge, 2013), 379

²²² Ibid

²²³ Ewa Callahan (2006) “Cultural Similarities and Differences in the Design of University Web Sites” *Journal of Computer-Mediated Communication* 11: 239-273, 240

²²⁴ Boyer et al (2006), 137

education should find an alternate way to express diversity as an ideal to be celebrated and continuous, not an ideal to be achieved and then sold.

The findings of this project showed that the internet is increasingly visual and that photos are instrumental in the selling and marketing of diversity in higher education. The findings of this study, in addition to the proliferation of racialized memes, show that the internet is a primary locale for representations of race. The internet has grown to become a necessity considered as pertinent to everyday life as “electricity or water.”²²⁵ Researchers say it has also become an increasingly visual medium: “looking has become as important as reading.”²²⁶ The current study supports that notion through the numerous visual portrayals of diversity. The researcher recommends that courses on media literacy be incorporated into high school curriculums as a way to prepare students for the messaging, visuals in particular, on college websites. Most of the inequality on these webpages was communicated through pictures. The increasingly visual nature of the internet could make this a bigger issue in the future without active intervention by web producers. To combat this, web content producers should also be media literate in order to critically examine the messages they produce. Content managers should be introduced to the ways the internet contributes to knowledge. Without a media-literate applicant pool, media literate content producers, or critical examination these messages and stereotypes about minorities and urban communities will persist.

²²⁵ Edward Wyatt “Obama’s Net Neutrality Bid Divides Civil Rights Groups” New York Times. December 7, 2014 <http://www.nytimes.com/2014/12/08/business/obamas-net-neutrality-bid-divides-civil-rights-groups.html>. Accessed December 7, 2014

²²⁶ Nakamura, *Digitizing Race*, 77

The lens of critical race theory helped uncover what is meant by “urban” in the Coalition of *Urban-Serving Universities*. Due to the prevalence of minority bodies on these webpages to show urbaneness, one can ascertain that “urban” means racial minority. Members of the LGBT community, the disabled and undocumented immigrants were all invisible in the discourses on about these urban campuses. As seen in figure 1.8 , international students—specifically from Asia--were put forth as bringing a “global” perspective to campuses. This leads to the notion that certain foreign students are acceptable and others are not. This notion may be outdated. Undocumented immigrants, people who do not have authorized citizenship, are a large group. Pew found that in 2012, 11.2 million undocumented immigrants lived in the U.S.²²⁷ Limiting the definition of “urban” to racial minorities does a disservice to members of these communities who identify as LGBT, disabled and undocumented.

The Coalition of Urban-Serving Colleges and Universities purportedly have an optimistic view of their communities as areas of growth and opportunity available for all through the help of its urban member universities. However, this study showed that member universities of this group portrayed urban communities in stereotypical and paternalistic ways: that urban communities and the minorities who live in them ‘lack’ and they “need” the assistance of the universities to be successful and furthermore the students who come from these communities lack and need the assistance of the universities to be as successful as their White counterparts. This discourse clearly establishes power dynamics: that the university is on top and the urban, minority communities and students are on the bottom. Further, this analysis confirmed that these universities define “urbaneness” along racialized lines; that being ‘urban’ means being minority

²²⁷ Jens Manuel Krogstad and Jeffrey S. Passel. “5 Facts About Illegal Immigration in the U.S.” *Pew Research Center*. November 18, 2014 <http://www.pewresearch.org/fact-tank/2014/11/18/5-facts-about-illegal-immigration-in-the-u-s/>. Accessed January 10, 2015

and poor or ill-equipped. This thesis found that these two threads of discourse come together at urban universities, and that ideas about urban communities, ethnic minorities and deficit are very similar to the discourse around them in the 1800s. This study was one of the first to examine diversity on college websites using the college surrounding communities as justification for research. Previous scholarship used collegiate and sports rankings to examine diversity; this research showed that a university's surrounding community may influence the way it approaches diversity and the way it portrays minorities on its website.

Limitations and Future Research

A limitation of this study was the number of college webpages examined. Only ten colleges were analyzed in this project for references to diversity and urban communities. While these ten colleges represent a quarter of the membership of the Coalition of Urban-Serving Universities, they are a very small number out of the several thousands of colleges in the United States. Future research could focus on more of the colleges in the group. Future research could also focus on the ways prospective students interpret these webpages. This project focused largely on the way the researcher interpreted the pages through the lens of critical race theory. Finding out how prospective students view them could change the ways diversity is presented. Another limitation of this study was the temporal nature of webpages. The visual and textual elements on the webpages analyzed in this study, specifically homepages and webpages on student organizations, are updated and modified at the will of content managers. Because of this, the textual and visual elements of these webpages are subject to change at any time. What might be presented on these webpages one day may be changed or moved to another place within the institutional site the next day. This could drastically change the messaging and visuals present. Scholars studying this topic may want to focus on webpages that are not subject to change as

frequently, an example of this would be “about” pages. Future research could also compare the portrayals of diversity on the websites of colleges in the Coalition of Urban-Serving Universities and non-member universities.

This project also found that these webpages and their illustrations of both men and women of color present racialized notions of femininity and masculinity. Asian women were portrayed as passive and Asian men were portrayed as highly intellectual model minorities. The portrayal of Asian women as passive aligns with previous research, but not the portrayal of Asian men which posited that Asian men, too, would be portrayed as passive or neutral subjects.²²⁸ African-American men were portrayed as highly masculine through urban appearance and advanced sports acumen. These findings may be of interest to gender studies scholars as well as Asian and African-American studies scholars interested in the ways gender is constructed on the internet.

What this study also showed was that in addition to White hegemony, a certain level of heterosexual privilege is put forth on these sites. No members of the LGBTQ communities were pictured on these webpages. While sexual orientation is an “invisible” characteristic, visual markers to this community such as the usage of the multicolored LGBTQ flag were not present. This group was only mentioned in the context of student organizations’ webpages and the about page of one university. This was surprising given the level of awareness and acceptance the LGBTQ community has reached. Gay marriage and domestic partnerships have also become topics of national debate. Estimates of the LGBTQ population include low numbers, but due to their inclusion in social justice work, work that the Coalition of Urban-Serving Universities participates in through uplifting their communities, it would seem that these colleges would have

²²⁸ Xiaopeng Wang and Anne Cooper-Chen (2010). “Gendered Stereotypes of Asians Portrayed on the Websites of U.S. Higher Education Institutions” *Visual Communication Quarterly* 17: 77-90, 85-86

a vested interest in recruiting students from this group.²²⁹ Yet, the lack of visuals about LGBTQ students and faculty could lead to students feeling excluded and not sure of their place on campus. Moreover, this could reinforce the silencing of this group since the websites don't necessarily present themselves as a welcoming environment.

A future avenue of research might also include the ways Whiteness is constructed on these sites. A recurring question that presented itself throughout this study was "do Whites bring diversity in the same ways that minorities do?" This thesis revealed that even on college websites, people of color are contrasted against normative Whiteness. Allen (2004) wrote that Whites view themselves as the norm while people of color are viewed with disdain: "White, 'normal' and 'human' converge into a disturbing synonymous relationship that serves to mystify the actual peculiarities of white existence and white dysfunction."²³⁰ In lieu of, or perhaps in addition to a lens of critical race theory, a lens of critical whiteness in future studies may help uncover the ways White hegemony is presented and maintained on these webpages and may reveal more findings in this area than this study.

Epistemic Consequences

While this study was largely concerned with what discourses were present on institutional websites, it was also concerned with the consequences of epistemology. Epistemology asks: how do we know what we know? The findings of this study have consequences for the epistemologies of diversity, race, and urban communities. The prevalence of racialized stereotypes or their absence on these webpages can possibly confirm or deny beliefs non-minority web visitors may have of minority groups and their role on college campuses and in society as a whole. Along

²²⁹ Gary J. Gates and Frank Newport "Special Report: 3.4% of U.S. Adults Identify as LGBT" *Gallup*. N.d. <http://www.gallup.com/poll/158066/special-report-adults-identify-lgbt.aspx> Accessed December 7, 2014

²³⁰ Ricky Lee Allen (2004) "Whiteness and Critical Pedagogy" *Educational Philosophy and Theory* 36 (2): 121-136, 126

similar lines, the representation of minorities in highly racialized scripts on these sites may exacerbate the stereotype threat: the fear of acting out racialized stereotypes. The current analysis, taken as is, reflects a lot of the current discourse about diversity and urbaneness in larger U.S. society: that it's a race issue that benefits minorities. This could speak to the relationship between the internet and society at large. It is hard to determine, with the current usages of the internet and its prevalence in our lives, which discourses come first: those on the internet or those in society. Regardless, this project showed that the internet acts as a mirror that reflects the past and present society simultaneously and that stereotypical ideas aren't eradicated on the internet, but instead take different forms.

The overarching discourse of diversity as race, found repeatedly in this study, has epistemic consequences. First, the combination of diversity as race and affirmative action on these sites allows for affirmative action to be interpreted as a racial policy when its intention was access for all historically marginalized groups, including women. This linking could further negative bias against minority groups and the word 'diversity' on college campuses and elsewhere. This is already happening; people are mobilizing against diversity efforts and the discourse of diversity as race. The White Genocide Project (whitegenocideproject.com) asserts that: "diversity is a code word for White genocide: anyone non-White is 'diverse' and anyone White is not 'diverse.'" ²³¹ Similarly, a White Man's March was organized in March 2014 to show solidarity for the White race and to attempt to halt diversity. The leader of the White Man's March, Kyle Hunt, linked diversity to deficit: "the anti-white 'diversity' agenda involves government-sponsored racism against white people in the form of affirmative action and 'diversity' quotas, which requires employers and colleges to give preference to less qualified

²³¹ "Diversity is a codeword for White genocide." White Genocide Project.
<http://whitegenocideproject.com/diversity-is-a-codeword-for-white-genocide/> Accessed December 4, 2014

non-whites.”²³² Hunt’s words illustrate the prevalence of the discourse of diversity/affirmative action as race that exists in society at large. His words also show that there is not much distance between his extremism and mainstream dismissals of diversity. Though the colleges attempted to minimize this discourse by attempting to appear post-racial, for the most part, the websites in the current study did nothing to dispute it.

In conjunction with the notion of diversity as race on these webpages was the idea that urban communities are deficient. Throughout this study, discourses about the communities that surround these universities were focused on lack or deficiency. This discourse appeared to be embedded in the university mission and was evidenced in the institutional community service projects. This discourse has consequences for the ways the institutions portray the students who come from urban communities. This study found that minorities were portrayed overwhelmingly as being the recipients of community service and that they “needed” the university. This idea could allow minority students to feel as if they are being ‘helped’ by the university.

While it is difficult to decipher these universities’ involvement and level of commitment to the Coalition of Urban-Serving Universities, their membership requires a certain level of community outreach and engagement. The Coalition of Urban-Serving Universities presents itself as a source of uplift and transformation for urban communities. However, this study showed that when it comes to their communities, these communities are discussed with racialized and deficit language, and they often invoke stereotypes and tokenization to accomplish urban identity. The reliance on racialized imagery and deficit language is neither uplift nor transformation. The colleges inadvertently contribute to knowledge about what makes up

²³² Toby McCasker “White Supremacist’s Genocidal Paranoia: Inside the Mind of the White Man March Founder” *Salon* April 19, 2014
http://www.salon.com/2014/04/19/fear_of_anti_white_genocide_inside_the_mind_of_the_white_man_march_founder/ Accessed December 5, 2014

adequate urban service and what makes a college “urban.” Given that university websites attempt to have similar elements, this can lead to duplication of these stereotypes and tokenization not only on the colleges involved in the Coalition but also at other universities.

The lens of critical race theory in this project was advantageous. Examining these websites with this lens allowed for racial inequities and stereotypes to be adequately examined. Critical race theory posits that race in the post-Civil Rights era is viewed negatively as “baggage.” The findings from the current study, specifically the tendency for these webpages to downplay its racial overtones by placing diversity statements next to tobacco-free policies, may support this idea of race as “baggage.” It is mentioned only for compliance purposes. Further, people of color on these websites were either pathologised or erased. These rigid representations show a disdain for or reluctance to discuss people of color in these spaces. Though it is impossible to explain the thinking of the content producers here, these representations may reveal the location of power of the content producers.

Recommendations

The first recommendation to combat duplicating these discourses is to find new ways to represent minority students. The depictions of minorities on these webpages are steeped in old traditions. Schools should keep pace with updated, accurate descriptions of students on campus and the students who are attending college as a whole. Schools should also avoid tokenization in the name of appearing diverse. While they would want to show the various groups of students who make up their student bodies, including one or two minorities or non-minorities is counterproductive. Yet, at the same time, including photos of just minorities is as well. Reaching a balance of representation is key. The second recommendation is for colleges to be transparent

on these webpages about diversity's uses on campus, what it adds, what it means, and how it's used in admissions. Being transparent about diversity can possibly alleviate misunderstanding about its meaning and the replication of deficit discourse. The third recommendation is for web content producers to get student feedback on their institutional websites. Incorporating student voices in the production of these sites may help reveal inequities and may spur change in the ways students are represented, including minority students. Getting feedback could be done a few ways specifically through surveys and focus group sessions. However, this suggestion may not be of much value if students are not media-literate. Media literacy refers broadly to the knowledge people have of the media industry as well as being able to "become critical viewers, aware of the various influences of the media, and inoculated against the undue influence of advertisement, hidden political agendas, and so forth."²³³ While reaching potential applicants and faculty of all backgrounds is an altruistic goal, colleges cannot be oblivious to the aforementioned inequalities they are producing and reproducing.

The responsibility is not on just the visitors of these webpages. Content producers should also aim to be ethical in their portrayals of students. They should work to portray the demographics of their universities honestly and in ways that match up to the rest of the discourses on their webpages. For example, UIC mentioned that it had a Disability Resource Center. Yet, no photos were presented on its webpages that included members of this group. This mismatch could be interpreted as a false representation on UIC's part since it purports to have this resource center but the students it serves are invisible. Also, content producers should portray students honestly. In figure 2.6, because the photo subjects are all looking in different direction, it appears that GSU altered the photo to include students from other pictures into a

²³³ Elisha Babad, Eyal Peer and Renee Hobbs (2012) "Media Literacy and Media Bias: Are Media Literacy Students Less Susceptible to Nonverbal Judgment Biases?" *Psychology of Popular Media Culture* 1 (2): 97-107, 97

singular photo, perhaps to ‘sell’ diversity. If this is the case, it wouldn’t be the first time a college or university has visually enhanced a photo to appear more inclusive. The University of Wisconsin-Madison inserted an African-American student’s face into a photo of all Whites. Predictably, the university’s action caused controversy surrounding ethics in college marketing and advertising.²³⁴ Content managers and producers should heed any lessons learned from that example, and try their best to avoid duplicating it.

I am an internet content manager, and am currently charged with presenting original, savvy messaging and visuals for the public as well as updating the content as needed. The crux of my work includes minorities, specifically African American males—a group that is often pathologised. The completion of this project will ensure that in the future I critically examine the messaging I put forth. This study showed that discourses on the internet are powerful and can shape thinking; the visual reading of “diversity/affirmative action” on university homepages convolutes the understanding of both terms. In my future creations, I will be mindful of such visual alignments. While it’s true that content managers may be under time pressures to create messaging and visuals, a website should not misinform or confuse. As stated previously, the internet is where one goes for information. To come away from a website with misinformation is a travesty of trust and ethics. Examining the work, prior to going live or publication, is one of the only safeguards to prevent studies like this one from being conducted.

²³⁴ Sharif Durhams. “Remember When UW Photoshopped a Black Student Onto An Admissions Brochure?” *JSOnline*. December 30, 2013. <http://www.jsonline.com/blogs/news/237991911.html> Accessed December 21, 2014.

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