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Competing Discourses of Diversity and Inclusion: Institutional Rhetoric and Graduate Student Narratives at Two Minority Serving Institutions

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in Linguistics

by

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June 2021

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Kendra Nicole Calhoun

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Thank you to all of my participants for being so generous with your time, to my committee for your insights and guidance, and to everyone who has helped me work through messy data and half-formed ideas to get to this point.

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ABSTRACT

Competing Discourses of Diversity and Inclusion: Institutional Rhetoric and Graduate Student Narratives at Two Minority Serving Institutions

by

Kendra Nicole Calhoun

Within neoliberal models of U.S. higher education, diversity is a prominent selling point in education discourse, but diversity practices often fail to meet the needs or expectations of the structurally marginalized students they purportedly benefit. Research in education and critical university studies has interrogated the concept of diversity and analyzed the experiences of people of color at Historically White Institutions (HWIs) in ways that bring this issue to light. However, the experiences of graduate students of color and the experiences of students at Minority Serving Institutions have not been adequately represented in this research. Additionally, institutional practices, student experiences, and discourses about diversity are intimately connected, but there is limited research that centers the relationship between them. In this sociocultural linguistic study, I analyze the structure and function of institutional diversity discourse from eight varied colleges and universities and narrative discourse from graduate students of color at two Minority Serving Institutions: an HWI in California that was recently designated a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) and a Historically Black University (HBCU) in the Southeast. Specifically, I examine ideologies

about diversity that circulated in institutional discourse, how that discourse shaped institutional practice and students' perceptions of their institutions, and how graduate students of color narrated their experiences in ways that challenged institutional rhetoric.

I conducted a multimodal analysis of website text and images, including focus group interviews with graduate students, and identified discourse features that appeared on the websites of all eight institutions, ones that appeared on only the websites of HWIs, and ones that appeared on only the websites of Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs). Institutions of all types used language that reflected neoliberal justifications of diversity as a benefit to institutions, along with discursive strategies to minimize institutional responsibility for diversity work and strategic textual and visual framings that maximized the appearance of diversity and the institution's commitment to it. HWIs used broad definitions of diversity and "inclusive excellence" frameworks, among other discourse features, to make dominant ideologies fit institutional realities. Discourse on MSIs' websites, in contrast, used language that centered students and institutional equity rather than the idea of diversity. Focus group participants' critiques of institutional websites demonstrated that students can recognize websites as strategic marketing content intended to construct a positive public image, and that awareness makes them wary of the content on those sites.

Through observant-participation methods and ethnographic interviews, I investigated how diversity was operationalized at the two universities, how graduate students conceptualized the definitions and functions of diversity, and how these were all tied to institutional history, mission, and resources. At the HWI-HSI, graduate students of color narrated experiences of marginalization and discrimination that directly contradicted the university's stated commitment to diversity and emphasis on its MSI status. This

contradiction between lived experience and institutional discourse was the basis for much of their criticism, which highlighted the personal and professional toll of “lip service” approaches to diversity. Through stancetaking and other discursive moves, interviewees distanced themselves from the institution as they undermined the claims in its diversity discourse. In contrast, Black graduate students at the HBCU discursively positioned themselves as part of their institution, which they praised for its commitment to the HBCU mission of serving Black students and communities. While graduate students had criticisms of institutional structures and practices, few had to do with institutional diversity because students recognized the heterogeneity of Black identities represented at the institution and saw themselves as the beneficiaries of the ethnoracial diversity that was present there. Through their perspectives as HBCU students, they challenged the idea that racial diversity–as it is constructed in dominant diversity discourse—needs to be an institutional goal. The findings of this study demonstrate how diversity discourse and practice are shaped by institution-specific and hegemonic influences, how diversity discourse impacts the experiences of students of color, and how taken-for-granted ideas about diversity—which continue to fail students of color in the white supremacist institution of U.S. higher education—can be improved when new institutional perspectives are engaged. Recommendations for structural change based on these findings conclude the study.

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CHAPTER 1: Diversity, discourse, and graduate education in the U.S.

Students of color in U.S. higher education continue to face structural barriers to access, enrollment, and persistence to graduation (Espinosa et al., 2019). At Historically White Institutions (HWIs), white supremacy is built into admissions (Edwards, 2021; Warikoo, 2016), faculty hiring (Sensoy & DiAngelo, 2017), and curricula (Grue, 2020; Quaye & Harper, 2007), and students of color experience interpersonal racism in their daily interactions with other members of their campus communities (Fasching-Varner et al., 2014).[1] For decades, institutions of higher education (IHEs) have put forth "diversity" as the solution to entrenched structural racism or as evidence that racism is being eradicated (Berrey, 2011).[2] This practice was put on full display when U.S. colleges and universities released statements about their "commitment to diversity" in the wake of George Floyd's murder by police in May 2020 and the summer of protests for racial justice that followed—and scholars of color publicly expressed their disdain for this performative action.[3] For instance, in June 2020, the daily humor website McSweeny's Internet Tendency published a

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[1] *Historically White Institution* refers to a college or university that has been predominantly white for the majority of its institutional history, regardless of its current ethnoracial makeup. Historically white institutions were founded to serve white students and therefore often remain white-dominated in ideology and practice, if not in population.

[2] Throughout the dissertation, I use *diversity* with two different senses. One sense is compositional diversity, or the numerical representation of different types of people. The second sense is the diversity frameworks used by colleges and universities, which typically encompass "diversity and inclusion" or "diversity, equity, and inclusion." Though they co-occur frequently, the terms in the latter sense are not interchangeable, so I make the distinction between them where it is relevant.

[3] As it is used in this sentence, *performative* is a descriptor for an action that is framed by a social actor as being motivated by a social cause when it is actually taken up to improve their image and gain social capital. The term was popularized in 2020 by activists calling out "performative activism" that did nothing to help people in need but made individuals look like good people for caring about an issue (Beckman 2020). This derogatory sense of *performative* is different from how the word is used in sociocultural theories of identity and performance based on Butler (1990).

satirical “letter to the university community” titled “We condemn all institutional racism except our own” (Lehr & McInnis, 2020). Even a cursory read through social media posts by students and faculty of color about diversity demonstrates the frustration with universities’ superficial engagement with issues of race and racism through a diversity lens (e.g., workshops and trainings). In June 2020, Professor Crystal Fleming, author of *How to Be Less Stupid About Race*, responded to a tweet that asked, “What is the academic version of ‘thoughts and prayers’?” with the answer “Diversity and inclusion.”

I have experienced this frustration myself as a Black woman in U.S. higher education, and I have heard it echoed by fellow graduate students in classrooms, at conferences, and in casual conversations. Our complaints about graduate student life as people of color and our critiques of institutional action around diversity have fostered camaraderie through commiseration, and they inspired me to pursue this study. They have also been a way of “not doing nothing” despite our relative lack of structural power as graduate students of color (Ahmed, 2019, para. 21). Graduate students occupy a medial and often amorphous space between faculty and undergraduates: they are simultaneously students, employees, professionals-in-training, novice researchers, and cutting-edge innovators. They are the next generation of faculty, but do not yet have faculty’s level of structural power. Though graduate students have some influence over undergraduates as instructors and mentors, they do not have the same power in numbers since graduate enrollment is a fraction of undergraduate enrollment. As a result, graduate students are not an institutional priority in the same way as other populations, and that is reflected in how graduate experiences are underrepresented in conversations about diversity in higher education.

The clear marginalization of graduate students in public discourses and academic research about diversity compared to undergraduates and faculty was another motivation for this study. Graduate students of color, in particular, face the structural racism that permeates U.S. higher education—including the expectation for people of color to take on the labor of diversity work (e.g., Duncan, 2014; Jimenez et al., 2019)—while at the same time navigating the culture of competition, bullying, and excessive labor that makes higher education a harmful environment for many (e.g., Amienne, 2017; Evans et al., 2018). I wanted to document my lived experiences as a Black graduate student and the experiences of other graduate students of color from our own perspectives. I wanted to demonstrate how these experiences are tied to institutional cultures and practices related to diversity, as well as how our perspectives offer insights that can inform structural change. Students' perspectives on diversity differ from those of faculty and administrators (Roper, 2004), and students of color, broadly, have different expectations than white university members (Starck et al., 2021); perspectives also differ among students of color based on our backgrounds (Park, 2009). Likewise, graduate students have different perspectives from undergraduates and faculty based on their institutional roles (e.g., Perez et al., 2019), and graduate students of color have different perspectives than white graduate students (e.g., Rys, 2018).

After participating in a partnership program with undergraduate students from Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs), I came to realize how much my own ideas about diversity in higher education were the product of my environment and educational background. I attended HWIs as an undergraduate and graduate student, so my perspectives were based on my experiences as a racial minority at universities that were not structured to center the needs of students of color. This was a fundamentally different

experience from students of color at most Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), especially Black students at HBCUs. The ideas about what diversity is and how it operates in higher education that I was most familiar with were not necessarily applicable to HBCU contexts; they aligned with dominant discourses and ideologies about diversity, but that was because those discourses and ideologies emerged from HWI contexts. HBCUs do not exist in a vacuum, however, and these dominant discourses and ideologies impact HBCUs as well, often in conflict with their institution-internal understandings of diversity. I wanted to highlight these differences to challenge the limited perceptions of other academics like me who had only ever experienced higher education at an HWI.

In this study I use a sociocultural linguistics framework to analyze diversity in U.S. higher education from the perspectives of graduate students of color at two MSIs: an HWI that recently gained MSI status and an HBCU. Specifically, I answer the following three questions:

1. How do diversity discourses, ideologies, and practices vary by institution types, individuals' roles or ranks, and individuals' backgrounds?
2. How do IHE websites function as sites of ideological (re)production through idealized constructions of their institutions as "diverse" places?
3. What counternarratives do graduate students of color offer to dominant discourses about the success of diversity and inclusion efforts?

To answer these questions, I conducted an interdisciplinary discourse analysis that draws on theory and methods from linguistics, anthropology, sociology, feminist studies, ethnic studies, and critical university studies. In my analysis, I juxtapose institutional diversity discourse and graduate students' narratives of their lived experiences at their universities to

demonstrate the contextual specificity of diversity ideologies, the nature of diversity discourse that shapes and is shaped by these ideologies, and the material consequences of such discourses for graduate students of color. Because institutional discourse in general shapes graduate students' expectations about their universities' values and practices, the messaging of diversity discourse informs how graduate students of color understand and move through their institution: (Why) does the university care about diversity? Who is responsible when "diversity" fails to meet graduate students' needs? How can students engage in university life without making themselves vulnerable? Institutional diversity discourse also functions to normalize certain structures and practices that impact graduate students' access to institutional spaces and resources (e.g., "deservingness," "merit"), as well as the overall quality of their educational experience. By highlighting key features of diversity discourse that do this work, I provide a toolkit for graduate students of color to ask critical questions about their institutions. I center graduate students' narratives—especially those that expose the fallacies of diversity discourse—because they offer "disruptive insights" about diversity (Gildersleeve et al., 2011, p. 100) that can inform concrete, structural changes to "move the needle" for graduate students of color in higher education.

1.1 Literature review

1.1.1 Diversity in U.S. higher education

Contemporary diversity ideologies and practices in higher education have been shaped by legal challenges, the increasingly neoliberal and corporatized model of IHEs, and shifting societal demographics and sociopolitical beliefs. The influential 1978 Supreme Court case *Regents of University of California vs. Bakke* challenged the legality of race-conscious

affirmative action admissions policies at public IHEs. The solo-authored ruling opinion by Justice Lewis Powell "codified diversity as a legal rationale for race-conscious admissions policies" (Berrey, 2011, p. 578) while also stating explicitly that race was only one of many dimensions that could contribute to institutional diversity (e.g., gender, class, nationality). This precedent was reinforced by the *Gratz* (2003) and *Grutter* (2003) cases, which challenged race-conscious admissions at the University of Michigan. In these cases, the university defended its policies using what has since become the standard "diversity rationale," arguing that racial diversity fostered the institution's mission as a public university because diversity enhanced students' learning by exposing them to new ideas and perspectives (Berrey, 2015). By centering diversity as the institutional goal, these cases catalyzed a shift away from an equity-based affirmative action framework. Rahim (2020) argues that Justice Powell intended to use "diversity" to deradicalize university campuses and that a decreased focus on structural racism and other systemic factors was one of the goals of his opinion.

In addition to complying with the restrictions created by the outcomes of these Supreme Court cases, the diversity rationale is compatible with the neoliberal ideologies and practices that dominate U.S. higher education. As an ideological framework, neoliberalism centers individualism and competition, asserting that "the (free) market" is the best arbiter of value and worth because of its supposed survival-of-the-fittest mechanisms. Neoliberalism's decades-long rise to dominance in U.S. society and the West more broadly has led to conditions in higher education in which IHEs operate as corporations competing in the global free market as the state divests from academic institutions (Ball, 2012; Canaan & Shumar, 2008; Hundle et al., 2019; Urciuoli, 2010b). IHEs attempt to show-up their peer institutions

in financially profitable ways out of both necessity—to compensate for decreased state and federal funding—and the inherent competition fostered by academia's hierarchical structures. The diversity rationale frames diversity as having "market value" since IHEs can use it as an asset that increases their attractiveness to potential consumers (i.e., students) (Urciuoli, 2016a). Neoliberalism has also shaped IHEs' approach to diversity by encouraging the adoption of corporate "diversity management" practices. Instead of approaching diversity as a matter of justice or equity, diversity management treats diversity as a problem (e.g., something that requires additional spending or may cause legal problems) that needs to be resolved so that it does not interfere with corporate performance or as something that needs to be transformed into an asset to that will benefit the institution in the market (Berrey 2014; Zanoni 2010).

Supreme Court cases influence how IHEs can talk about diversity, the type of institutional programming that they can offer, and their overall need to be prepared (beyond legal requirements) to support students of color. As a result, institutional ideologies and practices related to diversity can positively or negatively impact other institutional factors that determine the quality of experience for students of color, such as overall campus climate (Campbell-Whatley, 2015; Ward & Zarate, 2015). In addition to government influences, IHEs must contend with a range of societal reactions to the rapidly diversifying demographics of the U.S. and shifting sociopolitical beliefs. Conservative whites, who often hold positions of institutional influence as major donors or members of the Board of Trustees, resist institutionalizing practices that increase the number of non-white students and therefore they explicitly challenge diversity initiatives (Chun & Feagin, 2020). On the other end of the spectrum, progressive people of color are calling out institutions—particularly

highly resourced institutions like elite IHEs—for not doing enough to recruit and retain people of color. Thus, in today's diversity-conscious society and corporatized education model, it is beneficial for an institution's diversity discourse to demonstrate awareness of current diversity issues without alienating potential tuition-paying students or their parents who do not view diversity as necessarily beneficial. This rhetorical balancing act is one of the many focus areas of scholarly research that examines diversity in U.S. higher education.

1.1.2 Scholarly research on diversity in U.S. higher education

Because diversity is such a prominent and frequently contentious aspect of IHEs' missions, recruitment efforts, hiring practices, and more, a robust body of research and other critical writing on the topic has emerged, spanning disciplines and decades. Despite the breadth of this research, there are common biases in its scope with regard to whose experiences are analyzed and in what types of institutional contexts. Undergraduates, faculty, and administrators are the most commonly studied populations, to the exclusion of graduate students and staff. Race is the most commonly analyzed aspect of identity, followed by gender. Most analyses that address gender are limited to cisgender people and binary women-men comparisons that do not include nonbinary and/or trans people, unless the study is specifically framed as an analysis of the experiences of LGBTQ+ people in an IHE setting. Socioeconomic status is sometimes analyzed secondarily after race and/or gender, but it is rarely given as much analytical space as ethnoracial identity or made the primary focus (cf. Park et al., 2013). Diversity is also an infrequent focus of higher education diversity research, treated as an afterthought or not acknowledged at all; work that centers disability in discussions of diversity tend to be based in a disabilities studies rather than a diversity studies or higher education studies framework (e.g., Kim & Aquino 2017). Some recent edited

collections of higher education research have taken more comprehensive approaches to diversity that recognize the multifaceted nature of identity (e.g., Byrd et al., 2019; Quaye et al., 2020). Unsurprisingly, the vast majority of diversity research has been conducted at HWIs, where issues of racism and racial inclusion are most conspicuous.

At the intersections of these research foci, the experiences of undergraduates of color at HWIs feature prominently in studies of diversity. Some studies analyze the experiences of non-white students broadly, whereas others focus on particular student populations. For example, Turner (1994) describes how students of color can be made to feel like unwelcome "guests" at HWIs when those institutions do not attempt to change their foundational structures and ideologies as they admit more students of color. Griffin, Cunningham, and Mwangi (2016) and Lewis and Shah (2019) focus specifically on Black students' perspectives and experiences: the former analyze Black students' narratives about diversity and campus climate, and the latter focus on intra-racial differences in perspectives on campus climate. Vue et al. (2017) investigate the experiences of Black and Latinx students. Some studies examine difference among students of color along other social dimensions, such as class (e.g., Jack, 2019). The scope and scale of these types of studies vary depending on research questions, methodologies, and institutional context, but they all center students' lived experiences within their institutions, how students make sense of those experiences, and the institutional structures that impact them.

Another thread of diversity research similarly examines the experiences of faculty and administrators of color, primarily at HWIs. The perspectives of women faculty of color have been particularly well studied (e.g., Duncan, 2014; Moore, 2017; Turner et al., 2011). Much of this work has been done by scholars who contributed to the groundbreaking

Presumed Incompetent collections (Gutiérrez y Muhs et al., 2012; Niemann, et al. 2020), which detail the structural and interpersonal barriers that women faculty of color face based on their ethnoracial identity, gender, sexuality, class background, and status as first-generation students. Research investigating the experiences and practices of administrators has focused on student affairs professionals (Garcia, 2016) and diversity officers (Griffin, Muniz, & Smith, 2016); some research has focused on the practices of university presidents (e.g., Palmer & Freeman, 2020), but it is not grounded in the same narrative-based analysis of lived experiences as the research above.

The growing but still relatively small literature on the experiences of graduate students of color parallels the diversity research on undergraduates: it focuses on how institutional structures and relationships to other institution members at HWIs influence the quality of their experiences as well as their perspectives on their institution's diversity practices. For example, Solórzano and Yosso (2001) examine the forms of racism and gender discrimination faced by Chicana and Chicano graduate students and how those impact their graduate experiences. Gay (2004) identifies three types of marginalization that graduate students of color experience: physical, cultural and intellectual isolation; benign neglect, or "supporting" students of color through "non-directive laissez faire behaviors that leave students to flounder about" (p. 277); and problematic popularity, when "their status of being the 'only one,' or 'one of the very few' in their programs of study causes them to be in popular demand for many service functions" (p. 284). Gildersleeve at al. (2011) critically analyze the "Am I going crazy?!" narrative among graduate students, which they summarize as representing "the tentativeness, insecurity, and doubt that can be projected onto doctoral students of color" (p. 100). Slay et al. (2019) compare a "high-diversity" STEM

department's expressed commitment to diversity to the experiences reported by the department's graduate students of color to identity where efforts were falling short. Some studies examine multiple aspects of students' identities, such as Cadenas et al.'s (2021) study of class-based oppression among graduate students of color. Other diversity-related research takes a broad look at graduate students' relationship to institutional diversity, including Perez et al.'s (2019) analysis of how graduate students, regardless of background, are socialized into institutional understandings of diversity. Although the methodologies and theoretical frameworks employed in many of these studies are similar to those employed in studies of undergraduate experiences, undergraduates' and graduate students' institutional positionalities differ in significant ways, so studies generally do not combine the two populations to assess the experiences of "students of color" as a whole at an IHE.

As mentioned above, most of these studies analyze institutional members' narratives about their experiences. Despite using discourse data in the form of narratives, however, discourse structure and use is not a central point of analysis in these studies. Another area of research—much of which overlaps with one or more of the areas above—centers its analysis on the structure, use, and ideological significance of various forms of diversity discourse in higher education. This focus includes visual and textual institutional discourse as well as discourse used by members of the institution; the studies span qualitative and quantitative approaches in linguistics, education studies, sociology, anthropology, marketing, cultural studies, law, and other fields. Studies of institutional discourse have examined institution-specific marketing materials such as websites and recruitment booklets, along with widely circulating discourses about diversity. In their influential study of images in various IHEs' recruitment materials, Pippert et al. (2013) found that students of color were overrepresented,

with Black students overrepresented at the highest rate; they argue that this suggests an institutional understanding of diversity that based on the number of Black people present. Saichaie and Morphew's (2014) widely cited study of IHE websites found that regardless of IHE type, websites of four-year institutions convey homogeneous messages about the higher education experience through similar images representing campus community, academics, and student life. Recent studies of institutional discourse have also analyzed how ethnoracial categories are presented on websites to maximize the appearance of diversity (e.g., Ford & Patterson, 2019). Iverson's (2008, 2012) analysis of universities' diversity action plans for framings of students and the institution found that students from diverse backgrounds were frequently constructed as commodities and outsiders to the institution. Hakkola and Ropers-Huilman (2018) analyze the features and functions of diversity discourses used by IHE leaders in research, education policy, and statements. They identify the key rationale and common phrases for five main types of discourses and offered a critique of each: student demographics, neoliberalism, internationalization, equity, academic excellence, and pluralistic democratic education. Ahmed's (2007, 2012) influential research on "the language of diversity" in higher education is part of her examination of "diversity work" (the practices enacted within an institution to increase or achieve diversity), "diversity practitioners" (individuals who do diversity work within their institutions), and the often-conflicting ideologies among members of the institution (see also Anderson 2018 for a discussion of the latter point). Ahmed has demonstrated the ideological limitations of institutional discourse and shown how diversity practitioners may have to adopt that language anyway in order to make institutional action possible.

A few scholars have analyzed diversity discourse from a linguistics framework. Linguistic anthropologist Bonnie Urciuoli's body of work on diversity, including ethnographic research at a liberal arts college, has demonstrated the discursive relationship between diversity and neoliberalism (2016a), the varied understandings and strategic definitions of *diversity* (2003, 2010a, 2016b), and the contrasts between institutional representations of diversity and students' narrated experiences (2018). Morrish and Sauntson (2020) use an applied linguistics approach to analyze keywords in the mission statements of U.S. and U.K. IHEs. Their corpus analysis demonstrates how the sociohistorical context of the U.S. (e.g., Civil Rights Movement, affirmative action, legal challenges) has informed the prevalence of diversity discourse on IHE websites and the forms that it takes. For example, *diversity* rarely appears in the mission statements of U.K. IHEs, whereas it occurs with great frequency in the statements of U.S. IHEs. Collectively, discourse-centered diversity research highlights the close relationship between language, ideology, and institutional structures and practices, demonstrating the necessity of critically analyzing diversity discourse in order to improve conditions for people of color in higher education.

1.1.3 Critiques of diversity in higher education

Much of the diversity research above is critical in orientation in that it points out how IHEs fail to meet the needs of minoritized students who face structural barriers in higher education. However, critical diversity research ranges in terms of the extent of its critique. Some scholars critique IHEs for failing to uphold their stated commitments and assert that more needs to be done to improve diversity. Other scholars critique how diversity is conceptualized and highlight the need for more consistent, transparent, and accurate uses of the concept. The most critical scholars critique the very concept of diversity in higher

education and call for a disinvestment from it. Critical diversity research is not limited to educational contexts, and findings from studies of corporations, government, and civic life offer insights that are applicable to IHEs as well.

Critical scholars across the board highlight what Andersen (1999) calls the "fiction of diversity without oppression." This fiction is perpetuated when people focus on the representation, affirmation, and celebration of difference without acknowledging how institutions create structural inequalities. Andersen (1999, p. 16) asserts that "if diversity is just differentiation, it is culturally neutral, and it is not a matter of equality, justice, and power." Ahmed (2012) similarly asserts that diversity has been ideologically blunted since it can be used to create an illusion of the institution as morally good and distract from pressing issues of structural racism. Bell and Hartmann's (2007) study of diversity in civic life found that participants who were actively engaged with diversity through organizations and other activities upheld this fiction by engaging in diversity "happy talk"—focusing on the benefits of ethnoracial diversity, typically through a framework of cultural consumption that centered whiteness while eliding the reality of racial inequality.

Several scholars have specifically critiqued how diversity functions to protect whiteness and white sensibilities. In her essay "Diversity Is a Dangerous Set-up," Prescod-Weinstein (2018) argues that diversity work is not equivalent to anti-racist work because it re-centers white needs in discussions of race—as seen in the legal and institutional focus on how racial diversity benefits all students—and does not challenge foundational white-supremacist structures. Morfin et al. (2006) argue that the legal precedents that incentivized and entrenched this approach to diversity (i.e., *Bakke, Gratz*, and *Grutter*) allow IHEs to operate in race-neutral ways that do not have to contend with structural racial inequity and

therefore do not have to address white supremacy. Hikido and Murray (2016) and Rodriguez and Freeman (2016) both demonstrate how white undergraduates strategically use diversity to protect their own privilege. Hikido and Murray (2016) identify several claims made by white students about diversity, including that whiteness should not be discussed in conversations about diversity because whiteness is necessarily associated with racism, that diversity initiatives benefit students of color at the expense of white students, and that diversity is supposed to make the campus better for everyone. In their study of a college anti-racism group, Rodriguez and Freeman (2016) found that white students used diversity and intersectionality to shift the focus of conversations away from structural racism. The authors argue that "discourses of 'diversity' imply solutions aimed at inclusion, rather than actively addressing and eliminating forms of privilege" (2016, p. 79) and therefore non-critical engagements with the idea of diversity are counterproductive to anti-racist efforts. These critiques of the refusal to decenter whiteness in discussions of diversity point to what Lipsitz (2006) calls "the possessive investment in whiteness." He asserts that "Americans are encouraged to invest in whiteness, to remain true to an identity that provides them resources, power, and opportunity" (2006, p.vii), and the above literature shows that a diversity framework fosters this investment. White students and HWIs can gain material benefits from the presence of people of color—such as grants earmarked for diversity initiatives as well as an enhanced "exchange of ideas" on campus— without having to improve conditions for those students.

Some scholars have focused their critiques on how the corporatization of higher education has impacted institutional approaches to diversity. Leong (2013, p. 2153) critiques institutions, including IHEs, for engaging in what she calls "racial capitalism": "the process

of deriving social or economic value from the racial identity of another person." In addition to monetary gains through diversity-related grants, colleges and universities are able to monetize the identities of people of color by marketing their images to construct an institutional brand around diversity; institutions can then use that brand to attract new students to apply and enroll (bringing in application fees and tuition dollars) and attract new donors who care about diversity. Thomas (2019, p. 472) offers criticism through the framework of what he calls the "economization of diversity," which refers to "the process whereby specific formations of economic values, practices, and metrics are extended as justification for the university's efforts toward diversity." Thomas argues that this economization is accomplished through three main processes: diversity as investment, diversity metrics, and diversity as affective labor. As a result of these processes, "for [people] of color who perform the vast majority of diversity work…their labor converts ethnoracial difference into self-enhancement and self-investment for the campus and its white publics" (2019, p. 480). Although these critiques use different theoretical lenses than those discussed earlier, they reach the same conclusion: diversity allows institutions and specifically their white members to benefit from the presence of people of color while doing nothing to meaningfully support them.

Finally, a smaller contingent of scholars, primarily scholars of color, connect diversity in the U.S. education context to the position of the U.S. on a global scale. Rosa and Bonilla (2017) and Hundle (2019) both critique diversity through the lens of decolonization, calling for the recognition of academia as an imperial institution that needs to be more than "diversified." Their "decolonizing diversity" frameworks advocate both for the incorporation of theories of decolonizing the university that have developed in the Global South and for

historically contextualizing current U.S. race relations within global histories of coloniality and racial formation. All of these frameworks for critique have informed the present study by illustrating the varied avenues researchers can take to critically analyze diversity in higher education and how it perpetuates inequality.

1.2 Moving diversity and linguistics research forward

The theoretical framework, participants, and methods of this dissertation contribute new perspectives to the interdisciplinary literature on diversity in U.S. higher education. This study adds to the limited body of research on diversity discourse that uses a linguistics framework, and the interdisciplinary sociocultural linguistics framework that I use centers on questions about how discourse fundamentally shapes and is shaped by social factors. I ask sociocultural linguistic questions about discourse structure at all levels of language, investigate associations between discourse features and certain types of language users, examine the ideologies shaped by and circulated through discourse, and analyze how different types of people interpret the same discourse. I examine both institutional discourse and students' narrative discourse about diversity at their IHEs, and by placing these forms of discourse in direct conversation I demonstrate how language directly impacts the quality of graduate students' lived experiences.

My focus on graduate students of color expands the relatively limited diversity literature on graduate students. Moreover, by including the experiences of students at an HBCU, this study contributes needed insights into diversity at MSIs. Much of the literature on diversity at HBCUs offers an overview of institutional history, practices, and demographics (Gasman & Nguyen, 2015; Lee, 2015; Winkle-Wagner & Locks, 2020) and

how these are connected to education policy (Lundy-Wagner, 2015). Less research takes an ethnographic approach to understand context-specific forms of engagement with diversity, with one notable exception being Carter's (2015) study of how institutional mission and cultural norms shaped the institutionalization of a diversity mandate at an HBCU. Research on graduate education at HBCUs also tends to take an approach focused on historical overviews and institutional practices (e.g., Palmer et al. 2010), with some more recent research centering the first-hand perspectives and experiences of graduate students (Palmer et al., 2016). My analysis of diversity at an HBCU provides a new contribution by centering graduate students at an MSI and using data collected through ethnographic methods to represent their lived experiences.

The comparative ethnography at the heart of this study demonstrates the contextual specificity of diversity in higher education while highlighting similarities across different types of institutions—similarities that point to structural issues impacting academia as a whole. Diversity at MSIs and diversity at HWIs looks different and is also talked about differently both in diversity research and in public discourse. There is no single, agreed-upon understanding of diversity, and there is no one-size-fits-all approach to addressing its institutional shortcomings. By comparing discourses across institutions, however, I am able to point out shared institutional practices and ideologies at the foundation of varied diversity issues. Homing in on factors shaping the experiences of graduate students of color at multiple levels of academia, this study offers a starting point for efforts to make meaningful changes to diversity practices.

This study also demonstrates the theoretical and practical contributions of linguistics to diversity research and offers theoretical and methodological innovation in linguistics.

Linguists have the tools to identify and critically analyze discursive phenomena that are frequently missed or dismissed in other disciplinary frameworks; linguistic theory expands the types of research questions that can be asked and the information that can be learned from diversity discourse. I analyze both explicit and implicit information at all levels of language, interrogating not only what is said but how it is communicated through linguistic features such as word choice, syntactic structure, pitch, pauses, and laughter. I engage widely studied sociocultural linguistic concepts including stance, agency, constructed dialogue, and indexicality, and my findings contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of these concepts, what they look like in language, and how we can identify them using the tools of linguistic analysis. There is a significant amount of linguistics research that analyzes these concepts, but this is the first linguistics study that analyzes them in the context of graduate students of color talking about their experiences in U.S. higher education. Additionally, my multi-method approach to data collection and analysis—including observant participation, interviews, focus groups, critical discourse analysis, and multimodal media analysis—demonstrate the necessity of interdisciplinary and contextually-rich analyses of discourse to critically examine complex issues like diversity in higher education.

1.3 Key theories and frameworks

Across disciplines, several key theoretical frameworks are used in critical research on diversity in higher education. I draw on these directly and indirectly in my analysis. I do not always apply a given framework directly to my own data, but it still indirectly informs my own analysis because it is the framework through which another scholar, whose ideas I draw on, made sense of their own findings. The concepts and theoretical frameworks used in prior

diversity research that I apply directly in this study are the following: diversity as an amorphous concept, Black Feminist Theory, and counternarratives. Also central to my analysis of graduate students' experiences are the linguistic concepts of stance and agency. I discuss each of these below.

1.3.1 "Diversity" as an amorphous concept

Urciuoli (2003, p. 396) calls diversity a "strategically deployable shifter" to highlight the fact that the meaning of *diversity* depends on context, the intent of the language user, and the interpretation of the recipient. Intentionally or not, members of IHEs use the same terms with different meanings based on the social and interactional work that they need those words to do, and *diversity* is no exception. The meaning of diversity may change with regard to what counts within the concept (e.g., race, gender, ability, political beliefs), the threshold for compositional diversity (e.g., a certain percentage of Black students), or along any number of other dimensions. As described above, Urciuoli's perspective is shared by virtually all scholars who have critically analyzed diversity discourse, since the malleable meaning and varying level of clarity around diversity is one of the key reasons it can be used to maintain current systems of structural power. I conduct comparative analyses of institutional discourse and student interview discourse precisely to point out the varied pragmatics of *diversity* in different contexts and the factors that shape the term's use.

1.3.2 Black Feminist Theory

Throughout my analysis, I draw on the insights of Black Feminist scholars, including Kimberlé Crenshaw, Patricia Hill Collins, and Audre Lorde. Two tenets of Black Feminist Theory directly informed my data collection and analysis: (1) lived experience is data in the form of experiential knowledge, and (2) identity is multifaceted and inherently tied to

structures of power. My qualitative analysis of student interview data is guided by the belief that experiential and specialized academic knowledge are equally important (Collins, 2000), and every student has unique experiences that allow them to offer specific insights that no other student could. These experiences are grounded in students' complex identities, which are both specific to them as individuals and inextricable from macrolevel structures and phenomena that impact other members of the same social groups. In their essay "A Black Feminist Statement" (1984, p. 210), the Combahee River Collective, a group of Black lesbian activist scholars, wrote:

> The most general statement of our politics at the present time would be that we are committed to struggling against racial, sexual [gender], heterosexual, and class oppression and see as our particular task the development of integrated analysis and practice based upon the fact that the major systems of oppression are interlocking.

Their statement reflects the fundamental Black Feminist understanding that while certain aspects of our identities may be more salient in particular contexts, they are all always relevant to the way we move through the world. Audre Lorde (1984a, p. 138) expressed the same sentiment when she stated, "There is no such thing as a single-issue struggle because we do not live single-issue lives." Although I center race and racism in my analysis, I do so with the understanding that racialized experiences are shaped by ideologies and structures related to gender, sexuality, class, ability, citizenship, and other social categorizations. Kimberlé Crenshaw's theory of intersectionality (1989, 1991, 1992) builds upon the critical social lens established by Black feminists to demonstrate how historical structures and dominant representations make certain oppressed identities and experiences—specifically, those of Black women—illegible to socially hegemonic groups, as well as to dominant members of marginalized groups who seek unity around a single axis of identity.

Black Feminist Theory and intersectionality are theories based on the unique history and social positioning of Black women in the U.S., but they have been utilized to critically analyze the experiences of other marginalized groups in U.S. educational contexts (e.g., Byrd et al., 2019) and other sectors of society. Through an intersectional Black Feminist framework, this study validates the experiences of oppression and discrimination that graduate students of color experience in higher education and illuminates the social structures that allow oppressive practices to continue at IHEs (Harris & Patton, 2019). I demonstrate the specificity of certain experiences represented in graduate students' discourse and the shared nature of others, and I show how these experiences are shaped by individual characteristics as well as institution- and discipline-specific demographics, ideologies, and structures.

1.3.3 Counternarratives

The narratives shared by graduate students function as counternarratives (or counterstories), a concept frequently applied in Critical Race Theory (CRT) scholarship, which originally developed out of critical legal studies and has been widely adapted in education (Ladson-Billings, 1998). CRT posits systemic racial discrimination as endemic to U.S. society, validates the experiential knowledge of people of color, and "works toward the end of eliminating racial oppression as part of the broader goal of ending all forms of oppression" (Matsuda et al., 1993, p. 6). In a CRT framework, counternarratives challenge the stories—the "bundle of presuppositions, perceived wisdoms, and shared cultural understandings" (Delgado & Stefancic, 1993, p. 462)—of people in power. Counternarratives are "a method of telling the story of those experiences that are not often told (i.e., those on the margins of society) and a tool for analyzing and challenging the stories of those in power and whose story is a natural part of the dominant discourse" (Solórzano & Yosso 2001, p.

475, referencing Delgado 1989). Critical race scholars in education have utilized a counternarrative framework to challenge a range of dominant discourses about race, racism, and diversity (e.g., Morfin et al., 2006; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002), including deficit discourses about HBCUs (Williams et al., 2019) and institutional discourses that assert a universal benefit from ethnoracial diversity (e.g., Lewis & Shah, 2019). In this study, graduate students of color at both institutions I studied offer counternarratives to institutional diversity discourses about the success of and need for diversity; these narratives highlight the discursive marginalization or erasure of the institutional and interpersonal forms of discrimination that students of color continue to face in academia.

1.3.4 Stance and agency

Connected to the concept of counternarratives, my discourse analysis also draws on the sociocultural linguistic concepts of stance and agency. Stancetaking is an interactional practice that involves socially positioning oneself relative to others and characterizing people, objects, events, and other topics of discussion as having specific qualities or values (Du Bois, 2007; Jaffe, 2009). Stancetaking is how language users demonstrate (dis)agreement with other people and ideas expressed in discourse. It is accomplished through a variety of discursive practices that shape what is said, how it is said, and how it is interpreted, such as word choice, sentence structure, and intonation.

In a sociocultural linguistics framework, which views language as a form of social action, the discursive moves made as part of stancetaking are also a form of agency. The concept of agency has been debated in linguistics and related fields (Ahearn, 2001), but I use the term here to refer to the ability to take action. This ability is scalar, determined by individual ability as well as access to resources and structural power. For graduate students

from racially minoritized backgrounds in white-supremacist institutions of U.S. higher education, structural inequality may limit our ability to challenge people in positions of power overtly, but we have agency to use discourse to distance ourselves from problematic people and practices, influence others' opinions of people in power, and criticize diversity discourses that are counterproductive to anti-racist efforts.

1.4 Dissertation overview

Having provided the scholarly and theoretical background to this dissertation in the present chapter, in **Chapter 2**, I describe how my positionality as a Black woman educated at HWIs motivated me to pursue this topic and how it informed my decisions about data collection and analysis. I discuss the theoretical approaches that informed my methods and provide an overview of my methods and sites of data collection, which are discussed in more detail in relevant subsequent chapters.

In Chapters 3, 4, and 5, I analyze the structure and function of diversity discourse on IHE websites. **Chapter 3** details my methods and theoretical frameworks for data collection and analysis and presents an analysis of recurrent keywords in the website data. In **Chapter 4**, I examine discursive strategies used in IHE diversity discourse to frame institutions' demographics, campus cultures, and institutional practices. In **Chapter 5**, I analyze keywords and discourse practices that patterned by institution type (i.e., those that were used only by HWIs or MSIs).

Chapters 6 and 7 cover the experiences of graduate students of color at the HWI in this study. In **Chapter 6**, I provide national- and state-level historical context for the HWI's structures and diversity practices at the time of the study and summarize key points in

graduate students' descriptions of their life as part of the university and surrounding community. In **Chapter 7**, I analyze the key themes and linguistic features in graduate students' narratives about diversity, focusing on how they use their experiential knowledge as minoritized students to challenge idealized claims of institutional diversity discourse.

Chapters 8 and 9 parallel Chapters 6 and 7 with a focus on Black graduate students at the HBCU in this study. In **Chapter 8**, I overview the history of HBCUs in the U.S. and summarize key points in graduate students' descriptions of their life at the university, including their decisions to enroll at an HBCU. In **Chapter 9,** I analyze the key themes and linguistic features in HBCU graduate students' narratives about diversity, focusing on how their definitions of diversity differ from dominant, HWI-based conceptualizations and how their university's mission as an HBCU informed their expectations regarding diversity and institutional practice.

In **Chapter 10**, I compare key findings from the HWI and HBCU regarding graduate students' understandings of diversity in higher education, including what it is, whether it exists at their university, and why it matters. I discuss context-specific findings and the institutional factors that influenced them, including demographics, history, mission, and access to resources. I also highlight findings that were similar in both university contexts, which point to large-scale structural issues related to diversity and graduate education in the U.S.

Chapter 11 begins with a discussion of the theoretical and practical interventions of this study. I then offer recommendations for changes at different institutional levels to address the central structural issues identified in Chapter 10. These recommendations include models of institutional partnerships and innovations aimed to address the shortcomings of

current diversity efforts, as well as reflective questions for graduate students, faculty, and administrators.

CHAPTER 2: Researcher positionality, data, and methods

2.1 Researcher positionality

2.1.1 Research motivations and intentions

As a Black woman in higher education, I have first-hand experiences of racial isolation, having my academic abilities questioned, and being the target of racial and gender microaggressions. "Diversity" in higher education is inseparable from these forms of discrimination—in fact, diversity is frequently framed as the end goal in the process of eradicating structural inequalities (Pasque et al., 2016). Critical research on education and diversity demonstrates that the trajectories of students from minoritized backgrounds can be significantly impacted both negatively and positively by the ways in which diversity manifests institutionally in discourses, practices, and demographics. I intend for my research to be part of the process of institutional change that improves the educational experiences of minoritized students by improving diversity practices; I also seek to ensure that graduate students are included in this process. Centering the voices and experiences of graduate students of color, including my own, in discussions of diversity in higher education challenges institutional discourses that are too commonly accepted at face value by dominant groups within and outside of academia.

I am inspired by the practices of critical education and critical diversity researchers along with scholars in other fields who have created models for activist scholarship (e.g., Hale, 2008). My intention is to produce research that will contribute to efforts toward educational equity. Therefore, I designed this study to center graduate students that are directly negatively affected by diversity in higher education, and, wherever possible, I intentionally amplify the perspectives of the people who are most marginalized within this

heterogeneous population. This study is critical and sociopolitically engaged, and therefore, following Lather (2003), I make no claims to the "scientific 'neutrality' and 'objectivity' [that] serve to mystify the inherently ideological nature of research in the human sciences and to legitimate privilege based on class, race, and gender" (p. 186). This is not to suggest that this study is not empirical, methodologically rigorous, and theoretically sound. Rather, it is a "critical feminist science project" grounded in an understanding of objectivity as "critical positioning" engendered by acknowledgement of partial and intentional perspective (Haraway, 1988, p. 581, 586).

I make explicit throughout this study my scholarly and ideological commitment to students who are marginalized in higher education. I center the perspectives of students of color, many of whom are multiply marginalized in academia, as they are in U.S. society. I offer research-based recommendations for ways to improve conditions in higher education contexts with the goal of materially improving conditions in academia for graduate students like those in this study: students of color who are isolated in their home departments, who are women, who are trans, who are queer, who come from low-income backgrounds, who are first-generation students, and many more.

2.1.2 Structural disadvantage, privilege, and positionality in higher education

My critical, equity-oriented approach is a natural outgrowth of the academic knowledge, sociopolitical awareness, and critical reflexivity I gained through my undergraduate and graduate studies. I have had to navigate white-supremacist structures and ideologies that discriminate against all non-white members of the academy, anti-Blackness perpetuated by white people and non-Black people of color, and racialized misogyny at the individual and structural levels. My body has been involuntarily used as evidence of diversity

at an institution to hide the reality of its imbalanced student demographics. I have witnessed language and behavior disparaging or dismissive of working-class communities, Indigenous peoples, queer and trans people, and other marginalized groups. Yet for many years in higher education, I did not recognize these acts as such—or at the very least, I did not understand how egregious they really were. My privilege as a cisgender, heterosexual, able-bodied person from an upper-middle-class family with college-educated parents protected me in many ways from being the target of explicit discriminatory actions or bearing the burden of certain structural inequalities; my privilege also protected me from personally experiencing material consequences if I did not engage with the struggles of other groups in academia.

Over the course of my undergraduate and graduate education, I developed the means to be reflexive in critical, theoretically informed ways both about the people and practices I encountered in higher education and my own positionality within academia. I came to recognize that understanding my own educational experiences better was, and always is, contingent upon interrogating institutional ideologies, structures, and practices and the sociopolitical realities in which they exist. Through interactions with other academics from marginalized backgrounds and the various discussions about diversity I have been exposed to while pursuing higher education, I came to better understand my own identities, privileges, and disadvantages in the academy. I have not had the same experiences of discrimination and precarity that affect the most marginalized members of academia, and my commitment to social and educational equity compels me to listen to and amplify their perspectives and insights in my research.

The research questions and analytical scope for this study are directly shaped by my personal experiences and by an awareness of what, I, as a result, have the practical ability to

research in ethical ways. Using vision as a metaphor, Haraway (1988) theorizes this reality of research as "situated knowledge." Everything that we see, including objects in the natural world, is processed through visual technologies—both biological, like the human eye, and manmade, like photography; there is no way of seeing the world that transcends the effects of these technologies. Haraway argues that the same holds true for science: there is no form of scholarly endeavor that transcends the limits of human factors, despite the perpetuation of disengaged "objectivity" as a scientific goal. True objectivity, Haraway asserts, is understanding that researcher always see from somewhere, that what we see is enhanced or distorted or simply limited in scope based on where we stand and the methods used to obtain the ability to see. Rather than chasing the fallacy of "views from nowhere," research conducted through a framework of situated knowledge understands "objectivity as positioned rationality" (1988, p. 590) that leads to "highly specific visual possibilities, each with a wonderfully detailed, active, partial way of organizing worlds" (1988, p. 583).

I chose to analyze a Historically White Institution (HWI) not only because such institutions are the primary focus of diversity efforts and diversity research, but also because my undergraduate and graduate education was at these types of institutions, so I have an insider's perspective. Likewise, I chose a Historically Black University (HBCU) as the second institution to analyze in detail not only because HBCUs are understudied in diversity research, but also because I had the opportunity to live and teach at one during my graduate career. Diversity, equity, and inclusion are relevant to every college and university in the U.S., and I could have selected other institutions to study for a variety of research-based reasons; however, I was motivated by my lived experiences as well as larger research issues, so I chose institutions that were meaningful beyond their research relevance.

2.1.3 Learning the meanings of diversity at three Historically White Institutions

Over the course of my undergraduate and graduate careers, I attended three very different HWIs: University of South Carolina, University of Leeds, and University of California, Santa Barbara. Each one is unique in its institutional culture, student demographics, local community, and history, and my day-to-day activities and social and academic networks varied considerably from one institution to the next. My experiences across these institutions demonstrate the possibility of positive outcomes through diversity that many institutions genuinely strive for: students growing in their academic knowledge, becoming less ethnocentric in their understandings of the world, and learning to empathize in meaningful ways with people who are different from themselves. I believe in institutional potential because of these experiences. At these same institutions, however, I faced the inherent barriers for students of color in predominantly white educational spaces, which exposed the limitations of institutional imagination with regard to diversity, as well as academia's broad lack of structural support for marginalized students. As I moved through and among these universities, I became acutely aware of the malleable and often nebulous nature of diversity as a concept, and for this reason I am also highly critical of institutional diversity discourses and practices.

During the time that I completed my undergraduate degree at the University of South Carolina (USC), Black students constituted approximately 10% of the undergraduate student population. Despite our small numbers, Black students had a significant presence on campus because of the high proportion of Black student-athletes and the prominence of Greek life, which included several historically Black fraternities and sororities. The campus and student life were largely (self-)segregated, and because I was an Honors student who did not

participate in Greek life and was not an athlete, my immediate social and academic networks consisted primarily of white and, to a lesser degree, Asian American Honors students. Interacting with Black students beyond the few in the Honors program required intentional action, and I took the initiative to expand my network by joining organizations such as the Association of African American Students (AAAS) in my first semester. AAAS and its core members operated in some ways as gatekeepers of the Black student community, and, regardless of intention, they pushed students like me out of that Black social space. Regionality and upbringing were often dividing lines: Southern versus non-Southern Black students, students who grew up in predominantly Black areas versus students who did not. As a non-Southern Black woman, my gender expression was noticeably different from the other young women around me, which acted as a marker of difference from my Southern female peers generally, and especially from my Black Southern female peers. I did not have the critical social lens to articulate it as such at the time, but I spent my undergraduate years grappling with the different ways my identity as a Black woman raised in a white Pennsylvania suburb was rejected or accepted in various social spaces within a Southern white-supremacist institution. I explored new ways of expressing my individual identity as a Black woman, learned more about the diverse identities under the umbrella of Blackness, and came to terms with the fact that shared ethnoracial background did not guarantee good will. I developed friendships with Black students through other extracurricular activities, and we often bonded over the experience of being rejected from the Black social spaces that we attempted to venture into. What my peers and I went through highlights the reality that the presence of people who are considered key contributors to institutional diversity—such as

Black students at an HWI—is necessary but not sufficient for all members of those groups to benefit.

Attending school in South Carolina was my first time living in a new environment that made me more cognizant of my own and others' (regional) cultural biases, and it led me to develop a more complex understanding of the numerous factors that shape individuals' identities. In my third year of undergraduate studies, I had the opportunity to travel outside of the U.S. for the first time through study abroad and live in yet another new environment. That experience helped me to recognize that even my more developed understandings of culture, identity, and institutional diversity were specific to the U.S. cultural contexts I had lived in up to that point. I spent a semester abroad at the University of Leeds, an internationally oriented research university in Leeds, England. The university was one of five in the majority-white city, and it had robust study-abroad programs at the undergraduate level and a large number of full-time international students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels—according to the university website, more than 9,000 international students from 170 countries enroll each year (Leeds 2020). I spent much of my social time with other undergraduate study-abroad students from institutions in the U.S., Canada, Western Europe, and Australia. However, my home for the term was an international graduate student residence hall whose tenants were mostly from East Asia, South Asia, and the Middle East. During my semester at Leeds, I gained more firsthand exposure to different Asian and Middle Eastern cultures than I had had in my K-16 education up to that point.

Even observationally, seeing different styles of dress, hearing many languages spoken around the campus and city, and seeing the cultural events and organizations offered on and off campus inspired me to reflect in new ways on the limited racial, cultural, and linguistic

diversity I had experienced thus far in my life. Additionally, frequently being asked to explain or justify aspects of U.S. culture forced me to acknowledge cultural practices and ideologies that I had taken for granted or had not previously viewed as culturally significant. Because I had only ever lived in the U.S., my status as a U.S. citizen—and, by extension, someone from the West/Global North—had never been a prominent part of my identity. It became clear during that semester that I had underestimated the influence of U.S. culture, politics, and power around the world, and that I was generally unaware of how everyday people outside of the U.S. viewed my home country and its people. Meaningfully interacting with students from around the world of varying ages and cultural backgrounds was a significant learning experience and one that I valued immensely even as it exposed my own ignorance. When I returned to USC, I wanted to continue to expand my social network beyond U.S. borders and learn more about others' national and cultural backgrounds as well as my own. However, despite having a sizable number of international students, the university had few institutionally sponsored and structured ways for international and domestic students to interact with the purpose of engaging directly and meaningfully with cultural differences.

After I returned from Leeds and graduated from USC the following year, the next major change in my life was moving to California to attend graduate school at the University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB). My time as a graduate student was one of the most transformative periods of my life with regard to advancing my academic and social knowledge and changing my understanding of the academic institutions in which I had spent my adult life. Similar to my time at USC and Leeds, I had countless opportunities to learn about and from people whose backgrounds or identities were unfamiliar to me—or that I did

not actually understand as well as I thought I did. Demographically, culturally, and politically, UCSB and the surrounding area were unlike anywhere I had lived before. For example, UCSB, like much of Southern California, had significantly larger populations of Latinx and East Asian students; the LGBTQ+ community at UCSB was highly visible and active on campus; and there were resources for minoritized students who were not prominent at my previous institutions, including undocumented students and Native students.

As an instructor, mentor, and leader of student organizations, I learned from undergraduate students and graduate student colleagues who shared their perspectives in classroom, social, and structured extracurricular settings. I was an instructor and guest speaker for courses in the Department of Linguistics and the Department of Black Studies that attracted undergraduates from marginalized backgrounds, including Language and Power; Language, Race, and Ethnicity; Language, Gender, and Sexuality, and Introduction to African American Studies. Through office hours, discussion sections, and grading assignments, I got to know many of these students well. I organized mentoring relationships and campus events for Black undergraduates in my role as a coordinator for the Black Student Engagement Program, and as a member of the executive board for the Black Graduate Student Association, I helped to cultivate social and academic resources for Black graduate students on campus. I also supported undergraduate organizations, including the Black Student Union, by attending their events. Through these roles, I learned about the politics of undergraduate and graduate student life at UCSB. For example, I learned that many Black undergraduates felt marginalized relative to Latinx and Asian students on campus—a sentiment echoed by some Black graduate students. In 2019, Black undergraduate and graduate students constituted a combined five percent of the student

population, which meant both that we were underrepresented relative to the state's Black population (6.5%), and that there were five times as many Latinx and Asian students, who each constituted more than 25% of the student population. My active participation in campus life provided insights into how undergraduate students of color from different backgrounds were affected by the ethnoracial makeup of the campus, especially considering that the undergraduate population was not predominantly white but the larger campus community—including graduate students, faculty, staff, and administrators—was.

My regular interaction with undergraduate and graduate students also highlighted the similarities and differences in institutional needs of these two groups at UCSB. As a graduate student involved in departmental and campus activities as well as a professional network of academics at institutions around the world, I was exposed to the bureaucracy and "hidden curriculum" (e.g., Portelli, 1993) that structure academic institutions and the social practices of their members and saw how these can vary dramatically by institution. At the same time that I was gaining experiential knowledge at UCSB, I was learning from socially critical disciplines such as Black studies, sociology, and feminist studies that provided theory I could use to make connections between my experiences at all three institutions I had attended and to examine how these experiences were tied to larger sociopolitical and historical phenomena.

My experiences at USC, Leeds, and UCSB made several diversity-related realities clear to me:

1. What diversity looks like is institution-specific, shaped by the institution type and local context, among other factors.

2. There is no magic number or ratio of students from particular social groups that institutions can reach to be "sufficiently diverse."
3. In order for students to benefit from institutional diversity, there must be intentionality at the individual level as well as institutional structures that foster meaningful interaction among students (Garces & Jayakumar, 2014).
4. Students often understand institutional diversity differently than faculty, staff, and administrators do and in more nuanced, community-specific ways (Roper, 2004; Park, 2009, Starck et al., 2021).
5. Institutions typically institute diversity measures in top-down formats that in some cases not only fail to meet students' expressed needs but do more harm than good.
6. Graduate students and our unique institutional positions are rarely centered in discussions of diversity.
7. Colleges and universities often do not critically interrogate differences within and among institutions, and they pass up opportunities to draw on one another's successes and failures as models for institutional practices.

Bearing witness to these realities through both personal experience and observation motivated me to pursue research that examined these issues empirically, resulting in this multi-sited, multimodal study, which centers the experiences of graduate students of color at two different types of institutions and aims to address their needs.

In the remainder of this chapter, I describe the primary research methods used in this study: media discourse analysis, observant participation, and ethnographic interviews. Section 2.2 provides an overview of my approach to each of these methods of data collection and analysis. Section 2.3 summarizes the process of collecting and analyzing multimodal

discourse data from college and university websites, which I describe in more detail in Chapter 3. The two institutions where I conducted ethnography and the specific process of data collection at each site are described in Sections 2.4 and 2.5. In Section 2.6, I discuss ethical and logistical considerations that shaped my data collection and analysis, as well as how I present my findings in the subsequent chapters.

2.2. Research methods

This study centers on two institutions of higher education (IHEs) in the U.S. and the physical and digital contexts in which these institutions and their members operate: UCSB and the pseudonymous Southern Historically Black University (SHBU). I analyze the diversity discourses, ideologies, and practices of these two IHEs and their members in three contexts: in comparisons to other IHEs in the U.S, in comparisons between the two IHEs, and in the respective context of each institution. In Chapters 3 through 5, I analyze textual and visual diversity discourse on the websites of eight IHEs, including UCSB and SHBU; I also examine graduate students' perspectives on this type of institutional discourse, as expressed in focus group interviews. In Chapters 6 and 7, I analyze observational and interview data from UCSB; I do the same for SHBU in Chapters 8 and 9. I compare how graduate students engage with diversity at their respective institutions and consider how the narratives they share in their interviews reproduce or challenge institutional discourses, ideologies, and practices.

My methods of data collection and analysis are grounded in an interdisciplinary sociocultural linguistic framework, which centers on the question, "How does the empirical study of language illuminate social and cultural processes?" (Bucholtz & Hall, 2008, p. 405). Sociocultural linguistic scholarship includes both quantitative and qualitative methods used

in fields attuned to the relationships among languages, societies, and cultures, including sociolinguistics, anthropology, and sociology. In this study, I use qualitative methods of discourse analysis and ethnography, drawing on anthropology, education studies, linguistics, media studies, and sociology to analyze how language shapes and is shaped by concepts of diversity in U.S. higher education. I center discourse as the means through which institutions and individuals create meaning related to diversity, and I draw on theories of language structure in addition to theories of language use in my analysis. In the following two sections, I describe the specific theoretical motivations and frameworks that guided my methods of data collection and analysis; these methods are described in more detail in Sections 2.3 through 2.5.

2.2.1 IHE website analysis

My analysis of IHE website discourse builds on established descriptions and critiques of diversity discourse in U.S. higher education by interdisciplinary scholars in linguistic anthropology, sociology, critical race studies, and education (e.g., Andersen, 1999; Chun & Feagin, 2020; Urciuoli, 2016a). IHE websites are sites of ideologically rich institutional discourse that warrant analysis in their own right (Morrish & Sauntson, 2020; Urciuoli, 2003), because website discourse reflects the idealized image that an IHE chooses to present to its target audience of prospective students (Ford & Patterson, 2019; Saichaie & Morphew, 2014). For educational ethnographers, websites are a resource to better understand the people, academic units, and policies mentioned in interviews, meetings, and other settings; they can also help to situate institutions in a larger (e.g., regional, national) context. My analysis of UCSB's and SHBU's websites informed my analysis of interview and

observational data at these universities by providing a foundational understanding of institutional diversity discourse in each context.

To analyze the websites, I drew on some of the multimodal methods of critical discourse analysis (CDA), an interdisciplinary methodology that centers "the role of discourse in the (re)production and challenge of dominance" (van Dijk, 1993, p. 249). Specifically, I applied CDA's contextualized analysis of topic, intertextuality, lexical choice, morphosyntactic structure, and text organization in institutional discourse as tools of ideology, persuasion, and framing (Mayr, 2008). In addition to analyzing these structural patterns in website discourse, I analyzed content of the sites as tools that can uphold, exacerbate, or challenge institutional inequality in higher education through the (re)production and enactment of diversity ideologies and practices. CDA encompasses an array of important theoretical understandings of discourse—for instance, that discourse does ideological work—as well as tools for critical linguistic analysis. CDA on its own, however, is not sufficient to answer questions about the interplay of macro-level and micro-level factors, such as individuals' identities, community ideologies and mores, and government policies, for which I draw on linguistic anthropology. Dominant CDA approaches such as van Dijk's (1993) social cognition approach, Fairclough's (1995) dialectical-relational approach, and Reisigl and Wodak's (2001) discourse-historical approach focus on the impacts of institutional discourse and ideology at macro-social levels, such as national government policy or global capitalism. (However, feminist CDA often takes a more situated approach in order to analyze micro-level phenomena; see Lazar, 2007.) A linguistic-anthropological approach typically focuses on the functions and impacts of discourse within

a specific institution, community, or social network, such as a specific university or students in a single classroom.

My analysis of IHE websites is also distinct from CDA because I include first-person perspectives from members of the institutions whose discourse is being analyzed: I incorporate data from two focus groups with graduate students of color at UCSB. In these discussions, participants shared their opinions about IHE websites in general and also responded to excerpts from the eight IHE websites that I analyzed. In this way, my analyses of institutions' rhetorical efforts are directly juxtaposed with the interpretations of people who are part of those institutions' imagined audiences of website visitors. In conventional CDA approaches, the researcher stands outside the research: they analyze discourse produced by and within institutions and the impact of that discourse on society without directly engaging any of the groups or individuals thought to be impacted. For instance, a conventional CDA study would analyze the language of news media and contextualize it within social structures and practices, but it would not analyze audience members' responses to the news—such as comments on an online version of the broadcast, social media posts about the broadcast, or interviews with viewers—as closely, if at all (e.g., Richardson, 2007). The findings from my analysis of UCSB's and SHBU's websites as well as from the focus group discussions inform my analysis of graduate students' interview discourse in Chapters 6 through 9. In the next section, I briefly describe the ethnographic methods through which I collected this interview discourse.

2.2.2 Ethnography

UCSB and SHBU are both are four-year public universities that are federally designated Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs), and both had stated commitments to

diversity as well as diversity efforts currently in place. However, they differ along virtually every other structural, sociohistorical, and demographic axis of comparison, including campus culture, community demographics, financial resources, faculty teaching and research responsibilities, academic majors and degrees offered, and local history and politics. Both IHEs are included in the study so that the analysis could be comparative. Ethnographic research at a single university offers valuable insights into how that institution makes diversity and inclusion fit its current institutional image and goals; a comparative analysis, however, is better able to home in on specific institutional qualities that influence these discourses and practices by identifying the ways in which institutions are similar and different. For numerous reasons—including differences in time available for research and my access to institutional leaders at each site—the comparisons between the universities are not intended to be one-to-one. Instead, the analytical focus is on how each institution functions as a network of people fulfilling various roles related to institutional diversity; how ideologies about diversity at each institution are contextually shaped; and how graduate students understand and engage with diversity within their institutional contexts. I identified discourse patterns and practices that were prominent at each institution rather than attempting to directly compare people, academic units, and/or practices that may not exist at both universities. At both sites I engaged in in-person as well as digitally mediated interactions, observations of everyday campus activities, participation in meetings and campus events, and ethnographic interviews; I also analyzed a variety of discourse genres, including reports, flyers, emails, and social media posts. At SHBU, where I spent less time, I had frequent, explicit discussions about my observations with various institutional members to expand my understanding of the university as much as possible during my time there.

Theoretical approaches to ethnography

My ethnographic methods aligned with what Vargas (2006) describes as "observant participation." Whereas traditional ethnographic participant-observation can sometimes prioritize observation, observant participation prioritizes the researcher's active involvement in the lives of community members, participation in organizations as a member, and engagement with local culture and practices rather than "fly-on-the-wall" observation (Vargas, 2006, p. 18). My methods were also critical and feminist in orientation. As Madison (2005, p. 5) states, critical ethnography "probe[s] other possibilities that will challenge institutions, regimes of knowledge, and social practices that limit choices, constrain meaning, and denigrate identities and communities." In contrast to conventional ethnography, which generally aims to describe conditions as they are and reports on behalf of the people studied, critical ethnography "asks what could be" and "empower[s] [subjects] by giving more authority to the subjects' voice" (Thomas, 1999, pp. 3-4). Feminist ethnography, as a specific form of critical ethnography grounded in feminist theory, "challenges marginalization and injustice, acknowledges and reflects upon power relations within the research context, and aims to produce scholarship…that may contribute to movement building and/or be in the service of people, communities and issues" under study (Davis & Craven, 2016, p. 11). Although my analysis of diversity focuses primarily on race and ethnicity, it is grounded in an intersectional Black Feminist understanding of ethnoracial identity as necessarily shaped by other dimensions of identity, including gender, class, sexuality, and nationality (Combahee River Collective 1978; Davis 1981; Collins 2000).

Additionally, my methods reflect tenets of the fields of institutional ethnography and linguistic anthropology. Like a number of other scholars' critical ethnographies of diversity

at institutions of higher education, my research is designed based on the assumptions that "institutions coordinate human relations, universities are discursively constructed, [and] universities are enacted through ordered practices and processes" (Anderson, 2018, p. 69). I follow a linguistic-anthropological approach to ethnography that focuses on understanding discourse and interaction as processes that reflect community-specific social structures and belief systems. The goal of my observant participation at UCSB and SHBU was to identify institutional diversity discourse, as well as institutional members' diversity-related language practices, and to understand how both were the product of factors unique to each institutional community.

Ethnographic interviews

In addition to observant participation in campus life at each university, I conducted semi-structured ethnographic interviews with graduate students of color; I also conducted a few supplementary interviews with faculty, administrators, and/or staff at each site for a different perspective on the university. Dick (2006, p. 88) describes ethnographic interviews as "characterized by a minimum of control over responses and an emphasis on having speakers express themselves in their own words." I had a list of prepared open-ended questions that I wanted to ask all participants, and I referred to this list throughout the interviews, but my goal was for interviews to be as informal and conversational as possible. On multiple occasions, the interviewee introduced a topic that I had not anticipated, and I decided to forgo my prepared questions in favor of the richer and more informative interviewee-led discussion.

The interviews were intended to gain community members' factual knowledge about and varied perspectives on the institutional cultures I was analyzing; their answers to my

questions, as well as the ways in which they answered them, provided targeted insights about diversity in each institutional context that I could not achieve through observant participation alone (Bernard, 2018; Talmy, 2011). I asked a combination of descriptive, structural, and contrast questions (Spradley, 2016) in the interviews in order to learn, among other things, interviewees' backgrounds, institutional and community structures, relationships between community members and academic units, and terminology—both institutional and informal––used for people and practices at each institution. One difference between the interviews I conducted and typical ethnographic interviews was that many of my participants were people that I did not know prior to our interview. A small portion of graduate student participants at each university included people with whom I had existing relationships; some others were familiar through mutual friends or colleagues, but the majority were people that I had never met before. As I describe below, however, the majority of participants were recruited through mutual contacts, so my relationship with them was grounded in community connection, which is a priority of ethnography. As one would expect, the interviews were qualitatively different from one another based on not only interviewees' varied personalities and backgrounds but also on the nature of our relationship. Interviewee data is disaggregated by institution in the descriptions of ethnographic context in Sections 2.4 and 2.5, which also detail how I recruited interview participants at each university. Summaries of interviewee demographics are provided in Appendices A and B.

Graduate student participants were limited to students of color as a practical necessity of analytical scope; however, this restriction was made with the understanding that "students of color" is a broad category that captures differences in nationality, race and ethnicity, gender, sexuality, class, ability, and other identities. So, although race was forefronted in the

study as a key part of interviewees' identities and orientations to diversity, this was not done to the exclusion of other aspects of identity relevant to this discussion. In my email calls for participants, I explicitly acknowledged the ambiguity of the label "students of color" and many people's fraught relationship with the term; I stated that students who identify with a non-white ethnoracial identity but do not identify as a "person of color" were eligible to participate, in addition to people who identify as multiracial or mixed. Overall, participants ranged in age from 20 to mid-fifties and from first-year to seventh-year students; they included domestic and international students, women, men, trans and queer students, first-generation college students, and children of academic parents. There were students in disciplines across Arts, Business and Management, Humanities, Education, Social Sciences, and STEM. I interviewed a total of 43 graduate students of color: 30 at UCSB and 13 at SHBU. I did not interview any white students.

Because faculty, staff, and administrators in U.S. higher education are less racially diverse than students (Davis & Fry, 2019; Espinosa et al., 2019), race was not a criterion for eligibility for participants from these groups. Instead, they were recruited based on (1) direct supervision of graduate students, (2) regular interaction with graduate students, and/or (3) direct connection to diversity-related efforts as part of their institutional role. As was the case for graduate student participants, I had existing relationships with some but not all of the faculty, staff, and administrator interviewees. I interviewed a total of eight faculty, staff, and administrators: five at UCSB and three at SHBU.

Interview questions for graduate students focused on their perceptions of diversity both as a concept and in practice in academia, in their disciplines, at their institutions, and in their departments. I asked them to reflect on how their identity had impacted their

educational experiences, to explain what needs they had as graduate students, and to discuss structural changes that they wanted to see both locally and more broadly in higher education. I asked faculty, staff, and administrators to share their perceptions of diversity in higher education from their perspectives as institutional members with greater and different forms of power than most graduate students (some staff members were also graduate students). For participants with diversity-related roles, I asked them to describe their institutional roles—such as tasks and people they were responsible for and other academic units that their office interfaced with—and how their role fit into their institution's larger diversity efforts. I also asked them to reflect on the effectiveness of their position and what institutional resources they needed in order to do their job to the best of their abilities. The full lists of interview questions for both types of interviewees are available in Appendices C and D.

Interviews were conducted during the turbulent 2019-2020 academic year. During this year, UCSB students participated in a University of California-wide graduate student labor movement, the COVID-19 pandemic affected communities and academic institutions worldwide, and racial justice protests erupted across the U.S. beginning in May 2020 in response to the killings of Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, Breonna Taylor, and other Black people in the U.S. UCSB's labor movement made issues of income inequality, student labor, and institutional equity more prominent in the interviews with UCSB members than they might have otherwise been. Meanwhile, the sudden closure of IHEs, the shift to remote work, and the broad uncertainty surrounding the virus during the early months of the pandemic caused institutional disruptions at every level. Many members of academia faced health, housing, and/or economic crises as a consequence of the pandemic. At the same time, systemic racism and inequity in institutions including higher education became central topics

of public discourse about white supremacy and anti-Blackness in the U.S., and responses to increased criticism and urgent demands from students of color became additional tasks for staff, faculty, and administrators with roles related to institutional diversity. In addition to influencing the topics that arose during the interviews, these converging events forced me to restructure the planned scope and methods of my research. The majority of interviews were conducted in person before IHEs closed, while interviews that were conducted after the switch to remote work were done via the videoconference platform Zoom. The consequences of these events limited the availability of many academics that I had intended to interview, so I completed fewer total interviews at each institution than I had originally planned.

In the next three sections, I describe my methods of data collection and analysis in more detail. Section 2.3 covers IHE website discourse analysis and Sections 2.4 and 2.5 cover observant participation and interviews, including descriptions of the ethnographic contexts of the research and the process of recruiting and conducting interviews at each university. Section 2.4 focuses on UCSB and Section 2.5 on SHBU.

2.3 Website discourse analysis

Chapter 3 includes a comprehensive description of my website data collection and analysis process, so I provide only a general overview here. I analyzed textual and visual diversity discourse on the websites of eight IHEs: UCSB, SHBU, and six other colleges and universities. I aimed to differentiate widely shared features and institutionally specific features of diversity discourse, so I compared discourse from UCSB and SHBU to discourse from six geographically comparable IHEs, for a total of four IHEs in California and four in the Southeast. The six additional IHEs included institutions that varied in Minority Serving Institution (MSI) status, public/private status, teaching/research focus, prestige, and size. By

comparing institutions whose major similarities and differences could be isolated without ethnographic knowledge, I was able to better determine which website discourse features were characteristic of an institution type rather than an individual IHE. The website discourse from these other institutions provided a larger context for understanding how institutional website discourse can be structured and identifying common features of diversity discourse in higher education at that moment in time. The eight institutions and their characteristics of interest are described in more detail in Chapter 3.

I selected pages to analyze on each website based on previous IHE website studies, which consistently identify the following pages as the most information-dense and/or most visited: homepage, About page, admissions, and information summary pages such as "Facts and Figures," "By the Numbers," and "At a Glance." Because I was specifically interested in diversity discourse, I also analyzed discourse on pages related to institutional mission and values as well as to institutional diversity and equity. Using NVivo qualitative analysis software, I analyzed both text and images on these pages for structural, discursive, and ideological features based on ten questions, as applicable to each IHE website; these questions are listed in Section 3.2 of Chapter 3. In addition to coding data for the answers to these questions, I conducted critical thematic and linguistic analysis focused on features such as affect, verb tense and aspect, syntactic structure, and pronominal form and how these contributed to the discursively constructed relationship of the university to students, society, and the mission of education. Next, I turn to descriptions of the two universities where I conducted in-person research.

2.4 University of California, Santa Barbara (UCSB)

2.4.1 Observant participation at UCSB

My ethnographic research at UCSB spanned six years and included both formal and informal data collection. Although I was not formally conducting ethnography from the time I started at the university, as a humanistic social scientist and minoritized person in that context, I was always making observations and taking in information about diversity-related issues. These observations informed where and how I moved throughout UCSB and its surrounding communities, as well as the academic and social networks I created. I have years of experiential and observational knowledge about UCSB as an institution, its graduate and undergraduate student cultures, and the cultures of the nearby municipalities. I lived in various neighborhoods throughout Goleta, a city adjacent to the university; I also socialized in the downtown Santa Barbara area with friends and colleagues. As a student, I was intentionally interdisciplinary in my coursework, and I was involved in a variety of departmental and campus-wide activities. I took courses in various social sciences and humanities departments, and I was also a teaching assistant in multiple departments. I organized and attended graduate student events, was an active member of the Black Graduate Student Association, worked for a student-centered academic unit on campus, participated in community-based projects, and attended events such as talks, film screenings, and musical performances. Through these activities I created a network of graduate student colleagues from different personal backgrounds and a wide array of disciplines; I taught and/or socialized with undergraduates from a variety of backgrounds and disciplines as well. I also met numerous faculty and administrators through these institutional activities. Additionally, I

followed official UCSB accounts on Twitter, Instagram, and Facebook; read the two student-run campus newspapers; and read social media posts about UCSB from members of the campus community.

2.4.2 UCSB local community

UCSB and the university community are situated in relation to three municipalities: Santa Barbara, Isla Vista, and Goleta. Isla Vista and Goleta, which abut the university, were typically considered part of the greater Santa Barbara area, the center of which is less than a 30-minute drive from the university campus. The Santa Barbara area is small (around 150,000 people), and its demographics were increased greatly by the students who resided in the area while school was in session. Santa Barbara is located between Los Angeles in Southern California and the Bay Area in Northern California, and many students who attended UCSB or one of the several other IHEs in Santa Barbara came from these large, culturally diverse areas. In addition to UCSB, the area was known for its physical beauty, outdoor activities, local food scene, and its high cost of living—one of the most expensive in the state.

Isla Vista and Goleta are closest to UCSB and they had slightly lower costs of living relative to Santa Barbara. As a result, many students, faculty, and other employees from UCSB lived in these areas, along with students attending the colleges and universities located downtown. Both areas were family-oriented: they boasted large shopping plazas, parks, and an abundance of family-owned small businesses, many of which catered to the local Spanish-speaking Latinx community.[4] The area's demographics were often considered racially

[4] I use the terms *Latinx* and *Chicanx* as gender-neutral ethnoracial labels for the same populations referred to as *Latino, Chicano*, and/or *Hispanic* in institutional reports. I use the institutional terminology where appropriate when discussing institutional demographic reports.

binary— predominantly white (52%), with Latinx as the largest non-white population (35%)—and as the larger Santa Barbara area became a hub for small startups and tech companies, community demographics and culture shifted to a whiter, younger, and more affluent population.[5] For university-affiliated residents of Santa Barbara proper, one of the major draws of the downtown area that offset its higher housing costs was its proximity to the hub of dining, shopping, nightlife, festivals, and cultural events. The city of Santa Barbara was also considered racially binary— predominantly white (56%) with a large population of Latinx residents (37%). However, because the downtown area was near the wealthy white community of Montecito—an unincorporated enclave for multimillionaires, businesspeople, and celebrities—and it was a popular destination for wealthy tourists, Santa Barbara had a reputation among students, particularly students of color, as overwhelmingly white and affluent (though there were less-wealthy neighborhoods in the city as well). These types of visible differences fostered discourse among UCSB students about the Santa Barbara area being "separated" or "segregated." Students talked about Isla Vista and Goleta as the areas where more people of color lived and as reflecting the young, politically progressive, and relatively ethnoracially diverse cultures that were prominent at UCSB. Santa Barbara, on the other hand, was perceived as populated by older, more conservative, typically wealthy, white residents. Because of this, students from the local universities who did not live downtown primarily ventured into the city only for short periods to socialize. While there were certainly exceptions to these generalizations, it was broadly understood that Santa Barbara was a socially and/or financially difficult place to live for many students.

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[5]All demographic information summarized in this section is from the 2019 U.S. Census Bureau Quick Facts: https://www.census.gov/quickfacts

2.4.3 UCSB student demographics and campus culture

UCSB is a mid-sized public research university in Southern California that is part of the statewide University of California (UC) system. Compared to the other UC campuses, it had one of the smallest graduate populations relative to its undergraduate student population. In Fall 2019, around 3,000 graduate students were enrolled—about 13% the size of the undergraduate population of 23,000.[6] (For comparison, the graduate population of UC Berkeley, one of the largest campuses, was about 21% the size of its undergraduate population.) UCSB was a Historically White Institution (HWI) with Minority Serving Institution (MSI) status. The university was federally designated as a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) and Asian American/Native American/Pacific Islander Serving Institution (AANAPISI) in 2015, becoming the first research-intensive HSI and the highest-resourced HSI in the country.[7] HSI status is based on total Hispanic student enrollment (represented by the category *Chicano/Latino* in UCSB's institutional data) reaching 25% of the population; this status also makes an IHE eligible for HSI grants and membership in the Hispanic Association of Colleges and Universities and other HSI organizations. AANAPISI status requires total AANAPI student enrollment to be at least 10% and to have a low-income undergraduate population (defined as at least 50% of students receiving Title IV need-based aid).

[6] Unless attributed otherwise, all UCSB demographic statistics in this section are from the 2019-2020 campus profile published by UCSB's Office of Budget and Planning in January 2020.

[7] The U.S. Department of the Interior listed this designation as "Asian American/Pacific Islander Serving Institution" (AAPISI), but all other government departments, including the Department of Education, use the label "Asian American/Native American/Pacific Islander Serving Institution" (AANAPISI).

When undergraduate and graduate students are combined, in Fall 2019 the percentages of Chicano/Latino students (28%) and Asian/Pacific Islander students (27%) were nearly equal, and these groups constituted the two largest domestic non-white student population on a campus that had more than 60% domestic students of color that year. American Indian/Native Alaskan (1%, or around 200 students) and Black/African American (5%, or around 1,000 students) were strikingly smaller populations, and both were underrepresented relative to their estimated 2019 populations in the state of California (1.6% and 6.5%, respectively). However, UCSB's ethnoracial demographics differ dramatically when the undergraduate and graduate student populations are disaggregated. At the graduate level, the domestic student population in Fall 2019 was overwhelmingly white, with much smaller Asian/Pacific Islander and Chicano/Latino populations; Black/African American, and American Indian/Native Alaskan populations remained very low (see Table 2.1). Additionally, 31% of graduate students were international, compared to 14% of undergraduates. The ethnoracial backgrounds of international students were not reported in the same way as those of domestic students; instead of using major pan-racial or geographically-based ethnoracial labels, the campus profile reports the top 10 countries of origin for international students, and it reports a single percentage for undergraduate and graduate students combined. Disaggregated demographic data for international students can be found through filtered searches in the UC Information Center, which reports UC-wide and campus-specific demographic data, but the fact that this information is not available in UCSB's own public report suggests that it is not a question of great institutional concern.

	Domestic students					All students	
	White	**Asian/ Pacific Islander**	**Chicano/ Latino**	**Black/ African American**	**American Indian/ Native Alaskan**	**Domestic total**	**Int'l total**
Undergraduate students	35	28	29	5	1	86	14
Graduate students	60	16	14	4	1	69	31
Total UG & graduate	38	27	28	5	1	84	16

Table 2.1. Percentages of UCSB students by race/ethnicity in Fall 2019

Among people who are affiliated with the institution as well as those who are not, UCSB is often perceived as a sociopolitically liberal or progressive institution. It has a decades-long history of student political activism and conflict with institutional establishment figures, including city and campus police as well as university administrators. From the 1960s through the 1990s, mirroring civil unrest around the country, UCSB students protested issues such as the Vietnam War; the on-campus presence of institutions funding oppressive, racist regimes in other countries; the university's failure to meet the needs of students of color; and domestic and sexual violence against women (Griffith, 1970; A.S. Living History Project, n.d.). Student activism was the catalyst for UCSB becoming a national leader in establishing Ethnic Studies departments, including Black Studies, Chicana/o Studies, and Asian American Studies. At the time of the study, student activism and political engagement were a major part of UCSB's campus culture. During the time that I was conducting interviews, UCSB graduate students—myself included—were in the midst of a collective labor movement across the UC system calling for institutional recognition of educational inequity and increased wages for graduate students who struggled to afford the high cost of living in coastal California. When the COVID-19 pandemic hit and in-person rallies and

marches ended for public health reasons, the movement focused on the welfare of the campus community: advocating for graduate and undergraduate students' rights as institutional expectations shifted, organizing food donations and distributions, and fundraising for basic needs microgrants for students. Prior to the pandemic, students frequently held rallies in front of the University Center, organized marches across campus, and hosted public events to bring attention to social and political issues. In addition, the campus hosted cultural and political events throughout the academic year, including musical performances, film screenings, and academic and political talks; many of these were organized by the Multicultural Center or one of the Cultural Resource Centers that supported students who were minoritized on the basis of race/ethnicity, gender, sexuality, or other factors. Hosting events that explicitly addressed issues such as racism and white supremacy, queerphobia and transphobia, colonialism, and poverty, as well as events that celebrated frequently marginalized religious backgrounds, national identities, and gender and sexual identities contributed to UCSB's liberal reputation.

In addition to course offerings and campus events, UCSB had institutional resources in place to address the academic and social needs of students from a myriad of different backgrounds. The existence of these resources reflected an awareness of students' varying needs in order to succeed at the institution, although whether this awareness and the creation of a given resource was driven by students or the institution varied. The Student Resource Building housed the Cultural Resource Centers, where social events, meetings, and informal community-building took place; it also housed resource centers for women, international students, students with families, non-traditional students, and undocumented students. The campus counseling center offered identity-specific mental health resources, and the student

health center offered trans-specific health services. In response to the high cost of living exacerbating students' financial burdens, student government and other student-led organizations offered social services such as an on-campus food bank, emergency loans and mini-grants, and a system to donate unused dining hall card swipes to students facing food insecurity.

In their day-to-day activities, graduate and undergraduate students regularly interacted with one another in some form. The majority of graduate students were full-time students and all departments required coursework for the first several years, so graduate students generally spent a significant amount of time on campus. They served as teaching assistants and instructors of record in classrooms and labs, they took on undergraduates as research assistants, and they served as formal and informal mentors. Additionally, graduate student organizations often held events for or collaborated with related undergraduate organizations, as the Black Graduate Student Association did with the undergraduate Black Student Union. Undergraduate work-study students (many of them students of color) staffed the most popular spaces on campus—including the libraries, convenience stores, and coffee shops—and other than graduate students' offices there were limited physical spaces on campus designated for graduate students only, so graduates and undergraduates were often in proximity to each other.

With a few exceptions, the majority of campus resources offered through institutional units such as Student Affairs or the Office of Student Life were designed for and/or by undergraduate students. Most culture-, identity-, and interest-based groups and spaces were open to graduate students, but graduate students' participation in these spaces was often awkward because of their existing hierarchical relationships with undergraduates as

instructors or supervisors. Graduate students and undergraduates also had different needs and sought these types of groups out for different reasons. Beginning in the 2016-2017 academic year, several identity-based groups for minoritized graduate students were founded or revitalized. These groups were distinct from the Graduate Student Association (GSA), which represented all graduate students on campus, and they became active both in response to the lack of graduate-specific cultural groups at UCSB and in recognition of the graduate student population's increasing heterogeneity. These groups included the Black Graduate Student Association (BGSA), Asian Pacific Islander Graduate Student Association (API-GSA), American Indian Graduate Student Association (AIGSA), Colectiva (Chicanx/Latinx graduate student association), and the Queer and Trans Graduate Student Union (QTGSU). In institutional discourse, these organizations were referred to with the innocuous label *affinity groups*, but they were about more than shared identity: they functioned as spaces in which students could speak candidly about their negative experiences at UCSB, have open discussions and debates about community issues and larger sociopolitical events, and makes plans to advocate for access to resources and institutional change.

The various resources and activities across campus belied the lack of a comprehensive institutional system for increasing and supporting diversity. Identity-based student organizations were overseen by the Office of Student Life, while the Graduate Division had its own diversity staff, and, for the first few years of my time at the university, departments were largely left to implement diversity and inclusion measures as they saw fit––which in many cases meant not at all. Despite the size of the campus and the clear importance of ethnoracial and cultural diversity to students, UCSB's Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion had been established only a few years ago, and it was staffed by only

two people—one being a staff person hired as a recent UCSB Ph.D. in 2018. At the time I conducted interviews, the position of Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, the administrator who oversaw the office and all of its campus operations, was vacant. The previous person in that role had resigned, and the campus administration was in the middle of a search to find a replacement (which ended successfully). This was the context in which I conducted interviews with UCSB graduate students, staff, and administrators.

2.4.4 Interviews at UCSB

I conducted 30 semi-structured ethnographic interviews at UCSB during the 2019-2020 academic year. Combined with four preliminary interviews that I conducted in 2018 with people in my existing social network, I interviewed a total of 30 graduate students of color and five staff and administrators. Graduate students were recruited through my existing social networks, student organizations, and emails to individual departments. I first interviewed my colleagues who were involved in diversity-related efforts and campus activism, most of whom were also members of at least one of the graduate student organizations mentioned above. I distributed the call for participation to students in these groups through their member listservs and word-of-mouth. To reach graduate students of color who were not members of these associations, I emailed the call for participation to the graduate program advisor of each department and asked them to distribute it to their graduate student listserv. The 30 student participants were from across the university: four in Arts and Humanities, 12 in Education and Social Sciences, and 14 in STEM.[8] The majority of

[8] I intentionally group participants into these broad academic categories to maintain their confidentiality. Because so many graduate students of color are the only or one of very few in their department, their specific department becomes identifying information when combined with their ethnoracial identity, age, and/or year in their program.

graduate student interviews were conducted in person between January and early March 2020; seven interviews were conducted remotely via Zoom in March and April after UCSB closed in response to the COVID-19 pandemic.

Staff and administrator interviewees all held positions directly related to diversity and/or graduate students through either the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion or the Graduate Division. I contacted individual members of each office (some of whom I already knew) via email, and all five that I contacted completed an interview. Three were conducted in person, and the other two were conducted remotely via Zoom. In addition to staff and administrators, I had intended to interview faculty who held roles as department diversity officers: the Graduate Division had instituted a requirement for every department with a graduate program to have at least one designated diversity officer who was responsible for overseeing graduate student diversity issues within their department. However, as I described earlier in this chapter, the disruption caused by COVID-19 and the nationwide racial justice protests limited the availability of institution members with diversity-related responsibilities, as well as my own capacity for conducting interviews, so I was unable to interview faculty diversity officers. A summary of UCSB interviewees' roles and demographic information is in Appendix A. In the next section, I describe the ethnographic context and interview methods at my second research site: Southern Historically Black University.

2.5 Southern Historically Black University (SHBU)

As an HBCU, SHBU's educational environment was significantly different from UCSB's. Although both were federally designated MSIs, SHBU had been an MSI with an explicit mission and politics from its inception, whereas UCSB had been predominantly white for the majority of its existence. Unlike at UCSB, I did not have experiential

knowledge about SHBU prior to beginning my formal ethnographic research, so I had a much greater learning curve during my time there. Because of the nature of my position within the institution as part of a campus exchange program, however, I was able to inhabit roles and spaces similar to those I was a part of at UCSB. It is important to reiterate here that although my ethnography is comparative between the two universities, this study was not intended as a one-to-one comparison; therefore, my descriptions of SHBU and its local communities, as well as the process of data collection, are qualitatively different in some ways.

2.5.1 SHBU student demographics and campus culture

SHBU is a small public teaching-focused HBCU in a Southeastern state. It was founded in the late 1800s with the purpose of meeting the educational needs of African American students; as an accredited institution, it meets the requirements for federal designation as a Historically Black College or University laid out in the Higher Education Act of 1965: "any historically black college or university that was established prior to 1964, whose principal mission was, and is, the education of black Americans" (U.S. Department of Education, n.d.). In Fall 2019, approximately 4,000 undergraduates and 350 graduate students were enrolled. The majority of students were in-state, and domestic out-of-state students generally hailed from states up and down the East Coast. As reported in state data, approximately 60% of all domestic students were Black/African American; international students were reported as an ethnoracial category and constituted 2% of the population.[9] Graduate student and undergraduate student populations patterned fairly similarly in terms of

[9] Because this data is publicly available, numbers have been adjusted and/or generalized slightly to maintain SHBU confidentiality.

relative representation of ethnoracial groups, but graduate students had a noticeably larger population of international students, whereas undergraduates' population of multiracial students was more than three times that of graduate students. Undergraduate, graduate, and total student demographics are summarized in Table 2.2.

	Black/ African American	**Multiracial**	**White**	**Hispanic**	**Asian/ Pacific Islander**	**American Indian/ Native**	**Int'l**
Undergraduate students	55	40	1	1	1	1	1
Graduate students	65	12	5	2	1	0	15
Total UG & graduate	60	35	1	1	< 1	< 1	2

Table 2.2. Generalized percentages of SHBU students by race/ethnicity as reported in state data for Fall 2019

Like other southern HBCUs, campus culture at SHBU was relatively socially conservative and overtly Christian, and members of the institution advocated practices considered to uphold social propriety. This included expectations for formal or professional attire at campus events; addressing one's elders, regardless of academic rank or role, with a title such as *Professor, Dr., Mr.,* or *Ms.*; and acknowledging others whom one encountered on campus by nodding or saying hello. These practices are pillars of African American culture broadly, and therefore were not surprising to find in an HBCU context. Hierarchical institutional structures and unidirectional generational deference were also prominent features of SHBU culture, and in some contexts, these expectation had engendered tensions between senior university members, more junior faculty, and students. When younger university members pushed for institutional and/or social change, they were sometimes seen as disrespecting or attempting to undermine the authority of elder university members who

had conducted business at the university in the same way for decades. With a new university president at the helm, SBHU recently instituted policies to create a more inclusive campus culture and learning environment for LGBTQ+ university members. Motivated by the university's low score from a nonprofit organization that rates institutions' LGBTQ-friendliness, the initiative included Safe Zone Ally training for faculty and staff and the installation of gender-neutral bathrooms. Based on my conversations with students, faculty, and staff, the initiative was celebrated by younger members of the university, and it was having its intended effect of making the campus more LGBTQ-friendly, including ushering in the campus's first Pride celebrations.

SHBU prided itself on being an "opportunity university" at both the undergraduate and graduate levels. Its relatively minimal undergraduate enrollment requirements and tuition costs made it accessible to nontraditional students, low-income students, and students whose high school record and standardized test scores were not competitive enough to enroll at more selective institutions. Barriers to application, enrollment, and degree completion were addressed at the graduate level through measures such as eliminating application fees and conducting all graduate courses as evening seminars to accommodate students who worked full-time. The student-centered, family-like, "high touch" model of higher education that is central to HBCUs (Conrad & Gasman, 2015) was evident at SBHU. Class sizes were small; students often had their professor's phone number (and vice versa); faculty could initiate requests for the institution to check in on students who were absent from class for extended periods; and students often worked and socialized in staff members' offices. There was an academic success resource center where undergraduates could receive individualized tutoring, and both undergraduate and graduate students could get assistance preparing for

jobs and internships such as resume preparation and practice interviews. SBHU's institutional offerings, like those of all public universities, were largely determined by the financial resources it was allocated by the state and federal governments. As an HBCU, however, SBHU was also continually working against a history of racist underfunding that had affected its ability to improve infrastructure and make widespread institutional changes at the same rate as HWIs in the region and across the country.

Student organizations and social activities were a major part of campus life at SBHU. The university had nearly 100 social, academic, and professional organizations, with historically Black fraternities and sororities topping the social hierarchy. During Fall Homecoming and Spring Social Week, parades, athletic events, musical performances, and "social hours" at the central campus green were the focus of students' attention. Because graduate students worked full-time jobs or multiple part-time jobs and were in class in the evening, they generally did not participate in these social events and activities, which they viewed as "for undergraduates" even though they were open to everyone. Graduate student interaction with undergraduates was mostly limited to those students who held Graduate Assistant (GA) positions on campus and first-year graduate students who were SHBU alumni and had friends still enrolled as undergraduates. GAs worked as part-time employees in the academic success center, in residence halls, and in administrative offices, among other places. The working-professional culture of graduate students and their small numbers relative to undergraduates had led to a lack of a well-defined graduate student culture or community on campus, and there were limited spaces and resources specifically for graduate students. During my research, however, the new dean of the Graduate College was working to make graduate students feel more included in campus life and to address their specific

needs. The dean had instituted more social events and professional development workshops through the College and bolstered the Graduate Student Association's role as a representative for graduate students at institutional events and meetings.

2.5.2 SHBU local community

SHBU is located in South City (pseudonym), a majority-Black town of less than 50,000 people as of 2019.[10] The cost of living was low, but local government mismanagement in recent years had dramatically impacted the town, and in 2018 nearly a quarter of the city's population was living in poverty. When I was in South City in Spring 2019, I observed that many small businesses had closed, homes and other buildings were abandoned and dilapidated, and there was limited access to food resources such as grocery stores within the town. Local primary and secondary schools were also struggling with access to resources and personnel, which had affected the accreditation of several of these institutions. South City and its residents were slowly beginning to recover, and the increasing solvency of the city was evidenced by the renovation of homes, the conversion of former industrial spaces into apartments targeted at young professionals, and the opening of local shops and restaurants in recent years. As is the case in many Southeastern locales, South City was the site of several Civil War battlegrounds and memorials, and over the past several years the city had slowly been participating in the national trend of removing the names of Confederate figures from schools, museums, and other institutions. South City had a contentious relationship with its majority-white neighbor city, which was smaller in population but had been the center of economic development in the area around SHBU,

[10] All demographic statistics in this section are from the city's 2019 Census QuickFacts report and generalized for confidentiality.

boasting the areas shopping mall, chain restaurants, and largest grocery stores. Additionally, a higher percentage of its residents were homeowners, the median property value was higher, and the poverty level was significantly lower than in South City. From the perspective of South City locals, this dynamic was moving revenue out of South City and away from Black residents rather than bidirectionally. SHBU students who lived locally tended to live in South City since it was less expensive and had student apartment complexes near campus, but they would go to the neighboring city to shop and eat.

Faculty, staff, and administrators tended to live away from the South City area, often in larger towns and suburban neighborhoods. Many students also lived outside of the area and commuted to campus. A common complaint among students was that there was not much to do in the area if the university was not hosting an event; students who lived in the South City area and had cars would drive to the nearest major metropolitan area for activities such as bowling, museums, and concerts. Despite SHBU being the major institution in the area and serving the local community as an extension school, local residents felt there was a stark "town-gown" divide. While this dynamic occurs in many college towns (Carlson & Biemiller, 2019), this perception of SHBU was exacerbated by increased on-campus security after a violent incident had occurred on campus between local residents who were not affiliated with the university.

2.5.3 Observant participation at SHBU

I conducted ethnographic research at SHBU in the Spring 2019 semester and returned for a week-long follow-up visit in Spring 2020, just before the COVID-19 lockdown. The institutional partnership program that afforded me the opportunity to spend time at SHBU provided one semester's worth of funding for my role as a visiting scholar-in-residence. My

duties and activities included assisting with and attending Honors College events; participating in a faculty working group; and attending graduate student association meetings, Graduate College events, and graduate student conferences. As a visiting instructor, I taught an undergraduate linguistics course, attended department faculty meetings, presented my research at a department conference, and attended departmental events including undergraduate organization events and student recognition ceremonies. I lived in a residence hall and spent most of my time on campus, which allowed for a more immersive ethnographic experience than I would have had otherwise; for example, I was able to attend evening events and observe what campus was like on weekends. Through these activities I met undergraduates, graduate students, faculty, administrators, and staff members, and I observed a wide range of university life in a relatively short period of time. By building close relationships with SHBU faculty and staff, in particular, I was able to discuss my observations with people who had a more historically and institutionally contextualized understanding of campus practices. Having attended HWIs for my entire higher education, I could not always discern whether the institutional structures and practices that stood out to me were specific to SHBU or were common at other HBCUs as well; in the former case, the insights of university members who had been there for years helped me to understand the unique factors at SHBU that brought about these structures and practices. When I was not on campus, I spent time in the surrounding community frequenting local restaurants, coffee shops, stores, and public libraries, as well as attending classes at the local fitness center, getting my hair cut at a local barbershop, and other everyday activities. While at SHBU I also spent time in the larger cities in the area and visited other universities in the region. During

my time at SHBU and after my departure, I followed the official SHBU Twitter and Instagram accounts and the Twitter accounts of prominent university members.

2.5.4 Interviews at SHBU

I conducted interviews at SHBU primarily during my week-long follow-up visit in Spring 2020. At my request, staff and administrators in the Graduate College with whom I had established relationships the prior year had distributed my call for participation to the graduate student listserv prior to my arrival on campus. Once I arrived, they also contacted students who held GA positions—and therefore were on campus during the day—either by phone or via their supervisor. In addition, three interviewees put me in direct contact with a colleague, so snowball sampling was also part of the recruitment process. In total I interviewed 13 graduate students: one in Arts and Humanities, three in Business and Management, and nine in Education and Social Sciences. At the time, SHBU had fewer than five Ph.D. programs, so the majority of students as well as the majority of my interviewees were master's students in their first or second year. During my week on campus, I also interviewed two faculty members and an administrator in the Honors College, whom I knew from my previous semester at SHBU. A call for participation was distributed by the dean of the Graduate College to faculty in departments with graduate programs, but no faculty replied to the email request. Due to scheduling conflicts, I was unable to interview the staff and administrators that I knew in the Graduate College during my time on campus; COVID disruptions began shortly after my SHBU visit, and we were unable to find a time for remote interviews. A summary of SHBU interviewees' roles and demographics is in Appendix B.

In addition to the broader ethnographic context of both UCSB and SHBU provided here, it is important to characterize my own positionality in these two research settings. My

positionality within higher education, my research goals, and my personality all shaped my practices as a researcher and therefore shaped the structure and content of this study. In the next section, I discuss why research reflexivity is a crucial aspect of critical research. I then reflect on the personal and ethical considerations that informed my research from the interview process to data presentation.

2.6 Researcher reflexivity and ethical considerations

Researchers make decisions about what topics, objects, and phenomena to study; why those topics and not others are worthy of study; what questions to ask; what data to collect; who counts as "authorities" to cite; frameworks and methods to use for analysis; and who will have access to the completed research (see, e.g., Spivak, 1988 for a discussion of these issues). We make these decisions based on what we believe to be the best or most appropriate course of action in our situation, but criteria for "best" and "appropriate" vary widely. Our backgrounds and experiences shape our perspectives on the world and, therefore, our decisions about how to study it; without critical reflection on this subjective dimension of research, researchers perpetuate the fallacy of objectively "correct" and "incorrect" forms of study. Even within the mechanisms of peer review that are foundational to academia, researchers working from positions of social and/or institutional power who do not think critically about their positionality are poised to enact harm through their research practices, especially when their work centers marginalized communities, (see, e.g., DeGraff, 2005 and Dowling, 2005 for a discussions of this issue). Reflexivity, then, is all the more important in critical research intended to challenge hegemonic ideologies and systems of power: if researchers do not understand their own role in these hegemonic systems and how that role

has shaped their decisions about research, they may perpetuate the very systems they think they are dismantling. The need for reflexivity does not disappear when a researcher chooses to work in a community that they consider themself a part of, and the critical reflections of "native" or insider researchers can engender new questions, practices, and ethical considerations that advance research in their field (Jacobs-Huey, 2002).

My critiques of diversity and the research process I used to develop them were necessarily influenced by my own experiences with diversity in HWI contexts, as all research is shaped by the positionality of the researcher. I have been socialized in institutions whose diversity discourses and practices are based in the same white-supremacist ideologies that structure broader U.S. society. My baseline understandings of what diversity is and what it can be have been shaped by my understanding of what higher education is and can be, based on student demographics, student-faculty relationships, institutional resources, and so on. My frame of reference as a Black person at an HWI is different from that of Black students at HBCUs and of non-Black students of color at either type of IHE. My understanding of higher education is also shaped by my class background and direct trajectory to and through college and graduate school, which provided me a perspective different from that of students of color who were community college transfers as undergraduates, students who left the academy for extended periods of time before returning for graduate school, or students who held full-time jobs while pursuing their graduate degree. For these reasons, the time I spent at SHBU was a learning experience in many ways, as well as a period of professionalization. Researching, teaching, and networking at SHBU exposed me to institutional structures and practices that were significantly different from what I had seen and experienced at HWIs, and that

exposure enhanced my ability to imagine new possibilities for diversity practices in higher education.

I am able to write about UCSB and its diversity practices in greater detail than SHBU because I know them better, not because UCSB is the default or the norm for such practices. The purpose of comparing these two IHEs was not to position one institution as doing diversity work "right" and the other as doing it "wrong": it is to highlight each IHE's areas of relative strength and weakness in order to demonstrate how UCSB, SHBU, and other institutions can learn from each other to improve their own diversity practices. I compare the two IHEs and ground my analyses in their contextual specificities in order to demonstrate that there are few, if any, universally applicable and successful diversity "best practices" because of the variables that make IHEs different from each other. In an ideal world, I would have spent more time at SHBU in order to develop an even deeper understanding of the institution and people. But regardless of how long I was there, even doing deep ethnographic research, my understanding would never reach the same level as my familiarity with the structures, people, and practices at UCSB as a member of the campus community.

As I discussed in Chapter 1, diversity (or the lack thereof) has major impacts on the educational, social, and psychological experiences of minoritized students. Despite the dry and impersonal language often used in institutional diversity discourse, asking graduate students of color to share their opinions and experiences related to diversity is a very personal request. In most cases, I was asking my interviewees to be open and vulnerable with someone that they did not know very well, if at all, and to do so knowing that much of what they shared might not stay between the two of us: I told participants up front that I would be sharing my findings at conferences, in publications, and in presentations at their institution.

The majority of participants were very forthcoming and honest, and many exceeded the level of personal information I had even optimistically hoped to receive. For some, this seemed to be the first time someone had asked them directly about their experiences as a graduate student of color at their institution, especially with the explicit goal of using what they shared to make structural institutional change. My rapport-building skills as a researcher and my ability to relate to interviewees as an empathetic fellow graduate student of color certainly influenced the amount of information that interviewees were willing to share, but the topic itself was conducive to conversations filled with complex, highly affective personal narratives and strong opinions. Sometimes prompted and at other times of their own volition, interviewees shared ongoing frustrations, traumatic experiences, negative physical and mental effects from stress, and criticisms of their universities, departments, and professors. In numerous instances, an interviewee had to audibly stop themself from offering too much identifiable information or realized after they concluded their narrative that they had shared more than intended or expected. That is to say, many graduate student participants—particularly UCSB students—seemed eager to talk about the subject. Based on the way that I recruited participants and UCSB's greater emphasis on diversity compared to SHBU, this is not surprising: people who would agree to speak with a (more-or-less) stranger about diversity and the challenges they faced as a graduate student of color were likely to have spent a significant amount of time thinking about these topics before and to have a lot to say.

Given these realities, two ethical considerations are central to the way that I present my findings in this dissertation: prioritizing graduate student participants' confidentiality and avoiding the trap of "trauma porn." SHBU had only a few hundred graduate students total, so the number of students who worked as GAs, as well as the number of students enrolled in

each program, was relatively small. At UCSB, many graduate students of color were identifiable with only a few pieces of demographic information because they were, for instance, the only person of color, the only Black woman, or the only international student from a particular region in their department. For these reasons, as mentioned above, I generalize interviewees' areas of study. I refer to interviewees using the ethnoracial labels and descriptors that they used to describe themselves during their interview; because some were very specific, however, in some cases I broaden or generalize descriptors that may be identifiable. For example, Chinese students make up more than 70% of UCSB's international student population, so *Chinese international student* is not an immediate identifier if other demographic information is generalized. For a Native graduate student who is one of twenty on campus, on the other hand, the name of their tribe alongside other information would make them readily identifiable. Likewise, although interview quotes are kept as close to verbatim as possible, for these same reasons, some quotes are modified in order to protect the speaker's confidentiality by removing or changing names, generalizing dates, or changing wording without changing the meaning. Identifying quotes that could not be modified without losing accuracy are not included as examples, but, where possible, I incorporate meaningful words or phrases from those quotes directly into my discussion.

In addition to prioritizing confidentiality, my process for selecting quotes and thematic patterns to analyze was informed by my explicit intention not to produce scholarship that could be read as "trauma porn" or racial trauma voyeurism. *Trauma porn* is the popular term used to describe the mediatized consumption of minoritized people's pain, a phenomenon that returned to the spotlight in 2020 when videos of Black people being killed by police were circulated online and in televised news with dizzying frequency (Kelsky,

2020). (The term is an extension of disability activist Stella Young's term *inspiration porn*, used to critique objectifying videos of disabled people [Pulrang, 2020].) Those who circulated such videos typically claimed to do so in order to galvanize the public to take action against police brutality. Critics of the practice, however, describe it as sensationalizing Black death and (re)traumatizing Black viewers in the name of "convincing" white and other non-Black people to care about the issues that negatively affect Black communities (e.g., Gregory, 2019). In academia, trauma porn takes the form of diversity-oriented admissions essays, scholarship and grant applications, and other competitive processes that require minoritized students to write about overcoming hardship and frame their life experiences through a deficit lens in order to demonstrate their worthiness. Trauma porn also takes the form of research on non-dominant communities—especially research conducted by people who are not part of the community—that fixates on disadvantage and pain (e.g., poverty, crime, death) as the most compelling aspects of research participants' lives. This type of research is often exploitative: it gives nothing back to the community while advancing the scholar's career, and it frequently reproduces harmful ideologies about the community through a fetishization of negative circumstances. Yet this is the type of scholarship on minoritized communities that tends to receive public attention and to be seen as meritorious. Scholars who conduct research in non-dominant communities with the goal of making change must figure out how to navigate the contradictory goals of producing ethically sound research that exposes and challenges existing inequitable ideologies and structures while providing a nuanced representation of the community, while also producing research that is compelling enough to garner the attention of gatekeepers with the power to make continued research possible (e.g., grant review panels).

For minoritized scholars who have had their experiences of pain, loss, and violence repeatedly denied or minimized, there can be a desire to demonstrate how bad conditions and experiences can really be for minoritized communities in order to "prove" that we are not imagining or embellishing. While analyzing my data, I often found myself marking interviewees' painful stories as examples that absolutely needed to be included, but upon reflection I realized that this urge—wanting to prove the painful reality of many graduate students of color—was my motivation for doing so. When I reminded myself of the purpose of the study and the interview questions that elicited these narratives, I was able to reframe my reasons for including examples of participants' painful experiences. My study is not intended to prove that graduate students of color experience harmful practices in higher education by putting their pain on display: rather, the fact that graduate students of color experience harmful practices in higher education is the reality motivating this study. I include graduate students' descriptions of negative experiences with diversity discourses and practices and with the inequitable structures of academia in order to contextualize the perspectives that are the basis of my theorizations as well as my recommendations for changes to diversity work. Therefore, I have not necessarily included the most shocking and dramatic examples from the interviews but instead have focused on those that are the most theoretically enriching.

Finally, I do not want to create the false impression that all interviewees were equally forthcoming or that everyone was equally comfortable or had the same amount to say in their answers to each question. While most interviewees were talkative and had much to share, some answered questions very matter-of-factly and required a lot of follow-up questions to get more detailed responses. These were generally participants who seemed more shy or

reserved overall. On the whole, UCSB students had lengthier and more nuanced responses to questions about institutional diversity practices than SHBU students, but as I discuss in later chapters, this is a product of their positionalities as non-white students at an HWI where gaining familiarity with institutional structures and practices is a survival strategy. It also became clear after my first few interviews at SHBU that I had written my interview questions with UCSB-type students in mind. Although the language was accessible, the underlying assumptions and ideas behind some questions were not appropriate or applicable in an HBCU context. I was able to adjust my questions accordingly—breaking some down into multiple questions, starting with an explanatory statement, or eliminating the question altogether—but in retrospect, I would have written two distinct sets of questions instead of simply creating one set and swapping out the institutions' names and a few key phrases as needed. One additional factor that likely contributed to the differences in interviews was participants' relative experience with qualitative research interviews. Many UCSB interviewees had conducted interviews as part of their own research and/or had been interviewed for a research study before, so they were familiar with the format and interactional expectations. The SHBU interviewees who seemed most comfortable with the format were also those who had conducted interviews for their own research or were in fields where interviews were a common method of data collection.

If it had been possible, something else that I would have done differently is to develop relationships with more interviewees at SHBU prior to interviewing them. With regard to our experiences in higher education, I had much less in common with SHBU students than UCSB students, since we had never attended the same institution; that lack of connection certainly impacted how the interviews unfolded. I saw only a few graduate

students regularly during my time at SHBU, and interviews with those students were the most conversational and in-depth of the interviews I conducted there. They already knew what I was doing at the university and what I studied as a graduate student at UCSB, and they generally had a sense of who I was as a person. In interviews conducted during my follow-up visit, participants did not know anything beyond what was in the recruitment email or phone call that they received until we met in person, and they had a chance to ask me questions directly. It is also possible that, in addition to the expected initial awkwardness of meeting someone for the first time, my ambiguous position as a visiting researcher and instructor made the situation additionally uncertain for interviewees because they were unclear of my institutional status relative to them. Although I tried my best to be friendly and casual with interviewees, they may have been unsure about what type of interaction was most appropriate in that context. From my perspective as an ethnographic interviewer who is also an anxious overthinker, having some familiarity with my interviewees at SHBU would have helped me to feel more comfortable pressing them on their answers. Knowing that my interlocutor had a sense of my interactional style and a solid understanding of my research would have made me worry less about coming across as pedantic or condescending when I corrected a factually incorrect statement, asked a question about SHBU that they did not know the answer to and I did, or asked them to elaborate on a point.

2.7 Conclusion

All of the factors I have discussed in this chapter—my socialization at HWIs, my personal investment in changing diversity in higher education, the strengths and shortcomings of my data collection methods, and my awareness of the stakes for graduate student participants—influenced how I conducted this study and how I present my findings

in the following chapters. I have described in detail the institutional contexts and experiences that shaped my development into the critical diversity researcher who conducted this study, and the methods of data collection and analysis I used to do so. With my research motivations and frameworks as well as the UCSB and SHBU contexts established, in the next chapters I turn to data analysis. In Chapters 3 to 5, I describe my methods of data collection and analysis for the IHE websites and UCSB focus group data. In Chapters 6 and 7, I provide additional ethnographic context for UCSB before analyzing UCSB graduate student interviewees' narrative discourse. In Chapters 8 and 9, I situate SHBU in the history of HBCUs in the U.S. and analyze SHBU graduate student interviewees' narrative discourse. In Chapter 10, I compare key findings from each site, and based on my findings, I offer recommendations for change in Chapter 11

CHAPTER 3: Diversity ideologies and terminology on IHE websites

I see university websites as a marketing and advertising platform. Like, "Look at what we've done, look where we're going"…You know, all these different things that are just supposed to increase the value of that university.
— Ludwig, graduate student, UCSB

For many prospective students, IHE websites are their first and primary sources of information about their colleges and universities of interest. The text and images on an IHE website significantly influence whether a student wants to learn more about an institution as well as their expectations for student life and institutional culture when they arrive on campus. For students from marginalized backgrounds, what a website says (or omits) about diversity, equity, and/or inclusion informs whether they believe they will be safe, supported, and welcomed in that institutional space. IHE websites and website diversity discourse, then, have significance for both IHEs and students. However, the motivations and mechanisms behind these websites and the discourses that they feature are often known only to select institution members—typically staff and administrators who are directly involved in website construction and students from marginalized backgrounds who unwittingly become part of the process as "representatives" of diversity in institutional images.

In this chapter, I analyze the purpose of IHE websites, features of website diversity discourse, and the perspectives of graduate students of color on this type of website discourse. I first provide an overview of the functions of IHE websites in the context of contemporary neoliberal higher education practices and ideologies. This includes a discussion of the forms and functions of diversity discourse, specifically, the process of constructing an IHE website, and studies of students' interpretations of website discourse. In Section 3.2, I detail my data and my methods of collection and analysis: a sample of eight

IHE websites, two focus groups interviews with UCSB students, and my final coding scheme. In Section 3.3, I discuss discourse features that appeared in the text and images of all websites in the sample and what they reveal about dominant diversity-related ideologies and practices in U.S. higher education.

3.1 Strategic use of text and images on IHE websites

For individuals, organizations, and institutions alike, discourse is central to the construction of identities and social realities (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004; Mumby & Clair, 1997). Speech, text, and images are all ways to convey information and ideas either as they are or as they could be. Control of discourse—its content, form, and/or circulation—is control over how someone or something is represented to the world. In the capitalistic context of the U.S., positive representations translate to financial benefits through direct and indirect means, including members of the public paying for the goods, services, and experiences that discourse is used to represent. The shift to the current neoliberal model of U.S higher education—in which IHEs operate like corporations in the global free market as the state divests from academic institutions (Canaan & Shumar, 2008; Hundle et al., 2019)—created the need for IHEs to produce positive representations in the form of marketing discourse (Urciuoli, 2010b; Morrish & Sauntson, 2020). This type of financially advantageous discourse takes the form of informational and recruitment materials designed to attract tuition-paying students. Now that the internet is the primary way that students access information about colleges and universities, IHEs websites are key sources of institutional discourse.

The IHE website is a well-established marketing tool in higher education. From a marketing perspective, the purpose of the website is not simply to convey factual

information, but rather to do so in rhetorically strategic ways that are beneficial to the institution and in user-friendly ways that encourage visitors to thoroughly explore the website (Mustafa & Al-Zoua'bi, 2008; Papadimitriou & Blanco Ramírez, 2015; Winter et al., 2003). While an IHE website is used to inform the public about the institution's mission and values, it can also be used to build or reinforce an institutional "brand" that makes the institution stand out from others and attract prospective students to apply (e.g., Rutter et al., 2017; Zhang & O'Halloran, 2013); that brand may be built on national and international prestige, institutional diversity, tight-knit campus community, or other factors (e.g., Anderson, 2018; Espeland & Sauder, 2016). In her analysis of the strategic use of promotional language in IHE discourse, Urciuoli (2003, p. 406) points out that "[a]ll writing of college promotional discourse has been overseen by what amounts to a quality control team…whose central concern is the capacity of this promotional discourse to represent the college's image and endeavors as attractively and persuasively as possible."

Although IHEs aim to create distinctive institutional brands in order to capture market share, the content and strategic marketing discourse of IHE websites is strikingly similar within and across institutional types. Saichaie and Morphew (2014) conducted a content analysis of the websites of 12 IHEs of four different types (elite, public regional, Southern, Big 10), and they found consistent themes across the websites represented with similar texts and images. For example, images of student-athletes playing football represented athletics, small groups of happy students represented campus life and community, and historical buildings represented collegiate life. In a study comparing the websites of HBCUs and non-HBCU Black Serving Institutions (i.e., HWIs with at least 25% Black student enrollment), Hudson (2018) found no significant differences in the content available on the websites or

the accessibility of the content. With the exception of the representation of Hispanic/Latinx students, Hudson (2018) also found no significant differences in the visual representation of ethnoracial diversity. Morrish and Sauntson's (2020) corpus analysis of U.K. universities' mission statements found that, despite their varied institutional missions, prestigious research universities, regional research universities, and teaching-focused universities shared several keywords, including *excellence, international,* and *diversity*. The use of similar discursive features on the websites of different types of IHEs is not surprising given the competitive higher education marketplace: IHEs must balance characteristics of their brand that make them unique with widespread characteristics of IHEs that are legible to and expected by the general public. That is, IHEs cannot deviate too far from the norm if they want to remain in consideration alongside their institutional peers.

The practices of elite U.S. institutions that have established reputations as leaders in higher education (e.g., Ivy League, Stanford, MIT) are often viewed as models for other IHEs. Less prestigious IHEs, on the other hand, must first get their foot in the proverbial door before they can convince prospective students to choose them over another institution, so they frequently adapt the models created by elite institutions. All IHEs in the U.S, however, are subject to federal regulations (and state, for public institutions), and this impacts their institutional practices, including the content that can or must be included on their websites and how it can be presented. The convergence of similar content and structure on IHE websites is an example of what DiMaggio and Powell (1983) call "institutional isomorphism." While similarities resulting from pressure from other institutions, government mandates, or cultural expectations for IHEs to be like certain institutions are the product of "coercive isomorphism" (p. 150) IHEs' choice to model their practices after those of another

institution is “mimetic isomorphism” (p. 151) and its frequency increases in situations of uncertainty. Whether similarities across websites are the result of coercive or mimetic isomorphism is not always discernable, but in either case the similarities are not coincidental, and the selected features have been chosen deliberately. Website text and images specifically related to diversity have been studied extensively in higher education research precisely because of this isomorphism across widely varied institutions.

3.1.1 Diversity discourse on IHE websites

Because websites are part of institutional marketing, textual and visual representations of diversity are meant to be selling points, highlighting features of the institution that make prospective students want to spend their time and money there. In the years of research on IHE promotional material, however, there is little concrete evidence that the frequently adopted ways of representing diversity are effective marketing tools. DiMaggio and Powell (1983, p. 152) argue that

> [o]rganizations tend to model themselves after similar organizations in their field that they perceive to be more legitimate or successful. The ubiquity of certain kinds of structural arrangements can more likely be credited to the universality of mimetic processes than to any concrete evidence that the adopted models enhance efficiency.

With regard to diversity discourse, this means that those that are widespread are not necessarily the most descriptive, accurate, or effective at recruiting students. Rather, an influential institution adopts a practice or puts forth a model that IHEs take as a model. Eventually, enough IHEs adopt the same diversity discourse features that they become commonplace and expected and continue to be adopted until innovations are introduced.

Isomorphism in diversity discourse is highly noticeable in visual representations of diversity. IHEs select similar types of people to represent institutional diversity to the public, conveying the types of visible identity characteristics IHEs consider (acceptable) forms of

diversity. The primary way that IHE websites visually convey diversity is by showcasing individuals with different ethnoracial and gender identities, reflecting culturally dominant conceptualizations of diversity as based in race/ethnicity, gender, and closely related characteristics (e.g., nationality). Research has found that body size diversity, disability, and other visible differences such as age are rarely, if ever, represented in visual discourse: racial and gender diversity is presented through normative, youthful, conventionally attractive bodies. Saichaie and Morphew (2014, p. 518) found that the websites in their sample contained “no instances of obese, overweight, or unhappy students” and “conspicuously absent from the websites were disabled, nontraditional [i.e., older], and commuter students.” Similarly, Lavin’s (2017) analysis of digital viewbooks from research universities in Texas and California found that the students pictured were virtually all fit and able-bodied, regardless of race or gender.

The interpretations of visual representations of malleable, culturally defined concepts like diversity are highly subjective, regardless of how they are intended. In their study of the visual marketing of the concept of family, Borgerson et al. (2006) argue that although visual marketing of using people is very strategic—models are specifically selected based on their appearances and arranged in intentional ways based on what is being marketed—viewers will always filter its message through their own ideological lens. Applying Borgerson et al.’s conclusions to diversity websites, if website visitors choose to “associate what is represented in [an] image or text to [diversity], then that may become a subjective truth” (2006, p. 957). Visual representations of diversity on IHE websites have the potential to shape visitors’ conceptualizations of diversity by including the types of people who are typically excluded, but visitors may also reject a representation as inaccurate if it does not align with their

experiences or preconceived beliefs about diversity. For example, if someone thinks of diversity exclusively in terms of ethnoracial and/or gender identity, then that it was they will notice when assessing whether a group is diverse. If they were not expecting representation of disability, then they likely will not notice its absence. For disabled viewers, especially students, the erasure of people with disabilities may fundamentally shift their impression of an institution and its commitment to diversity. As demonstrated in Ramasubramanian et al. (2003), images alone—in the case of their study, images of different architectural styles and campus greenery—are enough to influence website visitors' impressions of an IHE's abstract qualities, so visual representations of diversity are extremely important.

IHE websites share the practice of overrepresenting ethnoracial minorities relative to their population at the institution (Del Vecchio 2017; Wilson & Meyer 2009); unsurprisingly, this practice is most common on the websites of Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs). In their study of ethnoracial representation in college recruitment materials, Pippert et al. (2013) found that Black students were overrepresented in images at a higher rate than students from other underrepresented ethnoracial groups. They argue that this reflects a narrow definition of diversity as a sufficient percentage of Black students, which is a product of affirmative action discourses and practices that centered around the integration of Black students at PWIs. IHEs also use similar keywords in their text-based diversity discourse, as demonstrated in Morrish and Sauntson's (2020) analysis of diversity statements on U.S. and U.K. IHE websites. They found that research and regional universities in both countries referenced the same social and identity characteristics when describing institutional diversity: race, ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, background, and perspective.

These forms of discursive isomorphism across websites appeared alongside varied ways of report ethnoracial data and language used in reference to these categorizations. In their study of race categories on the websites of more than 150 U.S. IHEs, Ford and Patterson (2019) found that strategies of omission, aggregation, and addition of ethnoracial categories vary by the demographics of the institutions. IHEs with the highest percentage of white students were the most likely to omit "White" as a racial category in their reported data; more than half of what they categorized as "low-diversity schools" aggregated students of color into a single category as a strategy to hide low numbers for certain groups; and more than 80% of IHEs added "international" as an ethnoracial category in reports of domestic student demographics. Holland and Ford (2020) followed up on this study by analyzing how ethnoracial categories were reported based on IHEs' levels of selectivity. Across the nearly 280 websites analyzed, they found that highly selective IHEs (which are typically PWIs) were more likely to omit white students and to add international students to demographic data reports, but IHEs aggregated students of color at the same rate across selectivity levels. The authors argue that the symbolic capital of ethnoracial diversity for elite institutions is different than for less prestigious IHEs, particularly regional and comprehensive IHEs that enroll a large number of students of color and are focused on serving local communities. IHEs that are "secure in their reputations to serve historically underrepresented students" (2020, p. 23) have less of a need to manipulate data; however, these IHEs must contend with ideologies that associate higher numbers of students of color with lower educational quality, which is one motivating factor for them not to minimize the presence of white students on campus (Collins 2009).

The complementary findings of these studies that analyze either visual or textual diversity discourse motivate a multimodal discourse analysis approach that analyzes both together. My analyses below, as well as in and Chapters 4 and 5, elaborate on the themes discussed above to explore how visual and textual diversity discourses are structured on the websites of IHEs that vary in demographics and levels of selectivity. Building on the theoretical contributions of research in retail marketing, higher education marketing, and critical discourse analysis, I examine isomorphism across IHEs as well as discourse features unique to specific institutions or types of IHE.

3.1.2 Production and interpretation of IHE website discourse

As Urciuoli (2003) emphasizes in the passage quoted above, IHE websites are created with the intent to make the institution appealing to the public and prospective students. It is important to note, however, that those responsible for writing the text and choosing the images that end up on these websites are not necessarily trained in either marketing or higher education practices. In both disciplines, diversity is a subfield that has its own theory and best practices, so even if a website copywriter has basic knowledge of marketing and higher education theory, they would not have a detailed understanding of how to write about and represent diversity in higher education. Additionally, website copywriters are not policymakers: they must comply with institutional and governmental policies that restrict or require certain diversity practices, but they do not necessarily have detailed knowledge of the policies themselves; policymakers and copywriters at the same IHE may in fact never have any meaningful interaction. That is to say, diversity discourse on an IHE website represents top-down practices and beliefs filtered through the decision-making of one or more

copywriters who may not have in-depth knowledge about the task they are required to do and, depending on the institution, may not receive much guidance either.

Well-resourced universities, particularly private elite IHEs with large endowments, have the means to create diversity, equity, and inclusion offices as stand-alone academic units and hire staff and administrators (e.g., Chief Diversity Officers) who are trained in higher education to run these units; such units typically include a staff member who is hired for the purpose of designing and maintaining the diversity office's website. Lower-resourced universities may have one employee who is responsible for the websites of several academic units, or responsibility for the website of the diversity or equity office falls on a staff member who was not hired with that as part of their job description. Thus, differences in diversity discourse across IHE websites are not solely the product of colleges and universities having different student populations, missions, and levels of selectivity; they are also the product of differences in practical and theoretical knowledge about discourse and practice in higher education, as well as differences in the availability of institutional resources that can optimize access to and implementation of this knowledge.

Another important fact is that institutions and the people who write on their behalf often view IHE websites differently than the current and prospective students who visit them. Students research IHEs through websites because they know that is where information that will determine their application and enrollment decisions is housed, but they are aware that one of the primary purposes of IHE websites is to market institutions in ways that encourage students to apply (e.g., Meyer & Jones, 2011). Despite their awareness of the persuasive purposes of IHE website discourse, however, students often still view this discourse as a form of contract. Students of color, in particular, turn to textual and image based diversity

discourse to assess what their experiences might be like at an IHE and how the institution will support them as they work to earn their degree; when the rhetoric that encouraged them to apply does not match institutional practice, students of color may become highly skeptical of institutional diversity discourse and the commitment to diversity it is meant to convey. For instance, overrepresentation of students of color, which may not be purposefully deceptive on the part of website copywriters, may be interpreted by students of color who enroll at the IHE as being intentionally misleading and dishonest (Shook 2019). Generally speaking, website creators and students may differ regarding which components of IHE websites they consider most important, and as a result, institutional marketing strategies and student uptake are misaligned. My analysis of IHE website discourse examines the structure, ideological foundations, and rhetorical potential of website discourse and places them in dialogue with student interpretations of website discourse.

3.2 Data and methods of IHE website analysis

The website data I selected for analysis and the analytical methods I employed were informed by the website discourse studies referenced above, as well as the larger bodies of research on diversity in higher education and marketing in higher education to which they contribute. Content analyses of IHE websites have identified the types of pages that contain information most relevant to prospective students: About, Admissions, student life, and diversity and/or equity office (the first visited the most frequently). Studies that compare websites from different types of IHEs (e.g., Holland & Ford 2020; Saichaie & Morphew 2014) demonstrate the explanatory power of incorporating factors such as prestige, mission, size, demographics, and geographic location into analyses of website discourse.

I build on studies of website text and images by analyzing both forms of discourse. Like Morrish and Sauntson (2020), I analyze keywords and their institutional, historical, and ideological contexts, and like Del Vecchio (2017), Lavin (2017), and Pippert et al. (2013), I analyze images of people and the forms of visually identifiable diversity that they represent. I also follow the practice in previous research that places institutional discourse and student discourse into dialogue with each other. I analyze how institutional descriptions and representations of diversity on websites compare to students' descriptions and understandings of the idea of diversity (Urciuoli 2009) and incorporated students' direct responses to website discourse into my analysis (Shook 2019). On the whole, I analyze how website diversity discourse functions to construct an image of an institution as a "diverse and inclusive" place. In the following sections, I describe my data and analysis methods in more detail.

3.2.1 Institutional website discourse data

I critically analyzed and compared discourse on the websites of eight four-year IHEs in the U.S., including UCSB and Southern Historically Black University (SHBU). Comparing across different types of IHEs allowed me to analyze how discourses are shaped by institutional factors, and frequently recurring discourse patterns across institution types pointed to widespread ideologies about diversity in U.S. higher education. UCSB, SHBU, and Stanford University (for reasons I explain below) are the only institutions for which I analyzed website diversity discourse specific to graduate students. Each of the six other institutions was selected based on its geographic proximity to either UCSB or SHBU in addition to its Minority Serving Institution (MSI) status, private or public status, research or teaching focus, prestige, and sociopolitical orientation. These criteria were used because they

are publicly identifiable institutional features that do not require ethnographic or in-group knowledge to recognize and assess. The eight institutions are summarized in Table 3.1.[11]

	U.S. region	MSI or PWI	Public or Private	IHE type	Prestige USNWR	Approx. total enrollment Fall 2019	Endowment (2019)	Other notable information
Christian University	Southeast	PWI	Private	Liberal arts	[Omitted]	15,000	$1.6 billion	Conservative Christian
CSU Channel Islands	Central California Coast	HSI	Public	Comprehensive (teaching-focused)	Top 20 Public Regional School West	7,000	$16 million	Established 2002
Pomona College	Southern California	PWI	Private	Liberal arts	Top 5 National Liberal Arts College	1,700	$2.3 billion	Part of college consortium
Southern Flagship University	Southeast	PWI	Public	Research	Top 10 Public University	25,000	> $5 billion	
Southern Historically Black University	Southeast	HBCU	Public	Comprehensive (teaching-focused)	Top 30 Public Regional School South	5,000	$35 million	
Southern Regional Black University	Southeast	HBCU	Public	Comprehensive (teaching-focused)	Top 50 Public Regional School South	5,600	$24 million	
Stanford University	Northern California	PWI	Private	Research	Top 10 National University	16,000	$27.7 billion	Typically enrolls more graduate than undergraduate students
UC Santa Barbara	Central California Coast	PWI with HSI status	Public	Research	Top 10 Public University	26,000	$403 million	Received MSI designation in 2015

Table 3.1 Summary of institutions in website analysis sample

The eight institutions whose website discourse I analyzed can be grouped in a several ways. Four of the eight institutions are in California: California State University (CSU)

[11] To protect the identity of SHBU, institutions in the southeast have been given pseudonyms and information is generalized.

Channel Islands, Pomona College, Stanford University, and UCSB. The other four are located in states in the Southeastern region of the U.S.: Christian University, Southern Flagship University, SHBU, and Southern Regional Black University. Four institutions are federally designated MSIs: CSU Channel Islands and UCSB are Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSIs) in California, and SHBU and Southern Regional Black University are Historically Black Colleges/Universities (HBCUs) in the Southeast. Although UCSB attained HSI status in 2015 because of the demographics of its undergraduate population, it is a Historically White Institution (HWI) and it is still a Predominantly White Institution (PWI) overall. Therefore, I consider UCSB an HWI with HSI status, whereas the other three MSIs are Historically Minority Serving Institutions (HMSIs). Four of the five HWIs (Pomona, UCSB, Stanford, Southern Flagship University) are considered prestigious or elite institutions based on their rankings in *U.S. News and World Report* (https://www.usnews.com/best-colleges), acceptance rates, and resources (i.e., endowments and awarded grants), among other factors. Three institutions are private (Christian University, Pomona, Stanford); Stanford is the only private IHE that is also a research university. Of the five public institutions (CSU Channel Islands, Southern Regional Black University, UCSB, Southern Flagship University, SHBU), two are research universities (UCSB, Southern Flagship University) and three are comprehensive regional universities (CSU Channel Islands, Southern Regional Black University, SHBU). As defined in an article in *Forbes,* a comprehensive institution is one that

> enrolls a large number of undergraduates and offers an array of master's degrees and in some instances a small number of doctoral degrees. Many were founded as teacher colleges (or "normal schools"), and a substantial number are located in metropolitan areas. Their faculties engage in research, although not with the emphasis or the extramural funding found at research universities. Consequently, they take on heavier teaching loads. […] Most comprehensives are public, accept the majority of applicants,

and compared to major research universities or liberal arts colleges, serve a more diverse student body in terms of age, ethnicity, part-time status, first-generation-college attenders and socioeconomic background. (Nietzel, 2019)

Of the three research universities (Stanford, UCSB, Southern Flagship University), UCSB is the only one with MSI status. Additionally, Christian University is the only institution with a religious affiliation. These groupings by characteristics are summarized in Table 3.2.

	California	Southeast	MSI	HWI/ PWI	Public	Private	Research	Prestigious	Regional	Religious affiliation
Christian University		✓		✓		✓				✓
CSU Channel Islands	✓		✓		✓				✓	
Pomona College	✓			✓		✓		✓		
Southern Flagship University		✓		✓	✓		✓	✓		
Southern Historically Black University		✓	✓		✓				✓	
Southern Regional Black University		✓	✓		✓				✓	
Stanford University	✓			✓		✓	✓	✓		
UC Santa Barbara	✓		✓	✓	✓		✓	✓		

Table 3.2. Summary of IHEs according to institution characteristics

Below, I provide an overview of the content analyzed on the websites of these eight institutions and my process for coding the data for analysis.

3.2.2 Website sampling and coding

For each IHE, I analyzed the following pages of the institution's websites, as available. Not every website had all of these pages, and the organization of content varied from one website to the next (e.g., which page contained the mission statement):

- Homepage
- About page
- Information summary page ("Facts and Figures," "By the Numbers," "At a Glance")
- Institutional mission and values
- Admissions page
- Diversity-related pages (e.g., Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion)

To ensure that I did not miss relevant diversity-related discourse that was not posted on or linked through one of these pages, I also searched the entire website for keywords such as *diversity, inclusion,* and *equity* using the website search function. In addition to the pages I had already found, this search typically returned stories from campus newspapers, department websites, and general announcements; it occasionally returned institutional reports and other formal documents related to diversity, such as diversity initiative proposals. Although the latter are not "website discourse" in the same sense as the content found on the pages listed above, they are still informational, publicly accessible texts that utilize institutional language around diversity, so I included these documents in my data set for a fuller understanding of what an institution's diversity discourse could be like. Text from these documents, where it is included in the following analyses, is noted as such.

Because I was interested in how institutional diversity discourses impact graduate students at UCSB and SHBU, I analyzed webpages related to graduate students for these two institutions. I also analyzed graduate-related discourse on Stanford's website. Stanford consistently enrolls more graduate than undergraduate students, so graduate diversity is a central aspect of its university-wide diversity efforts. For all three IHEs, the pages that I analyzed included the graduate studies homepage, admissions page, and diversity pages, as

well as any relevant subsections of the pages listed above that referenced graduate student diversity.

I collected and analyzed texts and images from 38 pages across the websites of these eight IHEs between January and May 2020. During the process of coding and writing up my analysis, I revisited these pages multiple times, and no major changes were made to them during this period.[12] Few pages stated when the text was originally written or most recently updated, so I was generally unable to locate the text temporally—that is, determine when a page was published relative to when the diversity-related terms that it includes became widespread. Additionally, none of the websites listed an author or contact information regarding the content of the site except UCSB's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion page.

Text and images were qualitatively coded and annotated using the NVivo qualitative data and analysis software package. My coding scheme was based on the following analytic questions:

1. How are *diversity* and *inclusion* defined or described in the discourse? Is this done explicitly or implicitly?
2. How are these definitions or descriptions related to institutional features summarized in Table 3.1?
3. Which forms (i.e., noun, adjective, verb) of *diversity* and *inclusion* are used? What are common collocations (words that appear before and after)?

[12] In response to the May 25, 2020 police killing of George Floyd and the social uprisings it sparked against white supremacy and institutional violence, many IHEs added statements to their websites expressing solidarity with protesters and/or denouncing white supremacy. Although some of these statements referenced institutional commitments to diversity, equity, and inclusion, I do not include them in my analysis because they were not created specifically as diversity texts and because they are reactions to a specific social moment that is beyond the scope of this project.

4. Are the verbs used in the discourse active or stative? (Where) does passivization occur?
5. What types of people visually represent diversity in images? What types of people are missing?
6. How is diversity represented in text versus images on the same page?
7. What semantically similar words are used in conjunction with or in place of *diversity*?
8. Which diversity-related "buzzwords" are used in the text? Which are not used?
9. How does the text reflect or orient to restrictions or requirements (e.g., legal, institutional) regarding diversity practices?
10. How does the institution frame the purpose of higher education? How does diversity fit into that frame?

Based on these questions, I coded discourse on each website for 21 features, which fell into 14 categories:

Code	Operationalization
All	• Use of the quantifier *all* in reference to aspects of diversity (e.g., *all people, all backgrounds)*
Active and stative framings of diversity	• Is diversity described as an action or process (with action verbs)? • Or as a state or achievement (with stative verbs)?
Definitions of *diversity*	• Definitions of diversity • Qualities stated as evidence of diversity
Definitions of *inclusion*	• Definitions of inclusion • Structures and/or practices states as evidence of inclusion
Diversity as euphemism	• *Diversity* used in place of explicit discussion of structural discrimination
Educational mission	• Institution's mission statement • Statements about the purpose of higher education
Excellence through diversity	• Discourse that connects diversity to qualities of excellence (e.g., rigor, leadership)
Global/international	• Use of the terms *global* and/or *international*
Legal consideration	• Reference to federal or state law

	• Omission of legal considerations where discussion would be relevant
Metacommentary about diversity	• Discourse that comments on what diversity discourse usually means or how it is usually used
Motivations or outcomes for diversity	• Why the institution values diversity • What the institution has achieved or hopes to achieve through diversity
Odd linguistic constructions	• Unusual word choices and syntactic constructions
Prestige versus access	• Discourse that invokes prestige (exclusion) and access at the same time
"Real talk" vs. "happy talk" about diversity	• Discussion of structural barriers, limitations of diversity work ("real talk") • Exclusively positive discussions of diversity ("happy talk")

Table 3.3 Coding categories for website analysis

3.2.3 Ethnographic and focus group data

As part of my analysis of IHE website discourse, I incorporate my own knowledge as well as interpretations of the website discourse other than my own. I interviewed the UCSB Diversity and Equity Coordinator, who oversaw the website content for the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion—which, as noted above, was the only page across the eight institutions that had a contact person publicly listed. I also conducted two focus groups with graduate student interview participants from UCSB to discuss their opinions about IHE websites and diversity discourse. Responses from all three interviews are incorporated into the discussion of findings below.

Focus group discussions afforded participants the opportunity to engage with diversity discourses as they appear in the specific genre of the IHE website and to do so in dialogue with others. I recruited focus group participants by emailing a request for participation to all graduate students at UCSB and SHBU who had completed an interview. Because of the timing of the request, the overall response rate was low, and the final sample of participants was all from UCSB. The email request was sent in mid-May 2020, two

months after the coronavirus pandemic forced colleges and universities to shut down in-person operations and many people in the U.S. were dealing with the accompanying housing and economic crises. UCSB is on a quarter-based system, so graduate students were still engaged in academic activities remotely, but SHBU's Spring semester had already ended. The week after I sent the requests, protests against anti-Black violence and police brutality erupted in response to back-to-back, high profile killings of Black Americans by police. Several people who had initially expressed intent to participate did not respond to follow-up requests for scheduling (this was the case for all of the SHBU respondents); as a result, the final sample was eight UCSB students. The sample of focus group participants is summarized in Table 3.4.

Pseudonym	Race/Ethnicity/Nationality	Gender	Area of study
Biyu	Chinese (International)	Female	STEM
Borden	Black (U.S.)	Male	Social Sciences
deandre	Black (U.S.)	Non-binary	Arts & Humanities
Kendrick	Black (U.S.)	Male	Arts & Humanities
Liana	Southeast Asian (International)	Female	STEM
Lilly	Middle Eastern (International)	Female	Social Sciences
Ludwig	Native/Indigenous (U.S.)	Male	Social Sciences
Netta	Asian American (U.S.)	Female	STEM

Table 3.4. Summary of UCSB focus group participants

The interviews, which were conducted over Zoom, consisted of open discussion questions such as "What do you see as the purpose of a diversity website?" and discussion of selected text excerpts and images from the websites that I analyze below. When I asked graduate student interviewees at both IHEs about their institution's website during their interviews, none of them said that they regularly or had ever systematically looked at it. However, much of the institutional discourse that they discussed during the interviews appears on IHE websites. The questions and images presented during the discussion groups

are in Appendix E. In the next section, I turn to my findings of features of IHE website diversity discourse that occurred across IHE types.

3.3. Findings: Cross-IHE ideologies and keywords

In the remainder of this chapter, I discuss similarities in discourses and ideologies that appeared on websites across the eight institutions, along with interviewees' perspectives on the data. I focus on features of diversity discourse in my data that are established in existing research on diversity and IHE websites. These features include justifications for diversity, neoliberal ideologies about diversity in higher education, and definitions of *diversity* and related terms. These features reflect discourse patterns that are widespread across IHEs in the U.S.: although some features are more prominent in certain institutional contexts, all IHEs engage with these discourses and ideologies to some extent regardless of institution type. I discuss novel findings in the website data in Chapter 4.

3.3.1 Justifications for diversity

A consistent feature of diversity discourse on the eight IHE websites was how institutions justified or motivated their diversity and inclusion practices. Rhetoric in favor of diversity in higher education frequently leans on the argument of institutional benefit: diversity can be achieved in such a way that the IHE and its members gain something from it (Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005). All of the IHE websites framed diversity as (1) a benefit to the institution as a single, abstract entity and/or (2) a benefit to students and faculty who are members of the institution. The consistency of this practice is not surprising considering the legal and discursive precedents established in the Supreme Court cases *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* (1978), *Gratz et al. v. Bollinger et al.* (2003), and *Grutter et*

al. v. Bollinger et al. (2003), which challenged affirmative action admissions policies at the University of California, Davis and University of Michigan, Ann Arbor, respectively. As Berry (2015) details, the decisions in these three cases established that diversity must have explicit and tangible benefits to IHEs (i.e., it must "serve a compelling interest") and that race-conscious admissions policies designed to foster diversity must be narrowly tailored to that goal. Justice Lewis Powell's single-authored opinion in the 1978 *Bakke* case framed diversity as socially beneficial and argued that race and other social characteristics should be considered in college admissions if diversity is the objective. This argument became the precedent for the "diversity rationale" used by the University of Michigan as the defendant in the *Gratz* and *Grutter* cases: "student learning improves and other benefits accrue when students interact with peers of other backgrounds, including but not limited to race and ethnicity, because such interaction exposes students to unfamiliar experiences and perspectives" (Berrey, 2015, p. 84).

Although none of the institutions whose websites I analyzed were in the midst of legal battles over race-conscious admissions during the period of this study, the practice of demonstrating how diversity "serves a compelling interest"—be it institutional or societal—continues. Three common justifications for diversity in my data set were the institution's status, the diversity rationale, and social justice. For Southern Flagship University and Pomona College, the interest that diversity serves is the institution's status as a leader in higher education—and, by extension, U.S. society. (Underlining is added in all examples.)

Example 1. Southern Flagship University, "Diversity" page[13]

[13] See Appendix F for a key of the representation conventions used in Chapters 3-9 for textual data.

We commit ourselves to a vision of leadership in diversity and equity, not out of a reluctant sense of obligation, but because only by enriching ourselves and embracing diversity can we become the leading institution we aspire to be.

Example 2. Pomona College, "Diversity and Admissions" page

Our campus, like many others across the nation, is navigating a critical turning point on issues of diversity and inclusivity. As a globally recognized institution in Southern California—a region at the forefront of diversity, openness and innovation—we must lead the way.

This justification is an example of what Thomas (2019, p. 476) refers to as "diversity as investment": "diversity is actively reimagined as a tool for the university and its campus publics to enhance their personal portfolios. Diversity as investment converts diversity efforts into strategic market-oriented actions." This practice applies to all IHE diversity discourse, but it is an especially fitting practice in the context of IHE websites considering their marketing functions.

As I discuss in Chapter 5, discursively linking diversity to ideologies of excellence such as "leadership" is common in the discourse of prestigious HWIs. These IHEs attempt to reconcile societal expectations for institutional diversity, exclusionary practices of elitism, and racist anti-affirmative logics that equate an increase in the number of students of color with a decrease in institutional quality. During the focus group discussions, several participants critiqued the following passage from Stanford's diversity statement as exemplifying the ideology of diversity as a benefit to the institution:

Example 3. Stanford University Diversity Statement

It's important to understand that we envision IDEAL (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity and Access in a Learning Environment) as much more than counting numbers and checking boxes. If we're successful, it will result in significant cultural and institutional change for Stanford.

Participants specifically took issue with the phrasing "for Stanford," which positions the institution as the beneficiary of these (implicitly positive) changes rather than members of the campus community. In the words of one participant, Liana:

> [I]t sounds to me like the purpose of the statement, or including diversity, or, like, envisioning IDEAL is mostly for the sake of the university. Less so than the people that they serve, which are the students. So, for me, I'm also questioning the purpose of, like, why do you incorporate diversity in the first place?

When I presented the passage in Example 3 to focus group participants, it was decontextualized—removed from the rest of the Sandford diversity statement, which discusses the relationship of diversity research and social justice, among other things. It was also anonymized so that they did not know which university produced it. Liana's interpretation of this passage and her final question nevertheless reflect a belief about education that is at odds with this type of institution-oriented diversity ideology: institutions of higher education fundamentally exist to serve students, and therefore any diversity efforts that are not designed with the intent to benefit students directly are not worthwhile.

In Examples 4-7, UCSB, CSU Channel Islands, Southern Regional Black University, and SHBU draw on the diversity rationale. These institutions present diversity as a resource that furthers the purpose of higher education as preparation for "the real world"—becoming adult members of society and the workforce. More specifically, an institution with compositional diversity ostensibly prepares students to participate in increasingly globalized and less homogeneous societies and workforces.

> **Example 4**. University of California Diversity Statement, linked on the UCSB "Diversity Equity, and Inclusion" page
>
> Diversity aims to broaden and deepen both the educational experience and the scholarly environment, as students and faculty learn to interact effectively with each other, preparing them to participate in an increasingly complex and pluralistic society.

Example 5. CSU Channel Islands "About" page

Multicultural—a campus that reflects the real world; a curriculum that prepares you for it.

Example 6. Southern Regional Black University, "Mission" page

We foster a multicultural campus respecting all people, cultures, ideas, beliefs, identities, socioeconomic backgrounds, and perspectives. We train our students to become leaders in an ever-changing global and multicultural society.

Example 7. SHBU, Mission statement

Preparing globally aware citizens that respect and appreciate cultural differences of all people through service and the dissemination of knowledge to the world.

Even Christian University, the most conservative of the eight institutions, made a bare-bones appeal to the diversity rationale.

Example 8. Christian University, "Diversity" page

Here you'll meet peers whose backgrounds, interests, and ideas align with and diverge from your own. We learn from one another.

Without elaborating and with no reference to "preparation" or students' life after university, this passage connects difference (*diverge*) to *learn[ing]* through syntactic juxtaposition that implies a correlative, if not necessarily causal, relationship. Whether diversity was described as benefiting the institution at large or the community of students, faculty, staff, and administrators, more often than not it was described as a tool or resource at the disposal of the institution.

Stanford's website was the only one to explicitly discuss motivations for diversity other than serving an institutional interest or the diversity rationale (though both of these other motivations are discussed at length). Stanford's website discourse connects diversity to "equity and access" and connects all three concepts to the historical exclusion of certain

unspecified populations from higher education. In other words, diversity is framed as a reparation of sorts.

Example 9. Stanford University Diversity Statement, "Social Justice" section

> Despite our current commitments to equity and access, our collective history is built on the efforts of populations that have been historically marginalized and denied equal access to higher education.

As I discuss in the following section, scholars across disciplines have demonstrated how neoliberal ideologies of diversity are largely disconnected from equity-based ideologies and practices. In California, affirmative action policies—which explicitly consider ethnoracial and gender identity—are banned in public higher education because of Proposition 209 (Ballotpedia 1996). Proposition 209 was passed in 1996, and the effort to overturn that ban through Proposition 16 in the 2020 state election was unsuccessful (Wolf & Abraham, 2020). As a private institution in California, Stanford is at liberty to make this type of discursive acknowledgement, but it is still unusual in the broader landscape of U.S. higher education diversity discourse.

3.3.2 Neoliberal ideologies of diversity

The common justifications for institutional diversity described above frame it as a resource that benefits the institution and its members. These positive descriptions of diversity's impacts are examples of the optimistic rhetoric of diversity "happy talk" (Bell & Hartmann, 2007). Diversity happy talk exclusively associates diversity with positive concepts and experiences such as fun, beauty, excitement, growth, and preparation. It is the logical outcome of the co-optation of diversity discourse by neoliberal institutions that disconnect remove from historical projects of racial equity in education. Thomas (2019) argues that through diversity happy talk, IHEs "[seek] to mobilize excitement and satisfaction" around

their diversity efforts, "yet the mobilization of excitement often entails minimizing, ignoring, and obfuscating issues of power and inequality" (p. 476). Such discourses feed into ahistorical ideologies of diversity as an individualized trait determined solely by the identities of current institutional members. In my study, this type of happy talk was especially prominent on pages for diversity-related offices and committees—pages which, fundamentally, are designed to use diversity to make the institution look good.

> **Example 10**. CSU Channel Islands "President's Commission on Human Relations, Diversity, and Equity" page
>
> Diversity at [CSU Channel Islands] is a source of renewal and vitality.
>
> **Example 11.** Southern Flagship University, "Diversity" page
>
> When people of different backgrounds come together, they exchange ideas, question assumptions (including their own), and broaden the horizons for us all.

Diversity happy talk is also a strategic discursive practice for institutions that fear alienating white members of their campus communities. These include white students, faculty, and staff who feel excluded from/by diversity discourse, as well as whites who believe that there is no need for targeted racial inclusion efforts in higher education because racial discrimination against non-whites is not an issue (Dover et al. 2016; Hikido & Murray 2016). At most IHEs in the U.S., white people constitute the majority of the campus community and/or they wield significant influence through their institutional roles, financial leverage, or other means. A 2017 American Council of Education survey of all U.S. colleges and universities found that only 17% of IHE presidents and 20% of department chairs were people of color (cited in Chun & Feagin 2020). In other words, most IHEs are highly motivated to assuage white people's concerns. In his interview with me, Keane, the Inclusion and Equity Coordinator at

UCSB, spoke to how diversity-related texts, including university websites, reflect the tensions of this institutional reality:

> A diversity text is like– It reveals *a lot* of cultural anxieties, right? Like anxieties about not upsetting the, you know, the wrong people. White people. @@, right? Or powerful people. Or, like, "We want to present [ourselves as] progressive, but, you know, we want to kind of mystify the need for this progressive [language].

By framing diversity as an educational and career benefit to all students, and therefore a benefit to the institution, diversity happy talk is a strategy to minimize whites' negative responses to diversity discourse.

Ludwig, one of the focus group participants, connected diversity happy talk to the more general and widespread happy talk of institutional discourse throughout IHE websites. Websites are designed to showcase the best that an institution has to offer in order to attract prospective students, and therefore they rarely include information that reflects poorly on the institution. Ludwig observed:

> I see university websites as a marketing and advertising platform. Like, "Look at what we've done, look where we're going." Yeah, I mean, look how many…Nobel Prize winners. You know, all these different things that are just supposed to increase the value of that university.
>
> They wouldn't mention anywhere on a website about the percentage of students being food insecure. That would be like, "Oh, we don't want that to be known, but we love that maybe in the department you're going to be in we have somebody that's won X amount of awards or been cited so many X times." And I think primarily the website is there really to focus on the positive and definitely not mention any of the negative.

For HWIs in particular, diversity "provides a positive take on markedness" (Urciuoli 2009, p. 36). These institutions can assign diversity as an attribute or property to racially or otherwise minoritized individuals and groups, who are then described as bringing "their" diversity to the institution to "share" with the campus community. This is captured in Example 11 above: "When people of different backgrounds come together, they exchange

ideas, question assumptions (including their own), and broaden the horizons for us all." The third-person pronoun *they* refers to "people of different backgrounds who come together" and the first-person pronoun *us* refers to the unnamed group of people whose "horizons" are "broadened" as a result. The intention of this statement was most likely to present the university community at large as being made up of people from different backgrounds; the wording, however, positions "people of different backgrounds" as separate from the existing university community ("us") but bringing something positive to the university community as a product of their difference. By individualizing diversity—framing it something that is separate from and added to the dominant institutional culture—neoliberal diversity discourse obscures the historical processes and societal structures that have led to the underrepresentation of certain groups in IHEs in the first place. As Ahmed (2012, p. 71) summarizes, "[I]f diversity is what individuals have *as* individuals, then it gives permission to those working within institutions to turn away from ongoing realities of institutional inequality" (original emphasis). Through this ideological lens, the goal of diversity work is to recruit "diverse" students to attend HWIs; whether institutions meaningfully change their longstanding exclusionary practices to be more inclusive of these students is rarely a topic of institutional discussion.

3.3.3 *Diversity* and related terms

Neoliberal ideologies about diversity as an institutional resource, an individualized trait, and an ahistorical phenomenon are especially evident in the lexical features of the websites in my study. The direct semantic consequences of *Bakke, Gratz,* and *Grutter* on diversity both as a word and as a concept are also evident in these lexical features. In this section, I analyze the terms *multicultural(ism)* and *global* and how their meanings and

functions on IHE websites compare to those of *diversity.* I also discuss the terms *legally protected groups* and *equal opportunity*, which appeared on the websites of four institutions, and how IHEs use these terms as part of diversity discourse to navigate state and federal legal mandates.

Diversity, and its adjectival form, *diverse,* appeared on institutional websites in my data set with varying frequency. Overall, the terms referred to or modified other words related to people (e.g., *community, population, students*) or aspects of individuals and social groups (e.g., *perspectives, identities, backgrounds*). The specificity of the terms' referents and the type of diversity that they referred to varied based on which page the term occurred on. For instance, "At a Glance" or "By the Numbers" pages, which highlight key facts about the institution in list form, tended to include language such as "students from [number] states and [number] countries"; pages about student life, in contrast, tended to highlight diversity by naming student organizations related to ethnoracial, cultural, and or religious identity (e.g., Muslim Student Association, Pan-Asian Student Union). Two diversity-related terms occurred on the websites of all eight IHEs in collocations with or in the same semantic and syntactic contexts as *diversity/diverse*: *multicultural(ism)* and *global*. (I discuss additional related terms that patterned according to institution type in Chapter 4.) These terms reflect how, in the decades since *Bakke, diversity* continues to be used in higher education in ways that deviate from or expand on its original narrow sense of racial diversity among domestic students.

Multicultural(ism)

Although they have different ideological underpinnings and are not exactly synonymous, *diversity* and *multiculturalism* have both been used in higher education since

the 1980s to refer to difference based on any of a number of identity characteristics. Within the realm of popular discourse as well as buzzwords in higher education, *multicultural(ism)* was the precursor to *diversity* (and, as a result, the former sounds dated to many people today). Multicultural education was the education sector's response to the demands made by the Civil Rights Movement and other movements that it inspired in the 1960s and 1970s. During this time, marginalized groups pushed both for access to education and for the curriculum that was taught to reflect their lived experiences. In the 1980s, the ideology of multiculturalism increased in popularity as a response to the universalist, homogeneous notions of "American culture" that emerged during the Cold War era (Berrey, 2015). Banks and Banks (2013, p. 5) note that "practicing educators use the term *multicultural education* to describe a wide variety of programs and practices related to educational equity, women, ethnic groups, language minorities, low-income groups, LGBT (lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender) people and people with disabilities."

Multiculturalism aligns with the expanded understanding of diversity put forth in the Powell decision: it considers gender, sexuality, class, and other identity categories, in addition to race and ethnicity. In the less radical form of multiculturalism, diversity plays a role in an assimilationist framework that maintains existing hegemonic power structures (Jay, 2003): having people from different ethnoracial and national backgrounds in the same group (i.e., diversity) affords multiculturalism, and ethnoracial and other forms of diversity are most welcome and celebrated by institutions when they fit into existing "American" values and practices. In its more radical form, multiculturalism explicitly challenges the idea that the experiences and knowledge of dominant groups are universally relevant. Banks and Banks (2013, pp. 18-19) argue:

> To implement multicultural education in a school, we must reform power relations, verbal interactions between teachers and students, culture, curriculum, extracurricular activities, attitudes toward minority languages, testing and assessment practices, and grouping practices. The school's institutional norms, social structures, cause-belief statements, values, and goals must be transformed and reconstructed.

Compared to this form of multiculturalism, the concept of diversity "more evidently eschew[s] a social justice view in favor of a view of productive, generative group relations" (Berry, 2015, p. 37). More than two decades ago, Ladson-Billings (1998, p. 22) lamented the sanitization of the radical potential of multicultural education in favor of diversity; she described multiculturalism as "but a shadow of its conceptual self" in the form of "superficial and trivial 'celebrations of diversity'" (see also Lewis, 2004). Both terms are racialized and have retained connotations of race, ethnicity, and nationality, but *diversity* typically has a wider scope of reference than *multiculturalism* in higher education. Whereas *diversity* can now refer to anything from geography to religion to sociopolitical beliefs, the "culture" in *multiculturalism* is often a euphemism for race specifically (e.g., Mitchell, 1993).

The websites of CSU Channel Islands and Southern Regional Black University—both HMSIs—showed how *diversity* and *multicultural(ism)* can function in IHE contexts where the post-*Bakke* meaning of diversity has not been as widely adopted or institutionally entrenched. On both websites, *multicultural(ism)* occurred with equal or greater frequency relative to *diversity.* In Example 6 above, Southern Regional Black University demonstrated the vagueness of reference than can make *multicultural* and *diverse* seemingly synonymous:

> **Example 6**. Southern Regional Black University, "Mission" page
>
> We foster a multicultural campus respecting all people, cultures, ideas, beliefs, identities, socioeconomic backgrounds, and perspectives. We train our students to become leaders in an ever-changing global and multicultural society.

In both sentences, *multicultural* can be understood to refer to demographic difference, and *diverse* could replace *multicultural* without fundamentally changing the message of the statement. The syntactic juxtaposition of *multicultural* and "people, cultures, ideas, beliefs, identities, socioeconomic backgrounds, and perspectives" suggests that these are the characteristics that make the campus multicultural and that students will encounter when they "become leaders in [a]…multicultural society." In this case, *multicultural* has a range of referents similar to *diversity* in the post-*Bakke* era, including "ideas, beliefs, and perspectives."

On the other websites where *multicultural(ism)* appeared, *diverse/diversity* and *multicultural(ism)* were used in similar, seemingly interchangeable ways, but *diversity* occurred with greater frequency. For example, the paragraph that introduced the UCSB "Principles of Community" included the phrase "our multicultural and global society." This phrasing was pulled directly from the UC Mission Statement, and *multicultural* did not occur anywhere else in the description of the principles, while forms of *diversity* occurred multiple times.

> **Example 12.** UCSB Diversity, Equity, and Inclusions page, "Principles of Community"
>
> Our community of faculty, students, and staff are involved in a culture of interdisciplinary collaboration that is responsive to the needs of <u>our multicultural and global society.</u>
> […]
> To fulfill our mission, faculty, staff, and students are engaged in a process that begins with cultivating a sense of mutual respect and understanding amongst our <u>community's diverse components</u>.

Diversity has become an ideologically "defanged" term in part because of its semantic expansion beyond the ever-contentious social categories of race and ethnicity. It is possible for an IHE to discuss diversity on its website without ever explicitly referencing race, but

multiculturalism still has strong semantic connections to race and ethnicity. The relatively safety of *diversity* compared to *multiculturalism* is demonstrated by the discourse on the website of Christian University, a private, predominantly white, conservative Christian university. Despite the sociopolitical differences between Christian University and the seven other institutions in my data set, Christian University used the language of diversity on its website (though in ways specific to its conservative Christian culture, which I discuss in Chapter 5). The term *multicultural* occurred only once on the pages that I analyzed, in reference to a resource center on campus; *diversity* was used everywhere else.

Example 13. Christian University, "Office of Equity and Inclusion" page

> The office was renamed the <u>Center for Multicultural Enrichment</u> to better reflect and affirm our purpose statement of promoting unity and celebrating <u>cultural diversity</u>.

It is typical for IHEs in the U.S. to have a "multicultural center" rather than a "diversity center" for student engagement and activities organized around food, music, dance, art and other cultural practices. Multicultural and other student centers are operated by the student affairs arm of an IHE, which is responsible for fostering students' holistic development through campus organizations and activities. Diversity, equity, and inclusion offices, in contrast, are administrative offices responsible for ensuring institutional compliance with federal and state laws. Thus, this use of *multicultural* is not surprising. The inclusion of the modifier *cultural* before *diversity* narrows the scope of reference to what typically falls under the umbrella of culture—namely, ethnoracial background. These are arguably the least controversial forms of diversity in the context of a conservative Christian institution in comparison to, for example, gender identity and sexuality.

Global

The other diversity-related term that occurred consistently across the eight IHE websites was *global,* which also refers to people and cultures. Whereas the members of a "multicultural" event or community may all be domestic, things that are "global" entail representations of culture across national boundaries. With regard to student demographics, representation from most or all U.S. states in the student population is a point of pride for IHEs because it means the educational experience that the institution offers is valuable enough for students to travel to another part of the country to participate in it. However, representation of students from around the world—a global population—indexes institutional prestige since students are willing to travel not just to another part of their home country but to a different country altogether to receive the high-quality education and opportunities that they perceive the institution offers (Beech, 2019). Although international engagement in general has educational and scientific benefits, the number of international students and the range of countries from which they come are factors used to assess an IHE's broader level of institutional "internationalization" within a competitive global education market (Lee, 2015).

As noted above, information about domestic and international student representation is typically reported together, as in the following example from Pomona College, which reports international student representation first.

Example 14. Pomona College "About" page

> "There are approximately 1,670 students who come from <u>59 nations and all 50 U.S. states</u>, as well as the District of Columbia, Guam and Puerto Rico."

Regional and comprehensive institutions, which primarily serve their local communities, do not have large populations of international students. Therefore, rather than highlighting international representation among the students, the websites of SHBU, Southern Regional Black University, and CSU Channel Islands used discourses of global orientation and

preparation. They focused on students' exposure to knowledge and cultural practices from around the world through course curricula, research, internships, campus events, and other resources. The implication was that not having a large population of international students as peers does not hinder students from being prepared to participate in the globalized cultures and economies of today's world, in the U.S. and abroad. SHBU's mission statement included *global* in the core values of the institution.

> **Example 15.** SHBU Mission statement
>
> Preparing globally aware citizens that respect and appreciate cultural differences of all people through service and the dissemination of knowledge to the world.

This type of discourse notably echoed the discourse used on the websites of prestigious institutions such as Pomona College and Stanford:

> **Example 16.** Pomona College, Mission statement
>
> We gather individuals, regardless of financial circumstances, into a small residential community that is strongly rooted in Southern California yet global in its orientation.
>
> **Example 17**. Stanford University, Vice Provost of Graduate Education "Commitment to Diversity" page
>
> As a result, the Stanford community reaps the educational benefits of diversity, while preparing future generations of leaders for a global society.

Preparing students to successfully participate in an international workforce is a primary selling point for institutions that want to remain competitive in the current landscape of U.S. higher education (Leong 2013; Thomas 2019; Urciuoli 2010b). Therefore, even a selective, prestigious IHE that attracts many international students must still rhetorically assert that it can educate domestic students in ways that makes them competitive anywhere in the world.

Legally protected* and *equal opportunity

In addition to the terms *multicultural(ism)* and *global*, four IHEs used the legally based terms *legally protected* and *equal opportunity* in the diversity discourse on their websites: CSU Channel Islands, UCSB, Southern Flagship University, and Southern Regional Black University. All are public universities, but they do not comprise the complete set of public universities in the data, since SHBU is also public. There is no other characteristic that all four IHEs share: two are in California, two are in the Southeast, two are research universities, and two are HMSIs. Because of the range of institutions that used this legalistic language, I analyzed the terms as cross-IHE discourse features. Both *legally protected* and *equal opportunity* refer to legal mandated at the state and/or federal level, which has shaped which institutional practices are permissible as well as the language that can be used to describe them. In California, Proposition 209 prohibits "discriminat[ing] against, or grant[ing] preferential treatment to, any individual or group on the basis of race, sex, color, ethnicity, or national origin in the operation of public employment, public education, or public contracting," and all four institutions were subject to the legal restrictions and expectations established by federal civil rights laws.

As a result of Proposition 209, public IHEs in California have been barred from using affirmative action policies in admissions since Fall 1998. This was a critical setback for public IHEs that aimed to meaningfully increase the diversity of their student population, because affirmative action was intended to do just that through an equity framework (Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). If IHEs want to increase the presence of Black students, women, and students from other minoritized groups, they have to implement admissions practices that account for the structures that exclude these students in the first place and create opportunities for them to enroll. Without affirmative action admissions policies in place,

diversity efforts at public California IHEs are currently restricted to race-neutral means, with many institutions using socioeconomic status as a proxy for ethnoracial background (Bleemer 2019; Kaufman 2007). These efforts include attracting students to apply (e.g., providing institutional funding for events to recruit underrepresented students), creating pipelines from high schools and community colleges, and highlighting existing diversity in demographics and institutional practices.

The banning of affirmative action policies in California did not revoke the legal protections of minoritized groups as established by federal laws, including, but not limited to, the 14th Amendment, the 1964 Civil Rights Act, the 1972 Equal Employment Opportunity Act, and the 1990 Americans with Disabilities Act. These legal precedents therefore provide a strategy for attempts to bolster diversity discourse by challenging perceptions that it is empty rhetoric. On their websites, IHEs can allude to, and even explicitly reference, these legally binding expectations for institutional practice. CSU Channel Islands drew on this strategy by using *legally protected* and *diversity* as synonyms for groups that are protected by federal law:

> **Example 18.** CSU "President's Commission on Human Relations, Diversity, and Equity" page
>
> California State University Channel Islands is dedicated to improving the university environment for legally protected categories, including but not limited to nationality, religion, race, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, veteran status, and sexual orientation. Toward this end the commission which reports to the President shall be responsible for reviewing and making recommendations regarding: [t]he preparation of the annual campus plan for improvement of the university environment for all legally protected groups (hereafter referred to as diversity groups).

By labeling the numerous groups that are protected by these laws in higher education as *diversity groups*, CSU Channel Islands contributes to the expanded understanding of diversity. For example, while veterans and disabled students are legally protected individuals,

as groups of students they were not the primary intended beneficiaries of affirmative action and diversity practices. (There are, of course, students of color and women who are also veterans and/or disabled.) This expanded definition of *diversity* allowed CSU Channel Islands to frame legally required institutional efforts as special diversity work.

Rather than legally protected groups, UCSB used the language of equal opportunity to simultaneously display its compliance with state and federal laws and index its investment in institutional diversity. Contextualized within the rest of the discourse on the campus's "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion" page, this sentence's message would be virtually identical if *diversity* replaced *equal opportunity*.

Example 19. UCSB "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion" page

> "In addition, our campus upholds the principle of equal opportunity for all since equal opportunity fosters the best conditions possible for the enhancement of research, creativity, innovation, and excellence."

The wording of this particular example also frames equal opportunity as a choice—something the university has opted-in to for the reasons listed—rather than a legal requirement.

Although *equal opportunity* directly invokes the language of the Equal Employment Opportunity Act, its use in institutional diversity discourse is an example of what Wade (2004) calls "diversity doublespeak." Diversity doublespeak includes terms such as *access, inclusion,* and *opportunity* that seem to communicate progress, but, in reality, mask failures to accomplish measurable change. *Equal opportunity*, specifically, frames diversity as a product of the absence of (overt) discrimination (e.g., "opportunities are available to everyone"). This obscures the inequitable structures that make it easier for students from dominant groups to find, participate in, or benefit from available opportunities—the types of

structures that affirmative action is intended to change. In their comparison of the structural differences between equal opportunity and affirmative action policies, Crosby and Blake-Beard (2004, p. 146) capture the reality that equal opportunity rhetoric attempts to hide:

> First, affirmative action entails the expenditure of effort and resources; equal opportunity is more passive. Second, affirmative action is planful and forward looking, requiring organizations to monitor their existing action and outcomes and to anticipate future problems, whereas equal opportunity is reactive, requiring corrective actions only after a problem has been alleged or discovered. Finally, affirmative action requires that organizations be cognizant of the ethnic and gender characteristics of people, whereas equal opportunity does not.

Despite invoking legalistic language with the aura of tangible action, *equal opportunity* is yet another form of amorphous diversity discourse.

The difference between *equal opportunity* as diversity doublespeak and as legal language is demonstrated by Examples 20 and 21. Both passages are from southeastern universities, but Southern Flagship University is an HWI and Southern Regional Black University is an HBCU. Like Example 19 from UCSB, Southern Flagship University's use of *equal opportunity* presents the concept as the outcome of prohibiting discrimination and harassment. The vague phrase "promoting an inclusive and welcoming community" gives no indication of proactive (rather than avoidant) actions that the institution takes to foster either equal opportunity or diversity.

> **Example 20**. Southern Flagship University "University Code of Ethics for Faculty and Staff"
>
> Equal Opportunity: We promote an inclusive and welcoming community that respects the rights, abilities, and opinions of all people. We value equal opportunity and diversity. We do not tolerate discrimination or harassment of any kind.

In contrast to Southern Flagship University (and UCSB), Southern Regional Black University did not include *diversity* or any diversity-related keywords in the text surrounding *equal opportunity.* Appearing on the page of the office responsible for ensuring that the

university upholds federal and state laws, *equal opportunities* was in direct reference to "laws and regulations"—including affirmative action—rather than *inclusion, access*, or other similar terms.

> **Example 21.** Southern Regional Black University, "Office of Institutional Equity" page
>
> Our charge is to remind each other daily not only what our laws are but also what Southern Regional Black University's strong collective spirit of fairness demands. […] The office strives to…[s]upport compliance efforts as they relate to equal opportunities and affirmative action laws and regulations.

As semantically related terms that were in some cases used interchangeably with *diversity,* the various uses of *multicultural(ism), global, legally protected,* and *equal opportunity* on IHE websites shed light on the conceptual malleability of *diversity*. The lesser frequency of *multiculturalism* compared to *diversity* reflects a difference in the social and identity characteristics that are a focus of current institutional discourse and practice. In the post-*Bakke* era of IHE diversity, HWIs can take advantage of international students' presence to counter perceptions that they are "not diverse" because they lack racial diversity among their domestic students. Meanwhile, the legal foundations of *diversity* in anti-racist, anti-discriminatory efforts are reflected in the use of *legally protected* and *equal opportunity*, but both terms can function as nothing more than rhetoric if they are not tied to concrete institutional practice.

3.4 Conclusion

My analysis of justifications of diversity, neoliberal ideologies, and diversity related terms in IHE website discourse has shown how dominant influences in U.S. higher education affect the diversity-related practices of all IHEs, regardless of institution type. All IHEs

motivated diversity using the argument of institutional benefit, a consequence of the precedent set by the 1978 *Bakke* Supreme Court ruling on race-conscious admissions practices and a form of institutional "happy talk" that discusses diversity in exclusively positive ways. Happy talk was one manifestation of neoliberal ideologies that appeared across websites, along with discourse that discussed diversity as individualized and additive. Two frequently occurring terms related to diversity, *multicultural(ism)* and *global,* both have strong associations with macro demographic categories including race and ethnicity; whereas radical instantiations of multiculturalism work toward structural change to make education more equitable, there is no parallel "radical diversity." *Global* was used to index an institution's desirability in a competitive and globalized higher education marketplace and to signal that IHEs prepared students to participate in a globalized workforce—the latter being one of the institutional benefits of diversity put forth by IHEs. The terms *legally protected* and *equal opportunity* also appeared across websites and they varied in their use as terms grounded in legal practices and rhetoric intended to make an IHE appear to be doing more work toward equity than it actually was.

By tracing the history of diversity ideologies and terminology, I have illustrated how they came to be the go-to options for IHE website discourse. The terms analyzed in this chapter are diversity "keywords"—words used to talk about and to make sense of key aspects of culture and society (Williams, 1985)—and analyzing their use has set the stage for my larger discussion of website discourse practices in Chapter 4. As Williams points out, many of the issues from which keywords emerge and that keywords are used to discuss "[cannot] really be thought through, and some of them…cannot even be focused unless we are conscious of the words as elements of the problems" (1985, p. 16). Interviewees'

perspectives on these discourse features contributed to my analysis of these "elements of the problems," since they highlighted the negative reaction that it can engender. In the next chapter, I identify additional diversity keywords as I analyze website diversity discourse features that have not been discussed in previous research, in addition to visual representations of diversity.

CHAPTER 4: Frames, blame, and diversity images on IHE websites

Ideally, it's a marketing tool to set the expectations of potential applicants and students. In practice it's a performative mechanism to try to deceive people into thinking that the school is what it likes to think that it might be on its best day.
– Kendrick, graduate student, UCSB

As described in Chapter 3, IHE websites are strategic marketing material designed to represent institutions in the most positive light in order to attract new institution members. To this end, website diversity discourse is constructed to highlight or create the appearance of good (e.g., commitment to diversity, significant compositional diversity) and downplay or erase the bad (e.g., history of structural racism, racist incidents on campus). Through strategically constructed diversity discourse, IHEs can "say the right thing" or "tell people what they want to hear" regardless of the institution's ideologies and practices. Because this discourse has significant societal impact, it warrants critical analysis that exposes how it is structured in ways that protect the institution's image and reputation while also potentially reinforcing harmful ideologies. In this chapter I analyze discursive frames, blame-avoidant language, and visual representations of diversity that do so.

Framing—a theoretical framework originally theorized by Goffman (1974)—and blame-avoidant language have been analyzed in prior CDA research on institutional discourse (e.g., Hansson, 2015), and the concept of frames has been applied in research on diversity discourse and ideology in higher education (e.g., Rodriguez & Freeman, 2016). The linguistic structures of frames and blame-avoidant language in the specific context of diversity discourse on IHE websites, however, have not been analyzed. Following my discussion of these two discourse features, I turn to an analysis of the types of people used to represent institutional diversity in images and the ways in which their bodies are deployed.

4.1 Stative and active framings of diversity

In Goffman's (1974) theorization of frame analysis, frames are structures embedded in communicative and other practices that shape how we perceive our social realities. Frames are mutable and developed based on an array of social information, and we adjust the frames that we apply in a given context based on the information available to us. Over the past several decades, frame analysis has been widely adopted in critical media studies, with a shift toward theorizing framing as a conscious process of discourse construction. This is exemplified in Entman's (1993, p. 52) explanation of the concept: "[t]o frame is to select some aspects of a perceived reality and make them more salient in a communicating text, in such a way as to promote a particular problem definition, causal interpretation, moral evaluation, and/or treatment recommendation." Though the emphasis on intentionality deviates from Goffman's sociological theorization, it is appropriate for analyses of mass media and institutional discourse, which are consciously tailored to align with and represent organizational goals and beliefs. In my analysis, I apply this adapted theorization of framing as it has been used in critical discourse analysis scholarship, focusing on syntactic and semantic features of diversity discourse that strategically shape its interpretation.

A distinctive feature of diversity discourse on IHE websites—and one that was referenced repeatedly during my focus group interviews with graduate students—was whether diversity was presented as a state (stative frame) or as a process (active frame). Stative and active frames are not the same as passive and active voice; rather, passive and active grammatical constructions contribute to the creation of these semantic frames. In a stative diversity frame, diversity and inclusion may be qualities or characteristics (i.e.,

diverse, inclusive); alternatively, they may be states of being or finite goals that can be or have been achieved. In the latter types of stative framings, diversity and inclusion are discussed as if they are concrete and possessable objects. In active diversity frames, in contrast, diversity and inclusion are dynamic qualities that are part of an ongoing process of institutional adaptation to societal changes. Active framings use language that conveys the idea that the institution is continually working toward improvement, such as the phrase "strives to create" in Example 22.

> **Example 22**. UCSB, "Diversity Equity and Inclusion" homepage
>
> The campus community, in keeping with the academic mission of the University of California to educate its residents, strives to create an environment that is welcoming for all sectors of our state's diverse population.

Active and stative frames were used in IHE website discourse based on how diversity and related concepts were defined: the definition of *diversity* shifts to mean what the institution needs it to mean in each instance (Urciuoli 2003), so the related diversity frames do the same. Framings of diversity are significant because the discursive construction of diversity shapes institutional practice: "being diverse" and "doing diversity work" are not the same, and diversity discourse is a key tool IHEs use to manage expectation around the latter.

In my study, the frequent use of one frame over the other in website discourse was telling of institutional diversity ideology; additionally, in the case of active diversity framings, the specific action that was described strongly shaped possible interpretation of the discourse.

4.1.1 Stative diversity framings

Stative framings of diversity employ forms of the stative verb *to be* (e.g., *N* is *diverse*), verbs of possession such as *have* (e.g., *N* has *diversity*), and other syntactic constructions using *diversity* and *diverse* to frame diversity as an inherent characteristic of

the modified noun (e.g., *the diversity of N*). That is, stative framings function to present institutional diversity—however that is defined by the institution itself—as a matter of established fact. For instance, in Example 23, the adjective *diverse* describes a population of students.

Example 23. SHBU Mission Statement

> The university, a public and historically black college/university, is committed to the preparation of a <u>diverse population</u> of men and women…

There is nothing inherently noteworthy about "diverse population" as a sequence of words: this adjective-noun construction is grammatically standard English syntax. However, the use of the malleable and poorly defined descriptor *diverse* does not provide readers with concrete information about who these "men and women" are. Even within the realm of diversity discourses, more informative adjectives and adjective phrases can be used, such as *multilingual* or *socioeconomically diverse*. While the amount of intentionality behind this particular linguistic construction cannot be gleaned from the text alone, an unelaborated "diverse X" construction is well suited to performative discursive gestures toward diversity—that is, having the "right" words on the website to make the institution appear to at least be cognizant of diversity issues.

IHEs' use of this "diverse N" construction or other stative framings on their websites is not necessarily nefarious or intentionally deceptive; in many cases, it is a reflection of the institution lacking a clear definition and/or mission for diversity. In my interview with Keane, UCSB's Inclusion and Equity Coordinator, he stated that it is difficult to "take [diversity discourse] out of the clouds of soft language" and into concrete, specific language if there is no intentionality, strategic vision, or guiding principles about diversity that the language should convey. If the person responsible for creating a website or specific page is

not invested in or well-informed about the implications of various forms of diversity discourse, they are very likely to draw on recognizable, widely circulated linguistic constructions.

"Diverse N" is one of several stative framings that objectify diversity. Diversity is discussed as an object that the institution can possess, and objectification that perpetuates the commodification of people and identities considered to contribute to diversity (Leong 2013). The specific linguistic construction "rich in N" in Example 24 is frequently used in reference to naturally occurring substances or qualities that enhance the overall value of the entity that contains or consumes them (e.g., "Food rich in vitamin C").

Example 24. Southern Flagship University, "Diversity" page

> A University community rich in diversity affords every member equal respect and provides a forum for understanding our differences as well as our commonalities.

While diversity certainly has the potential to enhance the perceived value of an institution, diversity does not happen organically at the majority of U.S. IHEs (Pasque et al., 2016). This is especially true in HWI contexts. Notably, the substances frequently referenced in "rich in X" constructions are quantifiable and extractable, such as vitamins, minerals, fruits and vegetables, color, oil, and plants (Corpus of Contemporary American English, 2021). "Rich in diversity" implies that the diversity is quantifiable or measurable and that there is a threshold at which the community shifts from simply having diversity to being rich in it, but this threshold is not defined.

In Example 24, the presence of diversity at the university—and an abundance of it, as *rich* implies—is framed as the condition that engenders respect and understanding within the campus community. In other words, diversity, rather than institutional structures and practices designed to foster meaningful interactions between institution members from

diverse backgrounds, creates the “forum” for understanding. In this ways, stative framings also downplay agentive responsibility creating an inclusive institution.

4.1.2 Active Framings

In contrast to stative framings, active framings use a range of action verbs. These actions may be past, current, or future and are typically on-going or implied to be long-term. In the context of IHE diversity discourse, common action verbs include forms of *recruit, enroll, retain, support, foster,* and *assess.* For instance, Example 25 includes the action verbs *recruit, provide,* and *create.*

> **Example 25**. Stanford University, “Office of Postdoctoral Affairs” page
>
> Recognizing the educational benefits of a diverse scientific workforce and a diverse academe, OPA actively recruits prospective postdocs from all backgrounds to consider training at Stanford, provides networks of mentoring and support, and creates opportunities for successful contributions within academia and with our surrounding communities.

Because they describe actions with the potential for change and progress rather than stasis, active framings such as “actively recruits prospective postdocs from all backgrounds” align with the preferences expressed by my focus group participants and other interviewees. During a focus group discussion, Borden described his preference for detailed, action-oriented language on diversity websites:

> What exactly- What are some things that, you know, you are implementing that would mean that students–or prospective students also–mean that they will know, like, “I’m being supported in these ways.” A website that doesn’t give details is more so in the line of performance. For me, it isn’t- It doesn't tell me anything about you, the university, in terms of, like, caring about diversity.”

Three website text excerpts with active framings were presented for discussion during the focus groups. The following text, selected from the UC Diversity Statement and presented in the anonymized format below, was received most positively:

Example 26. UC Diversity Statement

> The campus community…strives to create an environment that is welcoming for all sectors of our state's diverse population. […] The university particularly acknowledges the acute need to remove barriers to the recruitment, retention, and advancement of talented students, faculty, and staff from historically excluded populations who are currently underrepresented.

Liana positively evaluated this statement for “having action items,” and she pointed out that by acknowledging ongoing problems, the university can “[highlight] that they are doing something about it,” in contrast to diversity happy talk. Kendrick liked the fact that this statement acknowledged that there are barriers in place that prevent underrepresented populations’ full participation in the institution and therefore need to be removed:

> They talk about the idea of removing barriers in recruitment, retention, and advancement, which is, yeah. That’s solid. Amongst students, faculty, and staff, so inclusive of the campus community and engaged in the, like, reality, kind of qualifying that historically excluded as a reason why they’re currently underrepresented. That’s- That’s a solid one to me.

Notably, however, focus group participants who commended the language used in this statement expressed disappointment when they learned that the statement came from the website of their own university. In the following exchange between Kendrick, Lilly, and me, the type of institution that Kendrick and Lilly imagined would use this type of active framing did not align with the reality of their diversity-related experiences as graduate students of color at UCSB and the larger UC system. Once they knew the context for this language, they shifted their positive feedback to the words rather than the institution.

1. KENDRA: So this example is from our very own UCSB.
2. KENDRICK: [Oh::].
3. LILLY: [Interesting].
4. KENDRA: Yeah, this one is from the Diversity Office homepage
5. LILLY: Good *words*.

6. KENDRA:	@@@ I know. Does that change your interpretation now that you know?
7. LILLY:	Yeah:: . Still good words!
8. KENDRICK:	As you said, still good words. *Great* words.

Implied in Lilly and Kendrick's assessments of the diversity statement excerpt as having "good words" is that there are good and bad—or at least better and worse—forms of diversity discourse, regardless of whether that discourse is tied to concrete actions. That is, if this is performative discourse disconnect from structural change, the discourse at least uses convincing language.

Active framings are not inherently "good" by nature of being active rather than stative. In their study of institutional commitment to diversity expressed on IHE websites, LePeau et al. (2018, p. 24) found that even when websites included "goals, statements, and strategic plans" related to diversity, "rarely was tangible evidence included regarding how they are achieved." The specific action that the verb expresses, as well as its subject and/or object, carries significant weight with regard to the action's informativeness and specificity. In other words, it matters what the action is, who is performing it, and who is the target or recipient of the action.

This was demonstrated in focus group participants' evaluation of the passage in Example 27, which has an active diversity frame but was viewed more negatively than the UC diversity statement because of the verbs it uses.

Example 27. SHBU, "Mission" page

Diversity—<u>Fostering a community</u> that identifies, values, and respects differences of all people by <u>creating a positive experience</u> for students, faculty, staff, and the community.

Individuals specifically took issue with the lack of specificity or clear plans for application. Lilly commented: "*Fostering* and *positive* are too vague. How are you gonna assess that? How can you actually give it a number?" Like its synonyms *promote, advance*, and *strengthen,* all of which appeared numerous times in my data, *foster* does not, in itself, refer to a specific action; instead, it is the effect of specific actions. An institution "fosters a community that identifies, values, and respects differences of all people" by, for instance, hosting campus events that intentionally bring students from different backgrounds together, allocating money to support identity-based and culture-based student groups, and encouraging faculty to teach inclusive curricula. Those actions can be assessed and then improved based on those assessments. "Creating a positive experience" is reportedly the action that SHBU takes to foster the community that it describes, but "creating a positive experience" is as uninformative as "fostering a community." It is possible to assess how positive or negative students' experiences are (as evidenced by the literature on campus climate), but SHBU gave no indication, either in this excerpt or on the rest of the page, what concrete action steps it was taking to accomplish that goal.

In the same way that a single institution's website contains stative and active framings of diversity, a single institution's active framings may range in specificity. The ideological and institution-specific factors that contribute to these drastically different forms of diversity discourse and how they are assessed by focus group participants' assessments of them are discussed in Chapter 5. In the next section, I describe three strategies for discursively minimizing institutional responsibility that occurred on the websites: vague active framings, minimizing or erasing the role of IHEs as agents, and the use of hyper-specific language.

4.2 Discursively minimizing institutional responsibility

In addition to giving an IHE the appearance of taking concrete actions when it has not, vague active framings function as one of several discursive "escape hatches" that minimize an institution's responsibility for diversity work. Lack of specificity in described actions or goals means institutions express minimal, if any, commitment to action items. In Keane's words, "Not explicating goals is a very good way of just keeping things in stasis. If you're not clearly articulating what you're working towards, then you're just…existing." Along with *fostering* and its synonyms discussed above, another set of vague, non-stative verbs that appeared across IHE websites was *appreciate, value, honor,* and *respect*. The first three of these are used for positive evaluation of a stance object (Du Bois, 2007); that is, in a clause that contains one of these verbs, the agent performing the action takes a positive stance toward the syntactic object of the verb. In Examples 28-30, the stance objects being positively evaluated are "cultural differences," "a wide range of opinions, cultures, communities, perspectives and experiences," and "diversity," respectively.

Example 28. SHBU Mission Statement

Preparing globally aware citizens that respect and appreciate cultural differences of all people through service and the dissemination of knowledge to the world.

Example 29. Stanford University, "Undergraduate Admissions" page

The Stanford community values a wide range of opinions, cultures, communities, perspectives, and experiences, all of which challenge a student's own beliefs, intellectual passions, opinions and understanding of the world.

Example 30. UCSB, "Principles of Community"
We celebrate our differences and recognize and honor diversity as vital to the excellence of our University.

The ambiguous syntactic structure in Example 28 makes it unclear whether "service and dissemination of knowledge" are the actions of the university or the students it is preparing, and in Examples 29 and 30 there is no mention of any concrete action.

The fourth term, *respect,* can convey positive evaluation of a stance object in the form of admiration, but it does not necessarily convey a positive stance the way that *appreciate, value,* and *honor* do. In fact, *respect* is often used in contexts where two or more parties disagree or don't understand each other. At a minimum, *respect* conveys a regard for another person's feelings, beliefs, or experiences, as well as an intentional decision to tolerate difference in order to minimize offense. For instance, someone who wants to end or avoid an argument with another person about their choices might say, "I don't agree with your decision, but I respect that it is your decision to make." *Respect* in Example 31 is likely intended with the sense of admire rather than tolerate, since human dignity is widely agreed to be a fundamental right.

Example 31. Southern Regional Black University, "Office of Institutional Equity"

We respect the dignity and value of each human being in our community.

In Example 32, *respect*, in combination with *all people*, conveys the sense of *tolerate*: the university community is one in which members have regard for other people even if they do not agree with or understand them.

Example 32. Southern Flagship University, "Code of Ethics"

Equal Opportunity: We promote an inclusive and welcoming community that respects the rights, abilities, and opinions of all people.

What makes these verbs vague in the context of IHE websites is the lack of direct connection to concrete institutional actions. During his focus group's discussion, Kendrick

described this type of discourse as "speaking into the wind." Building on a point made by deandre earlier in the discussion, Kendrick stated that he wanted to see language about diversity that centered on tangible institutional structures, and he critiqued diversity websites that were solely rhetorical.

> Diversity pages oftentimes are just kind of speaking into the wind? Especially if they're not engaged with policy or stuff. deandre pointed to the idea that, like, on a diversity, equity and inclusion page one *might* find—potentially, fingers crossed, best case scenario—resources that, you know, that cost money, like fee waivers, scholarships, additional fellowships, undergrad research opportunities. [I want to see] institutional resources that help to diversify…or that promote diversity like on a trajectory or in a direction, as opposed to just saying words at me about, like, your general feelings about things.

Website visitors may infer a relationship between a sentence such as "We promote an inclusive and welcoming community that respects the rights, abilities, and opinions of all people" on one page and, for example, a description of the various student interest and cultural groups on a different page. That inference is not the same, however, as the institution linguistically establishing an explicit causal relationship between the two: "We promote an inclusive and welcoming community that respects the rights, abilities, and opinions of all people by supporting student interest and cultural groups." In the examples above, it is unclear what types of actions are included under the umbrellas of *appreciate, value, honor,* and *respect*. Are they actions of engagement or avoidance? How are they enacted differently at an institutional rather than individual level? What institutional practices or structures are in place to make these actions possible?

Imprecise language such as these vague active framings has the potential to protect an institution from an accusation that it has not met a stated commitment. For instance, if an institution does not linguistically connect the idea of "fostering community" to concrete actions, it could, at any point, define "fostering community" in ways that protect the

institution. If a critic asserts that inviting a controversial speaker to campus does not adhere to the institution's stated mission of fostering community, the institution could argue that speaker invitations were never explicitly stated as part of this mission (or that it respects "diversity of opinion" or some other campus value). The same can be said for appreciating, valuing, honoring, or respecting certain cultural beliefs and practices or political opinions. It is important to emphasize here that an IHE website's use of this type of vague language does not necessarily mean that the language was intentionally selected in order to offer an institution this type of rhetorical protection. As I have discussed above, the construction of a diversity website is often delegated to an individual who does not have practical knowledge of diversity and inclusion in higher education and simply draws on popular syntactic constructions and terminology. Whether or not the language is intentional, however, it offers the same potential to minimize institutional responsibility for actions.

Another strategy for minimizing institutional responsibility is the use of passive syntactic constructions, a phenomenon well documented by critical discourse analysis research (e.g., van Dijk 1993, 2006). A passive clause construction shifts the focus away from the agent, or entity doing the action, to the entity that experiences or is the recipient of the action; the former is optionally represented in a prepositional phrase after the verb phrase, and the latter functions as the syntactic subject of the clause. For example, in the sentence "A statement was released by the President in response to recent events," *a statement* is the subject of the sentence whereas *the President,* the entity that engaged in the action of releasing the statement, is part of an optional prepositional phrase. Constructions that omit the optional prepositional phrase present an outcome as occurring without an agent: "A statement was released in response to recent events." None of the texts that I analyzed used

this type of passive construction, but this is not surprising when one considers that the goal of diversity-related texts is to present an institution as the agent of diversity work. However, other forms of discursively obscuring institutional agency by demoting the agent did occur.

As defined by Duranti (2004, p. 454), "agents are entities whose actions have consequences for themselves or others." He goes on to note, "The extent to which such actions are performed willfully and with specific goals in mind varies. Such variation is responsible for the degree of agency that is attributed to a given entity." An institution such as an IHE is typically viewed as having a great deal of agency: it operates through the collective activity of faculty, staff, and administrators who each have individual agency, and their actions in turn affect students, employees, and local community members. One way to minimize the agency of an IHE—and therefore its role in and responsibility for a particular outcome—without using a passive construction is to wholly replace it as the syntactic subject and agent of a clause. Whereas passive constructions are often easily identifiable and critiqued ("Well, who exactly released the statement? It didn't release itself"), it is not unusual in English for entities that do not fit the above definition of an agent to be linguistically constructed as agents (Duranti, 2004, p. 464). As a result, sentences such as the one in Example 33 do not immediately stand out as odd or linguistically strategic.

Example 33. UC Diversity Statement

> Diversity aims to broaden and deepen both the educational experience and the scholarly environment, as students and faculty learn to interact effectively with each other, preparing them to participate in an increasingly complex and pluralistic society.

In this sentence, the syntactic subject is *diversity,* an abstract concept that does not have the ability to enact behaviors. Diversity is positioned as the entity responsible for "broaden[ing] and deepen[ing] both the educational experience and the scholarly environment." In the

context of the institution's full diversity statement, this single sentence does not erase UC as the agent engaging in diversity work. However, it still has the effect of presenting diversity as an agent that can function independent of institutional actions when in reality diversity is constructed by and dependent upon institutional actions. To avoid this, the first part of the sentence could have been written in a number of alternative ways, such as "Through diversity, the University of California aims to broaden and deepen."

The final discursive strategy for minimizing institutional responsibility that I discuss here is the use of hyper-specific language. In contrast to vague active framings or syntactic constructions that background institutional agency, hyper-specific language centers the institution and its actions using very narrowly defined terminology. In Example 34, Christian University uses the phrase *Biblically qualified*, variations of which appeared across the university's website.

Example 34. Christian University, "Office of Equity and Inclusion"

> The Office of Equity and Inclusion promotes diversity in our academic and professional community. This is accomplished through <u>Biblically qualified efforts</u> in the development of growth-focused programming, the establishment of impartial initiatives, and the education of inclusive excellence principles.

As a private institution, Christian University has more freedom in its conceptualization and execution of diversity work because that work is not legally tied to government funding. As long as it does not violate federal laws, Christian University can define diversity work in ways that align with the beliefs of its Southern, conservative, evangelical Christian foundations. "Biblically qualified" efforts are evaluated according to the teachings of the Bible, not dominant diversity ideologies and practices. Thus, everything that falls within the scope of the institution's efforts—inclusion of students from non-dominant backgrounds, campus events, faculty hiring, curriculum requirements—can be judged as (un)fair or

(un)successful based on the Christian University's interpretation of the Bible rather than commonly accepted and widely used assessments like campus climate surveys. This hyper-specific language minimizes institutional responsibility by minimizing accountability: Christian University used this language to essentially assert that, other than the federal government, only God can judge what it does.

These three strategies for discursively minimizing institutional responsibility—vague language, demoting the institution as agent, and hyper-specific language—along with the rhetorical functions of stative and active diversity framings discussed above, illustrate how diversity discourse directly impacts diversity practice. Through strategic discourse constructions, an IHE can change the meaning of diversity, represent itself as engaging in diversity work when it is not, and set the boundaries for its responsibility for diversity work. All of the examples analyzed in this chapter thus far have been textual, but text is not the only form of discourse used to construct an IHE's image on its website. Next, I turn to the visual representation of institutional diversity through photos.

4.3 Visual representations of diversity

In addition to similar language, IHE websites in my data set used similar images of people to represent institutional diversity visually, which I refer to as "diversity photos." Diversity photos are distinct from website images that are intended to portray institutional life but not necessarily institutional diversity: the latter include images of a single student engaged in academic activity like working in a science lab, large crowds at sporting events, or campus architecture and landscapes (e.g., Saichaie & Morphew, 2014). For all eight institutions, visual representations of diversity were based on differences in phenotype—that

is, differences in physical characteristics that are tied to ethnoracial categories—as well as gender presentation. With regard to gender, however, none of the website images analyzed included anyone with a nonnormative gender presentation. There was also no visible representation of students with disabilities—an erasure from diversity discourse that has been documented in previous research (Gabel et al., 2016; Lavin, 2017)—students with families, or older students. The diversity photos that were meant to convey ethnoracial and gender diversity appeared on various pages on the websites and ranged from highly staged to candid; however, they all shared the following characteristics: inclusion of at least two people who appeared to be of different ethnoracial backgrounds, representation of racial different but not ethnic difference, binary and normative representations of gender, and posed smiling students.

Because diversity is based on difference, all diversity photos included as least two people, either multiple photos of individuals that were arranged into a single image or one photo that included multiple people. The ethnoracial backgrounds of the depicted people in diversity photos were not always easily identifiable (e.g., some individuals were ethnoracially ambiguous), but it was always clear that multiple ethnoracial groups were represented. For PWIs, a diversity photo requires at least one non-white individual and all the photos in my data set included multiple people of color of different phenotypes. Black students featured prominently in diversity photos on the websites of all five PWIs, regardless of the percentage of Black students at each institution; this is in line with previous studies that found that students of color are overrepresented on U.S. IHE websites (Del Vecchio, 2017; Wilson & Meyer, 2009), with Black students overrepresented at the highest rate (Pippert et al., 2013). For HBCUs, a diversity photo requires at least one non-Black person,

who could be either white or a non-Black person of color. Both SHBU and Southern Regional Black University's websites featured more white students than non-Black students of color overall, but regardless of the relative representation of either group, the websites did not reflect the intra-racial diversity (e.g., Caribbean and African ethnicities) that Black graduate students that I interviewed at SHBU saw as a hallmark of HBCU life (see Chapters 8 and 9). Despite HMSI CSU Channels Islands' 53% Hispanic/Latino enrollment when I conducted my analysis, diversity photos had very similar ethnoracial representation as the diversity photos on PWIs' websites. Gender difference on all eight websites was limited to normatively masculine men and normatively feminine women, without variation in gender expression or inclusion of any visibly gender-nonconforming people. (It is also worth noting that there is very little literature about the representation of gender on IHE websites compared to the representation of race.)

During the focus group discussions, I asked the participants the following questions: "When you picture a typical diversity website, what's on it? What types of images? What topics are covered? What information is given?" I asked these questions prior to showing participants any examples of diversity photos. Their responses reflected shared perspectives as students of color at a PWI who were highly aware of how "diverse" students' bodies are used within their institution. The following responses from Netta, Ludwig, and Kendrick capture the features that participants strongly associated with typical diversity photos: smiling people and ethnoracially diverse groups:

> The generic picture of like, everybody's happy on campus. You got one person representing every race. It's very stock photo-ish at this point. (Netta)

> Pictures of laughing students of all colors and cultural [backgrounds], you know. They take a picture and post it and say, "Look, this is what we're like all the time." (Ludwig)

> The images that I expect to see is the group of, you know, at least, aesthetically racialized or ethnically diverse people from different potential subjectivities, mid laugh, like the salad shit. Because they're all just enjoying life so much here. (Kendrick)

Netta and Kendrick, who were in different focus groups, both made indirect negative evaluations of diversity photos by comparing them to stock photos. Stock photos, which are generic photos that can be licensed for public use, are often used in humorous internet memes because of their highly staged production and/or portrayal of unrealistic scenarios (e.g., a nun smiling while holding a handgun). When Netta described diversity photos as "very stock photo-ish as this point," she was pointing out that photos of laughing, smiling groups of (strategically) ethnoracially diverse students are so widespread on IHE websites that they feel fake and unrealistic. The diversity photos used by very different types of IHEs are so similar that they could have been licensed for use rather than taken on campus. Kendrick's comparison of laughing people to "the salad shit" was specifically referencing stock photos of women laughing while eating salad, which became a stock photo cliché and has been a meme since 2011, according to the website Know Your Meme. UCSB (Figure 4.1) and Christian University (Figure 4.2) both had at least one diversity photo that fit the "happy ethnoracially diverse group" stereotype; on both websites, the photo was the banner image for the diversity page.

Figure 4.1. Banner image on UCSB's Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion homepage

Figure 4.2. Banner image on Christian University's Diversity and Global Awareness page

Ludwig also made an indirect negative evaluation of the photos with his comment, "They take a picture and post it and say, 'Look, this is what we're like all the time.'" This statement captures the fact that a diversity photo—a portrayal of a specific, likely staged, group of people taken at a specific moment in time—is not an accurate representation of everyday campus life and interactions, yet it is presented as if it is. A Black student in Lewis and Shah's (2019) study shared a canonical example of this type of deceptive staging: a photographer asked her all-Black group of friends if they would like to be in a photoshoot, and after they agreed, a white student was called over and placed in the middle of their group. The students were instructed to pretend to talk to each other, and the photo of their fake interracial conversation was featured prominently on the institution's diversity website. Diversity photos such as these are the visual complement to diversity happy talk: they present diversity and interactions between students of different backgrounds in a wholly positive light.

In the final portion of the focus group discussions, I asked participants to make observations about five diversity photos: one each from CSU Channel Islands, Christian University, Stanford, UCSB, and SHBU (see Appendix E). I asked them to discuss similarities and differences between the photos and anything that stood out in each one, and their observations about these photos were very similar to their descriptions of imagined

diversity photos. Although gender was discussed early on in both focus groups, the discussion in response to the selected photos centered exclusively on ethnoracial diversity.

In his comments on the photos, Ludwig expanded on his initial description of diversity photos in general as including “students of all colors and cultural [backgrounds].” Comparing the five photos, he observed:

> I find it interesting that if I see- I see Black, I see white, I see very few Asian [people]. I’m not sure how they would represent a Native American there, but definitely no one, like, Muslim-identifying. I mean, they just- It’s interesting to me that it’s like, “This is what diversity means in our eyes.” And…yeah. It’s just, it feels like it’s an incomplete picture on all of them.

Ludwig noted that the groups in the diversity photos were limited in the ethnoracial identities that they portrayed. Specifically, they represent ethnoracial difference that does not require marked visual indexes to be discerned: white, Black, and Asian students are often identifiable based on physical features such skin tone, eye shape, nose shape, and hair color and texture, regardless of what they are wearing. Even ethnically ambiguous students can be identified as non-white without marked visual indexes. This point is illustrated in Figure 4.3, in which all six students are wearing university-branded attire (a common visual trope of unity) but are clearly of varying ethnoracial backgrounds. Ludwig, who is himself Native, admitted that he was unsure how a student’s Native identity would be clearly represented, presumably because many Native students are not seen as Native based on their phenotype and/or they do not wear anything that acts as a visual marker of their tribal or pan-ethnic membership. In contrast, ethnoracial groups that do have widely recognized visual indexes, such as Muslim women who wear hijabs, are not represented. As Ludwig stated, these IHEs are presenting an “incomplete picture” as their idea of diversity, which could be interpreted negatively by prospective and current students who are members of groups that are consistently excluded.

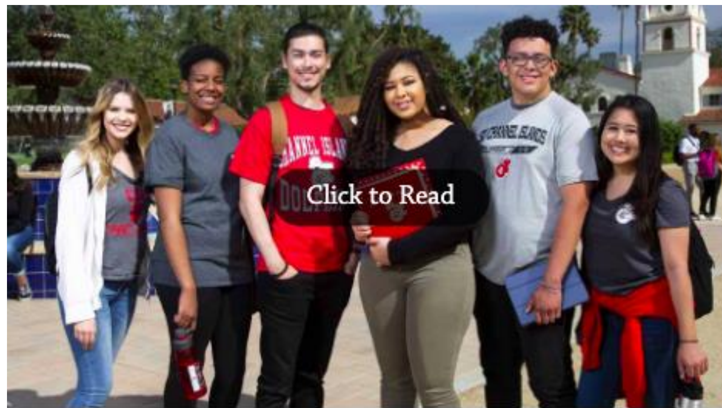

Figure 4.3. Cover image on the CSU Channel Islands 2020 digital viewbook

In her comment about the image from Christian University's Diversity and Global Awareness page (Figure 4.2), Lilly focused on the spectrum of skin tones represented, rather than the assumed ethnoracial background of each student. However, her conclusion about the photo, and diversity photos in general, were the same as other participants': they are staged to send the specific message that the institution values diversity. She described the individuals in the photo as "handpicked" to convey that the institution serves people "from each skin tone" (i.e., people of all ethnoracial backgrounds represented by these skin tones).

1. LILLY:	I just love how that one has handpicked one person from each skin tone, just putting in there. "See? We cater to all of them."
2. DEANDRE:	<SLOW> Rainbow coalition. </>

deandre's follow-up comment, "Rainbow coalition," is a tongue-in-cheek reference to Reverend Jesse Jackson's progressive and multicultural voting coalition in his 1984 run for U.S. president (Pruitt, 2021). Whereas the Rainbow Coalition was an alliance of people across race, gender, sexuality, and class identities fighting together against inequitable social structures, the multiracial groups of people that are featured in diversity photos and may not even know each other are not doing anything to change institutional structure by merely appearing in these photos.

Kendrick elaborated on Lilly's observation about diversity photos having a "one of each" model—that is, diversity photos rarely include two people of color from the same ethnoracial group. Since the presence of one person in the photo is meant to convey that people from that group are present on the campus (without having to specify the size of their population) there is presumably no need to include more than one "representative," as Kendrick called them.

> Yeah, I'll also point out I always pay attention to the number of, say, Black people in particular in any diversity photo. That number is typically one. Similar to what Lilly was talking about, the idea of like, they have, you know, one from each skin tone as representatives of diversity, because you only need one. In organic photos you might find multiples @@ in this sense.

Kendrick pointed out that this "one of each" practice is part of what makes diversity photos seem staged and artificial. In order to form a safe and supportive social space, students of color seek out others from similar cultural backgrounds, especially in predominantly white spaces (Bourassa, 1991; Tatum, 2017); as a result, real-life ethnoracially diverse groups are likely to have at least two students of color from the same background. This was one of the reasons that participants gave for their preference for the photo in Figure 4.4. over the other four photos. Although the people in it are posed, the photo does not appear staged: there are multiple Black, Asian, and white students and their poses—standing close together, some with their arms around each other—suggest that these students knew each other prior to the photo being taken. Participants agreed in their interpretation that the photo was taken at some point during an event such as a high school tour or freshman orientation.

Figure 4.4 Banner image on Stanford University's Admission page

Focus group participants understood the purpose of diversity photos as key components of IHE websites: these visual representations offer "evidence" that diversity exists (in some form) at an IHE. As they did for textual discourse, IHEs of various types drew on the same dominant visual practices to market themselves as institutions that had and/or valued diversity. Lilly and Kendrick's assessment of relatively "good words" in text-based discourse applies to diversity photos as well: regardless of whether photos are accurate representations of IHE demographics and interaction between students, there are better and worse ways to visually construct institutional diversity. Specifically, less posed photos that more closely mirror the make-up of real-life groups of students make representations of diversity more believable. Even the "good photos" in this group fell short, however, because they relied on normative bodies to represent a narrow view of visible diversity.

4.4 Conclusion

The eight IHEs in this study, like all colleges and universities, used their websites to represent the institution in the best possible light to prospective students and the broader public. The different diversity frames, discursive strategies, and visual representations of diversity that they used were motivated by the function of an IHE website as an institutional marketing tool. The textual and visual features identified represent widespread diversity

discourse practices and ideologies, since they appeared on the websites of highly varied institution types. My findings demonstrate the significance of the relationship between website diversity discourse and institutional practice by illuminating how these discourse practices define what diversity is or should be (i.e., a state of being or ongoing work), set the boundaries of what institutions can be held accountable for when they do not engage in diversity work, and provide "evidence" of institutional diversity that implies the institution values diversity. The perspectives of graduate student focus group participants highlighted how students of color see through the strategy of website diversity discourse once they are exposed to enough of it; their critiques of the sample website discourse also demonstrated that knowing that website discourse is not intended to be a truthful representation does not necessarily change a student's belief that their institution should do better in its discourse practices. As I discuss further in Chapter 7, the perceived dishonesty of institutional rhetoric had a significant impact on the experiences of graduate students of color at UCSB. I continue my analysis of website discourse in Chapter 5 with a discussion of features that patterned by institution type; these patterns point to the institution-specific factors that impact the structure and function of diversity discourse, which elucidate the varied ways that individual IHEs adapt diversity discourse and practice to their unique contexts.

CHAPTER 5: Website diversity discourse features by IHE type

I would assume that the institution that will probably not have as much verbiage or discussions of diversity will be a campus similar to an HBCU – somewhere where maybe the campus is more homogeneous in its population, and they don't necessarily feel the need to elaborate on certain things. Whereas, you know, an institution that is predominantly white will need to include language or understandings that there are groups that aren't within that particular population that are impacted.
– Borden, graduate student, UCSB

Minority Serving Institution (MSI) status was the only IHE characteristic analyzed that directly connected to an aspect of institutional diversity. MSI status, however, can be obtained for different reasons: the designations of Historically Black College or University (HBCU) and Tribal College or University are based on the foundational mission of the institutions as well as student demographics, whereas Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) and Asian American/Native American/Pacific Islander Serving Institution are based on student demographics alone. Some MSIs of the latter type, particularly regional comprehensive universities, have institutional structures and practices similar to IHEs of the former type—they have always served students from institutionally marginalized groups with the goal of making higher education equitable for them, even if their official MSI status is recent. Because MSI status can be connected to both IHE demographics and institutional mission, and all three significantly influence institutional ideologies and practices related to diversity, I analyzed features of diversity discourse according to IHEs' MSI status.

In this chapter, I examine discourse practices that appeared only on the websites of either Historically White Institutions (HWIs) or Historically Minority Serving Institutions (HMSIs)—that is, MSIs that are not also HWIs. In my data set, HWIs were Christian University, Pomona, Southern Flagship University, Stanford, and UCSB. HMSIs were either an HBCU or an HSI: CSU Channel Islands, SHBU, and Southern Regional Black University.

In my analysis, these two categories are further divided based on other institutional factors including prestige, religious affiliation, and MSI type. By isolating the institutional factors that discourse features patterned with, I demonstrate how context-specific influences (e.g., student demographics) interact with large-scale influences (e.g., neoliberal ideology) and how these inform and are reflected in website diversity discourse. Combined with the findings on discourse features used across IHE types in Chapter 4, the analysis below demonstrates how IHEs make dominant discourse practices and ideologies about diversity fit the priorities and structures of their institutional context. Commentary from UCSB focus group participants offers insight into the expectations that graduate students of color may have for the websites of certain types of IHEs and how the discourses on the websites analyzed may be perceived by prospective students.

5.1 Discourse features of HWI websites

Through the dominant viewpoint of diversity as ethnoracial representation—specifically, the presence of non-white individuals (Unzueta & Binning, 2010)—the least diverse IHEs are the those that are the whitest. An HWI may have a small but highly heterogeneous population of students of color (i.e., numerous ethnoracial groups with few people in each), but dominant discourses of racial diversity focus on the representation of broad pan-ethnic racial groups (e.g., Asian/Pacific Islander, Black) or the total number of people of color compared to the number of white people. For this reason, HMSIs that enroll predominantly students from one ethnoracial group (e.g., HSIs that are majority Hispanic/Latinx, HBCUs) are still considered diverse despite their relative ethnoracial homogeneity. Additionally, *diverse* is frequently used as a euphemistic descriptor for

minoritized identities—for example, referring to a person of color as "someone from a diverse background"; for people with this understanding of *diverse,* the presence of people with these minoritized identities, regardless of proportions, constitutes diversity, and therefore HMSIs with majority students of color are diverse.

As the least racially diverse IHEs, HWIs have the most to prove regarding their commitment to diversity; that is, they must demonstrate that they care about diversity, equity, and inclusion despite a demographic reality that could be interpreted as suggesting otherwise. During their focus group interview, deandre alluded to the significance of the representation of ethnoracial diversity on HWI websites—specifically the representations of Black people—when they discussed how they interpreted IHE website discourse during their graduate school application process.

> Right and so just looking at how they photographed the buildings, the representation of different kinds of people that you see on the websites…I did have a sense when I was applying to grad school, "Oh, they are showing," you know, "the best of what they have." So if there are no Black people, for instance, that *really* means there are no Black [people]. It's not that they messed up and they forgot to [include them]. No, they just not *there*. Because if they did [have Black people], they would know where they were and they would use their photos on the university website.

HWIs walk a fine line between demonstrating their commitment to diversity and appearing to overcompensate for their small numbers of students of color. For example, multiple focus group participants criticized Stanford's acronym IDEAL (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access in a Learning Environment) for essentially "doing too much" because it invoked the idea of perfection. Netta specifically used the descriptor *gimmicky*:

> The IDEAL acronym is jumping out to me. I don't know. I guess in a slightly negative way because it <u>almost seems kind of gimmicky</u>. Like all of the letters are important, but I don't know, like, spelling it out that way makes a- I don't know, there's something about it that…I have a weird feeling about.

In the next section, I describe two key discursive strategies used on the websites of all five HWIs to demonstrate institutional commitment to diversity: broad definitions of *diversity* and promoting the ideology of "excellence through diversity." Both strategies reflect post-*Bakke* approaches to diversity, specifically, defining diversity as more than ethnoracial diversity and justifying diversity efforts as "serving a compelling [institutional] interest." After that, I turn to three discourse features that appeared on the websites of the four highly ranked HWIs: metapragmatic discourse about diversity, language that negotiated the tension between access and prestige, and the term *underrepresented* to refer to students from marginalized backgrounds. Following my analysis of those three features, I discuss features specific to Christian University's website, which connected institutional diversity to Christianity and emphasized impartiality rather than diversity as the institution's goal.

5.1.1 Broad definitions of *diversity*

IHEs differ in both the social and identity characteristics that constitute diversity in their institutional contexts and in the language that they use to describe diversity on their websites. The HWI websites in my data frequently framed diversity in terms of numerous characteristics other than or in addition to ethnoracial identity, taking a more wide-ranging view of diversity than HMSIs. In some cases, such as Examples 35 and 36, institutions explicitly listed these characteristics, ensuring that readers knew that diversity did not refer exclusively to the ethnoracial demographics of the institution.

Example 35. Stanford University, "Undergraduate Admissions" page

Stanford's undergraduates come from all 50 states and 63 countries and the Stanford community embraces a broad range of racial, ethnic, socioeconomic, gender, sexual orientation, religious, cultural and educational backgrounds.

Example 36. Pomona College, "Diversity & Admissions" page

> The Pomona College Office of Admissions is dedicated to recruiting and supporting talented students from underrepresented groups…low-income students, first-generation students, rural students, and students who identify with racial or ethnic groups that are most underrepresented in higher education.

In other cases, such as Example 37, the broad interpretation of *diversity* was implied through language that did not specify what was considered to contribute to diversity.

> **Example 37.** UCSB, Graduate Division "Admissions and Outreach" page
>
> Diversity of all types is embraced on the campus. For example, ImaginArte, an interdisciplinary humanities project, provides online access to the visual legacy of the Chicano movement. The Religious Studies department's endowed chairs include the XIV Dali Lama Chair in Tibetan Studies, the Virgil Cordano Chair in Catholic Studies, and the Marsha and Jay Glazer Chair in Jewish Studies.

The phrase *all types* conveys that there is more than one type of diversity at the institution, but it does not name what these types are. The references in the second and third sentences in the passage are presumably examples of the various types of diversity present, but there are no names or labels for what type(s) of diversity they represent. Instead, this is left up to the interpretation of the reader, who may see these examples as evidence that the institution (regardless of its demographics) values diversity of cultural and religious backgrounds. Southern Flagship University's website used slightly more informative language to characterize diversity.

> **Example 38**. Southern Flagship University "Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion" page
>
> "The University promotes an inclusive and welcoming environment that embraces the full spectrum of human attributes, perspectives, and disciplines."

Full spectrum functions similarly to *all types* in Example 37 by minimally conveying that more than one characteristic is being considered. In this example, these characteristics are named, albeit vaguely: "human attributes, perspectives, and disciplines."

By contrast, Christian University's website rarely referred to individual characteristics or group membership in its diversity-related discourse. The sole page specifically about institutional diversity described it in terms of geographic origin, "points of view," and "life experiences."

> **Example 39**. Christian University, "Diversity and Global Awareness" page
>
> With students from all 50 states and over 70 nations around the world, Christian is a crossroads for individuals with differing points of view and life experiences. Here you'll meet peers whose backgrounds, interests, and ideas align with and diverge from your own.

There was no elaboration and no examples to further explain how or why geographic origin shapes individuals' points of view or life experiences, as the text implied, but readers could infer that people from different parts of the world have different cultural and ethnoracial backgrounds. Therefore, although the website explicitly states only three types of diversity, it could be interpreted as referring to several other types as well.

One type of named diversity that was unique to the broad definitions employed by HWIs was "diversity of thought" (and related phrases such as "ideological diversity") as in the following passage from Stanford's diversity statement.

> **Example 40**. Stanford University, Diversity statement
>
> The goals of IDEAL are to ensure that diversity of thought, experience and approach is represented in all sectors of our education and research enterprise.

In contemporary use, "diversity of thought" is distinct from disciplinary diversity or the diversity of perspectives that is represented when people with different cultural backgrounds and life experiences come together. The latter types of diversity are often presented as a necessity for comprehensive and innovative problem-solving because they ensure multiple

ways of viewing an issue. In fact, multiple studies have demonstrated that research conducted by diverse research groups is more innovative and more cited than research from homogeneous groups (Adams, 2013; Freeman & Huang, 2014; Hofstra et al., 2020; Powell, 2018)—a clearly compelling interest for research universities, in particular. This is not, however, the framework or motivation for "diversity of thought" discourse.

"Diversity of thought" is a specific talking point of current conservative activism in response to diversity efforts in U.S. higher education. Proponents of this argument assert that U.S. higher education is a liberal institution that marginalizes conservative ideology in its efforts toward racial, gender, and other forms of diversity (e.g., Vatz 2020). If institutions claim to value all forms of diversity, conservatives argue, then sociopolitically conservative beliefs should be afforded the same institutional space as liberal or progressive beliefs (e.g., Muwwakkil, 2019). By framing the predominantly white, male, and/or upper-middle-class individuals who hold conservative beliefs as numerical minorities within liberal institutions, "diversity of thought" rhetoric appropriates the expanded post-*Bakke* definitions of diversity as well as related discourses that focus on compositional diversity rather than structural inequality or historical context.

To UCSB focus group participants, the inclusion of "diversity of thought" in website discourse necessarily undermined an institution's claim to value diversity, since it ignores the sociohistorical motivations for dominant diversity practices in IHEs. To Kendrick, the inclusion of "diversity of viewpoint" in website discourse indexes an institutional approach to diversity that is intentionally devoid of racial justice motivations.

> There is certain verbiage and language that I absolutely do attune to, which is stuff like when [IHEs] talk about, "We appreciate diversity of viewpoint." I'm like, "Oh, that's coded." Yeah. This idea of like, "By diversity, we don't mean ethnically, racially, or culturally. We mean perspective? Politically, maybe?" Which is a way of saying,

> “We’re proud that we don’t have [Black and Brown students], but, uh, we do have diversity, if you understand diversity as ‘We have people of high SES and low SES!’ Diverse. ‘We have people from Wisconsin and from Massachusetts!’ Diverse.”

In addition to “diversity of viewpoint,” Kendrick referred to socioeconomic status (SES) and home state as characteristics that some IHEs use in their definitions of diversity; he drew a connection between these three features as all being resources for institutions that want to avoid or minimize the role of race and ethnicity in their claims to diversity. Kendrick’s assessment of the function of “diversity of thought” echoes Andersen (1999, p. 16): “if diversity is just differentiation, it is culturally neutral, and it is not a matter of equality, justice, and power.”

The excerpt from Stanford’s diversity statement toes the line between these motivations for encouraging different viewpoints (research benefits and the conservative ideology). Stanford is a major research university, so it is unsurprising that its website would explicitly connect diversity to its “research enterprise”; the use of the exact phrase “diversity of thought,” however, undermines an interpretation of the language as referring exclusively to research and problem-solving contexts since “diversity of thought” is strongly associated with ideological viewpoint. Additionally, the passage in Example 40 was not the only occurrence of “viewpoint diversity” language on Stanford’s website, and the other instances reinforced the conservative discourse premise that all sociopolitical perspectives deserve equal space and attention in higher education. Without explicit reference to conservative ideology or individuals, Stanford’s diversity statement validates the perspective of “diversity of thought” rhetoric: it states that one of the university’s “three immediate priorities for improvement [is] advancing free expression in an inclusive community.” The statement continues:

Example 41. Stanford University, Diversity statement

> Free expression within a diverse community—in the form of thoughtful and respectful debate—is an extraordinary learning opportunity for all. Breakthroughs in understanding come from considering a broad range of ideas—including those we might find objectionable—and engaging in rigorous testing of them through analysis and debate.

The language of "breakthroughs," "rigorous testing," and "analysis and debate" frames differing ideas as essentially resolvable through the scientific method or the mechanisms of the supposed "marketplace of ideas" in which only the best and most truthful ideas are given credence (see, e.g., Ho & Schauer 2015 for a discussion of this concept). By suggesting that all members of the university community should engage with ideas that they "might find objectionable," Stanford's diversity statement creates a false equivalency between the impact of doing so for people from structurally dominant and nondominant groups. Students of color and those from other minoritized groups experience psychological harm, among other consequences, as a result of discriminatory ideologies and practices in their campus communities (Fasching-Varner et al., 2014); this is not the case for students from dominant groups. In this attempt to demonstrate the institution's commitment to all types of diversity, the diversity statement contradicts itself as well as the discourse on other pages of the website that state an explicit commitment to social justice and institutional equity. (In recent years, Donald Trump, political pundits, and mass media outlets have been publicly criticized for using false equivalency or "both sides" rhetoric in the aftermath of racist and anti-semitic violence. Critics have pointed out the harm that this discourse does by equating fascist, white supremacist ideology and action with anti-racist, abolitionist, and other progressive ideologies and protests. See, e.g., Lennard 2018 and Perry 2019.)

Emphasizing forms of diversity other than ethnoracial difference—a practice that can lead to the overly broad or "diversity of thought" discourses described above—is not the only way HWIs can attempt to "make up for" a lack of ethnoracial diversity. During her focus group discussion, Netta pointed out that an HWI can demonstrate a commitment to diversity by acknowledging the structural factors that have shaped the institution's demographics. She stated that if an IHE is genuinely (not only rhetorically) committed to change and increasing its diversity, its website could be forthcoming about the challenges the institution faces and its plans for progress.

> [I]f they really wanted to show that they cared, maybe they would mention [their] history in a diversity statement and acknowledge that, despite their history, they're going to make changes to move forward.

Netta's comment captures a common perspective among graduate students at both UCSB and SHBU: rather than empty, idealistic rhetoric, they wanted institutional honesty about progress toward diversity and inclusion (see also Shook, 2019). One form of idealistic diversity rhetoric that was used by all five HWIs was discourse about the relationship of diversity and inclusion to the idea of institutional excellence.

5.1.2. Connecting diversity, inclusion, and excellence

In 2005, the Association of American Colleges and Universities (AACU) introduced its "Making Excellence Inclusive" initiative, which was developed in response to the Supreme Court decisions in the 2003 *Gratz* and *Grutter* affirmative action cases. AACU introduced "inclusive excellence" as a framework for IHEs to pursue structural change in pursuit of diversity and stated its commitment "to make Inclusive Excellence a signature element of America's best colleges and universities" (Williams et al., 2005, p.viii). Because AACU is a leading national association for undergraduate education in the U.S., its use of

inclusive excellence as a framework and its intention make that framework widespread led to the popularization of the term in U.S. institutional discourse, especially among institutions where diversity is a pressing concern. (As a point of comparison, Brusoni et al.'s 2014 report on "The Concept of Excellence in Higher Education" in Europe does not mention institutional diversity once.) Prior to 2005, *excellence* had been established as a keyword in neoliberal higher education discourse (Urciuoli, 2003), but AACU's Inclusive Excellence framework tied excellence specifically to diversity. As described by Williams et al., who co-authored the proposal "Toward a Model of Inclusive Excellence and Change in Postsecondary Institutions" (2005, p. 9):

> Within the [Inclusive Excellence] Change Model, <u>diversity is a key component of a comprehensive strategy for achieving institutional excellence</u>—which includes, but is not limited to, the academic excellence of all students in attendance and concerted efforts to educate all students to succeed in a diverse society and equip them with sophisticated intercultural skills. (emphasis added)

The authors state that "the movement toward inclusive excellence can call into question some of the deepest and most longstanding traditions of college and universities" (2005, p. 17) by acknowledging that existing institutional structures and practices are incompatible with efforts to combat social inequities and to keep up with shifting population demographics.

As is often the case with diversity-related language, the initial conceptualization of *inclusive excellence* is not how the term is used in contemporary discourse. The original model centered diversity within institutional structure and organizational practice: "diversity, inclusion, and equity initiatives must be so fundamentally linked to educational mission that to ignore them in everyday practice would jeopardize institutional vitality" (Williams et al., 2005, p.viii). On the HWI websites that I analyzed, however, diversity was rarely framed as integral or foundational to an IHE beyond its usefulness in achieving institutional desires to

be perceived as "excellent." In U.S. higher education, institutional excellence at HWIs has been traditionally associated with curricular rigor and student achievement, as measured through evaluations such as SAT scores, GRE scores, and grade point averages (Posselt, 2016); formal rankings through *U.S. News and World Report* (Espeland & Sauder, 2016); and informal measures of prestige such as renowned faculty, research innovation, and total research funding through competitive grants and fellowships. Critical scholars have pointed out that these measures of "merit" obscure group and structural privileges that lead to unequal achievement by people who are not from dominant social groups (Ghosh 2012; Maher & Tetreault 2007). Diversity—especially ethnoracial diversity—has become an expectation and "selling point" of U.S. IHEs, but academia broadly has not questioned its traditions in the ways Williams et al. (2005) called for. As a result, HWIs make diversity fit rhetorically with these established measures and indexes of excellence. All five websites included language connecting diversity and institutional excellence, and in each of the examples below illustrated Ahmed's (2012, p. 57) observation: "diversity becomes one means for pursuing [the institution's] prior end of excellence [and] becomes a technology for this pursuit."

In Example 42, the use of the preposition *through* frames "diversity and inclusiveness" as the resource that UCSB will use to achieve excellence—that is, diversity is not framed as a goal in itself but rather as the tool that will be used to meet the real goal of excellence.

Example 42. UCSB, "Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion" page

> The University of California at Santa Barbara is committed to promoting excellence through diversity and inclusiveness… In addition, our campus upholds the principle of equal opportunity for all since equal opportunity fosters the best conditions possible for the enhancement of research, creativity, innovation, and excellence.

Excellence is linked to "research, creativity, [and] innovation," which are all traditional measures of institutional excellence. (See Chapter 3 for a discussion of *equal opportunity* as it relates to diversity.) The "Facts and Figures" page, which showcased noteworthy facts about the university such as rankings and research statistics, included a blurb about UCSB's designation as a Hispanic Serving Institution.

> **Example 43**. UCSB, "Facts and Figures" page
>
> UCSB is a Hispanic-Serving Institution (HSI), an elite designation by the Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities for colleges or universities in which Hispanic enrollment comprises at least 25% of the total. Our campus was the first HSI among members of the prestigious Association of American Universities.

In this case, institutional excellence is tied both to diversity and to the status of UCSB as a member of a respected association, another informal measure of institutional excellence. Specifically, this blurb linguistically links excellence to one form of ethnoracial diversity with the adjectives *elite* and *prestigious,* but the use of *elite* to describe the HSI designation is inaccurate. Although UCSB's membership in the Association of American Universities (an association of 65 leading research universities in the U.S) may give it elite status as an institution, HSI designation is given based solely on student demographics. It is not the reward of a competitive process, and of the 539 IHEs with HSI status in the 2018-2019 academic year, the majority of institutions were non-elite comprehensive and/or regional IHEs (Hispanic Association of Colleges & Universities). In the Southern California context, high Hispanic/Latinx student enrollment is an expectation for a public university with an institutional mission to serve the state's population, not a marker of elite status.

Pomona's admissions website did not reference the IHE's status as a prestigious institution, but it did use the same rhetorical strategy of linking diversity to a widely accepted

index of institutional excellence, in this case the idea of a "rigorous" learning environment that challenges students intellectually.

Example 44. Pomona College, "Admissions" page

> Below is an excerpt from the plan outlining our Four Beacons of Excellence:
> Access & Inclusion: Develop a campus community that includes the fullest possible range of <u>diverse perspectives and backgrounds</u> essential to a <u>rigorous learning atmosphere</u>.

There is a notable grammatical hedge with the phrase *essential to a rigorous learning atmosphere*. The "range of diverse perspectives and backgrounds" that the college will include is not the fullest possible range in general, but the fullest possible of range of a specific subset of perspectives and backgrounds. In other words, not all perspectives and backgrounds are relevant to the institutional goal of a rigorous learning atmosphere, i.e., institutional excellence. Framing diversity as a benefit to the institution in this ways is one of the discursive strategies that emerged in the wake of legal precedents that require IHEs to demonstrate institutional interest in order to actively pursue diversity (as discussed in Chapter 3.

The discussion of diversity in the context of the college's "Beacons of Excellence" paralleled language on the Southern Flagship University website, which described diversity as a "pillar of excellence" and, as such, a "cornerstone" of university life.

Example 45. Southern Flagship University "Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion" page

> ODEI provides leadership, information, consultation, coordination, and assistance to the various units and constituencies within the Southern Flagship University in an effort to <u>embrace diversity and equity as pillars of excellence</u>, synergize actions at all levels of the institution, and cultivate inclusiveness and mutual respect throughout the community.

The rhetorical goal of the metaphorical language of *beacon, pillar,* and *cornerstone* makes diversity seem foundational to institutional excellence. But the inclusive excellence framework that inspires this type of language emerged from the reality that diversity and excellence are widely viewed as mutually exclusive or even contradictory concepts. Diversity is considered by many to undermine established conditions and practices of excellence. A common argument against affirmative action or otherwise race-conscious admissions policies is that "underqualified" students of color are admitted to institutions in the name of diversity and take the places of "qualified" white students (Allen et al., 2018). Complainants assert that the quality of the education offered by the institution—the level of "excellence"—decreases as more students of color are admitted (Smith 2015, p. 15). The association of excellence with whiteness and other dominant identity categories (e.g., male, heterosexual, Western) also manifests at the disciplinary level. Smith (2015, p. 76) observes:

> The fact is that in different academic disciplines, certain methodologies are valued, certain ways of doing things are accepted, and certain ways of framing issues are expected. These elements become codified in a culture with norms and values that can limit the openness to new ideas and people but can also be seen as central to excellence of the field. At that point, diversity is seen as threatening accepted notions of excellence, not just culture.

"Inclusive excellence" is fundamentally a response to racist assumptions, a discursive attempt to prove that as HWIs become less white they will not become any less rigorous or offer lower-quality education. AACU's original model for "making excellence inclusive" was designed for institutions that needed to increase diversity (i.e., HWIs), which ignored the excellence and diversity that already existed at MSIs. HBCUs such as Howard University, Spelman College, and Morehouse College meet many of the inequitable and exclusionary measures of excellence applied to HWIs, both formal and informal. Framing institutional excellence as necessarily needing to be "made inclusive" erases the work of these institutions

that have in fact accomplished more than most HWIs. They have met conventional standards of excellence while centering educational equity and structural inclusion as central missions in ways that even well-intentioned HWIs still only aspire to. Although the MSI websites I examined discussed institutional excellence, only the websites of HWIs used language from the "inclusive excellence" framework that connects it to diversity.

The broad definitions of diversity and the inclusive excellence discourses described above are examples of how HWIs attempt to "prove" institutional commitment to diversity despite having predominantly white populations and/or white-centered structures and practices. These two features appeared on the websites of all five HWIs, despite the IHEs' differences along other criteria, indicating the influence of HWI status on website discourse structure. Three additional discourse features appeared on the websites of the four prestigious HWIs (as determined by their *U.S. News and World Report* rankings and their national reputations). The websites of Pomona College, Stanford, UCSB, and Southern Flagship University featured metapragmatic commentary about diversity, rhetorical negotiations between institutional access and prestige, and the use of the term *underrepresented* to describe the status of marginalized students. Below, I analyze how the use of these features—and the ideologies they convey—was influenced by both HWI status and institutional prestige.

5.2 Discourses features of prestigious HWI websites

5.2.1 Metapragmatic commentary about diversity

The websites of Pomona, Southern Flagship University, and Stanford each had at least one explicit reference to common interpretations, operationalizations, and stereotypes

related to the term *diversity.* In each case, acknowledgment of common institutional practices related to diversity, including common discourse practices, functioned to improve the IHE's own image: the institution positioned itself as one whose members were aware of what was currently happening in higher education and one that went above and beyond "common" practices. As Bauman and Briggs (2003, p. 17) argue in their discussion of "metadiscursive regimes," the ways that individuals and institutions talk about language allows people to then use language as the primary characteristic or as a proxy for other social characteristics that are the basis for ideologies that perpetuate systems of power. For instance, white speakers talk about linguistic features used by speakers of color as proxies for race; when they describe these linguistic features negatively (e.g., lazy, improper), they are also negatively evaluating the people of color who use them. That is, by perpetuating language ideologies that disparage the linguistic practices of people of color, white speakers can uphold white supremacist ideologies that maintain their societal privilege (Alim et al., 2016; Lippi-Green, 2012). In the context of diversity discourses, certain institutions—typically powerful ones that can influence the actions of others (see Chapter 3)—frame specific discursive practices as representative of a commitment to diversity. IHEs that use those discursive practices, then, are indicating that they are deserving of resources, progressive, and in touch with the times; IHEs that use other forms of discourse, regardless of their reasons for doing so, are the opposite.

The metapragmatic comments on all three websites created an implicit "us vs. them" dichotomy by framing their institutions as ones that do not engage in superficial behaviors related to diversity. For instance, in Example 46, the statement "At Pomona, diversity isn't a buzzword" implies that there are IHEs where diversity is indeed a buzzword, with the

additional implicit understanding that a buzzword is undesirable because it lacks substance. The sentence that follows—"It is crucial to our educational mission"—reinforces the image of Pomona as an IHE that has more than a surface-level engagement with diversity.

Example 46. Pomona College "Admissions" page, "Diversity at Pomona" section

At Pomona, diversity isn't a buzzword. It's crucial to our educational mission.

Southern Flagship University's website created a dichotomy between IHEs that willingly pursue diversity and equity, such as itself (albeit for institutionally driven reasons), and IHEs that engage with diversity and equity because of a "sense of obligation." Like Pomona, Southern Flagship University constructed an image of itself as an institution that does more and does better than others when it comes to engaging with diversity.

Example 47. Southern Flagship University "Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion" page

We commit ourselves to a vision of leadership in diversity and equity, not out of a reluctant sense of obligation but because only by enriching ourselves and embracing diversity can we become the leading institution we aspire to be.

Pomona's and Stanford's websites used the same linguistic strategy of creating an implicit "them" that had less desirable diversity practices with regard to numeric measures of diversity or diversity-related success.

Example 48. Pomona College "Admissions" page, "Diversity & Admissions" section

Our campus, like many others across the nation, is navigating a critical turning point on issues of diversity and inclusivity…. We believe numbers alone do not indicate success in achieving a dynamically diverse community.

Example 49. Stanford University Diversity Statement

It's important to understand that we envision IDEAL as much more than counting numbers and checking boxes. If we're successful, it will result in significant cultural and institutional change for Stanford.

These metapragmatic comments are a specific type of discursive performance of an HWI's commitment to diversity. They use the strategy of linguistic distinction (Bucholtz & Hall, 2004) to create meaningful social difference between prestigious HWI institutions ("us"/good) and all other IHEs that do not follow the same diversity and inclusion practices ("them"/bad). These IHEs use implicitly comparative institutional rhetoric to essentially say, "We're better at this than they are." By making differences between themselves and other IHEs more salient through these linguistic distinctions, Pomona, Southern Flagship University, and Stanford reinforce their status as prestigious institutions.

It is not coincidental that the three IHEs whose websites made this sort of commentary were the three most highly resourced institutions in my data. In 2019, Pomona, Southern Flagship University, and Stanford had endowments of $2.3 billion, more than $5 billion, and $27.7 billion, respectively (see Table 3.1 in Chapter 3). With this level of financial resources available, these IHEs can afford to establish large diversity offices staffed with numerous individuals who have studied and/or trained extensively in diversity, equity, and inclusion work (often members of the contemporary "diversity management" industry). Collectively, these types of offices are knowledgeable about trends and best practices in higher education and are well-versed in the language of diversity. Rather than making website copy the responsibility of a staff member outside of the diversity or equity office or someone with little theoretical or practical expertise in the area, these IHEs can afford to have their websites designed and written by diversity experts. That is, they have the means to hire someone whose job it is to make sure that their institution's website looks as good as or better than others' and, by extension, that the institution looks better than other IHEs as a result of having a more polished website that makes assertions such as, "Here, diversity isn't

a buzzword." Access to greater financial resources also means that these institutions have more money to direct to campus diversity efforts (e.g., scholarships, student organizations, events), which then provide material to be included on their websites. Regardless of the efficacy of these diversity efforts or their uptake by enrolled students, having more diversity-related resources listed on a website can make an IHE appear to care more about diversity than institutions that have fewer resources listed, contributing to the diversity-based institutional hierarchy.

No matter how well-resourced an IHE is or how polished its website, there is no guarantee that website visitors will interpret and react to the website in the ways intended by those that designed it. During the focus group interviews, some graduate students viewed this strategy of linguistic distinction through metapragmatic comments—basically a form of showing off—negatively. Borden, in particular, viewed competition around diversity practices as missing the point of diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts. In his own words: "I think also what happens is like this level of competition of who is the 'leader' of diversity work or diversity-seeking initiatives and those things…it sort of misses the point." Awareness of common diversity pitfalls and how they are perceived by the public creates opportunities for institution members to reflect on their own IHEs' practices and make changes accordingly. In the self-promotional marketing context of an IHE website, however, efforts to demonstrate this awareness through metapragmatic comments or other discourse strategies are primarily rhetorical ploys.

In contrast to these types of metapragmatic comments, the absence of which does not have structural consequences for IHEs, other discourse features on the websites of prestigious HWIs were in response to institutional or government requirements. Specifically,

each IHE had to balance constructing an image of the institution as elite and conveying that the institution is accessible to students. This was especially true for public IHEs, which are required to serve the population of the state. I turn to an analysis of the rhetorical negotiation of these two factors next.

5.2.2 Prestige versus access

In her analysis of IHE diversity action plans, Iverson (2012) found that the discourses used to talk about institutional access positioned students from minoritized groups as outsiders. Structural changes were needed in order to "permit" these students entry to the institution, to make it possible for them to "be seen and heard," and to demonstrate that they are valued (pg. 159). Some diversity plans called on current institution members to make special efforts to befriend people from marginalized groups and treat them as "welcome guests" of the institution (pg. 163). Iverson also found that outsider status for students of color, in particular, is constructed through exceptionalizing discourse: access is offered only to those students with "elevated placement on a hierarchy of achievement" (pg. 165), which reinforces the idea that students from these backgrounds, as a rule, are not qualified to be part of the institution. The types of discourse features that Iverson (2012) found in diversity policy also appeared on the websites of the four prestigious IHEs.

In higher education, as in other institutional contexts, prestigious institutions maintain their elite status through practices of exclusion: only the most intelligent, innovative, hard-working, or otherwise "best of the best" are members of these IHEs. Low acceptance rates, high standardized test scores, competitive grants awarded to faculty and graduate students, and available research technology are some of the measures used to establish an IHE as a prestigious institution. The elite of any group is necessarily a small minority, as demonstrated

by the fact that only eight out of the nearly 1,500 accredited four-year IHEs in the U.S are in the Ivy League. In contrast, diversity work is about expanding access to the institution—bringing in new kinds of people and/or increasing the representation of people who are there in small numbers. Going a step beyond the rhetoric of *inclusive excellence*, prestigious IHEs must discursively demonstrate that while admitting new types of students they will maintain not only the widely accepted and expected practices that constitute institutional excellence in higher education but also the elitist practices that are unique to IHEs of the highest status. On the websites of the four prestigious HWIs in my data set, the tension between the notions of prestige and access was negotiated through two primary strategies. The first was qualifying the types of "diverse" students that could have access to the institution (i.e., students who meet criteria for institutional excellence as well as diversity efforts). The second was highlighting characteristics of the institutions that make it elite or prestigious while discussing diversity-related issues.

According to their websites, Stanford, Southern Flagship University, and UCSB are open to "deserving," "talented," and "qualified" students, respectively.

Example 51. Stanford University, "Diversity Works" page

The diversity of Stanford's first class reflects our commitment to provide opportunities for advancement to any <u>deserving student</u>. We value the rich perspectives, skills, and ideas people from <u>varied backgrounds</u> bring to the Stanford community.

Example 52. Southern Flagship University Mission Statement

The Southern Flagship University is a public institution of higher learning guided by a founding vision of discovery, innovation, and development of the full potential of <u>talented students</u> from <u>all walks of life</u>…We are defined by our universal dedication to excellence and affordable <u>access</u>.

Example 53. UC Diversity Statement

> The State of California has a compelling interest in making sure that people from <u>all backgrounds</u> perceive that access to the University is possible for <u>talented students</u>, staff, and faculty from all groups. The knowledge that the University of California is open to <u>qualified students</u> from all groups, and thus serves all parts of the community equitably, helps sustain the social fabric of the State.

Although the criteria for each of these descriptors are not stated in the text in which it appears, readers can infer that students are assessed according to the measures that give these IHEs their high status, which are usually outlined on the website's admissions page (e.g., standardized test scores, grade point averages). In other words, these universities are not claiming to admit fundamentally different types of students than they traditionally have; rather, they are admitting students from underrepresented ethnoracial, gender, socioeconomic, and other groups who fit existing criteria for the behaviors and accomplishments that constitute a student worthy to attend Stanford, Southern Flagship University, or UCSB. This discourse exemplifies the way that diversity is a "dangerous set-up" (Prescod-Weinstein, 2018) because of its function as a strategic tool for minimizing changes to the institutional status quo: the demographics of the institution may change through, for example, targeted recruitment of high-achieving students of color, without any changes being made to the inequitable structures of exclusion in which the institution operates.

In Example 53, the UC diversity statement includes the qualifiers *talented* and *qualified* to narrow the scope of students to whom the University of California is open. It also includes an easily missed but meaningful linguistic construction: "people from all backgrounds <u>perceive that access</u> to the University is possible." This phrasing is important because the perception of access is not the same as actual access to the institution; someone who perceives themselves as having access to the university based on the rhetoric of the

website may lack access because of financial barriers or be denied admission because they do not meet the expectations of the reviewers of their application. The sentence in which this construction occurs conveys an institutional desire for "people from all backgrounds" to imagine themselves at a UC campus despite the reality of limited access based on institutional requirements.

Pomona combined both strategies to construct its institutional image as an elite institution that was theoretically accessible to a diverse population: qualifying Pomona-worthy students and highlighting aspects of the institution that contributes to its prestigious status.

Example 54. Pomona College Mission Statement

> Throughout its history, Pomona College has educated students of exceptional promise. We gather individuals, regardless of financial circumstances, into a small residential community that is strongly rooted in Southern California yet global in its orientation.

The qualifier *of exceptional promise* has the same function as *deserving, talented,* and *qualified* in the previous examples—delineating the types of students who are given access to the institution. In the second sentence, *regardless of financial circumstances* does double duty. First, it increases the perception of access by conveying that financial resources will not be a barrier to students who are granted admission. Second, it suggests that Pomona has extensive financial resources, because the ability to cover students' total financial needs is possible only when the institution's own financial resources are abundant and secure.

Based on their status as public or private, these four institutions varied in their institutional commitment to access. Whereas a public IHE has a stated mission of serving (i.e., providing educational access to) the state's population, private IHEs have more freedom

to restrict who they accept and serve. It is striking, then, to see the influence of hierarchical status manifest in similar ways in the discourse of these four HWIs' websites.

5.2.3 Minoritized students as *underrepresented* students

A final discourse feature that appeared only on the websites of the prestigious HWIs was the use of the term *underrepresented* to refer to the status of institutionally marginalized students. The use of the term is primarily related to these IHEs' status as HWIs rather than their relative prestige; however, prestigious IHEs do have an institutional image to maintain that is tied to their hierarchical status, and this consideration inevitably influenced the ways that they used the term compared to other, lower-ranked institutions. If the final HWI in the data set had been an institution other than Christian University, it is very likely that *underrepresented* would have appeared at least once on its website. As I discuss below, Christian University had unique features of diversity discourse on its website that were distinct from widely used forms; race, ethnicity, and class were rarely mentioned, and *underrepresented* did not appear anywhere on the pages I analyzed.

With regard to factual description, *underrepresented* is a useful term: when the percentage of people from any particular demographic within an institution is lower than the percentage within the city, state, and/or national population, they have less or lower representation than would be expected given equitable institutional access. In California, for example, the state's Black population was approximately 6.5% in 2019 (U.S. Census QuickFacts) and in Fall 2019 domestic Black students were 4% of UC students at both the undergraduate and graduate levels (UC Information Center); thus, domestic Black students could be accurately described as underrepresented within the UC. Although *underrepresented* could in theory apply to any population given the right context, within the

genre of diversity discourse it is used primarily to refer to people of color and other categorizations that include large proportions of people of color, such as first-generation students and low-income students). For instance, the National Science Foundation website on "Women, Minorities, and Persons with Disabilities in Science and Engineering" defines *underrepresented minority* specifically as "three racial or ethnic minority groups (Blacks or African Americans, Hispanics or Latinos, and American Indians or Alaska Natives) whose representation in [science and engineering] education or employment is smaller than their representation in the U.S. population."

Mukherji et al. (2017) critique the use of terms such as *underrepresented minorities* and *underrepresented groups* in diversity discourse for aggregating diverse populations in ways that make efforts to address their institutional needs less effective. In addition to homogenizing the experiences of students from marginalized backgrounds, *underrepresented* is as a passive, stative framing of institutional reality that minimizes institutional responsibility. Using *underrepresented* as an adjective to modify *students, groups,* or other similar terms erases the agent responsible for their underrepresentation (i.e., the institution) and the structures and practices that prevent fair representation (e.g., systemic racism, income inequality). Compared to a phrase such as *structurally excluded*, *underrepresented* erases the fact that students' representation is the result of institution actions and non-actions, not a taken-for-granted state of being. Keane, the Inclusion and Equity Coordinator at UCSB, commented on this discourse feature during our interview:

> The way we even talk about exclusion on these websites is so passive. Like "underrepresented" is one of my favorite words…that's such an interesting passivity. There just "aren't enough," they're just "not here." When I see language like that, I'm just like, that communicates ideology to me. It again puts the problem of inclusion *without* instead of *within,* right. Like, by talking about "excluded peoples" [instead of

> "underrepresented"], it is an acknowledgement that we are preserving the systems that are excluding people.

The rhetorical function of *underrepresented* is exemplified by the modified forms used on the websites of the four highly-ranked HWIs; in each case, the term was preceded by an adverb and/or was part of a larger descriptive phrase. Southern Flagship University's diversity website used the modifier *historically*, which places underrepresentation entirely in the past.

> **Example 55.** Southern Flagship University, "Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion" page
>
> The Office for Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (ODEI) assists and monitors all units of the University in their efforts to recruit and retain faculty, staff, and students from historically underrepresented groups and to provide affirmative and supportive environments for work and life at the Southern Flagship University.

Because it refers to the past, *historically* may be used to differentiate underrepresented groups based on the length of their presence in the U.S.: groups can only be underrepresented at an IHE if there is a larger population to compare them to. For instance, African Americans and Native peoples have been underrepresented in U.S. IHEs for centuries because they have been present here for centuries, but immigrant communities of color that became established in the U.S. more recently also became underrepresented in higher education more recently. By modifying with only *historically* and omitting any explicit connection to the present (e.g., *currently*), however, the descriptor is anachronistic: if people from underrepresented groups were only underrepresented in the past, there would not be a need for targeted efforts to "recruit and retain" them in the present. Another modifier that functions similarly to *historically* is *traditionally,* since a tradition is something established in the past, but how far in the past can vary widely. The phrase *traditionally underrepresented* appeared on Pomona's admissions page.

Example 56. Pomona College, “Diversity & Admissions” page

> Additionally, each year, we invite students from diverse, traditionally underrepresented backgrounds to visit our campus for Perspectives on Pomona (POP), a fall fly-in program.

In the UC diversity statement, the term *underrepresented* appeared in the phrase *historically excluded populations who are currently underrepresented*.

Example 57. UC Diversity Statement

> The University particularly acknowledges the acute need to remove barriers to the recruitment, retention, and advancement of talented students, faculty, and staff from historically excluded populations who are currently underrepresented.

The phrasing in this passage is more specific in its temporal description—referencing both historical and current states—but the switch from *excluded* to *underrepresented* is a rhetorical move that minimizes the current role of institutional structure. Whereas *historically excluded* centers exclusion (an action or process enacted by an agent), *currently underrepresented* centers the state or condition of underrepresentation without emphasizing an agent. The larger phrase suggests that past practices of exclusion have impacted the current state of some groups’ underrepresentation, but it strategically confines the practices of exclusion to the past (compare to, for example, *historically and currently excluded populations*). Keane noted that the avoidant function of this type of discourse is not lost on the everyday reader:

> [A phrase like this] is such an incredible doubling down on the logic that, like, the exclusion is something that happened in history, something away from us, and now they’re just underrepresented. Everybody sees that—not just grad students, not just people who study language—this is brochure language, or like, courtroom language to minimize [legal] exposure.

Unlike the other prestigious HWIs, Stanford's modified use of *underrepresented* included no explicit temporal contextualization and instead specified the institutional context in which underrepresentation occurred.

> **Example 59**. Stanford University, Vice Provost of Graduate Education "Commitment to Diversity" page
>
> [The Vice Provost of Graduate Education] works collaboratively within the University to broaden the participation and promote the academic success of graduate students from a variety of backgrounds, including those underrepresented within research universities.

The modifier *within research universities* may seem at first glance to narrow the scope of who is considered underrepresented, but it actually functions to make more people eligible for this categorization. In theory, there could be groups who are not underrepresented in higher education at large but are underrepresented at research universities in particular; for example, white women might be underrepresented at STEM-focused research universities due to those disciplines being male-dominated, but white women overall are not an underrepresented group in higher education.

Discussion of IHEs' use of the term *underrepresented* arose during the focus group interviews. deandre made a connection between the acknowledgement in website discourse of some groups' underrepresentation and the prestige of the institutions making these acknowledgments. In their view, admitting to a lack of equitable representation was a form of admitting fault, and only an institution with a well-established reputation that is unlikely to be affected by doing so would use this kind of language on its website. In response to the anonymized excerpt of the UC diversity statement that included the text in Example 57, deandre stated:

> It's different than the earlier [website excerpts discussed in the focus group] that preemptively and definitively shifted the blame for what we would imagine is

> underrepresentation, and [this institution] kind of put it out there straightforwardly—"We don't have this kind of representation." Which makes me imagine that it is probably a relatively elite university. And I only say that because by acknowledging that folks are currently underrepresented, acknowledging that they are fucking up in some regard, is only something that a university that is shitting on other universities [would do], like, "We don't need to prove to you that we're better than these other schools because we know we're better than these other schools. So we can afford to acknowledge where we're fucking up.

deandre's assessment of this discursive move reflects how status and prestige can influence how underrepresentation is framed rhetorically and how website visitors may interpret this type of discourse in light of the status of the institution. When one considers that underrepresentation of certain groups is a product of structural exclusion, it is not surprising that underrepresentation is primarily a point of discussion on HWIs' websites, and particularly for prestigious HWIs whose status is based on exclusionary practices.

The examples of metapragmatic commentary about diversity discourses and practices, rhetorical negotiations of access and prestige, and the discursive uses of *underrepresented* analyzed above reflect how prestige and HWI status both influence diversity discourse. Although the four prestigious HWIs differed according to institutional factors such as size and public or private status, these differences were not as influential as the factors that the institutions shared. In the next section, I discuss website discourse features that were unique to Christian University, which was an outlier among the HWIs in my data set.

5.3 Discourses features of Christian University

The sociopolitically conservative, evangelical Christian IHE Christian University was the only institution in the data set with a religious affiliation, and that affiliation featured prominently on the university's website. *Biblically* was used as a modifier on many pages, and Christianity was explicitly invoked as the institutions' guiding belief system.

Additionally, the term *diversity* and references to ethnoracial identity or groups rarely appeared on the website, and "impartiality" was the primary framework for institutional inclusion practices.

As discussed in Chapter 4, Christian University's website used *biblical* as a form of hyper-specific language that created institutionally specific parameters and expectations for diversity-related work and minimized institutional accountability beyond federal mandates. For instance, the passage in Example 60 references federal law (Titles VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act) but asserts that at the institutional level diversity should be understood through "a biblically based perspective."

Example 60. Christian University, "Office of Equity and Inclusion" page

> The Office of Equity & Inclusion strives for excellence in supporting these Christian University aims: Upholding Title VI and VII of the Civil Rights Act while promoting <u>a biblically based perspective</u> regarding the diversity of God's kingdom as reflected in our campus culture.

The reframing of diversity as a primarily religious rather than legal or political matter ("the diversity of God's kingdom") was a discursive strategy that appeared on pages across the Christian University website. In the "Resolution on Equity and Inclusion," passed by the university's Board of Trustees in December 2018, this understanding of diversity is stated explicitly and is connected directly to the university mission.

Example 61. Christian University, "Resolution on Equity and Inclusion"

> [C]ultural diversity has always been a core value of the University, and the University's Mission Statement reveals our <u>understanding of diversity as a reflection of the awesome power of the Creator</u>…

On the Diversity and Global Awareness page, shared Christian faith was framed as the most important identity characteristic—one that overshadows differences and centers "what transcends culture."

Example 62. Christian University "Diversity and Global Awareness" page

> As Christians, we believe that what we have in common — our identity in Christ — frees us to celebrate what makes us different. […] When you're a Christian University student, you'll join a community that fosters what transcends culture — peace, joy, hope, and love — and you'll leave here prepared to think critically, independently, and globally.

One interpretation of this text—and likely the intended rhetorical goal—is that Christian faith is the foundation of the campus community's ability to "celebrate" difference; that is, by seeing each other first and foremost as members of "God's kingdom," differences are simply reflections of God, and therefore there is no motivation for discriminatory behavior based on those differences. The second part of the passage, however, conveys a slightly different message: culture, and by extension cultural difference, is less important than one's identity as a Christian. This is a contextually specific form of colorblind discourse (Bonilla-Silva, 2018) that minimizes the significance of ethnoracial identity in someone's life. If race, ethnicity, and culture are less important than one's Christian identity, then so are racism and racial prejudice. Fostering "peace, joy, hope, and love"—emotions and states that are not tied to culture but are central to Christian beliefs—precisely because they "transcend culture" is seemingly at odds with the previous sentence's claim of celebrating difference. The rhetorical emphasis on the Christian foundations in this example ("As Christians") also obscures the fact that there may be students who are not Christian enrolled at the university (e.g., students on athletics scholarships).

The use of *biblical* as a descriptor and the frequent references to the university's Christian foundations were part of a larger rhetorical effort to construct an image of the institution as "impartial." Impartial practices treat all people equally, regardless of who they are. As such *impartial* functions similarly to *equal opportunity*: it frames institutional

outcomes as the result of a lack of overt discrimination. Treating everyone equally, however, ignores the different needs that people have based on their backgrounds, identities, and abilities. Neither impartiality nor equal opportunity entails intentional, targeted efforts to ensure students' needs are met, which would be an equity-based approach to education. A stance of impartiality complies with anti-discrimination laws while requiring no engagement with affirmative action practices, which were legal in Christian University's state and entail acknowledgement of institutional shortcomings. Example 63 illustrates how Christian University's website equated trying not to actively discriminate against any group of people with serving its campus community.

> **Example 63.** Christian University, "Office of Equity and Inclusion" page
>
> We are here to serve all students, faculty, staff, and leadership by making every effort to promote inclusiveness and impartiality throughout our institution and standing against all forms of unbiblical discrimination.

In this passage, the university notably only commits itself to challenging "unbiblical discrimination." The phrase "unbiblical discrimination" implies that there is "biblical discrimination"—forms of discrimination that are ostensibly justified by the teachings of the Bible, depending on one's interpretations of those teachings. Biblical discrimination is using Christianity to discriminate against others, which has been done by businesses and employers in the U.S. who refuse to offer services to queer couples or refuse to cover contraception in their health insurance (American Civil Liberties Union, n.d.). Based on the statement above, Christian University would not "stand against" this type of practice on its own campus, which again contradicts the claim to serve all university members and "promote inclusiveness and impartiality."

Through the demographic information that was reported, Christian University's website also demonstrated a lack of institutional engagement with or concern for diversity in the dominant sense of race and ethnicity. Whereas other HWIs, including the other private IHEs Pomona and Stanford, took advantage of the expanded definition of diversity to compensate for their perceived lack of ethnoracial diversity, Christian University provided minimal demographic information and no information at all about race or ethnicity in its public-facing campus profile. It reported only geographic origin, (binary) gender, and residential or commuter status on its Quick Facts page. During his focus group discussion, Ludwig inferred a lack of institutional concern for diversity from the following sentence on the Diversity and Global Awareness page, which uses the diminutive form of *just*:

Example 64. Christian University, "Diversity and Global Awareness" page

Inclusion is just making people feel welcome.

In his opinion, describing inclusion as "just making people feel welcome" minimized the importance of diversity and inclusion and the institutional effort that it warrants. He stated:

> There's so many moving parts and it's– I think it's very close minded to say that it's, "Oh, this is a simple problem to fix." It shouldn't be something that's like- It should be ongoing, in my opinion. And to suggest that it's simple, I think it kind of devalues diversity in itself.

Numerous studies have demonstrated that "making people feel welcome"—specifically making students from minoritized groups feel welcome at HWIs—requires structural changes and action at all levels of the institution. IHEs must create spaces in which students' cultural backgrounds are respected and foster meaningful cross-group interactions through housing, courses, and social events that allow students to build relationships while learning about each other (Tienda 2013). Institution members must also take a "diversity-and-inclusion-as-action" approach to student experience, in which they reflect on the systems of power that

exist and how they will stay in place if no action is taken (Winkle-Wagner & Locks, 2020, pg.3).

As discussed in Chapter 3, the discourse on university websites reflects state and federal influences, institution-wide ideologies and practices, and the beliefs and preferences of the various individuals who approve the website content. Christian University's discourse strategies—its emphasis on Christian identity over cultural background, using the framework of impartiality, and avoiding the term *diversity*—are not representative of all Christian colleges and universities. In fact, many Christian IHEs are actively and meaningfully engaged in diversity, equity, and inclusion work, including open discussions about race and how Christian faith should motivate work toward institutional equality (Longman 2017).

The HWI discourse features analyzed above allowed white-dominated institutions to articulate a commitment to (some type of) diversity despite low numbers of students of color; they also made it possible for IHEs to frame the motivations for institutional actions in ways that aligned with institutional priorities. Despite the differences in other institutional traits, the website discourse of Christian University, Pomona College, Southern Flagship University, Stanford University and UCSB had striking similarities that were based in their status as HWIs. As such, these discourse features did not appear on the websites of CSU Channel Islands, SHBU, or Southern Regional Black University, whose website discourse reflected their status as Historically Minority Serving Institutions. In the next section, I discuss features of website diversity discourse that were unique to these three IHEs.

5.4 Discourse features of HMSI websites

The popular understanding of diversity as a critical mass of people of color in an institution positions HWIs as the least diverse IHEs and HMSIs as the most diverse IHEs. For HMSIs whose populations are predominantly students of color from one ethnoracial group being a “diverse IHE” does not necessarily mean having students from a wide range of backgrounds. Instead, it means having a large number of “diverse” students (i.e., students from non-dominant groups), even if those students are “diverse” on the same demographic basis. As discussed in Chapter 3, institutional ideologies often construct diversity as a quality that can be assigned to individuals rather than as a characteristic of the IHE community as a whole. This ideological framing is prominent in U.S. higher education broadly and informs the diversity discourse on HMSI websites, but, notably, it did not appear explicitly on any of the three HMSI websites analyzed. The discourse features shared by CSU Channel Islands, SHBU, and Southern Regional Black University reflect how IHEs that have historically served students from minoritized groups engage with, adapt, and resist diversity discourses and ideologies that emerge from HWI contexts. Compared to the websites of HWIs, diversity was understated on HMSI websites and the websites used student-centered language, including a shared set of actions verbs related to student experience.

5.4.1 Understated diversity

According to popular understandings of diversity, HMSIs do not have to prove diversity as HWIs do. HMSIs can let racial demographics speak for themselves, which means HMSIs’ websites do not need to forefront diversity discourse as a matter of rhetorical necessity. During their focus group interview, deandre and Kendrick discussed this reality:

1. DEANDRE:	[I]f you're talking about a large public institution in or near a place that is predominately Black,
2.	such that they just have a lot of Black students,
3.	maybe 50 percent or such,
4.	they don't necessarily need to advertise it because you walk on campus,
5.	you just know.
6.	Or you look at their demographics,
7.	you just see, "Oh, it's fiftypercent Black."
8.	They don't need to be, you know…pump-faking, basically.
9.	@@@ Football reference.
10.	So, yeah. So, they would just kind of elide that.
11. KENDRICK:	In reference to deandre's point, I don't know that HBCUs do diversity pages,
12.	because they're like, "For what?"

Because HBCUs are understood to be institutions that either currently serve or historically served primarily Black students. As a result, simply invoking HBCU status is sufficient to convey that an institution serves students of color, as SHBU does in its mission statement: "SHBU, a public, comprehensive land grant institution and historically black college/university." deandre, who grew up around HBCUs and was familiar with their institutional cultures, discussed how this reliance on HBCU status as evidence of racial diversity erases the diversity of other kinds identities among the Black students who attend; the focus on race makes white and non-Black students of color the symbols of difference at the expense of marginalized groups within Black communities.

> There is diversity that goes underrepresented at HBCUs, particularly queer and trans communities that are often silenced and repressed, because it's not about diversity, it's about, "We are Black." HBCUs have white students and they don't, they don't like put pictures of them up on the websites. Usually. Sometimes they do. It's like, "Ah, yes, look, we are diverse. We have white students."

In contrast to SHBU, CSU Channel Islands made no reference to its status as a Hispanic Serving Institution in the main text of its website, though it was referenced in institutional documents that I found through the website's search function. This omission could possibly be because the threshold for HSI status is 25% Hispanic/Latinx enrollment

and CSU Channel Islands' student population was more than 50% Hispanic/Latinx, so to rely on HSI status could downplay institution demographics to those who do not look up the statistics. It could also be that, as a small regional university, most of CSU Channel Islands' website visitors are likely local and understand that a regional university in Southern California will have a Hispanic/Latinx population size that reflects local communities. Another possibility is that CSU understood being an HSI as a mission or practice rather than an institutional identity: serving Hispanic/Latinx students went beyond enrolling them at the university, so portraying institutional practices on the website was more important than emphasizing enrollment numbers (e.g., Garcia et al., 2019; Marin, 2019). Regardless of the institutional motivation, the only at-length discussion of diversity on the website was on the page for the President's Commission on Human Relations, Diversity, and Equity, which focused on legally protected groups.

An additional contributing factor to the relatively understated diversity discourse on HMSI's websites' is that diversity, in the sense of demographic breadth, is not part of the institutional missions for these IHEs. Although all three websites have at least one statement about preparing students to participate in a global society or a reference to institutional diversity, none of their mission statements mention increasing, fostering, or using diversity as a resource—a major contrast to HWIs. HBCUs, in particular, were founded to serve a specific population based on the principles of educational access and racial equity in the face of legal, overt racial discrimination. Diversity has not been a guiding principle, yet a more diverse population has been able to access education through HBCUs than through exclusionary HWIs (Gasman & Tudico, 2008; Lovett, 2011).

5.4.2 Student-centered discourse

The equity-oriented principles of the HMSIs in my sample were reflected in the student-centered language on their websites. I use the term *student-centered discourse* to refer to discourse that explicitly focuses on students and their needs and discourse that describes institutional practices that do so. This is in contrast to institution-centered discourse that focuses on the accolades of institutions and frames student attendance as a privilege.

Both HBCUs had student-centered language in their mission statement and/or elsewhere on their mission page.

Example 65. SHBU Mission Statement

> The University endeavors to meet the educational needs of students, graduating lifelong learners who are well equipped to serve their communities as informed citizens, globally competitive leaders, and highly effective, ethical professionals.

Example 66. SHBU, Mission page, "Values" section

> Student-Centered—Promoting the intellectual, physical, social, and emotional development of students in all facets of University life.

Example 67. Southern Regional Black University Mission Statement

> Student-Centered—Students are our top priority, and we are committed to helping them become globally competitive in an enriching, stimulating and supportive environment.

SHBU's mission statement is notable for the phrase "endeavors to meet the educational needs of students," which places the responsibility on the institution to ensure that its students have what they need in order to succeed—and also acknowledges that the university may not always manage to do so. This stance of making the institution work for the students is in stark contrast to HWIs' rhetoric of inclusive excellence that is based on students fitting into existing institutional expectations; it also differs from HWI rhetoric describing students as resources that benefit the institution. The SHBU mission page also acknowledged that students have more than academic needs. Referring to students' "intellectual, physical,

social, and emotional development" highlighted the holistic interest in students' well-being and efforts to meet their multifaceted needs that are common at HBCUs (Gay, 2018). Southern Regional Black University's mission statement, which listed the institution's core values, explicitly states that "students are [the university's] top priority." Considering that the goal of IHE websites is to attract prospective students, one would expect that clearly stating that the institution cares about its students would be a common practice regardless of IHE type, even if it is purely rhetorical—but this type of language only appeared on the websites of HMSIs.

In addition to talking about students, another form of student-centered discourse was talking to students, a discourse strategy on CSU Channel Islands' website. CSU was unique in its use of the second-person pronoun *you* rather than *students* or third-person *they* to refer to students on its About page. Using *you* positioned students as the target audience for this information rather than an unspecified generic audience.

Example 68. CSU Channel Islands "About" page

> Our mission statement boils down to this: No matter which of our academic programs you choose, you'll be at the center of your educational experience.

CSU Channel Islands also invoked the metaphor of the university as family, specifically describing the institutional "family" as *warm, welcoming, smart and fun*.

Example 69. CSU Channel Islands "About" page

> Imagine a big family—one that's warm, welcoming, smart and fun. That's California State University Channel Islands.

How this family structure manifests in institutional practice is left to the reader's imagination, but based on dominant representations of family in the U.S. they can infer that this metaphor means students will develop positive relationships with the people around them

and will be cared for by university leaders. Whether in the form of a stated commitment to prioritize students or language that spoke directly to students, student-centered discourse on HMSI websites reflected institutional ideology that MSIs are meant to serve students. Equity-oriented and student-centered language also took the form of a set of active verbs that were unique to HMSI websites.

5.4.3 Active verbs: *Assist, empower,* and *transform*

The verbs *assist, empower,* and *transform* framed institutional practices as intended to provide help to students when and in whatever form they need it (*assist*), to work with students to become self-motivated and capable (*empower*), and create meaningful, long-lasting change (*transform*). Similar to active framings of diversity and inclusion, these active verbs reflected an understanding that serving students is a dynamic activity with multiple dimensions. Also like diversity and inclusion, however, the verbs were not always connected to concrete or specific actions, as illustrated in Example 70.

Example 70. SHBU Graduate College homepage

> One of the aims of the Graduate College is to assist students in achieving an advanced level of understanding and competence necessary for successful professional careers.

In the context of the Graduate College—compared to a department or research lab—the lack of connection to specific action is not completely out of place. The requirements for various graduate programs can different significantly, and the homepage is focused on what the Graduate College offers to all students. A passage further down on the homepage references "facilitating research," which aligns with the typical U.S. graduate school structure of students simultaneously taking coursework and conducting independent research. In the clause "assist students in achieving an advanced level of understanding and competence," *assist* is an apt action verb to describe the practices of a Graduate College, since graduate

students are expected to have already achieved a certain level of academic and/or professional accomplishments and to be self-motivated. The College's responsibility to students is in theory to work alongside students to make it easier for them to achieve their goals; the College does not, however, have the same sort of high-involvement, holistic development responsibility that the larger institution has to undergraduate students.

The verbs *empower* and *transform,* which also appeared on HMSI websites, reflected institutional ideologies that education is about more than students gaining content knowledge. To empower others is to increase their sense of agency and ability to enact control over their lives; in Example 71, Southern Regional Black University presents itself as an institution that does this for its students through its "supportive academic and culturally diverse environment."

Example 71. Southern Regional Black University Mission Statement

> Offering a supportive academic and culturally diverse environment for all, the University empowers its students to turn their aspirations into reality and achieve their full potential as well-rounded and resourceful citizens and leaders for the 21st century.

This was one of the few instances in which HMSI student-centered language was explicitly connected to institutional demographics. In contrast to other diversity discourse, including elsewhere on the Southern Regional Black University website, this passage from the mission statement does not go on to connect diversity to institutional gains or a globalized workforce. It instead maintains the student-centered focus by connecting it to students' development as members of society: becoming "well-rounded and resourceful citizens."

The verb *transform* appeared on SHBU's Graduate College homepage in reference to the end result of graduate students' time in their programs.

Example 72. SHBU, Graduate College homepage

Transforming students into accomplished professionals through research and practice "Through research and practice," these students are able to go from being primarily students, who are seen as not yet fully knowledgeable in their areas of study, to being "accomplished professionals." *Transforming* suggests that the College does not view this change as simply a shift in rank or gaining a new job title, but rather as a fundamental change in graduates' positions in society. On SHBU's website, the language of transformation was not specific to the Graduate College; the university described itself as offering "a transformative educational experience" on the About page, and this idea was echoed on multiple other pages.

The HMSI discourse features of understated diversity and student-centered language are reflections of the equity-based and student-oriented missions of these types of institutions. They are also reflections of how institutions that meet dominant perceptions of racial diversity do not have to "prove" commitments to the idea of diversity as HWIs do. Focus group participants had fewer comments about HMSI website discourse than HWI website discourse (all of which was presented anonymously), which suggests that HMSI diversity discourse includes fewer of the features that participants considered egregious. Even with guiding questions that focused on the HMSI discourse examples, participants typically brought the discussion back to HWIs by pointing out how the HMSI discourse was different from the HWI examples they saw and from the type of discourse they expected based on HWI websites. The focus on HWI discourse was not surprising given that all of the participants were graduate students at an HWI and most had attended HWIs for their undergraduate studies as well. It does, however, point to the reality that what the public sees as "diversity discourse" is largely determined by the discursive practices of HWIs.

5.5 Conclusion

The website discourse features analyzed in this chapter illustrate how institutional diversity discourse—and the malleable concept of diversity itself—is shaped by interconnected factors at multiple levels of academia. Website discourse is central to the construction of institutions' identities as "diverse and inclusive" places, but what "diverse and inclusive" means can vary significantly. All eight IHEs' website discourse reflected the dominant neoliberal ideologies and practices of U.S. higher education, but the impacts of those ideologies and practices for each institution were shaped by demographics, mission, private/public status, prestige, financial resources, and varying legal restrictions. By identifying discourse features that appeared only on the websites of certain IHE types, I have illustrated the relationship between diversity discourse and specific institutional qualities. Combined with my findings in Chapters 3 and 4, my findings in this chapter demonstrate that, in order to be comprehensive, analyses of diversity discourse and its impact on institutional practice require attention to institutional specificity as well influences at the state and national level.

A comprehensive analysis of website discourse is essential to my investigation of how institutional diversity discourse influences the experiences of graduate students of color. Although graduate students' day-to-day activities are generally localized to their institution, students do not exist in a vacuum. They attend conferences, they are members of academic and professional organizations, they know students at other IHEs, and they see discourse from other institutions circulate in social and news media. As a result, graduate students see and hear the types of widespread discourse features discussed in Chapters 3 and 4, along with

discourses specific to their type of institution (e.g., HWI or HMSI) and discourses unique to their individual college or university. These various circulating discourses can significantly shape graduate students of color's perspectives on higher education, diversity, and their specific institutions, as shown by focus group participants' reactions to website diversity discourse from UCSB and other IHEs. Throughout my discussions of discourses at UCSB and SHBU in Chapters 6 through 9, I refer to the findings of my website discourse analysis to illustrate points regarding observational or interview data.

Although most interviewees stated that they did not regularly visit their university's website, the diversity discourses that they mentioned during their interviews could frequently be found there. Website diversity discourse is not the only type of institutional discourse, but it reflects the diversity discourses that students and other institution members read in emails and office documents and hear at townhalls and campus events. Because this discourse has such an impact on institutional practice, I make recommendations for improvement in Chapter 11 based on the findings of my study and the insights of previous literature.

CHAPTER 6: Narratives of graduate student life at UCSB

This school is historically white, and it just exudes that when you walk on campus.
— Francesca, graduate student, UCSB

The perspectives on diversity held by graduate students of color at UCSB were heavily influenced by the distinct social, educational, and financial context of the university as a historically white public research institution in California that was part of the University of California (UC) system. Many aspects of UCSB's institutional operations were the consequences of years-long changes at the university, UC, state, and national levels, but the interconnectedness of these changes and their historical progression were often opaque to students—graduate and undergraduate alike. This chapter begins with background about the structure of the University of California system and the place of UCSB and graduate students within it (Section 6.1) to further contextualize the people, events, and practices of the university that I analyze in interviewees' narratives in Chapter 7.

In Section 6.2, I briefly describe the overarching diversity, equity, and inclusion structures at UCSB, along with the national and local sociopolitical moment in which the interviews took place. Institutional leaders' responses to specific events related to racism, financial inequity, and other forms of discrimination informed interviewees' opinions about whether the institution cared about students from marginalized backgrounds, as did their day-to-day interactions with faculty, staff, and students from dominant groups. After providing this additional ethnographic context, in Section 6.3 I summarize the demographics of the 30 graduate students of color interviewed at UCSB and then provide examples of how their experiences as members of the university were heterogeneous based on different aspects of their identities and backgrounds. In Section 6.4, I discuss the recurring themes in interviewees' descriptions of the living, learning, and working environments at UCSB, which

shaped their perspectives on the university and its diversity practices. Finally, in Section 6.5, I analyze how these descriptions of the university, as well as other aspects of the interviews, conveyed the affective significance of diversity to graduate students of color in the HWI context of UCSB and why this affect should inform the diversity discourse and practices of UCSB other HWIs.

6.1. UCSB and the University of California in the 21st century

Since the late 2000s, the University of California has undergone significant changes as a result of university internal and external factors. The Great Recession that began in 2007-2008 led to major cuts in state government funding for public higher education, which created a budget gap that had ripple effects across all levels of UC (Lenz, 2009; Mitchell, Leachman, & Masterson, 2017). At the system level and on each UC campus, institutional leaders made decisions about how to adjust funding models and priorities, distribution of labor, student enrollment, and more in order to make up for financial losses; like the other major public university systems in California, UC focused on spending cuts over revenue generation (Johnson-Ahorlu et al., 2013), including plans to decrease undergraduate (over)enrollment over time, temporarily reduce salaries, and freeze or cut hiring in certain areas (Lenz, 2009). Institutional data demonstrates that what ended up happening in the years following the recession was a steady increase in undergraduate enrollment, especially among higher-paying out-of-state and international students, and an increase in low-cost temporary and contingent instructional positions.[14]

[14] All enrollment and employment statistics in this section are publicly available on the UC Information Center: https://www.universityofcalifornia.edu/infocenter/. 2011 is the earliest year for which the Information Center reports data.

From Fall 2011 to Fall 2020, total undergraduate enrollment in the UC system increased by 25%; out-of-state domestic enrollment increased by more than 120% and international student enrollment increased by more than 250%. Non-California residents went from approximately 7% of undergraduate enrollment to approximately 17% during this time. Meanwhile, the number of ladder faculty increased 17%, lecturers increased 41%, and graduate students increased approximately 12.5% (see Table 6). At UCSB, from Fall 2011 to Fall 2019—the academic year when I conducted interviews—total undergraduate enrollment increased by 25%; ladder faculty increased by 15%, lecturers increased by 18%, and graduate students decreased by approximately 3%. (From year to year, UCSB's graduate student population could fluctuate by a few dozen to a few hundred students, but enrollment hovered between 2,750 and 3,050 students during this time period.) Ladder faculty, lecturers, and graduate students operate within different systems of expectations and requirements within UC, which allowed for a redistribution of teaching and other labor to meet the demand created by increased undergraduate enrollment.

University population	**2011 to 2020 change**
Undergraduate students	
Total undergraduates	+ 25%
Out-of-state undergraduates	+ 120%
International undergraduates	+ 250%
Instructors	
Ladder faculty	+ 17%
Lecturers	+ 41%
Graduate students	+ 12.5%

Table 6. UC-wide increases in students and instructors, 2011-2020

Compared to teaching-focused IHEs such as community colleges, regional comprehensive universities, and liberal arts colleges, UC places greater institutional emphasis on research. Rather than increase the teaching demands of existing faculty or creating the needed number of tenure-track faculty lines to adequately meet teaching needs across the UC campuses—the latter being largely infeasible given established funding structures—UC campuses hired more temporary faculty and shifted more of the remaining teaching labor to graduate students. Lecturers, especially part-time and short-term, are hired primarily, and usually exclusively, to teach, and their pay is significantly lower than that of ladder faculty; whereas ladder faculty are paid a yearly salary, lecturers are paid per credit hour or per course taught, making them a much less expensive form of teaching labor (Flaherty, 2020). (Increasing the number of contingent faculty as a cost-cutting strategy has been ongoing in U.S. higher education for years [Hurlburt & McGarrah, 2016]).

In contrast to faculty, graduate students aim not for "promotion" but to remain in "good standing," which maintains their funding eligibility and place in their program. Teaching is not among the formal criteria for determining good standing, but it can directly impact whether a graduate student is able to maintain their standing: teaching responsibilities take time away from the research and preparation required to meet program milestones such as theses and qualifying exams. For some students, working as a teaching assistant is their sole source of funding; departments may choose to admit students with no guarantee of funding other than teaching assistantships, and departments may be incentivized to rely on such funding models if they have increased demand for undergraduate courses that could be covered by graduate teaching labor. Depending on the size of the graduate program and the severity of the need, even some students who have grant- or fellowship-based funding may

be asked to teach courses in order to avoid faculty teaching overload courses, to cover for faculty course releases, or to increase the number of seats in a course by adding additional labs or discussion sections. Relative to its undergraduate enrollment, UCSB had a small graduate student population, which meant that there were fewer graduate students among whom to distribute the additional labor created by undergraduate enrollment and institutional structures limiting faculty teaching loads.

Most UCSB graduate students did not attend a UC institution for their undergraduate studies or otherwise have a reason to pay close attention to what was happening in the UC system in the late 2000s. The history of the university, state and federal education policies, and government funding issues was knowledge that students generally had to learn on their own, since it was not systematically shared by UCSB in any way. Additionally, the UC system has a complex hierarchical network of campus and system administrators that can make power structures unclear to students. Each campus has department chairs, division Deans and Associate Deans, Vice Chancellors of academic and non-academic units, an Executive Vice Chancellor or Provost, and a Chancellor (the administrator that most other universities would refer to as their President), as well as a campus Academic Senate. At the system level—that is, encompassing all ten campuses—UC is led by its President, Board of Regents, and systemwide Academic Senate. The average graduate student interacted most regularly with their own department's faculty, mainly their advisor, the department's director of graduate studies, and perhaps their program chair; they also had regular interaction with members of Graduate Division for graduate student-specific matters. Depending on how practices were implemented and whether or how issues were communicated to students, the source or final authority for an issue was not always clear.

Advanced graduate students at UCSB had seen and experienced the negative impact of the steadily increasing undergraduate enrollment over several years. As I demonstrate throughout this chapter, even first- and second-year students could recognize the tensions and untenable situations created by institutional structures. Without detailed knowledge of the structures, however, graduate students were placed in the situation of having to navigate an institutional system that they did not fully understand. As graduate students attempted to address the types of interpersonal, departmental, and campus-wide issues described by my interviewees, they often encountered roadblocks that they could not have anticipated or only partially understood. The opacity of institutional structures and decision making around distribution of resources, graduate students' roles, and diversity and inclusion efforts was a major contributor to graduate student frustration with UCSB and the UC system. At UCSB, the lack of clarity around diversity and inclusion was exacerbated by the lack of a concrete diversity plan, a point that I return to in the following section.

6.2. Diversity and the sociopolitical moment at UCSB

Although UCSB had two Minority Serving Institution (MSI) designations—Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) and Asian American/Native American/Pacific Islander Serving Institution (AANAPISI)—only its HSI status featured prominently in institutional diversity discourse. According to Keane, the Inclusion and Equity Coordinator for the Office of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion, this omission was largely a consequence of MSIs having to choose one designation for the purpose of applying for federal funding, and HSIs were receiving increased attention at a national level in response to the U.S.'s growing Latinx population (Anguiano & Navarro, 2020). In addition to its large population of domestic

Asian students, UCSB had a large population of Asian international students: in Fall 2019, 16% of the total student population was international students and 75% of those students were from mainland China. These dynamics, along with the stagnant populations of Black and Indigenous students and national and international sociopolitical events, shaped how students from different ethnoracial backgrounds perceived UCSB's practices as an MSI.

The U.S. Department of the Interior defines MSIs as follows:

> Minority Serving Institutions are institutions of higher education that serve minority populations. *They are unique both in their missions and in their day-to-day operations*. Some of these colleges and universities are located in remote regions of the country, whereas others serve urban neighborhoods. Some are only a few decades old, whereas others have been striving for more than a century to give their constituents the social and educational skills needed to overcome racial discrimination and limited economic opportunities. (emphasis added)

As I detail throughout this chapter, graduate students of color took issue with the fact that, although there were diversity initiatives in place, UCSB did not seem to be fundamentally changing its institutional mission or day-to-day operations to best serve the increasingly diverse student body. In the absence of leadership on diversity issues due to the lack of a Vice Chancellor for this area, UCSB did not have either campus-specific diversity goals or a defined strategic plan independent of UC system-wide goals. Keane described it as a lack of "inclusion outcomes," drawing a parallel to the learning outcomes instructors were expected to specify on their course syllabi. In his view, "diversity and inclusion wins at UCSB [were] in spite of the system, not because of it." Because there was no overarching shared goal, institutional diversity and inclusion efforts on campus—including the funding and labor to enact those efforts—were sporadic and piecemeal rather than systematic and synergistic (see, e.g., Williams & Clowney 2007 for a discussion of the necessity of strategic planning for diversity efforts in higher education).

At the time of the study, UCSB was in the midst of major student activist movements at the same time that the U.S. was experiencing sociopolitical upheavals on a historical scale. In 2016, Donald Trump was elected President of the United States, and his policies and practices—including an attempt to end the Deferred Action for Childhood Arrivals (DACA) program that created educational opportunities for undocumented students (*Department of Homeland Security et al. v. Regents of the University of California et al.,* 2019), implementing a "Muslim ban" (Executive Order 13769), and appointing white supremacists such as Steve Bannon to positions in the White House—directly endangered the safety of students at UCSB for the four-year duration of his presidency. In 2017, the deadly white-supremacist "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, near the prestigious University of Virginia, brought attention to the place of IHEs in the U.S.'s long-term relationship with white supremacy (Harper, 2017). UCSB students organized rallies, marches, and support spaces in direct response to these national events. In addition, they continued the years-long advocacy for increased resources for students from marginalized groups. As undergraduate enrollment continued to increase at UCSB and across UC campuses each year during this period, undergraduate and graduate students alike brought increased attention to the limitations on physical space and increased labor demands that this situation created.

In January 2020, graduate student activism took the spotlight when graduate students at UCSB followed the lead of graduate students at UC Santa Cruz to fight for a cost-of-living adjustment (COLA) to the pay of graduate teaching assistants. The COLA movement, which eventually spread to all UC campuses with teaching assistants, addressed the widespread financial insecurities that UC graduate students faced as a result of the high cost of living in

California relative to graduate teaching salaries, along with the ripple effect that financial insecurity had on their academic and professional activities. Teaching and grading strikes, rallies, marches, and teach-ins—and the UC's responses to them—garnered national attention (e.g., Cowan, 2020) and shed a light on the crucial role of graduate students' labor to UC's ability to operate. When the coronavirus pandemic closed UCSB's campus, the COLA movement moved online and adjusted to addressing the new concerns that the pandemic created, including additional labor to shift to online teaching and many graduate students' sudden loss of supplementary incomes from other in-person jobs. The COLA movement put on display graduate students' uniquely ambiguous status within the institution: they are treated as employees or as students depending on the situation, but they also hold many informal, uncompensated roles that did not necessarily fall under the purview of the institution's disciplinary structures (e.g., mentor to undergraduate students, leader of an identity-based student organization). The COLA movement also highlighted the overlooked diversity among graduate students with respect to age and familial responsibilities, along with the different institutional conditions for international students compared to domestic students (e.g., restrictions created by visa status). I was active in the COLA movement as an organizer, and some of the interviewees and I had interacted at COLA events prior to meeting for the purpose of the interview (that is, we realized only at the time of the interview that we had met before). Regardless of whether they actively participated in or even supported the COLA movement, every graduate student at UCSB was affected by it, and it was at the forefront of many interviewees' minds during my study.

6.3 UCSB interviewees

I interviewed a total of 30 graduate students of color at UCSB, who ranged from first- to seventh-year students across Art and Humanities, Education and Social Sciences, and STEM. The youngest interviewees were 23 years old, and the oldest was in his 50s; seven were international students, two were domestic students who had immigrated to the U.S. when they were young, and the other 21 were domestic students from around the U.S. Interviewees varied in their ethnoracial identities, socioeconomic backgrounds, status as first-generation students, and their gender and sexual identities (see Appendix A). All of these factors, but not only these factors, shaped interviewees' experiences in higher education and at UCSB, and this is reflected in the ways that they described life as a graduate student and a person of color living in Santa Barbara.

6.3.1 Heterogeneous experiences and perspectives among graduate students of color

"People of color" and "students of color" are broad categories that encompass myriad identities and backgrounds. Graduate students of color come from different ethnic, racial, and national backgrounds that inform not only how they view the world but also how the world views them. Although the descriptor *of color* forefronts race, ethnoracial identity and the social systems built around it are inextricable from other aspects of identity and society (e.g., Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 2000). Interviewees shared numerous experiences by virtue of being people of color moving through the white-supremacist structures of an IHE—imposter syndrome, feeling isolated on campus because of solo status, and the use of their presence in their department as an excuse not to engage with diversity issues more meaningfully (e.g.,

Thompson & Sekaquaptewa, 2002). Students' experiences and perspectives also varied significantly based on their nationality, gender, class background, and more.

For instance, Althea and Milo both had one Asian parent and one white parent but had different relationships to their Asian heritage and how it fit into educational spaces. Althea grew up immersed in her Southeast Asian community in the U.S. and was hyperaware of how her culture was marginalized even within Asian communities and spaces in higher education. Milo, on the other hand, was born and raised in East Asia and was not exposed to U.S. racial ideology until he moved to the U.S. to attend college. In addition to individual difference based on upbringing, Black students collectively have a unique positionality in U.S. higher education due to the labor of enslaved Black people used to build many IHEs as well as the history of legally codified anti-Blackness that has barred Black people from basic, let alone higher, education. Multiple Black interviewees noted that it was very likely that they would be the only—and possibly the first—Black faculty member in their future department.

Native students were an even smaller minority than Black students at UCSB, and the relationship of Native peoples to U.S. IHEs was different from that of Black students or other students of color. With the exception of Tribal Colleges and Universities (TCUs), U.S. IHEs have played a major role in the dispossession of Native tribes' lands, and the institutions built on these lands marginalize and erase Indigenous knowledge and belief systems within their educational structures (Stein & de Andreotti, 2016). Ludwig, himself a native student, pointed out that while institutions were finally making changes to acknowledge this reality, such as through land acknowledgements, there was still a fundamental disconnect between dominant white, Western institutional logics and Indigenous worldviews. Marisol and Diana

were both Latinx students of Mexican descent, but their experiences and perspectives were shaped by their differing realities as a domestic and immigrant student, respectively. Marisol highlighted the tension she felt trying to encourage more Chicanas to pursue graduate school and wanting people "to have belief in higher education," Diana highlighted the challenges she faced as an immigrant during the Trump administration. Lilly, an international student from the Middle East, faced personal and academic barriers in the wake of Trump's Islamophobic and xenophobic Executive Order 13769, "Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States." By its third iteration, the order banned travel to the U.S. from 13 majority-Muslim countries, including Lilly's home country, which made travel to see her family or collect data needed for her dissertation virtually impossible.

Graduate students of color who were first-generation college students, came from low-income backgrounds, and/or were part of the LGBTQ+ community also described experiences unique to those parts of their identities. For instance, Francesca did not feel an immediate sense of camaraderie with other queer students in her department because her political beliefs were typically "more liberal than white gays'." Dominant diversity discourses and practices in higher education often fail to acknowledge the diversity of experiences and perspectives among "diverse students" that these examples illustrate, treating the different facets of students' identities as discrete rather than interconnected (e.g., Anderson, 2018). Broad definitions of diversity that "kitchen-sink everything together," to quote Netta, lack the specificity needed to adequately address graduate students' needs, but, as I discussed in Chapter 3, there are often multiple level of decision making that determine how specific or broad "diversity" can be. Two non-student interviewees, Camden and Garrett, were full-time diversity administrators within Graduate Division; both described

how state and federal legal restrictions limited how UCSB could define diversity and allocate funds, resulting in broad definitions of diversity for programs such as the graduate student mentoring program, which encompassed as many minoritized people as possible by casting a wide net.

6.4 Interviewees' narratives of graduate student life at UCSB

Based on the questions that I asked and the interactional nature of the encounter, personal narratives were a large part of interviewees' responses. Personal narratives "convey a sequence of reportable events" that are "of great interest or import to interlocutors (Ochs & Capps, 2009, pp. 33-34). According to Ochs and Capps (2009, p. 7), "the essential function of personal narrative [is] to air, probe, and otherwise attempt to reconstruct and make sense of actual and possible life experiences," and interviewees did exactly this in their recounting of their experiences. In this section, I summarize key common themes in their descriptions of life at UCSB.

As part of their interview, I asked each graduate student what they wished they had known before starting their program, what needs were unique to graduate students in general and at UCSB specifically, what resources they needed access to, and whether they perceived UCSB as diverse. These questions elicited answers that spoke to the experiences of navigating UCSB as graduate students of color as well as the realities of living in the city of Santa Barbara, which was even less diverse than the university (see Chapter 2). Several key topics recurred in interviewees' responses: the different life stages and different institutional roles of graduate students compared to undergraduates; the financial strains created by the cost of living in Santa Barbara and the discrepancy between graduate labor and pay; the

limited resources or limited access to resources for different types of students; the complexity of faculty-student relationships; and the whiteness of UCSB and the surrounding community.

6.4.1 Life stages, institutional roles, and financial insecurity

Whereas the majority of undergraduate students are in their late teens to early 20s, most graduate students, and especially advanced Ph.D. students, are older, with life responsibilities that differ from those of the average undergraduate. This can include dedicating time to partners and children, financially supporting family, supporting aging parents, and trying to prepare for their long-term career. For example, Robert noted that his income as a graduate student was more than what his parents made as small business owners growing up and more than what he made working part time jobs as an undergraduate. Although he now had a greater income, he also had new financial stress because of his parents' limited financial means and increasingly poor health: he was trying to simultaneously save for their retirement and health care and his own future. While these are also common responsibilities for non-graduate students of a similar age, interviewees pointed out that the demands of graduate school make it difficult to keep up with them—or they require major professional sacrifices in order to do so. Teaching and research salaries alone were rarely sufficient to cover all financial expenses; the time demand for coursework, teaching, research, professional development, mentoring, and other activities left little room for supplementary income sources through other jobs; for people with families, dedicating time to those relationships often meant missing social, networking, and professional development opportunities or vice versa.

These life-work balance difficulties, which have been documented among graduate students are various types of IHEs (e.g., Yusuf et al., 2020), were exacerbated in the UCSB

context by the high cost of living in Santa Barbara. Based on an analysis of graduate student salaries and average housing costs in the Santa Barbara area, UCSB COLA organizers found that a typical teaching assistant at UCSB in 2019 spent 51% of their income on housing, which was well above the 30% federal threshold for "rent burden" (https://ucsb4cola.org/general-faq/). Ruthi noted that it was not uncommon for students to have to cut back on buying needed clothing, shoes, or food, in order to make sure they could pay their rent. Some graduate students took out new loans to cover their living expenses. For graduate students who were not living in university housing, cost mitigation options were limited: living with housemates was not personally feasible for everyone, and older students who were able to live with others were generally not interested in living with people significantly younger than themselves—especially considering the possibility of an undergraduate housemate becoming one of their students. Jameison, a first-year STEM student, had taken on a tutoring job to supplement his income as a teaching assistant (the former paying better by the hour); while he liked having more financial stability, he would have preferred to have that time for research. Ludwig, an Arts and Humanities students with a family, concisely summarized graduate students' life in Santa Barbara as "poverty with a view."

Interviewees highlighted the fact that teaching and research assistant salaries were based on a set number of hours for those positions, which were constantly exceeded because of student demand or unavoidable research needs. These salaries did not cover the hours of labor that graduate students put into the university outside of these roles, including training research assistants, mentoring students, and various form of diversity labor—the latter disproportionately falling on the shoulders of minoritized students, as I discuss later in this

chapter. Tilly, a fifth-year student in Education and Social Sciences, stated plainly that labor outside the boundaries of teaching or paid research positions needs to be financially compensated:

> If you want us as students of color to be a resource for you, you also need to value that work as much as you value the other work. The pay needs to be as much- If you want us to give you feedback on how to improve a course that's low-key racist, *pay me for my time*. In the same way that you would pay other students that are working on, like, helping you with your website.

deandre, a second-year student in Arts and Humanities, noted that such diversity work not only takes away from graduate students' primary responsibilities as researchers and instructors but also adds an additional burden onto the daily work of navigating higher education and UCSB as a person of color:

> Equity work is extracurricular labor that has nothing to do with our research—mentoring, outreach programs, department open house. These are uncompensated and we do them with the pressures of working within a white-supremacist institution.

UCSB graduate students also had to use their income to pay for optional-but-expected professional development activities such as presenting research at conferences. Students whose department or advisor did not have designated conference funds had to compete with other graduate students for a limited number of campus-wide lottery-based $200 travel awards that each graduate student was eligible to receive once per year. These types of discrepancies between hours worked, costs incurred, and salaries paid resulted in the widespread experience of financial insecurity, which fostered the feelings of being exploited and undervalued workers that fueled the COLA movement. Although the movement on its surface was about money, graduate students across the UC system who supported the movement were motivated by a desire for their labor to be recognized as integral to the

institution rather than treated as simply part of professional trainings or even a privilege for which graduate students should be uncritically grateful.

6.4.2 Access to resources

The lack of or limited access to key institutional resources was another defining feature of interviewees' descriptions of life at UCSB. Interviewees recognized that students from different backgrounds have different needs and that it was realistically impossible for every need of every student to be met through institutional resources. They also recognized that UCSB had much more extensive resources in place than many other IHEs, such as cultural resource centers, the resource center for sexual and gender diversity, socially progressive campus programming, and free mental health resources. This did not, however, change the reality that graduate students of color had needs that should have been better met by the institution.

For instance, international graduate students of color faced unique institutional and legal barriers to some resources that domestic graduate students of color had access to, such as state food assistance programs that are only available to California residents. International students Lilly (from the Middle East), Biyu (from mainland China), and Liana (from Southeast Asia) all suggested ways that resources could be expanded to better address their individual needs and the collective needs of international students. Lilly suggested offering cultural events in languages other than English, providing more funding to departments and campus organizations that can make these types of events happen, and allowing students to invite people from their communities who were not affiliated with the institution to participate in or lead university to "make UCSB [international students'] home, not just the place they currently are." Biyu pointed out that there should be more assistance for

unfamiliar non-academic tasks such as filing taxes and learning how to drive. Liana, who completed her undergraduate studies in the U.S., described international students as broadly "neglected from a lot of things related to diversity and inclusion" and issues like tuition costs and visas that are specific to international students "can make [them] feel like outsiders." Liana recognized that many of these issues were beyond the control of UCSB, but she asserted that the university had the ability to offer resources to "help prepare [international students] to face these challenges." A consistent desire among the international students interviewed was for the office that serves them to be larger, with more staff and funding to facilitate these types of resources.

Kendrick, a Black student in Arts and Humanities, focused on a different type of resource: faculty who share the student's background. Black faculty at UCSB were few, mostly clustered in the social sciences, and overburdened. For instance, the Department of Black Studies did not have a graduate program, so faculty did not have graduate students to consistently share the responsibilities of teaching, mentoring undergraduates, and facilitating department events. This also meant that Black graduate students' primary interactions with Black Studies faculty was in formal settings like graduate courses, where time was split with other students. For Kendrick and other Black graduate students, including me, this impacted opportunities to receive mentorship from scholars who knew firsthand what it was like to work toward a career in academia as a Black person—a lack of information that could have long-term impacts on our careers.

One type of resource that was mentioned by nearly every interviewee was mental health resources. Between the widespread pressures of graduate school, societal structures that marginalized certain groups, and the experiences of navigating higher education as a

minoritized person, graduate students of color face many challenges that negatively affect their mental health. As was the case for many other types of resources, student demand for counseling services greatly exceeded institutional capacity; there were no graduate-only counselors or counseling slots, so graduate students had to compete with undergraduates for on-campus services. Netta pointed out the lack of mental health professionals who shared the backgrounds of students who sought counseling. White therapists, she said, no matter how well trained, cannot understand what it is like to move through the world as a person of color. The varied resources that interviewees oriented to as most important reflected the diversity of their experiences as students of color from different backgrounds; while they shared many needs as graduate students, they also experienced the institution in ways that were significantly different from each other, as described above.

6.4.3 Student-faculty relationships

Graduate students' relationships with faculty were one of the biggest factors shaping their graduate education experience as well as their future after graduation. The faculty advisor chairs committees for theses and qualifying exams, signs off on institutional paperwork for program milestones, provides the primary reference for job and funding applications, and overall holds more structural power as faculty than their advisees do as students. The inherent power imbalance in these relationships and the potential for abuse and exploitation of students is well known and widely documented in higher education (e.g., Amienne, 2017; Moss, 2018). Althea, a student in Arts and Humanities, described the advising relationship as placing students "at the whim of faculty," emphasizing that a graduate student's "entire future can depend on a letter of recommendation." Borden, a sixth-year student in Education and Social Sciences, echoed this perspective, saying, "Graduate

students have it the worst, but we can't complain about anything because of our positions. Well, we *could* complain, but we could lose our job or advisor." For students of color in programs at an HWI like UCSB, this structural power imbalance was only one form of disempowerment created through the student-faculty relationship. The majority of UCSB faculty—like the majority of faculty across U.S. higher education (Espinosa et al., 2019)—were white, so the majority of faculty advising graduate students of color at UCSB were white. In many cases, graduate students of color can seek out additional mentorship from faculty at their institution who are not their advisor but share their background and are in the same or a related field; however, such faculty are often themselves vulnerable, overstretched, and not compensated for this additional labor. For many graduate students of color at UCSB, however, there were few faculty with shared background for them to seek out in any department (see Turner & González 2015 for a discussion of academic mentorship across racial and gender backgrounds).

Having shared lived experiences is not a prerequisite for a good faculty-student relationship: many graduate students, myself included, have been successfully mentored by faculty who did not share their backgrounds, and some students have had poor relationships with faculty advisors shared their background. Interviewees pointed out that faculty advisors, regardless of background, who do not proactively work to understand their advisees' unique experiences and perspectives will not be able to address their students' academic needs, let alone support them through personal issues that affect their academic work. Faculty advisors' knowledge about their students shapes whether and how they help graduate students seek out resources and opportunities as well as how they imagine their advisees' future careers developing; because of the power differential, graduate students did not always feel

comfortable pointing this out or pushing back against their advisor's expectations (Brockman et al., 2010). All of this impacted interviewees' ability to be as successful as possible in their graduate career. Lupita, a Black student in STEM, described how her non-Black advisor's lack of knowledge about opportunities created for scholars of color or specifically for Black scholars placed her at a structural disadvantage.

> And because there's no like Black professors, at least in STEM, what I found in applying for grants and stuff is that, like, they're not aware of the stuff that you could compete in really well based on your background or any diverse part of you. Like, I found out about things like the Ford [Foundation] Fellowship and specifically Black fellowships from other people or on my own. My advisor was basically like, look at like these big national fellowships you know. They give a lot of money, but that was putting me in a pool of people that was really big when I could be incredibly competitive in another field, you know, and they don't know that those things exist, so they don't know how to tell you to access them. And if you don't know, you don't have friends, or you're early on in the process, like, how do you figure those things out?

Every graduate student's relationship with their advisor is unique, but the experiences shared by interviewees illuminate the central role of this relationship in their ability to navigate the institution. Interviewees' narratives about their advisors reflect the inequitable structures and practices that intersect to make graduate school difficult for students of color in particular ways. The lack of faculty of color and the homogenizing of students of color's experiences were two manifestations of the how UCSB structurally centered whiteness within the institution.

6.4.4 The whiteness of UCSB and Santa Barbara

UCSB's designation as an MSI belied institutional structures and a university culture that centered whiteness. Francesca, a first-year STEM student who grew up in Southern California, described UCSB as being "so white it's intimidating." Tilly also critiqued the persistent whiteness of graduate students and faculty at a university whose undergraduate population of students of color was consistently growing: "Why do administrators and

professors think their students are blind? Do they think students are stupid and won't notice that they have all-white faculty and TAs?" While the demographics of undergraduate students had changed enough to garner the AANAPISI and HSI designations, the demographics of other institution members had not changed at the same rate. For instance, in Fall 2019, 68% of UCSB's ladder faculty were white—an improvement from nearly 80% in 2011, but still noticeably different from the undergraduate population (UC Information Center). UCSB had established its academic reputation as a leading public research university (e.g., consistently ranked as a top-ten public university by *U.S. News & World Report*), but its public reputation remained closely tied to images of Santa Barbara and popular representations of Southern California as white, wealthy, and beachy. While UCSB embraced its MSI status as a marker of ethnoracial diversity, it also embraced Southern California activities that are often associated with whiteness in popular culture, such as surfing, skateboarding, and other outdoor recreation (e.g., Lander, 2008): for instance, photos of white students biking and skateboarding on campus, surfing, and running on the beach feature prominently on the university's website (Figure 6). Aria, a first-year STEM student who grew up on the East Coast, pointed out that Santa Barbara's "Southern California surfer town" image attracts a certain demographic—primarily white Californians—and stated that UCSB needs to change its marketing to forefront other aspects of the university that attract students from different backgrounds.

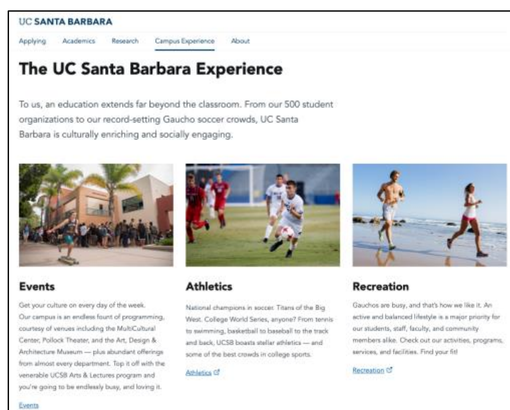

Figure 6. “Campus Experience” overview page on the UCSB website

The campus’s centering of whiteness affected how graduate students of color interacted with faculty, graduate student colleagues, and undergraduates. Racist, sexist, and classist stereotypes, along with feelings of imposter syndrome (Parkman, 2016) and the very real possibility of negative consequences for themselves made many graduate students of color hesitant to call out institutional and interpersonal discrimination. Multiple interviewees reported that when they or other students did express their concerns to their advisor, department chair, or other institutional authority, they were ignored or dismissed, or their concern was deemed a low priority. Lavender, a Black third-year STEM student, summarized the messages she received from the institution based on her experiences in this way: “Placating white tears, conservative sensibility, and white fragility is more important than Black sense of worth.” The expectation for students of color to empathize with white experiences and perspectives, including those that devalued their personhood and/or minimized the reality of racial inequity in the U.S. came primarily, though not exclusively, from white faculty and peers (Curtis-Boles et al., 2020). In addition to interpersonal interactional contexts, racism also occurred in more structural forms, such as homogeneous, colonial, and white-supremacist curricula (Patton, 2016).

Unlike students of color at an HWI located in a major city such as Los Angeles, UCSB graduate students did not have many local cultural resources outside of the university. The majority of resources in Santa Barbara catered to the area's white demographic. Santa Barbara's premier cultural festival, "Old Spanish Days Fiesta," and the promotion of the Santa Barbara Mission as a tourist attraction glorified the city's historical connection to Spain by erasing the reality of colonialism and its impact on the area's Native Chumash people (see, e.g., Dartt-Newton & Erlandson, 2006). Althea referred to the existence of a downtown street called "Indio Muerto" ('dead Indian' in Spanish) and a popular beachfront restaurant called "Sambo's" (a derogatory stereotype of a simple-minded Black man) as structural "fuck you's" to the Indigenous and Black people who lived in the area.[15] Netta noted that in addition to the visible preponderance of white people in the area, the representation of people of color from different ethnoracial backgrounds was uneven: certain Asian populations were better represented than others and Black people were even more underrepresented in the city than at the university. She recalled feeling surprised to see so many Black people in one place when she visited New Orleans for a conference, which made her realize how few Black people she encountered in her day-to-day life in Santa Barbara.

6.4.5 Ambivalence about UCSB

Living in a predominantly white area, navigating a historically white institution, juggling personal responsibilities and the expectations for graduate student labor, working amid financial insecurity and limited access to needed resources, and making decisions

[15] Local activists petitioned for years for the street name to be changed without success until the racial justice movement of Summer 2020 garnered enough momentum for the city council to vote on the name change in September of that year (Welsh 2020). Despite protests against the restaurant name since the 1970s, Sambo's did not change its name either until local racial justice activists used the movement's momentum to draw renewed attention to the name and the racist history of the word (Smith 2020).

within the inequitable power structures of graduate programs created significant challenges for graduate students of color. Interviewees' vigorous critiques of UCSB's institutional structures and practices were based in their experiences facing these challenges every day. Embedded in their critiques, however, was an ambivalence about UCSB, higher education, and what it means to be a graduate student of color at an HWI. This ambivalence captured the complicated nature of diversity at UCSB and why diversity work needs to be approached with intentionality and an understanding of graduate students' positionalities.

Every interviewee had an answer to the question, "What have you liked most about graduate school?"—although their answers were not always something for which the institution could take credit. They were passionate about their research, the freedom to learn and explore new ideas, the potential to help others with their research, and getting to work with undergraduates through teaching and mentorship. Interviewees acknowledged that being a graduate student at a major research university was a valuable opportunity not afforded to everyone, and it was one that could set them up for a successful career within or beyond academia. Interviewees also recognized that UCSB offered many resources that were not necessarily the norm across U.S. higher education, research universities, or HWIs. However, they also made valid statements about the limitations of those resources and how they impacted graduate students of color. Through their critiques, interviewees resisted the notion that graduate students—especially those from minoritized communities—should simply be grateful that they are "allowed" a place in an HWI, a notion grounded in the white-supremacist belief in white intellectual superiority.

With regard to diversity, interviewees' evaluations of institutional practices and their individual experiences ranged from mostly positive to mostly negative. Birdie, a second-year

STEM student from mainland China, described her time at UCSB as positive overall: "I feel like UCSB is inclusive. I don't feel anything uncomfortable in my department, and everyone treats me like a normal person, not like I have the label of 'Asian female.'" In contrast, when asked if there was anything that she thought UCSB did well regarding diversity and inclusion, Marisol, a seventh-year student in Education and Social Sciences, responded: "I can't think of anything that they do *well*…that's telling." Milo, a second-year Arts and Humanities student in his mid-fifties, expressed ambivalence about his views on diversity because his point of reference was significantly different from his younger peers. Compared to when Milo completed his undergraduate studies thirty years earlier, U.S. higher education had changed significantly, and he saw many positive changes to the dominant philosophies of education and how students of varying backgrounds were treated in educational institutions. Because he was older and socialized in a different sociopolitical environment than graduate students currently in their twenties and thirties, Milo sometimes felt that he did not have the same awareness of or perspectives on issues related to diversity. Additionally, because he had decades of work experience in multiple industries prior to beginning his graduate program, Milo did not feel the pressure to participate in the economy of uncompensated labor that many graduate students did in an effort to make themselves more competitive for jobs. Ludwig summarized his ambivalence by saying, "I think they're trying but they try other things faster and harder."

One common point of ambivalence for interviewees was the apparent mismatch between their identified needs and their proposed forms of change and what was feasible given current institutional realities. Sometimes interviewees qualified their responses with phrases such as "I don't know how this would actually happen" or "I know this isn't the

case" because they had learned from their experiences as graduate students that there were many interpersonal and structural barriers to change. For example, Steve, a second-year STEM student, was ambivalent about whether his definition of *inclusion* as "making someone feel comfortable" could apply within an institution like UCSB:

> I'm defining making someone feel welcome as having people like you present. I think that's why I'm struggling with…accepting my own answer? Because I realize that's not something that's common everywhere. And that it takes years and years and years for any academic institution to build up to that point?

Interviewees' ambivalence about UCSB was the product of self-reflection as well as the body of experiential knowledge about higher education that they had developed during their time as graduate students. Their awareness of both the positive and negative aspects of graduate education also led to highly emotional talk about it. Interviewees were passionate about what they did—they would not have stayed in their programs otherwise—and they could identity the institutional changes that were needed to improve their educational environment. For many, the persistent structural barriers and interpersonal discrimination that they faced made those changes feel unachievable, like they were stuck in an institutional limbo, and that feeling of being in limbo added to the many negative feelings that interviewees already experienced.

6.5 Diversity as an affective issue

The affective intensity of many of the conversations that I had with interviewees stood in stark contrast to the sanitized and optimistic institutional diversity discourse that I discussed in Chapters 3, 4, and 5. The lack of structural support, minimization of their concerns, personal sacrifices, and other negative experiences that interviewees narrated—discussed in more detail in Chapter 7—conveyed the extremely personal impact of UCSB's

institutional structures and practices overall, and their decisions related to diversity and inclusion on campus, in particular. Because I was a fellow graduate student of color at the same university and the person who initiated the conversation about diversity, I was a sympathetic interviewer. As a result, interviewees were generally forthcoming about their negative experiences and the impact on their mental health, academic performance, and overall well-being. In this section, I describe two ways that interviewees connected institutional diversity and emotion in their descriptions of graduate life at UCSB: articulating emotion linguistically and discussing emotional labor that they did as minoritized members of the institution.

6.5.1 Linguistically articulated emotion

As one would expect, interviewees varied in the ways that they articulated their perspectives and experiences, informed by their personality, comfort level during the interview, and content that they chose to share. For instance, some people were extremely animated while others were more reserved; some participants used humor and sarcasm to convey their ideas and others answered questions very matter-of-factly. What was clear across interviews, however, was that graduate students of color at UCSB experienced a range of emotions as a result of structures and practices related to diversity, and negative emotions were especially salient. The topic of the study attracted the types of students who had strong opinions about diversity (e.g., many of the interviewees had held a diversity-related role on campus or studied diversity as part of their research), but this reality does not in any way diminish the insightfulness and broader applicability of what they shared. As Harris and González (2012, p. 4) write about the experiences shared by women of color academics in the *Presumed Incompetent* collection, "It is important, then, to read even the most seemingly

personal stories in this collection as symptomatic of a larger, structural problem, rather than solely the issues of any one woman or department, college, or campus." Their experiences were micro-level manifestations of macro-level phenomena.

In this section, I analyze examples of the four most salient emotions: frustration, exhaustion, hurt, and anger. In some cases, interviewees explicitly named the emotion or state that they experienced and in other cases I gave a name to the emotional state that was expressed through their linguistic—particularly, lexical and intonational—choices. In every example, the student traced the emotion back to a person, interaction, discourse practice, institutional structure, or some other aspect of their life in the university; this functioned as a form of affective stancetaking, not only conveying their emotional state but also evaluating and positioning themselves relative to whatever it was that they framed as the cause of their emotions (Jaffe, 2009). Analyzing interviewees' emotions as valid forms of data that can inform institutional practice challenges misogynistic and white supremacist ideologies of "rationality" that uphold systems of hegemonic power in educational contexts (Rys, 2018). When women and people of color are framed as "emotional" and emotion is positioned as antithetical to "reason" and "logic," the critiques of power and inequity that minoritized people make through their emotion can be systematically dismissed (see, e.g., Ahmed, 2004). In contrast to most spaces within a historically white institution, the interviews for this study provided a space in which minoritized graduate students' emotions were welcomed, and more often than not they were emotions with which I could empathize, having experienced them myself.

Frustration

The most frequently expressed emotion among interviewees was frustration: being upset or discontent due to factors that could not be changed or were beyond their control. Frustration, like other emotions, is scalar rather than categorical, and can range from minor annoyance to exasperation. Frustration was expressed to greater and lesser degrees by different interviewees, and the same person sometimes expressed more or less intense frustration at different moments in their interview. When asked about diversity and inclusion in higher education, deandre expressed their annoyance before I had even finished the question:

1. KENDRA: So when you hear or read things about diversity and inclusion in academia (.)
2. DEANDRE: <SLOW, QUIET> I *roll* my eyes. </>

Rolling one's eyes is a widely recognized indication of annoyance, and deandre's verbalization of this embodied practice was their way of saying that they are annoyed by the very mention of diversity and inclusion. In the moments after this exchange, deandre expressed frustration in the form of a sort of "diversity fatigue"—a variation of the "equity fatigue" Ahmed (2007) describes: they were tired of hearing about "diversity and inclusion" because they perceived it as not only discursively overemphasized but as the wrong institutional framework altogether (see Chapter 7).

Francesca expressed a combination of frustration and incredulity after I asked her a question about UCSB being an HSI. Francesca was initially under the impression that HSI was a self-selected label, but her incredulity did not abate after learning that it was a federal designation based on student demographics:

> <SMILE> *This* school (.) saying that they have enough Latinx people to say it's a Hispanic Serving Institution is *hilarious* to me. I don't see *nearly* enough Hispanic or Latinx kids … and it's *always* surprising to me </>. There are *so* many more white kids here than I've *ever* seen in my life. […] I like- <BREATHY> I </> *don't*

> understand why there's *so* many white kids and, like, it *always* throws me off because we're still in southern California down here. I- I *don't* get it.

Having grown up in a region of California with a large Latinx population, Francesca could not reconcile the university community that she saw in her day-to-day life—"*so* many white kids"—with the significant Hispanic/Latinx population she believed was the primary criteria for an HSI designation. She was confused by the institution's demographics and frustrated that they did not align with the university's discursive self-representation.

Steve expressed frustration with people in academia who assume that they know the objectively "best" way to navigate the institution: people who ignore or actively resist the fact that people face different challenges in higher education based on their backgrounds. As a first-generation college student from a low-income background whose parents came to the U.S. as refugees, Steve had faced many unique challenges in his journey up to and during his graduate school experience. In the example below, he references a type of person rather than a specific person—someone from a wealthier background with college educated parents—but he referenced this type of person multiple times during our conversation, for example, among peers and faculty in his department.

> Like some upper middle class, "I don't care what your ethnicity is" *person*, who's now a scientist and, like, daddy had a Ph.D. and mom's an M.D., trying to tell *poor* grad students from *poor* families how they can manage that dynamic. It's like, shut up! You don't, like- You don't- Your opinion does not- I mean, I'm not saying that I'm thinking about this in the healthiest or the most appropriate way, but to me, it's, like, just as ridiculous as if I wrote a book called "The Third Trimester and What to Expect."

Steve considered this type of person's opinion "ridiculous," useless because it would lack any experiential knowledge, as would a book written by someone who had never been pregnant and lacked any other type of credible knowledge about pregnancy. His exclamation,

"It's like, shut up!" and the multiple truncated clauses conveyed the degree of his frustration, which he named as such a few moments later.

Anger

The most intense form of frustration expressed by interviewees could be read as anger, and one of the key lexical markers of anger, and intense negative emotions more generally, was profanity. In the following example, Kendrick was responding to a question about "pet peeves" in higher education, following a discussion about UCSB touting its HSI status and graduate students of color's relative lack of power within the institution.

> Either start doing what you're *saying* you're doing or *stop fucking saying it*! What do you think you're *doing*, what do you feel you're *getting* by *lying* to me?
> […]
> I would prefer people weren't so *goddamn* well-meaning and were just more honest. Because I can deal with honesty, I can't deal with this pseudo "I'm so happy you're here" bullshit.

In contrast to most other interviewees, who asserted that IHEs and UCSB need to engage in action that matches their rhetoric, Kendrick added that IHEs that cannot do so need to change the rhetoric itself. In other words, stop marketing the institution and its priorities as something they are not (i.e., lying), which makes it more difficult for him to know how to "deal with" the institution he is part of. In "The Uses of Anger: Women Responding to Racism" Lorde (1984b, p. 129) describes anger as "a grief of distortions between peers, and its object is change…Anger is an appropriate reaction to racists attitudes, as is fury when the actions arising from those attitudes do not change." Graduate students of color expressed this change-oriented anger when they highlighted the people, structures, and practices related to institutional diversity that were leading them to feel this way and needed to change.

Resignation

In addition to frustration, several advanced graduate students who had been at UCSB for years expressed resignation: they had not given up wanting to make positive changes at UCSB or in their disciplines, but they had accepted that higher education was an extremely flawed and inequitable institution that would be slow to change. They had to make difficult decisions about how much of themselves they were willing to give to an institution that they felt gave little in return (when it was not outright hostile). Brona, a Black graduate student in her fifth year, described this reality using the metaphor of climbing "the ivory tower."

> The system itself is *so::* dehumanizing and *so::*... discouraging? That I think, like, for these populations that have already had to be resilient their *whole* lives, like at a certain point in your life, for many people, you're like, "I'm fucking *tired* of being resilient. Okay?" And why would I want to continue to, like, try to go up this ivory tower where, like, literally they're shooting arrows and like throwing grenades at me when <LAUGHING> I could go somewhere else </> and, like, maybe have one dude named Bob who's an asshole. You know?

"Somewhere else" referred to non-academic institutions and careers, options that many interviewees, even those passionate about teaching, research, and working with students, considered after their negative experiences in higher education (though they recognized that all fields would have barriers). Brona described higher education as "dehumanizing" multiple times during our conversation, pointing to the research and teaching labor, poor funding, and lack of care in her department as primary causes because the made her feel like "just a cog in a machine." While describing the factors that made her feel dehumanized, Brona conveyed a sense of hurt as well as resignation, and the latter feeling was also shared by her graduate student peers.

Hurt

Interviewees shared numerous reasons for feeling hurt during their time as graduate students, and one of the most frequent was other university members minimizing, negating,

or completely failing to recognize the challenges they faced as minoritized students at an HWI. Regardless of intentionality, when the offender was someone who was supposed to have graduate students' best interest as a priority, this type of action could make a student feel as though fundamental parts of their identities were being dismissed as unimportant and not worth taking the time to consider. When one Black graduate student had the traumatic experience of being called a racial slur, they were hurt by the initial incident and then again by the lack of support in their department: from their perspective, faculty had not put in effort to anticipate non-academic experiences that could impact minoritized graduate students.

> So I mean, like, they don't even consider- Like, there is no infrastructure- Like, my professors don't acknowledge that that is an issue when I walk into their office, and I'm like, you know, I'm *dejected* and they're like, <RAISED PITCH> "Oh, did you not get results that you wanted on your research?" </> […] But that *never* crosses their mind that that is an *emotional* struggle that Black students and other students of color and LGBT students have to deal with. Because *they* didn't have to deal with that, you know.

Notably, they do not frame this as a strictly interpersonal issue. Rather than "faculty in my department don't support me," they say, "there is no infrastructure for support": they connect this specific experience to the structural issue of lack of Black faculty in their field. Because there wasn't anyone with more structural power speaking to the realities of anti-Blackness and Black students' educational experiences, structures to support Black students were not a priority for their department.

Interviewees' negative emotional experiences, particularly their feelings of frustration, anger, resignation, and hurt, reflect what Smith (2007) refers to as "racial battle fatigue." Originally theorized based on the experiences of Black men in higher education, racial battle fatigue is "the result of constant physiological, psychological, cultural, and emotional coping with racial microaggressions in less-than-ideal and racially hostile or

unsupportive environments (campus or otherwise)" (2007, p. 555). Common psychological symptoms of racial battle fatigue include constant worrying and anxiety, loss of self-confidence, frustration, and anger, which are expressed by interviewees in the examples above and in Chapter 7. Their emotions were effects of injustices and violence, including epistemic and emotional violence, both in their interpersonal relationships and in institutional structures; as the graduate student in the previous example alluded to, in many contexts systemic issues have to change in order for better interpersonal relationships to become a meaningful possibility. In *The Cultural Politics of Emotion,* Ahmed (2004, p. 198) asserts that "the struggle against injustice cannot be transformed into a manual for good relationships without concealing the injustice of how 'relationships' work by differentiating between others. Justice might then not be simply 'getting along' but may preserve the right of others not to enter into relationships." She goes on to say, "When emotions are seen as only personal, or about the person and how they feel, then the systematic nature of their effects is concealed" (2004, p. 199).

In the examples above, interviewees point to ideologies and structures beyond their own relationships to the institution to highlight the "complexity of the relation between violence, power, and emotion" (Ahmed 2004, p. 196), all of which are interwoven with issues of justice and injustice. A common form of injustice that interviewees shared, which was the product of racialized, gendered, classist and other discriminatory ideology and structures, was the forms and amount of labor that graduate students were expected to do for others and/or felt they had to do in order to make UCSB survivable for themselves.

6.5.2 Emotional labor

Emotional labor includes labor that could be but is not compensated, such as mentoring and leading workshops, as well as the interpersonal labor required to maintain relationships and the labor required to sustain one's well-being within a harmful institution. In U.S. higher education, emotional labor disproportionately falls on minoritized people, especially women of color (e.g., Duncan, 2014; Jimenez et al., 2019; Moore, 2017). This "invisible labor" is not academically meritorious: it is not part of formal reviews for graduate students' progression through their programs or faculty reviews for tenure and promotion (Matthew, 2016). Although service is an expected part of academics' work in the academy, the emotional labor that people of color and other minoritized people engage in often does not fall under that umbrella, so it is done instead of or in addition to their other service responsibilities such committee work.

Emotional labor is a matter of both (in)justice and diversity because it is part of a cycle of institutional practices that hinders minoritized scholars in the name of "diversity and inclusion"—a system that Padilla (1994, p. 26) calls "cultural taxation." Rather than institutionalize structures, practices, and resources to recruit, support, and retain students and faculty from minoritized backgrounds, HWIs will push that labor onto graduate students and faculty and then punish them for not fulfilling their "real" responsibilities. This unpaid labor includes "being called on to be the expert on matters of diversity" regardless of knowledge or comfort doing so; "being called upon, often repeatedly, to educate individuals in the majority group about diversity, even though this is not part of our job description and we are not given any authority or recognition to go along with the responsibility"; and "taking time away from our work to serve as general problem solver, trouble shooter, or negotiator for agreements that arise in part because of sociocultural differences" (Padilla, 1994, p. 26).

Garret, one of the Graduate Division diversity administrators, recognized the emotional labor of graduate students from minoritized groups and did what he could in his capacity to alleviate the burden they faced. Through the graduate student mentorship program, graduate students mentors had a job title that they could put on their CV and they also received financial compensation for their time and expertise.

> The program isn't perfect, but we need something in place to help students make it to the finish line. We currently offer small stipends to graduate students who are mentors, but I want to increase that money because grads need funding and have a lot on their plate. So, better funding would be an incentive for them to participate and would make the program more robust, but that funding has to come from the DEI office. […] Students of color do this type of mentoring work anyway, so let's recognize them and get them paid.

Garret's inability to pay graduate students as much as he would like reflected the limitations of individuals to change the inequitable distribution of emotional labor when it was not valued at the institution level. While discussing the uncompensated labor of people of color at HWIs and how it is systematically dismissed, Lavender, a Black woman in STEM, stated, "Wouldn't it be nice to have some stats to spit out about how much time people of color in academia have to spend disproportionately dealing with stupid ass shit?" In a field like hers, statistical data was often what determined whether a diversity or equity issue was taken seriously by people it did not directly impact. Interviewees described four main forms of diversity-related emotional labor that impacted their experiences as graduate students of color: convincing others to care about issues, explanation, being a representative, and managing emotions.

Convincing people to care

One of the biggest hurdles that interviewees faced was getting other people to care about the structures and practices in society and higher education that negatively impacted

them— inequalities that people from dominant groups often do not see or experience directly and therefore do not consider topics of concern. In order to convey why people should care about an issue, people from minoritized groups often have to share stories of personal trauma in order to "prove" that racism, gender discrimination, and other forms of inequality are societal problems. The same is true when they need to demonstrate that current diversity practices fail to address specific needs of theirs and students like them. The demand for personal experience as evidence puts minoritized people in extremely vulnerable positions: they have to divulge personal information, relive trauma, and potentially expose members of their institutions with no guarantee that the powerholders will make change (or that conditions will not get worse for them). Robert described this practice as a "messed up theory of change" that hinges on an institutions' ability to satisfactorily respond to the experiences shared.

> The university is good at reading numbers but not people, not emotion, even though emotion is data too. There is a lot of pressure put on students of color to provide that emotional data, and often to what end? To have another conversation. They ask students to share their stories in order to change policy, but if policy doesn't change that's a messed up theory of change. "Talk about your trauma so that we can *maybe* have some changes"?

As our conversation continued after this moment, Robert did not suggest that the institution find more ways to turn students' "emotional data" into understandable numbers (e.g., through surveys); he placed the onus on the university to learn to do something with the precious emotional data given by students in the forms in which it was given.

Explaining discrimination

Sharing one's experiences with the goal of convincing others to care was one specific form of explanation that graduate students of color engaged in. Another, more general, form of explanation was teaching basic principles of discrimination, including to well-meaning

people who were supportive of diversity efforts but poorly informed or obtuse as a result of their own privilege. Within and outside of the structures of higher education, minoritized people are often asked to explain systemic discrimination and individual bias to people from dominant groups (e.g., Wilson, 2020). Jodi detailed how she had to repeatedly point out racist biases in the work of peers and faculty in her STEM field, including the marginalization of racially minoritized people's experiences in quantitative research despite those communities being the most impacted by the phenomena under study.

> STEM is not designed to include people of color because it has historically excluded people of color and considered them inferior. It's hard to talk about intersectionality. There is a lack of compassion and people's humanity is reduced to numbers and economical benefits. As a person of color in this field you understand it to be *more* than that. You know the real people affected by it. You *lived* that life at one point, and you have to hear people say that because it doesn't meet some ideal number that it's not a problem. They talk about, "It's for the greater good" forgetting that we're a part of the world, too. So you end up taking on the burden of having to explain this to people who think they're saving the world when really they're saving the world for *white* people.

Jodi frames certain types of research methods and motivations ("numbers and economic benefits") as lacking compassion, expressing an approach to research shared by other STEM interviewees: research should be a tool to make the world a better place by solving social problems, particularly those that affect the people who are most marginalized in society. Jodi's example captures how explaining discrimination related to research is not simply about critiquing someone's choice of quantitative research methods, for instance, but can require challenging someone's fundamental beliefs about how and why research is done. A person of color pointing out to a white person who believes that they are "saving the world" that they are in reality only "saving the world for white people" is an exchange ripe for racial hostility, even from "nice" white people (DiAngelo, 2011). This potential for racial hostility was not limited to research-based explanation but could occur in any interaction that

undermined whites' worldviews, such as when Aquila, a second-year in STEM, had to explain why it is racist that graduate students of color are "not considered for the same opportunities…[and] people assume [they] can't take on as much work or can take on more work" than their white peers. In any case, graduate students of color must engage in the intellectual and emotional labor of deciding whether to say anything, how to go about the explanation (content and form), weighing the potential consequences based on power differentials, and responding to the fallout of the exchange.

Being a representative of one's group

Another form of emotional labor that interviewees endured was the pressure of being a representative for their ethnoracial group. In classes, research labs, departments, and other higher education contexts where graduate students experience solo status, they often times do have to speak on behalf of people of color, women, international students, or queer students, for instance, because if they do not, then the stereotyping or erasure of those groups that occurs in those spaces will go on unchecked. Lilly described this pressure as the only person of color and the only international student in her M.A. program.

> I felt like had to represent the "other" and how it feels to be on the other side because people would never know or learn otherwise. People asked me questions like "What is the weather like in [your home country]? Do you have highways? Do you use utensils?" It didn't feel offensive at the time, but I did feel weighed down by having to represent the entire country and region. I felt I had to apologize when I didn't know something outside of my experience.

Despite it being unrealistic for others to expect Lilly to have detailed knowledge about anything and everything related to her country, Lilly felt that she had let others down when she did not have that knowledge. Although she did not say so explicitly, her use of the phrase *at the time* suggested that with a more developed better understanding of U.S. racial

dynamics, she had come to recognize the questions as offense (and placing unfair expectations on her).

Brona described the pressure of moving through U.S. higher education knowing that her actions as a Black woman could determine the fate of another Black woman who followed in her footsteps. Beyond having to be near perfect to challenge racist and sexist stereotypes for her own sake, Brona had to be at the top of her game to ensure that as many opportunities as possible remained options for other Black women.

> I think a lot about the fact that white people are not raised or indoctrinated with this idea of "what you do will open the door for other people." [As a person of color] you are a representation of your racial group, and if I fuck up some other Black girl who worked her ass off, who found the right resources, is at the door, they're gonna close the door in her face because I'm a representative. And [white people] never think about that. They never have to think about "what I do will have an effect on everyone else who looks like me or talks like me." And that is a heavy burden to bear. It's monumental.

As is the case in all racist institutions, graduate students of color were the ones placed in positions of blame when they did not live up to racist expectations.

Managing emotions

As a result of being placed in these many untenable situations, a final type of emotional labor that was commonly described by interviewees was having to manage emotions around white people and other people with the power to negatively impact their educational experiences. Several interviewees were involved in diversity and inclusion efforts in their department and/or at the university level; these positions afforded them "a seat at the table" with faculty and administrators, but they did not change the inherent power dynamics of the situation. This meant that graduate students could not necessarily openly critique what was being discussed, even when they had strong opinions about it. At one point during our interview, Celeste, a third-year in Education and Social Sciences reflected on how

much we had discussed, saying "You caught me on a day when I've come from all these meetings having to bite my tongue until it bleeds, so I have a lot to say @ @." Because of the topic of the interview and our ability to relate to each other as women of color at UCSB, our conversation acted as an outlet where Celeste did not have to bite her tongue at all and was at least momentarily afforded the space to say what she would have liked to say in those meetings. In addition to managing their emotions in the context of interactions with others, graduate students of color had to manage their emotions as part of the work they did to maintain their psychological well-being. Emotional labor, on top of structural and interpersonal barriers, took major tolls on interviewees' mental and physical health, and they often felt they had little recourse to address the root causes. This negative impact is one of many reasons why changes to improve conditions for minoritized graduate students should be an urgent priority at UCSB and other HWIs.

Because of the power dynamics of academic hierarchy and many graduate students' dependency on the goodwill of their faculty advisor and other institutions members for academic progress, the types of experiences that interviewees shared—and the intensely affective manner in which they shared them—are unlikely to look and sound the same in other contexts. When departments have surveys or meetings to collect student feedback, or an advisor asks a student directly for information, graduate students may "bite their tongues" like Celeste and censor themselves as a form of protection. As a result, even university members with a genuine interest in students' well-being may be unaware of the scale of students of color's negative experiences within a historically white institution. Although the gist of their experiences is reflected in the decades of research on people of colors' experiences in white supremacist institutions, interviewees' candid descriptions of how

institutional discourse and practices at UCSB has affected them as individuals, along with the specific causes that they point to, offer invaluable insights for institution members with structural power who want to make meaningful change. These negative experiences in the institution were one of several reasons why interviewees believed diversity and inclusion mattered in higher education, which I discuss in the following chapter.

6.6 Conclusion

The structures, practices, and institutional culture of UCSB that shaped the day-to-day experiences of graduate students of color analyzed in this chapter also shaped their perspectives on diversity at the university. Although interviewees' individual experiences differed in many ways based on their backgrounds, departments, and other factors, they shared the barriers of navigating a white-supremacist university as people of color. Their narratives about life at UCSB conveyed the highly affective nature of diversity: many interviewees expressed negative emotions—including frustration, anger, resignation, and hurt—in their recollections of graduate life. They also described the emotional labor that they felt compelled to engage in to make UCSB a survivable place or that they had forced upon them by people with more structural power. These students made it possible for the university to boast about its demographics and diversity efforts in its institutional discourse, but the totality of their experiences will never appear in that discourse—only those accomplishments and accolades that the institution can claim to bolster its own image. The detailed descriptions of life at UCSB in graduate student's own words highlight the drastic differences between the idealized representations of university life in institutional discourse

and institutional realities. The ethnographic context provided in this chapter also sets the stage for UCSB interviewees' critiques of institutional diversity, which I turn to in Chapter 7.

CHAPTER 7: Defining, critiquing, and fighting for diversity at UCSB

White people have this false sense of "I'm doing good because you're part of my space now. I let you into my space." And it's like, no, actually, that's not true.
– Jodi, graduate student, UCSB

On the whole, UCSB interviewees' narratives about life and diversity at the university were marked by strong criticism of the institution and institution members with the most structural power. Most interviewees were passionate about diversity as an institutional issue based on their negative experiences as students of color in U.S. higher education, which had inspired many to participate in diversity and advocacy work at UCSB. They agreed that UCSB and other HWIs need to take intentional steps to ensure that students from marginalized backgrounds are supported structurally, not just rhetorically. Both institutional structure and institutional practice—including many of the institutional diversity discourse practices analyzed in Chapters 3, 4, and 5—were the target of interviewees' criticisms. In this chapter, I demonstrate how interviewees articulated the relationship between diversity-related structures, practices, and discourses and their collective impact on students' lived experiences at UCSB.

In the first section, I summarize how UCSB interviewees explained diversity and inclusion in higher education to establish the baseline conceptual understandings that shaped their discussions. In Section 7.2, I examine the key linguistic and interactional resources that interviewees used in their critiques of diversity and inclusion at UCSB; I center my analysis on the practice of stancetaking and the discursive strategies that interviewees used to critically evaluate UCSB and its members as well as distance themselves from the institution. After analyzing the range of interviewees' key discursive resources, in Section 7.3, I demonstrate how interviewees specifically used these them to overtly challenge UCSB's

stated commitment to diversity. I identify five institutional structures and practices that interviewees posited as evidence that UCSB's diversity discourse was nothing more than rhetoric—disconnected from meaningful action as well as the reality of their lived experiences. In the final section, I summarize interviewees' explanations of why diversity and inclusion matter in higher education, which reflected their varied motivations for participating in diversity work and/or being part of an institution that most of them considered extremely flawed.

7.1 UCSB students' definitions of diversity and inclusion

Because I was interested in the varied ways that students of color understand diversity, I directly asked each interviewee, "In your opinion, what does it mean for a university to be diverse? For a university to be inclusive?" The two-part question was intentionally leading, setting up diversity and inclusion as separate concepts. In the process of defining these concepts separately, interviewees were pushed to think about the relationship between them. In this section, I summarize the key aspects of their definitions of diversity and inclusion.

7.1.1 Defining *diversity*

Interviewees' explanations of diversity covered five main points:

1. Diversity is about numbers and representation and does not necessarily include action.
2. Diversity includes race and gender, but also many other identities.
3. Institutions should aim to represent society and our globalizing world.

4. Diversity needs to be considered at all levels of the institution: students, faculty, administrators, staff.
5. Diversity in curriculum, research topics, and disciplinary approaches is as important as diversity of people.

Interviewees were united in their sense of diversity as being primarily about demographics, with IHEs playing "a numbers game" with regard to how many people from various groups were represented at the institution. For public IHEs, institutional demographics can be determined more by regional demographics than institutional recruitment efforts: a university may have a diverse student population because it is located in a diverse city or region rather than because of institutional actions. Several interviewees pointed out that UCSB's location in Southern California near Los Angeles and the agricultural hub of Ventura Country made it highly likely that its population of Latinx students would increase over time, regardless of diversity efforts. Others highlighted the fact that it is possible for an IHE to have a diverse population but do little to nothing to support them, echoing the observations of Ahmed (2007, p. 249),:

> [O]rganizations, including universities, have a tendency to say that diversity is a key value (and may even "brand" themselves through this term), but…the "saying" does not always lead to "doing." This would be a "lip service" model of "valuing diversity," in which the claim to be diverse, or to aspire to diversity, gives value to the organization, but where that claim is *not followed through by action or by the re-allocation of resources*. (emphasis added)

I return to the idea of "lip service" diversity efforts in Section 7.3. In our interview, Lupita made the important point that disciplines and departments dominated by any single group are not diverse, regardless of who that group is; in other words, it is possible for there to be representation without diversity. In her experience as a STEM student, she had seen many departments dominated by white women or by international men of color, and she believed

that "if the majority is any one group, it's not diverse. It doesn't matter if that one group is brown."

Racial diversity was described by interviewees as the presence of people of color, which is the prevailing understanding of this concept in the white-dominated contexts of U.S. higher education and society (Berrey, 2011; Unzueta & Binning, 2010). Many interviewees, emphasized that "people of color" is a heterogeneous category, and that diversity among people in this group should be represented at the university. Biyu, an international student from China, stated that having such a large population of Chinese international students at UCSB was convenient and comforting to her, but she recognized that it might not be seen as diversity by others. Every interviewee recognized that race was not the only criterion for institutional diversity, even though it was the most prominent one. They drew on their own experiences as women, first-generation college students, students from low-income backgrounds, LGBTQ+ students, and international students to articulate how these intersecting aspects of identity shape students' experiences in higher education and therefore need to be considered in conjunction with race in discussions of diversity. For example, STEM student Aquila described diversity as bringing together "not just people of color, but people with different experiences, like formerly incarcerated people and people of different nationalities."

Domestic and international students alike invoked the idea of globalization, but they did so differently than the institutional discourse analyzed in Chapter 3. Rather than forefronting diversity as preparation for a global workforce or the presence of international scholars as an index of prestige, interviewees framed the presence of scholars from around the world as fair representation and a necessity for sound research and social change. Rosalie,

an international student from Latin America, argued that because UCSB students and faculty conduct research that is about and that impacts people around the world, UCSB should have representation of people from around the world—ideally from the communities at the center of this research.

Interviewees emphasized that the imperative for institutional representation of domestic and international culture, and for diversity more broadly, applied to the whole university community, not only to students. Students are taught and mentored by faculty, they interact regularly with staff, and their experiences are shaped by policy and practices decided by administrators. The discrepancy between the increasing diversity of student populations and the relatively stagnant demographics of faculty and administrators is a widespread and persistent problem in U.S. higher education (Davis & Fry, 2019; NCES, 2019). Along with diversity of backgrounds, diversity of teaching and research were also named as important aspects of institutional diversity. Connecting diversity to novel research ideas, STEM student Aria stated, "you can have diversity of faculty, but if they're all teaching the same things, that's not fostering diverse perspectives and innovation." Jameison, also a student in STEM, defined diversity in the following way:

> For a university to be diverse, in my mind, it means they incorporate different schools of thought, as well as incorporating people from different backgrounds. […] The people there come from different places, and bring different things, different areas of expertise, all that.

Regardless of whether they understood diversity as based on identity, scholarly discipline, and/or research specialization, the graduate students interviewed aligned with my questions' framing of diversity as a separate concept from inclusion. In the next section, I summarize interviewees' criteria for inclusion and how the concept was inextricably connected to, yet distinct from, diversity.

7.1.2 Defining *inclusion*

Interviewees' explanations of inclusion in higher education covered three main points:

1. Inclusion is about people's experiences in IHE spaces.
2. Inclusion requires intentional action.
3. Inclusion is a form of care for the institutional community.

Rather than being about *who* is present a particular IHE, inclusion was described as being about *how* people from different backgrounds exist in that space. An inclusive university is one in which students feel a sense of acceptance, support, and safety in their university community. For people from minoritized backgrounds, that sense of acceptance and belonging comes in large part from feeling that they have the freedom and the means to use their voices—to speak freely about their lived experiences and backgrounds without judgement—and that, as people, they are valued, not simply tolerated. Arts and Humanities student Borden described inclusion as "making sure that everyone's voice is heard in some way, making sure everyone has the space to succeed, to achieve their goals…not feel discriminated against or like their presence is devalued or, you know, they're unworthy of that space."

Interviewees emphasized that, unlike compositional diversity, inclusion could not simply be a byproduct of other institutional factors. Inclusive structures and practices can lead to greater institutional diversity, but a diverse student body does not necessarily bring about the institutional change that inclusion requires. Inclusion was broadly described as requiring intentionality, and two specific forms of intentionality were brought up in multiple interviews: proactive practices and equity-oriented practices. Ideally in the form of institutional policy but at the very least in interactional practices, people with institutional

power (e.g., faculty advisors, department chairs, university administrators) should be anticipating the needs of students, especially students from minoritized backgrounds. Being proactive rather than simply reactive requires reflexivity and an openness to criticism in order to learn from mistakes, as well as recognition of the diversity of people's experiences and the limitations of one's own knowledge. In other words, people with power must listen to those most negatively impacted by institutional practices, be willing to learn about what they do not already know, and avoid assuming that they necessarily know what is best for everyone. Robert, a student in Education and Social Sciences, stated that this proactive inclusion "has to be part of every decision in a department, not only the committee that does DEI," and it should involve asking questions such as "Who are we including and excluding? What are the structures that create that in our department, in the UC, in the state? Where can we intervene?" In Lilly's terms, inclusion requires "thinking about how people from different backgrounds are disadvantaged by the system, and how to help them have a better experience in this world."

Robert's and Lilly's statements both point to the necessity of equity-oriented practices, which assess students' varied educational experiences based on their background as well as institutional structures and work to provide students with the specific resources they need in order to be as successful as their peers. Equity is in contrast to equality, in which the same resources are provided to all students, regardless of the accessibility or usefulness of those resources for certain students (see my discussion of "equal opportunity" in Chapter 3). Celeste, a student in Education and Social Sciences, gave the example of inclusive, equity-oriented practices for first-generation college students, a population that UCSB frequently touted as evidence of diversity:

> Inclusivity means thinking about equity rather than equality. Like, first-gen students don't have the cultural capital of knowing about how higher education works, so universities and departments need to be ready to spend extra time, money, and thought to give those students what they need.

Ludwig noted that an equality-based framework especially disadvantages minoritized students from very small groups, who have to compete with other students to access resources and to have their concerns recognized in the first place. This was true for UCSB's Native student population, which made up less than 1% of the student body (a total of 20 students at the graduate level). According to Ludwig, if Native students were to attempt public protest to express their needs, it would not have the same effect as larger groups: "Someone once suggested we do a sit-in, but, you know…people could just walk around us." Proactive and equitable distribution of resources was also at the center of Kendrick's explanation of inclusion, which reiterated the difference between diversity and inclusion: "[It's] taking steps to make sure resources are distributed equitably to those respective groups. […] You could have diversity in ability but if you don't have [wheelchair] ramps, what is it for? Inclusion means that you've thought about it and planned for it."

In addition to equity, the language of care and understanding was used by several interviewees, articulating what Anderson (2018) describes as an "ideology of care" that links difference, need, and care in the context of IHE diversity. Aria defined inclusion as "structural forms of taking care" of the university community; Education and Social Sciences student Diana described structures and practices designed to foster the feelings of acceptance, support, and safety described above as "institutionalizing empathy." Interviewees primarily framed this type of institutional care as aspirational or an area for improvement, as opposed to something that they had experienced during their time at UCSB. The lack of institutionalized inclusive practices for students of color and other minoritized students in

many departments and at the university level was one of the primary contributors to interviewees' negative feelings during their graduate studies, including feeling dehumanized and objectified, as described in Chapter 6. They desired but were left wanting what Gay (2018, p. 58) calls "culturally responsive caring":

> [C]ulturally responsive caring as an essential part of the educational process…focuses on caring *for* instead of caring *about* the personal well-being and academic success of ethnically diverse students, with a clear understanding that the two are interrelated. While *caring about* conveys feelings of concern for one's state of being, *caring for* is active engagement in doing something to positively affect it. Thus, it encompasses a combination of concern, compassion, commitment, responsibility, and action. (original emphasis)

In sum, interviewees understood inclusion as the practices and structures that IHEs should have as core components of their institutional operations if those IHEs want to attract and retain a diverse institutional population—"going beyond putting people of color on a brochure," in Aquila's words, to meet the needs of students not only as students but as people.

These understandings of diversity and inclusion were articulated in response to the two direct questions that I asked and they were also weaved into interviewees' narratives of their experiences that they shared in response to other questions. Interviewees' responses were informed by varied individual, discipline-specific, and institutional factors, yet, as illustrated above, they aligned across these differences in numerous ways. In the next section, I analyze the key discursive and interactional resources that interviewees used to assert their understandings of these concepts in addition to critiquing the university and higher education.

7.2 Key linguistic and interactional resources

Across the thirty graduate student interviewees and their unique speaking styles, there were numerous discourse features of note. Here, I focus on five that each occurred in multiple interviews: stancetaking, verb choice, constructed dialogue, pronoun choice, and metapragmatic comments. As I describe below, stancetaking occurs in every utterance, either overtly or implicitly, so the other four practices simultaneously contributed to the act of stancetaking while fulfilling other discursive functions.

7.2.1 Stancetaking

In the previous sections and the remaining sections of this chapter, each quote from an interviewee represents an instance of stancetaking. Jaffe (2009, p. 3) defines stancetaking as "taking up a position with respect to the form or the content of one's utterance." She writes, "there is no such thing as a completely neutral position vis-a-vis one's linguistic production, because neutrality itself is a stance…[and] every choice is defined in contrast to other semantic options" (2009, p. 3). Central to stancetaking are evaluation and positionality, which are accomplished through linguistic and interactional moves. Du Bois (2007) defines evaluation as characterizing something as having a specific quality or value. Jaffe (2009, p. 4) explains positionality as follows: "how speakers and writers are necessarily engaged in positioning themselves vis-à-vis their words and texts (which are embedded in histories of linguistic and textual production), their interlocutors and audiences (both actual and virtual/projected/imagined), and with respect to a context that they simultaneously respond to and construct linguistically". In other words, in each utterance the language user positions themself relative to what they say, who they are in conversation with, and the context in

which the interaction occurs. Du Bois (2007) conceptualizes these facets of stancetaking as forming a “stance triangle”: a *stance subject* (the person taking a stance) orients to a *stance object* (not necessarily a physical object) and based on that orientation (through evaluation or positioning) the stance subject positively or negatively aligns with others who have oriented to the same stance object. In the context of the interviews, each interviewee acted as a stance subject orienting to aspects of diversity and inclusion in higher education as stance objects; depending on the context, the other stancetaker(s) in the triangle were either me (a co-present interlocutor), individuals in their narrative, UCSB, or other entities (Figure 7).

Du Bois (2007, pp. 142,154) emphasizes that “the actual stance taken [in an utterance] cannot be fully interpreted without reference to its larger dialogic and sequential context” because “the object of stance [may be] left unmentioned within the stance utterance itself.” Discourse that immediately precedes the utterance of interest, a prior conversation, discourse in popular culture, and so on can all provide the contextual information needed to understand an utterance. Interviewees referred to contextualizing discourse such as interactions with other university members, articles they had read, media they had watched, current events, and statements they or I had made earlier in the interview. Even if they did not refer to it explicitly, interviewees’ utterances and the stancetaking therein were also contextualized by and in conversation with the types of institutional discourse I analyzed in Chapters 3, 4, and 5, which circulates within institutional spaces beyond IHE websites.

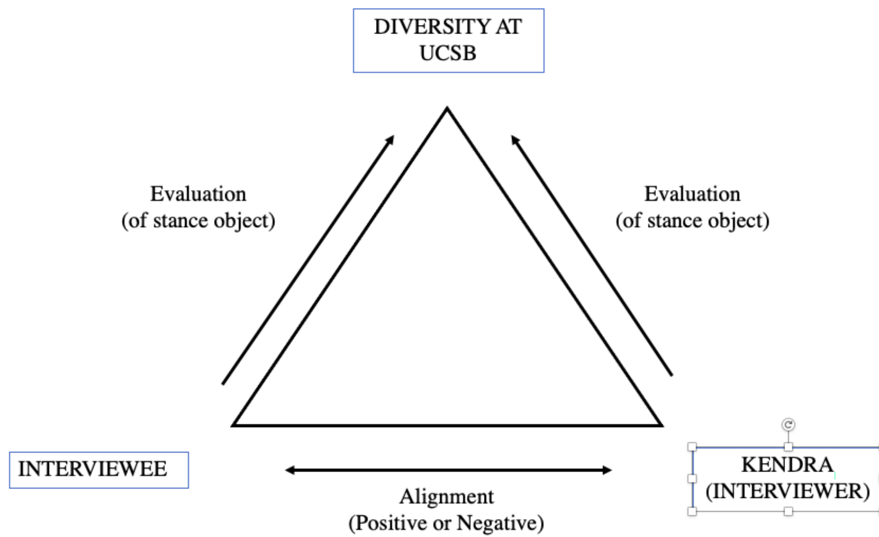

Figure 7. Stance triangle of the UCSB interview context

Jaffe (2009, p. 8) notes that "[b]ecause individual identities are defined within social formations, by taking up a position, individuals automatically invoke a constellation of associated social identities. In doing so, speakers project, assign, propose, constrain, define, or otherwise shape the subject positions of their interlocutors." That is, because one's identity is always constructed in relation to others (Bucholtz & Hall, 2005), when stance subjects say something about themselves through stancetaking they also necessarily say something about who or what they are in conversation with. For example, when someone discursively positions themself as knowledgeable about a topic, they simultaneously position others as equally, less, or more knowledgeable about the same topic. This form of stancetaking manifested clearly in moments when interviewees positioned themselves as knowledgeable about the reality being a graduate student from a minoritized background and evaluated the university or specific university members as less knowledgeable; that difference in knowledge and the structures that perpetuated it were the basis for much of their criticism.

Through an analytical framework of stancetaking through discourse, interviewees' utterances convey layers of socially significant information. Each utterance represented in this chapter provides information via its content, and it also involves linguistic choices that are equally significant in understanding graduate students' relationships to IHEs, UCSB, and diversity in higher education. There are multiple ways to convey an idea, which makes the lexical features, syntactic structures, intonation patterns, and other linguistic features that speakers choose part of the discursive process of stancetaking (Jaffe, 2009). For example, upon learning that UCSB is considered a Hispanic Serving Institution, Francesca stated, "That's funny that they think they have any right to say that UCSB is an HSI. There's like no support." Another possible way for Francesca to have expressed the same content information would have been, "I don't believe that UCSB's institutional practices warrant the university being designated an HSI." Francesca construction, *that's funny* evaluates UCSB's practice of saying it is an HSI as laughable, belittling the practice while she conveys her negative alignment with UCSB, since this fact is not intended to be humorous. Additionally, the phrase *any right to say* implies that UCSB enacted a privilege that had not yet been earned; the quantifier *any*, rather than the indefinite article *a* ("a right to say") emphasizes this deficiency. Because context is crucial to stancetaking and interpreting discourse, the linguistic features of significance vary from one utterance to another. One linguistic feature that played a significant role in stancetaking among interviewees was verb choice, which I describe in the next section. I analyze the third discursive practice, the strategic use of pronouns, in a later section, but pronouns are also used in interactionally significant ways in the examples below.

7.2.2 Verb choice

Interviewees discursively challenged the idea that UCSB necessarily had certain qualities (e.g., "has diversity," "is an HSI"), engaged in certain behaviors (e.g., "tries," "fosters") or upheld certain values related to diversity. Through their choice of verbs, they asserted a disconnect between institutional diversity rhetoric and diversity practice—using stancetaking to evaluate institutional rhetoric as untruthful or inaccurate. In numerous instances, an interviewee structured their utterance around a specific verb in such a way that they were able to critique institutional discourse and practice in relatively few words. One category of verbs that interviewees used strategically was verbs specific to communicating information, such as *say, tell, speak,* and *talk*. Aria and Kendrick used *say* and *tell,* respectively, to capture the experience of observing institution members assert that the university was engaged in action but not seeing the action themselves. Rather than "They are trying" or "They try," Aria repeatedly said, "They *say* they're trying…" in reference to faculty in her department, which made her utterances reported speech rather than an observations of practice. In contrast to verbatim representations of another's speech, the paraphrased summary form of reported speech is more explicitly filtered through the speakers own evaluative lens. In this instance, the exact words used were less important than what Aria took away from them: the perception that faculty talk about trying to make change without actually do so.

Speaking as though to an institutional representative, Kendrick used the verb *tell* to create a contrast between the messaging directed at Black university members and the actions that he saw the university engage in:

> You're *telling* me that you're interested in proportional representation. You *tell* me that Black people are valued and seen as assets on this campus. And then I look at your *behavior,* look at where your *money* goes, look at what you do directly after you say

> the thing…and again you're not- your behavior isn't different from a person who would say the opposite of what you just said.

Unlike *say,* the verb *tell* syntactically requires an indirect object, that is, a recipient of the information being told. A speaker could say, "You say that Black people are valued" but the sentence "You tell that Black people are valued" would be ungrammatical to most English speakers. By using the verb *tell*, Kendrick highlighted that institutional leaders were not expressing these ideas to a vague general audience but instead were conveying what he saw as dishonest information directly to him. In other words, Kendrick saw these university members as lying to his face. Lupita used the verb *claim* to explicitly evaluate UCSB's HSI designation as debatable: "A place like UCSB that *claims* it's an HSI, but (MUMBLES)…" Like the verbs *allege* and *contend, claim* is used to assert that there is not enough evidence to accept the information after the verb as factual (as seen frequently in legal and journalistic discourse). The intentionally indecipherable mumbling used to trail off at the end of the sentence had two major interactional functions: (1) it framed the reasons for UCSB's HSI status being questionable as a taboo topic that should not be and/or is not spoken aloud, and (2) it positioned her interlocutor (me) as someone who would understand the meaning of her clause even if it was incomplete, i.e., someone who would likely positively align with her stance.

deandre also used the verb *say* to highlight the difference between language and action but framed their critique in a slightly different way than Aria: "Diversity and inclusion is important to UCSB, but it doesn't do much to foster it. It's important that they *say* it's important." In their second statement, deandre asserted that what the university considers important is not actually diversity and inclusion but rather being seen as an institution that

considers them important, and this image is based on what the university says about the topic, regardless of what it does or does not do. In other words, deandre evaluated UCSB's diversity discourse as a form of virtue signaling, "the action or practice of highlighting one's morality through the use of language and other signs that index superficial alignment with progressive sociopolitical values" (miles-hercules & Muwwakkil 2021: 2).

Rosalie was unique in her use of the verb *pretend*, which evaluates the disconnect between rhetoric and action as intentional: "They *pretend* that they care, and they do all those meetings, but they don't make changes." When someone pretends to do or be something, they consciously represent themself as possessing qualities that they know they do not have or as having done something that they know they did not do: children "play pretend" to act out being doctors and princesses, and adults pretend to know information to seem smart to other people. Rosalie evaluated institutional actions intended as evidence of caring—"all those meetings"—as a form of pretend because the meetings did not lead to change, which was presumably the stated purpose of having the meetings in the first place.

Through these types of evaluative stancetaking moves, interviewees were able to enact a form of agency (Ahearn, 2001) that is typically constrained by the inequitable power structures of academia. In the context of the interview, graduate students of color could linguistically undermine UCSB's institutional authority on matters of diversity and inclusion by pointing out the hypocrisy they saw embedded in its discourse and asserting their experiential knowledge as more accurate and reliable (see, e.g., Collins 2000 for a discussion of lived experience as a source of knowledge for minoritized people). More importantly, they could do so without the fear of hostility or retribution that hung over their interactions with faculty and administrators, and sometimes even their white colleagues. Interviewees also

enacted this agency through the second linguistic resource used to engage in stancetaking and critique institutional discourse and practice: constructed dialogue.

7.2.3 Constructed dialogue

Throughout our one-on-one conversations, interviewees repeatedly represented the discourse of other people. In some cases, these representations were variations of real encounters—variations because "narrative involves some reconstruction of stories across time and place…and stories are performed differently in different contexts" (Squire 2008, p. 44). In other cases, interviewees were imagining what someone would say, transforming someone's non-linguistic actions into language, turning widespread ideology or popular sentiment into an individual's speech, or otherwise constructing dialogue that had not occurred. I use the term *constructed dialogue* (Tannen, 1986) to encompass all of these representations of real and imagined interactions in which interviewees voiced other people. It is important to note here that constructed dialogue is a common interactional practice and one that I also participated in during my exchanges with interviewees, such as in the following example.

> But then until there's like enough *pressure* that's like, "Oh, if we *don't* do something about diversity there's going to be negative consequences," it's just that, kind of like, "Oh, we're aware we need to do something," but when people are like, "Can we- can we do *this* something?" they're like, "Ehh, no."

My own use of constructed dialogue may have influenced how interviewees expressed themselves, considering the tendency for speakers to adjust their speech practices based on their interlocutor (e.g., Bell, 1984). But regardless of whether it was influenced by my own speech practices, interviewees' use of constructed dialogue was interactionally and discursively significant.

Constructed dialogue is a form of what Bakhtin (1981) has theorized as "double-voiced" discourse, or discourse that embodies the language and ideologies of two (or more) people. When someone uses constructed dialogue to criticize the speaker(s) whose speech is being represented, this is a form of double-voiced discourse in which "the second voice becomes the object of criticism, ridicule, or attack" (Baxter, 2014, p. 30). Through this type of double-voiced discourse, "a speaker can explicitly appropriate the words of others in order to express their own agendas, and as such, these types of [double-voiced discourse] constitute an 'overt polemic': another speaker's voice is openly reproduced in order to approve or criticise it" (Baxter, 2014, p. 31). For instance, in the following example, Steve constructed an exchange between people in a department that was meant to be representative of and criticize the types of "actionless" conversations that faculty may have around diversity.

> So, in my experience when people talk about diversity in an academic institution, although I think they really mean well, I feel that it's kind of actionless. And that could just be because of the department I'm in or the departments I've been in and the people that I've rubbed elbows with? But, it's very like,
>
> > "Yeah we need to improve- increase diversity!"
> > "So, like, how do we do that?"
> > "I don't know, we don't have money for that."
>
> It's like, okay, well, you're kind of wasting- You're kind of not trying.

Through constructed dialogue, interviewees controlled the representation of others who were not co-present for our interaction, including what they said/would say and how they said/would say it. They also controlled their self-representation, both in the constructed interaction and in our co-present interaction, since their words and actions as represented in the constructed interaction shaped how I viewed them over the course of our conversation. Interviewees' representations of themselves and others through this double-voiced constructed dialogue was a form of stancetaking, since how they chose to represent an individual was based on their evaluation of that person's words and actions.

Like stancetaking through language more generally, discursively constructing the institution and its members—particularly those with institutional power, including faculty and administrators—was also a form of agency. In reality, people with more institutional power than graduate students could choose not to listen when graduate students expressed concern, ignoring them altogether or talking at them rather than with them. London felt this even in their position as a graduate peer advisor with Graduate Division: “Even as someone who is in a position with direct connection to admins, who I should talk to about what isn’t always clear. Conversations often feel one-way.” In the dialogue constructed during an interview, however, graduate students could make that relationship necessarily dialogic by representing a situation in which the institution and its members have no choice but to listen and respond.

Voicing institutional personae

In the act of voicing members of the institution, interviewees conveyed the discursive practices and ideologies that they associated with certain types of people. They drew on institutional discourse of the type analyzed in Chapters 3,4, and 5, discursive tropes about diversity and inclusion in higher education that circulate in education circles, ideologies about race and other social categorizations, and their own individual perspectives to construct “characterological figures”: “well known persons or social types identified in the public’s mind with certain speech styles” (Bell & Gibson, 2011, pg. 558, referencing Agha, 2003). Rather than a specific individual, a characterological figure is a social type, associated with specific kinds of thoughts, actions, or utterances. Even when a particular characterological figure was not described with regard to their social identity (e.g., race, gender, age), interviewees could use linguistic indexes to provide social information about them. A

linguistic index is a linguistic feature, at any level of language from sound to sentence, that has been assigned particular social meanings through its use and interpretation by particular language users in particular contexts (Silverstein, 2005). We come to associate linguistic features with certain types of people, and our beliefs about those people (e.g., their intelligence, attractiveness, sociopolitical alignments) in turn get mapped onto these linguistic features. In constructed dialogue, the linguistic indexes that a constructed speaker uses are part of narrator's stancetaking.

In the following example from Kendrick, he described the imagined speaker (through the speaker's own voice) as a "good white liberal." Without that statement, a listener who shared Kendrick's perspective would nonetheless be able to discern what type of person he was trying to portray.

> If you say, "We want Black and Brown people here. They are welcome here," and then I say, "What, uh, structures do you have in order to kind of, one, promote their success in your *white* frame? And, two, what protections are they afforded such that they can feel safe? Like, if someone comes and abuses them, like, what are the consequences for [that person] having done that?" Your answer *can't* be "(TSK) Oh, they wouldn't do that. We're good white liberals! We *love* the browns! <FAST> I would've voted for Obama a third time." </> That's not good enough, because we found that that's not actually what happens.

Referring to Black and Brown people as "(the) browns" and "(the) blacks" as an index of racism is a contemporary meme among people color on social media. The use of the definite determiner *the* to refer to people of shared ethnoracial background is racist in its essentialist homogenization into a single discrete group, as well as its effect of othering members of that group (Abadi, 2016). The collective noun *blacks* gained prominence in the 1970s and 1980s but has since been overtaken by other terms as sociopolitical beliefs have changed over the past decades. Because of this history, the term is now indexical of outdated, if not racist, views to some people, especially young Black people. The statement "I would've voted for

Obama a third time," popularized by the 2017 film *Get Out,* has also become an index of racist, white U.S. liberalism (miles-hercules & Muwwakkil, 2021; Blake, 2020). Through this phrase, a white person attempts to discursively absolve their role in perpetuating anti-Black racism by "proving" they are not racist because, given the chance, they would have re-elected a Black president. Thus, in this constructed dialogue, Kendrick represents the type of institution member who dodges questions about providing students of color protection from harm as a racist white liberal.

Throughout her interview, Brona repeatedly voiced UCSB faculty and administrators. In most instances, the person she represented was not explicitly raced or gendered, but, as with Kendrick, her representation of their speech included clear linguistic indexes of the types of people she evaluated them to be. In some instances, she explicitly evaluated the constructed speakers actions, such as when she voiced a faculty member after describing his actions as" microaggressions."

> My friend is taking a course, and *I* would say…every *thirty* seconds the guy conducts a microaggression? […] This friend studies racism in their research and in response he said, "<VOX: Valley Girl> Wha::t? But it's 2020? </> I don't think racism is really an *issue* anymore."

Interestingly, Brona uses linguistic features indexical of the "Valley Girl" persona to voice this male faculty member: nasal voice quality, elongated vowels, and rising intonation at the end of a sentence (i.e., "uptalk") (e.g., D'Onofrio, 2015). The Valley Girl is associated with youth, whiteness, privilege through affluence, superficiality, and lack of social awareness (e.g., Bucholtz, 2007), and the linguistic features associated with the Valley Girl persona have also been used in performances of "mock white girl" that portray young white women with the same negative traits (Slobe, 2018; Mason-Carris 2011). In the context of this interview, and given Brona's indication that the voiced speaker is a man ("the guy"), the

Valley Girl persona here seemed to be intended to portray whiteness and/or its ideological associations, as well as superficiality and lack of social awareness. This interpretation is supported by the statement "I don't think racism is really an *issue* anymore," a canonical example of the "minimization of racism" frame of colorblind racism (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Through both direct and indirect linguistic features, Brona represented this faculty member as a characterological type similar to the racist white liberal that Kendrick constructed in the previous example.

At another point in her interview, Brona voiced both graduate students and university administrators, neither of whom were explicitly raced or gendered. In the example below, she described the antagonistic relationship between students trying to make change on campus and administrators who hinder their progress.

> In a lot of advocacy work, I think students put in *a lot* of energy and *a lot* of effort, right. Then the administration is just like, "*I'm* just gon sit on this piece of paper … *M:aybe* I'll *do* somethin'. *M:aybe* I *won't* do somethin'." And then grad students are like <VOX: baby voice> "But…I did everything I could." </> And the administration is like, "Yeah, that's a cool story bro, and *m:aybe* we'll do something about it. Or maybe we won't. 'Cau::se if we sit on this piece of paper long enough, yo ass is gon graduate."

Brona represented "the administration's" lack of action on the student proposals, demands, or other information provided on "this piece of paper" as intentional—specifically, a strategy to wait out the students, who will eventually graduate and will no longer be at the institution to agitate for change. Through the use of the phrase *cool story, bro*, an internet meme from the early 2010s used to shut down excessive or intentionally antagonistic language (Agger, 2013), Brona also represented the administration as uninterested and dismissive of students' concerns. In addition to the *cool story, bro* meme, she captured the power difference between the administration and activist students by representing students with a high-pitched, toddler-

like voice. Although it is humorous in its unexpected and exaggerated nature, the baby voice used by Brona portrays students as innocent, which suggests that she viewed the administration's behavior toward students as not only unfair but potentially abusive: what type of person would intentionally deny an innocent child what they need?

Through these varied forms of constructed dialogue, Brona and other interviewees were able to represent their stances on university members and the university as a whole. In these representations of others, interviewees also positioned themselves in relation to these other members of the institution. Another key linguistic resource through which interviewees positioned themselves relative to other IHE members was the strategic use of pronouns.

7.2.4 Pronoun use

As a form of self-protection, interviewees did not refer to institution members by name with the exception of the Chancellor, an administrator with whom no interviewee had direct contact. They made clear when they were referring to a specific person, group, or entity using language such as *staff in my department*, *my research lab*, or *administrators at UCSB*, but in many instances the referent was broad, such as *faculty, UCSB,* and *people*. An interviewee's use of pronouns with non-specific referents could be a product of various factors: for instance, they might have assumed shared knowledge between us based on prior discourse in the interview or widely known information. Another possibility is that they did not have enough information about a referent to identify them any more specifically. As I described in Chapter 6, the UC system has a complex hierarchical structure that it is not systematically explained to students, so many graduate students did not have a full understanding of the chain of command for diversity-related policies and practices. Sometimes the extent of a graduate student's knowledge was "someone above me made a

decision about this" without knowing who or why. While I cannot always discern with certainty why an individual used a pronoun with a vague referent, the frequency with which it occurred across interviews suggested that it was motivated by a factor common to graduate students beyond the context of each interview.

One of the most frequently used pronouns with vague reference was *you*. It was often used to direct speech at an individual who was not present in the interaction, by speaking to me but not addressing me. In the context of the one-on-one interview, I was always the target audience for interviewees' speech, since I was the only other person present and they were responding to my prompts. By enacting a scene for me as the audience, interviewees used the interactional context of the interview to construct institutions and their members as interlocutors who had to listen to them. Kendrick used *you* in this way in the example above: "If you say, 'We want Black and Brown people here. They are welcome here," and then I say, 'What structures do you have to promote their success in your white frame…?'"

The pronouns *we/us* and *they/them* were also used, both in constructed dialogue and direct responses to questions. These pronouns played a crucial role in creating "us vs. them" dichotomies that allowed interviewees to distance, if not completely separate, themselves from the institution members, practices, and structures that they critiqued. For example, Zara used *they* to refer to powerful institution members whose lack of self-reflection leads to unfair decision making.

> People recognize these *problems*, recognize (.) problems in (.) their own *behavior* that they're not really *honest* with themselves about *why* they decided to do something that they've done. U::m <QUIET> yeah. </> This is why I think *therapy* would be great for *everyone*. There's like, a lot of self-*delusions* that (.) go on when you *have*, like, ulterior motives that you haven't even recognized *yourself.*

Notably, in the final sentence, Zara switched to a non-specific or universal *you*, following her use of the pronoun *everyone* in the sentence before. This suggests that she does not view herself as immune from the larger issue of self-delusion, but she does not see herself as someone who allows that to have negative consequences in the university context.

One graduate student who was in a small department referred to departmental members with *we* and higher-ranking administrators who made decisions about their department's funding with *they*: "My department is so small and we have such limited funding that we miss out on things other departments do, like colloquia and guest speakers. We don't get a lot of attention until shit goes down and they're trying to shut us down." Throughout their interview, this interviewee focused on administrator-student, graduate-undergraduate, and department-institution relationships; they said little about dynamics within their department, suggesting that they considered their small department their primary in-group and viewedpeople who made conditions more difficult for members of the department—be they undergraduate, graduate, or faculty—as out-group members and adversaries.

In non-constructed dialogue contexts, depending on the topic, interviewees varyingly used *we* to refer to all UCSB graduate students, graduate students in their department, graduate students of color, international students, and/or another UCSB group or community. When they referred to UCSB as a collective entity, interviewees almost always used *UCSB* and *they* rather than *we.* The critique-oriented nature of the interviews fostered discussions in which interviewees would only want to position themselves as part of the institution in particular ways. At the end of this chapter, I return to a discussion about the extent to which

interviewees articulated a recognition of their own participation and perpetuation of inequitable structures and practices as a result of their institutional roles as graduate students.

7.2.5 Metapragmatic comments

A less frequent but equally significant linguist resource used by interviewees to critique diversity and inclusion was metapragmatic comments. Metapragmatic comments were utterances in which interviewees oriented to the structure, meaning, and use of particular features of diversity discourse—more specifically, how a linguistic feature's functional meaning is shaped by its social use (Silverstein, 1993). In the focus groups that discussed website discourse, participants were given texts and asked to respond to guided questions, which helped them to home in on specific morphological, lexical, and syntactic features. In the one-on-one interviews, on the other hand, specific features of diversity discourse were discussed as they emerged organically (i.e., in response to a question or in the natural flow of conversation) and only to the extent that was relevant. As a result, interviewees in this context frequently talked about discourse broadly and in terms of its relationship to action, ideology, or impact on students, but they rarely reflected on specific linguistic features and the nuances of how they were used. This made the few metapragmatic comments that occurred in interviews especially salient: for instance, when Jodi made the comment that "the more you say the word *diversity* without action, the less meaning it has." All of the metapragmatic comments in the interview data focused on lexical items, which suggests that interviewees were not (as) consciously attuned to features at other levels of language that were also contributing to their overall interpretations of diversity discourse, such as the passive or agentless syntactic constructions that I discussed in Chapter 4 (see Silverstein 1981 for a discussion of the limits of a speaker's awareness about their own

language). This is not a surprising finding, given the lower cognitive threshold for recognizing words (compared to, e.g., morphemes or phonemes) due to their salience as bounded units of language (Osgood & Hoosain, 1974).

For example, Robert commented on the common descriptors *underrepresented* and *underserved* used to describe minoritized populations:

> I think we need to change our language from "underrepresented and underserved" to "misrepresented and disserved" cause I think that's more accurate to describe the experiences of, like, students of color who are coming to institutions. *Who* is doing the underrepresenting, right? It kind of absolves the actor. *Who* is doing the underrepresenting or *who* is doing the underserving? There are conditions which produce that. And I think *not* to use that language, again, can place the blame on communities of color for not preparing people, in whatever way, to get to UCSB.

Robert saw these terms as erasing the conditions and the individuals that create a marginalized status for other groups within higher education; in my discussion of the term *underrepresented* in Chapter 5, I similarly argue that the adjective assigns "underrepresentation" as a quality to members of those groups rather than as a product of structural forces and practices. Robert suggested changing *underrepresented* and *underserved* to *misrepresented* and *disserved:* although the latter terms do not explicitly name specific conditions or responsible parties, he asserted that the prefixes *mis-* and *dis-* do a better job of pointing to the existence of conditions and responsible parties than the prefix *under-*. Unlike *underrepresented, misrepresented* entails an agent doing the poor or inaccurate representation of the grammatical object (the person being represented). Whereas *underserve* can be interpreted as an issue of quantity rather than quality—students are being given what they need but not enough of it—*disserve*, formed through back-formation from the noun *disservice*, frames the institutional actions supposedly enacted to "serve" students as necessarily harmful rather than helpful.

Zara also provided an example of a lexical change that could shift perspective:

> Someone in one of these diversity groups said they prefer the term "underrepresented majorities," which turned a lot of heads. But, like, she was pointing out that we've marginalized people to such an extent that we don't recognize how much of the population they actually make up.

Rather than changing the form of *underrepresented,* the example Zara heard changed the noun that the term modifies: *majorities* instead of *minorities. Minority* is still used by many as a synonym for *person of color*, which in many contexts means that ethnoracial groups that are not numerically a minority are nevertheless referred to with that term (including Black students referring to Black people in an HBCU context, as I illustrate in Chapter 9.) *Majority-minority* as a label for IHEs whose members are predominately people of color exemplifies this use in institutional discourse. The phrase *underrepresented majorities* links numerical representation in a specific institutional context— where underrepresentation is generally defined in terms of state and national demographics—to demographics on a global scale, where people of color are the majority. These types of metapragmatic comments indicated that at least some graduate students of color at UCSB were thinkingly deeply about how linguistic choices in diversity discourse could impact their experiences in higher education by challenging dominant ideologies that determined structure and practice.

The linguistic practices of stancetaking, verb choice, constructed dialogue, pronoun choice, and metapragmatic comments were not specific to particular topics or types of students. They appear throughout the examples in the following two sections, which analyze how interviewees called out the disconnect between institutional discourse and their explanations for why diversity matters in higher education. Though I do not provide the detailed linguistic analysis for each example below, close analysis of linguistic structure and

interactional practice was central to my overall analysis of the interview discourse represented.

7.3 Institutional "lip service" or "checking the diversity box"

A common complaint among interviewees, as illustrated by several of the examples above, was the perception that UCSB and its institutional members with power were doing the bare minimum with regard to diversity and inclusion. Multiple people used the expression "check(ing) the diversity box" to describe what they saw as a "lip service" approach to diversity: expressing a commitment to diversity, inclusion, and change discursively but not taking sufficient, if any, action at the department or university level to make those possible. Sometimes this was ascribed to a lack of awareness, i.e., people incorrectly thinking they were doing enough. More often than not, however, it was framed as an intentional choice: the university said what was necessary to maintain its positive public image and then consciously took the least resource-intensive actions to bolster that image (e.g., admitting students of color) or took no action at all. This view of the institution was captured by a comment from Brona: "They're like, 'Aw, people are racist? That's awful…Oh, did you want me to *do* something about that?'"

Ludwig echoed Brona's sentiment that people high in the institutional hierarchy ("the administration," "the university") choose to acknowledge and then sit-on students' demands for change as a way to avoid addressing these demands without appearing to completely ignore them:

> I don't think the university would push for change if people weren't talking about it, because they don't do things until they're forced to do things. They try to put the brakes on things until students leave and there's a new complaint cycle with new students in four years, and they can say they've been working on it.

Ludwig implied that diversity and inclusion work is not a priority for the institution and therefore it is only done when the university's public image is threatened—a motivational framework that Bell (1980) refers to as "interest convergence." In an interest convergence model, a university and individuals with institutional power do not willingly better the conditions of people from minoritized groups in ways that shift systems of power unless there is a clear benefit to those in power, including avoiding a negative public reputation (Bell, 1980). The interests of minoritized people and powerful people interests must converge before meaningful structural change will occur. Jameison expressed a similar perspective on university priorities when he commented on the distribution of financial resources.

> I mean anybody who really wants to do something will just make it happen, you know? And it's like, you take the university with like millions and millions of dollars of endowment, and administrators getting paid hundreds of thousands of dollars, right, like (Laughter) @and @it's @like, it can't be that important, or else it would get done!

Albeit optimistic in his assertion that "anybody who really wants to do something will just make it happen" given the reality that advocates for institutional change face numerous long-standing and deeply entrenched barriers (Ahmed, 2012; Rahim, 2020; Rodriguez & Freeman, 2016), Jameison makes the valid observation that powerful institution members are the ones who can make decisions about how university money is spent. In these examples, Brona, Ludwig, and Jameison critiqued a "lip service" approach to diversity in a general sense, but interviewees also critiqued it with regard to specific people and practices at UCSB. These included fetishization of UCSB's HSI/MSI status, leaders who were not knowledgeable about minoritized students' experiences, lack of retention efforts, lack of financial support to people doing diversity work, and lack of accountability for harm to marginalized students. I discuss each of these in turn below.

Graduate Division staff and administrators similarly noted that institutional actions often do not move beyond "checking the diversity box." For instance, when describing the scaled annual block grants that departments are eligible for based on their diversity efforts, Camden said, "Diversity means changing the culture of the department, not just checking off boxes." Garret connected this lack of substantive action to UCSB's lack of a centralized diversity plan at the time. He said, "People are just spinning their wheels. Like, there's a lack of funding for diversity initiatives, and we lack a common goal that is structurally supported." Austin, a graduate peer in Graduate Division, said:

> Institutions are very reactive to issues. There's not a lot of forward thinking about "How are we going to make this a better climate or environment for these students." Change often comes from the trauma of students begging for things they should have had in the first place, and institutionally, it's easier to pass the ball around when there's no clear definition of who is responsible for what.

Graduate students generally did not reference the university's lack of diversity plan, though a few did comment on the lack of clear goals for specific department diversity initiatives that they were part of. This contrast between graduate students and Graduate Division employees was indicative of graduate students' limited access to knowledge about institutional structures and practices. In any case, they were able to recognize clear instances of misaligned institutional diversity rhetoric and action at all levels of the institution.

7.3.1 Fetishization of HSI/MSI status

UCSB's HSI/MSI status featured prominently in institutional discourse on the university website, in campus communications such as emails from the Chancellor and other administrators, and in posts on official university social media accounts. As a member of the university community, I regularly observed unprompted comments on UCSB's HSI/MSI by status students of color—an indication of the salience of this topic. For the interviews, I had

prepared questions that specifically asked about UCSB's HSI/MSI designation, but interviewees frequently brought up the topic before I did. Almost every interviewee who discussed the topic criticized how UCSB utilized its HSI/MSI status in institutional discourse compared to its actions to support students of color, particularly how it insufficiently served Latinx students as an HSI. Borden's perspective on this topic was representative of this type of critique, calling the university's use of the label a form of exploitation and manipulation: "Once a university has that MSI label, they try to use it, exploit it […] Like in my department they bring up [UCSB's HSI status] like a badge of honor but it ends there. It's a form of manipulation, like a smoke and mirrors kind of thing." deandre viewed the university "champion[ing] the label of HSI" as a disingenuous attempt to frame the presence of Latinx/Hispanic students at UCSB as primarily a product of institutional effort rather than local demographics and history:

> UCSB is happy to champion the label of HSI as if it is a thing that they *did*. The thing that they *did* was belong to a settler colonial nation. This land was Mexico less than two hundred years ago—of *course* there's a lot of Hispanic people here! @@@ It's not an accomplishment, and they celebrate it in a way that's amnesic. Like, they don't think about it as a history of colonization, they think about it as "we have the bodies in the room." But that "bodies in the room" discourse allows you to do nothing to advance equity while simultaneously patting yourself on the back.

deandre's critique pointed out that this "amnesic" way of talking about the presence of Latinx people at UCSB ignored the history of colonization in the region that made UCSB's existence possible. deandre explicitly evaluated UCSB's HSI status as "not an accomplishment" and celebratory institutional discourse as "patting [themselves] on the back." ("Patting themselves on the back was another phrase, like "checking the diversity box" that was used by multiple interviewees in reference to the university's diversity discourse and practice.)

Diana critiqued UCSB's use of the HSI label based on her own experience as a Latinx student who became disillusioned with the institution. She highlighted the demographic differences between students and decision-makers, ineffective distribution of MSI funds, and the lack of support she experienced after being recruited with HSI rhetoric.

> Poor, first-gen, Latinx students may be excited about and drawn to UCSB as an HSI, but the people making decisions about Hispanic students' experiences are *not* the undergrads who *make* UCSB an HSI. It's white faculty and admin, and I don't think that helps anyone in the long run. […] Is any of this money going into recruiting students into fields where they're really underrepresented and *helping* them? […] I was recruited to come here, and being an HSI was part of that rhetoric, and when I got here I felt *abandoned*. And I have a *master's* degree. Think about first-gen undergrads coming here."

Diana was a first-generation undergraduate herself, and she had attended two very different types of HSIs for her undergraduate and graduate studies (her undergraduate IHE was a regional comprehensive institution), so she was aware of the difficulties Latinx first-generation college students likely faced attempting to navigate UCSB without the knowledge about institutional structures and practices she had gained from her years in higher education. Because of the expectations that she had of UCSB based on the HSI rhetoric used to recruit her—and her interpretation of that rhetoric based on the practices of her previous institution–Diana did not simply feel disappointed or surprised once she was at UCSB. She felt "abandoned," suggesting a widespread lack of support at multiple levels of the university. On fact, at various points in our conversation, Diana mentioned having a fraught relationship with her faculty advisor and other struggles within her department, along with the financial struggles common among UCSB graduate students.

One disciplinary area where Latinx students were highly underrepresented at UCSB was STEM, so much so that even some non-STEM interviewees were aware of and commented on it. Gwen, who was a student in STEM, made a statement that highlighted this

underrepresentation and, indirectly, how the ethos of being an HSI had not permeated all areas of the university. She said, "It's never come up in any conversations I've had. I actually didn't know UCSB was an HSI, but that could be because there are so few Hispanic people on my side of campus." Not only were there few Latinx/Hispanic students present on the STEM side of campus, but STEM faculty and students in Gwen's own department were not talking, or not talking openly, about the issue.

7.3.2 Uninformed leadership

Several interviewees pointed to institutional leaders' lack of knowledge about minoritized students' experiences and needs as a major contributor to their negative perceptions of diversity at UCSB. Because the population of faculty and administrators was whiter than the population of students, only a limited number of institutional leaders could recognize and empathize with the struggles of graduate students of color based on their own lived experiences. Some institutional leaders were well-meaning and wanted to help but did not know how, and some advocates for institutional change knew what needed to be done but had their actions hindered by someone more powerful than they were who did not understand why that work needed to be done. In these contexts, the disconnect between institutional rhetoric and action was often framed by interviewees as a product of ignorance rather than intentional deception or malice, but they did not see ignorance as an excuse.

Jameison described the problematic nature of white institutional leaders making decisions on behalf of people of color using the analogy of someone trying to decide what another person should eat when the former knows nothing about the latter's dietary preferences or potentially fatal food allergies. He went on to say: "They enact things that they *think* are helpful, or like, they at least think are not harmful. Basically, people who've never

had to *think* about these issues now have to *solve* these issues." Celeste described this type of racial power dynamic as a form of infantilization—not allowing people of color to make decisions for themselves because they are supposedly not intellectually capable of doing so. She talked about more racially diverse leadership as one of the primary solutions to this problem because the experiences of students of color would be better represented in leadership spaces, either by leaders of color speaking on their behalf or by those leaders creating space for students to advocate for themselves.

> I value diverse leadership because a lot of people in leadership value the idea of diversity and inclusion and want to help people, but they don't know how. Also, white people making decisions for people of color is a form of infantilization. […] We need people who have *experienced* the issues being discussed or addressed, because, like- Like, someone who was themself a grad student of color who felt left out would advocate to have us in the room.

Like Celeste, Francesca noted that the level of knowledge about diversity and racism can vary drastically between students, faculty, and administrators. Describing the situation in her department she said, "At the student level it's okay, but in terms of, like, policies set, it's a fuck show. Faculty don't know what to do, and they don't see the problems that are there…which is unsurprising but still annoying." Francesca pointed out how the policies that shaped students' day-to-day experiences in the department were under the control of faculty who were not aware of the existing structures that made the department a difficult place to be for students of color. In other words, the implementation of policy was "a fuck show" because it did not recognize and address students' real needs. Interviewees who discussed institution leaders' lack of knowledge about the needs of students of color centered different aspect of the problem. Some focused on power dynamics at play, for instance, and others focused on the relationship between institutional knowledge and policy. However, all

interviewees who address the issue they were unified in their description of this ignorance as a significant problem that impacted their experiences as graduate students of color.

7.3.4 Lack of retention efforts and lack of financial support

A common refrain among the graduate students interviewed was that UCSB was focused on recruiting students from minoritized backgrounds, but it had not created structures and allocated resources to retain those students once they were part of the university community, a perspective demonstrated clearly in Diana's narrative above about feeling abandoned by the university. Recruiting students to the institution "checked the diversity box," but at a university without a strategic plan for diversity and inclusion—including retention efforts for undergraduates, graduate students, and faculty—it was easy for students to fall through the cracks. Marisol commented on this issue of recruitment without retention, focusing specifically on Latinx students.

> What are we doing once they get here? Are we retaining them or not? I've had many first- and second-year students struggling in STEM who don't want to be here anymore because the university does not sustain them very well. Like, we get funding, yay, but how is that funding being used to retain and sustain the students you're *getting the money for*?

Marisol referenced the federal funding that UCSB received as an HSI and questioned whether those funds were being spent on resources that would directly support Latinx students. Notably, she used the terms *retain* and *sustain*, implying that serving Latinx students went beyond keeping them in the institution: the university needed to be an environment in which students were nurtured and could thrive.

Two recurring issues related to retention and financial resources were the underfunding of UCSB's ethnic studies departments and identity-based graduate student organizations. Chicana/o Studies was the only ethnic studies department with a graduate

program at the time of the study (and it had recently been temporarily suspended). The Department of Black Studies offered graduate courses and an interdisciplinary emphasis but did not have its own graduate program. The Department of Asian American Studies had none of the three. Native/Indigenous Studies scholars were scattered across humanities and social sciences departments, connected through the American Indian and Indigenous Collective, but there was no department, emphasis, or graduate program. Ethnic studies departments and programs are often the bastions of progressive racial ideology and actions at HWIs since they are typically born from student protests for racial justice (Hu-DeHart, 1993; Rojas, 2007); they are also where many students of color and other minoritized students seek refuge from the ideologies and practices of hegemonic groups. As such, fostering the research, teaching, and mentoring that happens in ethnic studies programs and departments is one clear way for an HWI to demonstrate its commitment to diversity and inclusion. Yet, these programs and departments are often under-resourced at HWIs, and they face political challenges from within and outside of IHEs that have gone on for decades (Brown, 2013; Butler & Schmitz, 1993). deandre described the Department of Chicana/o Studies as one of "the banners UCSB parades around" along with its HSI designation, but the department itself had a poor physical space and faculty were overburdened because they were serving many Latinx students but not receiving adequate resources to do so. To interviewees, this was another clear instance of diversity lip service, as UCSB emphasized its MSI status while marginalizing the departments doing much of the leg work to keep those students at the university.

Multiple interviewees described a similar pattern of rhetoric versus action at the graduate level with regard to how identity-based organizations are marketed versus how they are funded. One student who was a leader in one such organization said, "Admins love to talk

about international students, students of color, LGBTQ students and all the orgs we have but don't fund them. The university wants bragging rights with none of the work afterwards." Likewise, when asked if they thought diversity and inclusion were important to UCSB, a Black student pointed to the underfunding of the BGSA.

> I don't get the sense that it is [important]. Like, if you look at programming, BGSA is constantly struggling to get funding. Maybe we need to do more to demonstrate the validity of our organization's work to admin, but it's exhausting to have to fight for your presence.

This interviewee shifted from first-person plural pronouns (*we, our*) to general form of the second-person pronoun *you* when referring to BGSA. The use of both types of pronouns in this context suggests that the speaker saw having to justify why BGSA deserved the funding it needed to stay afloat as having to justify Black graduate students' presence on campus more broadly, since the organization's primary work was ensuring exactly that. They indirectly asserted that if UCSB cared about diversity and inclusion, it would provide more funding to BGSA for its various activities; therefore, the consistent struggle for funding sent a message to Black graduate students that the university—or, more accurately, the administrators who made decisions about funding—did not value the work that BGSA and its members did. In the words of another Black graduate student who was a BGSA member, this work included creating a sense of community and safety, a space for venting and commiseration, a space for validation of each other's experiences, and overall "easing the psychological burden of being a marginalized person." Based on my own experience as a BGSA member as well as my conversations with graduate students who were active members of identity-based groups, the social and academic support networks that these organization offered were for many students the lifeline that helped them to persevere

through specific challenges in their programs and the general challenges of being a graduate student.

7.3.5 Lack of accountability for harm

The final form of diversity lip service that many interviewees mentioned was discourse that minimized the reality of the harm experiences by minoritized students—a form of diversity happy talk (Bell & Hartmann, 2007). Interviewees called out faculty, administrators, and the institution for talking about diversity and engaging in diversity practices in ways that belied the structural and interpersonal racism, sexism, and other forms of discrimination that they faced. In Borden's words, "There's what the administration thinks of as diversity and there's what happens on the ground, and a lot of what happens on the ground spits at this idea of diversity." Several interviewees discussed a lack of tangible consequences for people with power who engaged in discriminatory and harmful behavior. Their sentiment was captured in the following comment by Lavender: "My department's conversation about equity wasn't about telling people they need to change their behavior. It was holding their hand and telling them they shouldn't do it even though there will be no repercussions if they do."

For UCSB graduate students, the lack of consequences was one of two primary ways that harm against minoritized students was normalized within the institution. The other was perpetuating the idea that suffering is an inherent part of graduate education. Interviewees who mentioned this issue pointed to older, typically white male, faculty as the primary culprits using this discourse to excuse harmful behaviors and avoid the work of changing inequitable structures. While everyone in academia necessarily faces challenges, considering suffering an unavoidable experience makes those challenges greater and/or more numerous

than they need to be. Applying this common line of thinking in academia to war, Ruthi pointed out the faulty logic of believing that because one generation had to endure a negative experience then latr generations should also have to endure it.

> [In academia] there's this mentality of, "We've been through this, we've done this, so why can't you do this?" But, like, your dads went through World War II, do you wanna go through that too? Do you wanna do that? What are we comparing ourselves to?

Ruthi's framing of this mentality through the question "So why can't you do it?" highlights how graduate students were challenging what falls under the umbrella of "what it takes" to be successful in graduate school whereas faculty viewed it as a matter of students' ability to do what was required. In other words, "why can't you do it?" implies that students who want to change excessive requirements and other harmful practices are less committed or capable than their predecessors. Considering that many of the students working to change these structures were from minoritized groups, it is reasonable to infer that racist, sexist, classist, and other discriminatory beliefs about minoritized people's inferiority informed this perspective. According to interviewees, until these types of harmful structures and practices are dealt with, the adverse experiences of students from minoritized groups will continue to undermine institutional rhetoric about commitment to diversity and inclusion.

Interviewees were consistent in their criticism of the lack of equitable structures and practices at the department and university levels, whether they viewed the mismatch between rhetoric and action as an intentional practice or a product of institutional ignorance. The examples that they discussed—overemphasis on HSI/MSI status, uninformed leaders, and lack of retention efforts, financial support, and accountability for harm—are unsurprising when viewed through the interest convergence lens. If public image and the student interest and revenue that it generates is a university's primary motivation for engaging with diversity

issues, there is little motivation for the institution to enact the types of structural changes that graduate students of color wanted to see. If HSI status based on student demographics is all that is required for a university to become eligible for federal funds, for instance, spending money to restructure the institution to be more equitable for students of color is financially counterproductive from an institutional perspective.

7.4 UCSB students' arguments for diversity in higher education

Interviewees' descriptions of life at UCSB, the highly affective reality of being graduate students of color, their definitions of diversity and inclusion, and the ways that they challenged institutional rhetoric that lacked action have illustrated why interviewees cared about diversity and inclusion. Interviewees' experiences at UCSB, which informed their perspectives on higher education and diversity, varied widely depending on aspects of their identities and backgrounds. When asked directly to summarize why they believed diversity and inclusion matter in higher education, interviewees varied in their responses, but they fell into three main categories: diversity for sound and innovative research, diversity to build a better world, and diversity as the wrong framework for change.

7.4.1 Research quality and innovation

Reflecting the context of UCSB as a major research institution as well as different disciplinary perspectives on the purpose of research, nearly every interviewee mentioned the benefits and/or necessity of diversity for sound, high quality research. This response was especially frequent among students in STEM fields, where it was a common argument made to garner support for diversity and inclusion efforts. Students who stated that diversity is important to research aligned with HWI and public university discourse that frame diversity

as serving a “compelling institutional interest” (Chapter 3); in the context of their larger interviews, however, no one presented this as the only—and in most cases, not even the primary—reason for diversity and inclusion to matter in higher education.

Biyu argued that a diverse and inclusive educational environment was necessary for her to do her job as a researcher: “I’m the diverse one. If I don’t feel like I’m well received, if my life doesn’t go well here, I can’t focus on my research.” Other STEM students focused on the need for researchers from different backgrounds to be represented in their field in order to ensure that questions were answered fully and researchers were not relying on a limited set of scientific perspectives. One student in psychology considered this especially important in their field, in which researchers make claims about human nature.

> Psych has all these ideas about human nature that are presented as universal, but the designs and the researchers are all white and Western…and that’s considered acceptable. How can you say anything about humanity if you aren’t studying all aspects of it?

For Aria, diversity mattered for research and for justice because “you can’t change things if there aren’t people who care about them in the field.” She said that a “lack of diversity of people means there is a lack of diversity of thought, and that means we’re putting forth solutions that don’t cater to different groups. And if that’s what we’re doing, then what's our purpose?” Fellow STEM students Gwen and Zara shared Aria’s perspective that representation of people from different backgrounds and the diverse perspectives, knowledge, and skill sets that they bring to their fields creates opportunities for innovation, new discoveries, and expanding scientific questions to places and communities that are historically and currently marginalized. Gwen articulated how narrow ideas about what scientists do and how and why they do it keep her field from progressing like it could.

> There are whole masses of people who are talented and smart who aren't in the field. [My field] is about helping people but that gets lost in the day-to-day, and the image of my field is the crazy lab scientist. Like, what discoveries and technological innovations haven't happened yet because certain people are not being included? […] Our experiences matter when we're doing science. Being on the cutting edge of science requires creativity, but it's easy to believe there is one "right" mode to science.

Zara emphasized that the lack of diversity in STEM fields was not only a problem of access for people from minoritized backgrounds, but also an issue of people being pushed out.

7.4.2 Creating a better world

The second most frequently given reason for why diversity and inclusion matter in higher education was that they are crucial to creating a better world, which IHEs play a major role in shaping. Rather than framing diversity as a benefit to academic disciplines or institutions, these types of responses centered on how diversity in educational contexts could make individuals better people by helping them to be more empathetic and see people different from themselves as simply different instead of an "other" or "them" separate from "us." Interviewees who focused on this reason were primarily in either Arts and Humanities or Education and Social Sciences.

Milo spoke about a sense of responsibility that comes with the opportunities and privileges created for many by pursuing higher education, particularly at a U.S. IHEs, considering the long-standing global hegemony of U.S. higher education (Olaniran & Agnello, 2008):

> We as educators or students, when we leave our academic institutions, we become the people who kind of rule the world, in a way. There's a responsibility in that, and that responsibility is balanced by how much understanding and knowledge and patience and perseverance you have, you know, how cultured you are.

Being "cultured" in the context Milo discussed meant being exposed to various cultures that are different from one's own. In HWI institutional discourse, this exposure to other cultures

is often presented as one of the ways that diversity benefits white people, but with his racially non-specific language of "educators or students," Milo framed it as a learning opportunity for anyone.

From Celeste's perspective, diversity and inclusion is important in higher education because "the university is a space where a lot of people get politicized" as they learn more about the world around them. She stated:

> Students need to hear from people who are not like them. People from marginalized groups need to see people like themselves in positions of power, succeeding, see models of what they could do, and be given the tools to do so. This is a space to see what's possible and what the world is really like, so if we want to see a world that is not white-supremacist, that is anti-racist, we need to be training students appropriately.

For Celeste, higher education is a realm of possibility where students can be "trained" to view the world in anti-discriminatory ways through knowledge, critical thinking skills, and role models of people from marginalized groups in positions of power. In contrast to the passive nature of Milo's term "cultured," "training" entails intentionality. For example, it is not sufficient for people of color to simply exist within a university space, they must also hold positions of high rank.

Central to both Milo's and Celeste's responses, along with those of other interviewees, was the idea that diversity in higher education created opportunities to make society and higher education better for future generations. Diana, who was in Education and Social Sciences, gave a response that aligned with STEM students' line of thinking with regard to the necessity of diversity for innovation, but she focused on benefits to society as opposed to research or science.

> Some of the most important knowledge and understandings of society have come from minority scholars. I believe there are some solutions that can only come from minority people because we're the ones who experience them. We're forced to come up with innovative solutions because of how we have to navigate society.

Beyond having different or innovative perspectives, she asserted, people from minoritized backgrounds possess experiential knowledge that people from dominant groups never can. Without creating space for minoritized people to share this knowledge through diversity and inclusion practices, that knowledge will not exist in higher education spaces—which is not to say this it would not exist (see, e.g., González, Moll, & Amanti, 2005).

7.4.3 Diversity is the wrong framework for change

While many interviewees gave straightforward responses to the question of why diversity and inclusion matter in higher education, the most critical interviewees challenged the basic premise of the questions: that diversity, as it was conceptualized in U.S. IHEs, matters in higher education. They did not negate the validity of the previous two types of responses, but they asserted that diversity should not be the end goal. Their response paralleled the ideas of other scholars of color, particularly women of color, who have critiqued the concept of diversity (e.g., Ahmed, 2007, 2012; Hundle, 2019; Prescod-Weinstein, 2018): from this perspective, justice, equity, anti-racism, decolonization, liberation, and other concepts that explicitly aim to acknowledge and remedy structural forms of discrimination and violence should be the goal, and institutional diversity will follow.

Jodi and deandre both overtly critiqued IHEs' focus on compositional diversity. Both asserted that focusing on numbers minimizes or ignores the structures that make IHEs inequitable spaces to begin with. Jodi highlighted the fact that HWIs were not intended to serve people of color, so people of color cannot simply be added to the institutional space and expected to survive—let alone thrive and be successful—without intentional support. She said, "Grad school as an institution thinks it's addressing the 'diversity problem' but they're only approaching it from a quota perspective, not 'How do you supports students of

color in an institution that wasn't designed for them?'" deandre used Martin Luther King Jr.'s expression "integrating [one's] people into a burning house" to describe the actions of people who recruit minoritized people of color to institutions that have no intention of making structures more accommodating of those students' needs.

> I often wrestle with or balk at the idea of diversity as something universities should aspire to. I'm less invested in "How do we get variously colored bodies in the room?" than "How is this institution advancing an anti-racist endeavor?" […] Focusing on diversity in terms of, like, a numeric sense is this idea, for me, of what MLK said about being fearful of integrating his people into a burning house. That if you don't shift the *structures* of the space and just bring more bodies into it, then, like, you're actually setting them up to be harmed within the structures that you *already knew* were variously racist, or misogynistic, or transphobic *in the first place*.

deandre's critique here does not assign blame to institutions for not knowing that their structures can be harmful but instead for knowing that they are harmful ("you already knew"), not attempting to change them, and continuing to actively bring students of color into those spaces to be harmed.

Kendrick focused his response on the unique positionality of Black students in U.S. higher education and how diversity ideologies and practices impacted them.

> Diversity matters in higher education because justice, because slavery, because Black Codes and discrimination. The consequences of these will continue to compound until we address them directly. […] The conversation about justice is wholly absent [from discussions of diversity]. "We need to do better by Black people because we've done so terribly by them historically." That's not even accessible in a UC public education frame because people would be like, "Bias! Can't do it!"

Kendrick expressed frustration that "the conversation about justice is wholly absent" from diversity efforts in general and pointed to specific institutional realities that made it even more difficult in the California and UC context. Earlier in the conversation, Kendrick pointed out that Black people in the U.S. have been leaders of the civil rights and social justice movements that have opened the doors of higher education to people from minoritized

groups (e.g., Bradley, 2019), but this fact and the social realities that pushed Black people to have to engage in these movements (slavery, Black Codes, discrimination) are erased in generalized "diversity" frameworks (see, e.g., Douglass Horsford, 2011). Kendrick demonstrated a diachronic perspective that looked to both the history and the future of U.S. society and higher education when he said, "The consequences of these will continue to compound until we address them directly."

Robert also offered a diachronic perspective in his critique of diversity, emphasizing that IHEs have been complicit in the U.S.'s long history of injustice:

> The conditions that are making students feel excluded or marginal are a product of the history that produced these institutions. The labor of enslaved people produced these institutions. Indigenous people were pushed out by these institutions. The university is not separate from the history of violence and usurpation that is the history of the U.S., and that has to be acknowledged.

Robert was invested in not simply changing but reimagining the institution, and his responses centered on the idea of liberation as the goal. He spoke about how liberation is centered in healing, and healing is work that requires acknowledgement of past harm and being cognizant of how that past harm impact the present and the future (see, e.g., French et al., 2020). Liberation also requires imagining realities that do not yet exist, which can become increasingly difficult for people who spend years restricted by institutional structures.

Whether they framed diversity as a necessity for comprehensive research, scholarly innovation, or making the world better, or they reframed the role of diversity altogether, all of the graduate students that I interviewed agreed that UCSB and higher education needed to make major changes. Their perspectives on diversity reflected the intersections of dominant ideologies in their disciplines, their individual positionality, and the institutional context. Based on their own lived experiences and observations made during their time in higher

education, graduate students of color could clearly see the limitations of diversity and how diversity discourse and practice were frequently misaligned.

7.5 Conclusion

By analyzing the experiences of students who identified with the broad label of "graduate students of color," in this chapter I have represented both the consistency of problematic structures and practices at UCSB and the specificity of individuals' experiences based on their identities and academic positionalities. The heterogeneity of interviewees' experiences demonstrates the need for diversity efforts at the departmental and university levels that are created with intentionality and attuned to the nuances of how ethnoracial identity, citizenship, gender, socioeconomic status, academic discipline, and numerous other factors impact the educational experiences of graduate students of color. Despite the heterogeneity of their experiences, interviewees were aligned in their understandings of diversity and inclusion. Overall, they viewed diversity as primarily about representation of people from certain social groups, focused on race but not exclusive to it; in contrast, they described inclusion as being about people's experiences within the institution and the action taken to make those experiences positive for people from minoritized groups.

Through their stancetaking moves, interviewees evaluated various people, practices, and structures connected to diversity at UCSB. They positioned themselves as more knowledgeable about the needs of graduate students of color than other members of the institution based on their lived experiences, and they implicitly and explicitly conveyed how they viewed their relationship to and position within the university. Constructed dialogue, in particular, afforded interviewees control over the representation of themselves and their

relationship to university members with more power, and they were able to construct interactions in which those who could and had previously dismissed them had to listen to their concerns.

A major focus of interviewees' criticism of diversity and inclusion at UCSB was the disconnect and often contradictions between institutional rhetoric—in official university discourse and from specific individuals—and institutional reality. They pointed to student and faculty demographics, distribution of resources, and their lived experiences to discursively challenge the university's emphasis on its HSI and MSI status; point out the lack of knowledge among university leaders about minoritized students' experiences; and criticize the lack of retention efforts, financial support for people doing diversity work, and institutional accountability for harm. In their challenges to the claims made in institutional rhetoric and their broader descriptions of graduate student life at UCSB, interviewees conveyed the psychological stakes of diversity and inclusion. The salience of negative experiences demonstrated the emotional and lasting impact of harmful institutional ideologies and practices. The negative feelings engendered by the rhetoric and practice mismatch, in particular, reflect how "diversity mixed messages" (Windscheid, 2016) can make the institution as a whole less attractive to current and potential members—a consequence of significance for an institution that aims to maintain a positive public image. The mixed messages also contributed to what Gildersleeve et al. (2011) call an "Am I going crazy?!" narrative among graduate students of color who experience racism, racial isolation, and other forms of discrimination but see those realities consistently minimized in other people's discourses and actions.

When asked why diversity and inclusion matter in higher education, STEM students in particular focused on the benefits to research, which some explicitly connected to a belief that research should solve social problems. Several interviewees focused on the role of IHEs in efforts to create a better society through knowledge and interactions with people different from oneself. A few interviewees agreed that IHEs had the potential to foster positive social change but challenged diversity and inclusion as the framework through which that could occur. Overall, interviewees saw the current reality for graduate students of color at UCSB as bleak in many ways, but they also imagined how it could be different. Those who planned to remain in academia for their careers were thinking consciously about the types of harmful and exploitative practices they would avoid when they became faculty as well as the structural changes that they would fight to have implemented in their future institutions.

It is interesting to note that although interviewees were very conscious of how they might contribute to inequitable practices in the future, they did not talk about how they were potentially contributing to them already. Graduate students at UCSB were generally aware of how the university system exploited their labor—for example, the COLA movement was motivated by the belief that graduate students' essential labor was underpaid—but in the context of the interviews there was virtually no discussion of how graduate students could reproduce the structures of the exploitative system in which they participated. Perhaps because many interviewees were involved in diversity and equity work, they primarily viewed themselves as actively trying to resist and change these structures. In any case, interviewees' awareness of the strategic rhetoric of the institution and their founded critiques of the lack of action to support that rhetoric positioned them as what Moten and Harney (2004, pp. 101-102) call "subversive intellectuals": their intellectual labor "is as necessary as

it is unwelcome,” and when they move beyond the boundaries of doing the university’s labor and question the university itself, they are dismissed as uncollegial, naïve, or unprofessional. As not only subversive intellectuals but also Others in a white-supremacist institution, paying close attention to what is said and done in the name of diversity was a survival strategy for graduate students of color at UCSB—one that was not necessary for Black graduate students at Southern Historically Black University, which I discuss in the following chapters.

CHAPTER 8: Narratives of graduate student life at SHBU

It's actually like a family here. Everybody's open and honest. I mean there's a lot of people and a lot of resource that are here to benefit you and all you need to do is say, like, "Hey! I need help."
—Toni, graduate student, SHBU

Southern Historically Black University was a fundamentally different educational space from UCSB. As an HBCU, it was the type of institution that is marginalized in research on diversity in higher education, meaning the diversity-related experiences of graduate students of color like those at SHBU are also marginalized in this research. In Chapters 8 and 9, I document the experiences, perspectives, and discursive practices of Black graduate students at SHBU—not only as a point of comparison to UCSB, but as data that warrants analysis in its own right. In this chapter, I begin with a description of the history and institutional culture of SHBU, then I summarize the key aspects of life at SHBU that shaped graduate student participants' perspectives on SHBU and its diversity discourse and practices. In Section 8.1, I provide a brief history of the founding of HBCUs and their positions in U.S. society, and in Section 8.2, I describe how these factors have shaped institutional culture and practice at SHBU, as I observed during my time there. In Section 8.3, I detail the living, learning, and working environments at SHBU as described by interviewees. This detailed description of institutional history and student life at SHBU provides a rich context for interviewees' discourse practices that I analyze in Chapter 9.

8.1 A brief history of HBCUs in the U.S.

Historically Black Colleges and Universities in the U.S. have had a turbulent history over the past several centuries. Because most were founded in the wake of the Civil War and had to endure the virulent anti-Blackness and white supremacy that defined the following

century, HBCUs have faced major barriers to their creation and survival. The means through which HBCUs have sustained themselves in order to continue their mission of racial equity through education have significantly influenced their institutional cultures. For the earliest HBCUs, large portions of their initial funding, supplies, teachers, and advocacy came from white Christian missionary organizations, which resulted in white Christian conservatism dictating university culture and rules, such as restrictions on dress and social activities (Williams & Ashley, 2004). In the early twentieth century, industry philanthropists became major sources of financial support for HBCUs after state governments throughout the Southeast inequitably distributed federal funds between public HWIs and public HBCUs in defiance of the Morrill Act of 1890 (Gasman & Tudico, 2008); the influence of these philanthropists was another factor leading to sociopolitically conservative environments on many HBCU campuses. The tenuous financial situations of most HBCUs continued into and past the mid-twentieth century, but during this time HBCUs gained educational autonomy as institutional leadership shifted from white to Black presidents, administrators, educators, and benefactors, which elevated Black cultural values (Williams & Ashley, 2004). Because Black leaders had more control over funding (i.e., they did not necessarily need to appease white cultural ideologies for financial survival), "there was greater tolerance for dissent and Black self-determination" (Gasman & Tudico, 2008, p. 4); this afforded more sociopolitical activity at HBCUs, though the social conservatism described above persisted.

Because of the intertwined racial and financial politics of higher education, HBCUs' commitment to centering Black culture and to social and economic racial equity have unfortunately become part of a cycle that keeps many HBCUs on shaky financial ground. As Lovett (2011, p. 72) describes, "by investing more time and money in remedial courses,

developmental programs, scholarships, counseling, and advisement, HBCUs [have] continued to serve diverse populations and less wealthy students. But this approach [has] strained HBCU budgets." Additionally, because public HBCUs serve low-income Black communities, their institutional constituents are often less able to invest financially in the institution through donations, which leaves these HBCUs with smaller endowments and reserve funds—and, by extension, fewer institutional resources to offer students—compared to HWIs and private HBCUs (Lovett, 2011; Winkle-Wagner & Locks, 2020). The allocation of funds in many states, however, does not adequately account for this financial disparity (Gasman, 2012). At a national level, HBCU enrollment increased by 30% from 2000 to 2009 while federal funding for HBCUs remained virtually the same, even as total federal funding for higher education increased more than four-fold (Jones, 2016). The historical processes that have led to HBCUs being in this difficult financial position have also led to public perceptions, particularly but not exclusively among non-Black people in the U.S., of HBCUs as subpar institutions—that is, many people believe that HBCUs lack resources because they are underserving of financial support rather than recognizing that an ongoing lack of financial support hinders HBCUs from reaching their full potential (Palmer et al., 2016). HBCU students are often aware of this perception, and because they are proud of their institution, they are defensive against criticism from outsiders. They are also aware of how HBCUs' financial realities could impact their education: in their HBCU case studies, Conrad and Gasman (2015, p. 165) found that students "understand that a lack of resources means that they don't have access to many of the things that students have at better-resourced institutions, but also seem to have a sense that the material resources are not as important as the human resources that [their university] has." I discuss this perspective further below.

Despite popular perceptions that HBCUs serve only Black students and employ only Black faculty, there is longstanding ethnoracial diversity at HBCUs (Gasman & Nguyen, 2015; Lee, 2015). In fact, enrollment of non-Black students at HBCUs has been steadily increasing over the past decades, especially at the graduate level (Gasman et al., 2013). The financial and racial politics of higher education, however, have made ethnoracial diversity a point of contention for many HBCUs. Because of the competition for enrollment from HWIs, diversifying their student bodies has been a practical necessity for HBCUs—it is also been a legal mandate that has caused problems for many. Lundy-Wagner (2015, p. 94) notes that "most of the legal issues surrounding student diversity at HBCUs pertain to increasing White undergraduate enrollment in order to meet outdated and racist desegregation goals." From an ideological standpoint, dominant (i.e., HWI-based) diversity rhetoric and practice are at odds with the historical mission of HBCUs. As Carter (2015, p. 26) found in their case study of the institutionalization of diversity at an HBCU, "the diversity challenge HBCUs face is not only one of the legitimacy of a majority Black student body, but a matter of the legitimacy of their racial politics…[D]iversity may not undermine the demographics, but it may challenge HBCUs to conform by abandoning anti-racist racial framing." Practitioners at the HBCU in Carter's study found some ways to make the ambiguous language of diversity (e.g., the vague definition of *underserved*) fit the university's goals and sociopolitical framework; this allowed them to resist dominant forms of institutionalization that center whiteness and instead institutionalize diversity in ways that served minoritized students. Carter (2015, p. 68) found that the university's "messages of diversity did not include service, community commitments and obligations, and anti-racism. Instead, the messages of diversity cultivation were that gaining proficiency at working with people of different backgrounds was a

valuable job skill, and that developing an appreciation of cultural differences was [students'] civic duty." HBCUs differ in their engagement with and institutionalization of diversity, but, as I describe in this chapter, SHBU mirrored many of the practices Carter (2015) describes.

The founding of SHBU and its transition from a college to a university in the latter half of the 20th century varies in a few key ways from the history described above. However, as a public HBCU in the Southeast founded in the late 1800s, it has faced many of the same financial and political challenges as its peer institutions. Racist allocation models for state funding have deprived HBCUs of the money needed to adequately meet operating costs and serve students, while at the same time making funding dependent on institutional compliance with state mandates about institutional operation. Moreover, HBCUs that are focused on meeting basic operating costs generally do not have the funds for personnel and infrastructure that could help them to secure additional forms of funding, such as dedicated staff to organize fundraising efforts and support grant applications (Gasman 2010). A legislative report for the state where SHBU is located found that public HBCUs were having a disproportionately difficult time compensating for the overall reduction in state funding for public higher education at the state and federal levels that began in the late 2000s. Compared to HWIs in the state, these public HBCUs relied more on state funding and tuition for total revenue, had higher percentages of in-state students (who paid the lower in-state tuition), and had more students from families unable to afford tuition costs. A second report by a state organization found that across HBCUs in the state, more than 50% of students had an expected family contribution of 0% based on household income, according to national assessments of students' federal aid eligibility (i.e., FAFSA); this number was less than 20% for the top three public HWIs in the state. These financial realities have created a fraught

relationship between SHBU and the state that looks very different from the relationship of UCSB and the UC system to the state of California.

One financial challenge not mentioned above is the competition with public HWIs for student enrollment, Black or otherwise. When legally codified segregation in higher education was struck down in the ruling of *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), attending an HWI became an option for Black students; this made HWIs direct competition for HBCUs at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, and they have continued to be ever since (Lovett 2011). This competition is especially troubling for public HBCUs that operate on a "full-time enrollment" model in which the bulk of institutional revenue comes from tuition paid by full-time students because the university receives insufficient funding through government sources or donations. At HBCUs such as SHBU, which keeps tuition low in order to make enrollment more financially accessible to more students, lower overall enrollment translates to less tuition revenue for the university. In my experience at SHBU, the layers of tension between HBCUs and non-HBCUs was ever present—as I discuss below, even students who were happy with their decision to attend SHBU imagined how their experience would have been better if they had attended an HWI instead. In the next section, I describe the institutional culture and practices that I observed during my time at SHBU and introduce some of the perspectives shared by interviewees, which I elaborate on in Section 8.2.

8.2 Observations of institutional culture and practices at SHBU

During my time at SHBU, it was clear that the university was committed to the HBCU mission of racial equity through education: SHBU was financially accessible, student development was holistic, and Black history, culture, and future possibilities were at the heart

of university activities from course curricula to social events. This commitment was embodied by the university president, whom I had the opportunity to meet—an opportunity, I should note, that was open to administrators, faculty, and staff as well as students. In our meeting, the president described their passion for education, working with Black as well as non-Black students, and the transformational potential of an HBCU education, at one point saying, “One thing we’re very good at here is changing lives.” As an HBCU graduate, the president was aware of the strengths and limitations of HBCUs generally and SHBU specifically, as well as the history that led to these strengths and limitations; they told me, “I love SHBU with my eyes wide open.” The president had ambitious plans for change at SHBU, but they had not set out to “fix” the institution. Rather, they were working to make the university even more accessible, inclusive, and transformative for as many students as possible. One of the most notable aspects of SHBU culture was how the university’s mission and history was not only known by all institution members but discussed by them explicitly and frequently. In fact, the university’s mission statement and the university slogans connected to it were standard in the email signatures of faculty, staff, and administrators. Although in theory the institution’s mission guides every IHE’s structures and practices, the ways that SHBU members of all levels were able to articulate the university mission demonstrated how it fully permeated institutional life.

For many faculty, administrators, and staff at SHBU, the university’s mission and the structures and practices that it shaped were what drew them to the university in the first place. Like the university president, many Black university employees were themselves HBCU graduates and knew firsthand the positive impact that an HBCU education could have on Black students. They chose to work at SHBU knowing exactly the types of students they

would work with and what their various educational needs would be; the types of resources that they would and would not have access to; institutional and student expectations for how they would interact with students; and the nuances of institutional culture at an HBCU that only an insider could anticipate. Even for those who were not HBCU alumni, knowledge of what it means to be part of an HBCU community informed their decision to work at SHBU. In contrast, it is not unusual for faculty to "end up" at IHEs such as UCSB: they want to work at a research university, but they are not offered a job by their top choice, or, alternatively, they view all research institutions above a certain caliber as interchangeable. Dissatisfaction with their circumstances and/or the institutional focus on research can lead to faculty apathy with regard to teaching, students' well-being, and institutional happenings outside of their own research and department. In contrast, the shared HBCU background among many SHBU employees, especially faculty, meant that they were on the same page with regard to their purpose and responsibility as members of the university; at the same time, however, this shared perspective reinforced entrenched ideas about "how HBCUs are" in ways that made institutional change more difficult. Both In my observations at faculty meetings and in my conversations with students and other university employees, if faculty of the same generation had the same HBCU experiences, then they had strong opinions—reinforced by each other—about how an HBCU should operate. When younger students or faculty, or those with a non-HBCU background, suggested changes that differed from or appeared to question the validity of longstanding HBCU practices, SHBU employees who were HBCU alumni sometimes dismissed those people as not understanding how HBCUs are "supposed to" work. The president's commitment to issues that were important to younger university members helped

create change through a top-down mechanism, but horizontal tensions within the university hierarchy still persisted.

The historical influence of Christianity at HBCUs was still present at SHBU, and its explicit orientation to Christianity was normalized by the culture of HBCUs and non-HBCUs alike in the Southeast. (In my first semester at University of South Carolina, I was surprised to learn that a prayer over the stadium announcement system at the start of a football game was standard practice.) The university had an on-campus student ministry, whose leader was an integral part of the campus community. An opening or closing prayer was a regular part of university events, such as the Founder's Day celebration, and referencing God or one's Christian beliefs in casual interaction that was not about religion was not unusual—a stark contrast to my observations of interaction at UCSB. The Christian influence at SHBU impacted more than conversation and events, however: it also reinforced the university's mission. Rather than, or in addition to, emphasizing a philosophical belief in equity and social justice through education, many institution members believed in the university's mission because it aligned with their worldview as Christians. The tenets of love, equality, and serving others that they saw as informing their day-to-day life also informed their day-to-day practice as faculty, staff, and administrators.

Another notable aspect of SHBU culture was the highly supportive and personal relationships between institutional members, one of the hallmarks of HBCU culture (Conrad & Gasman 2015). Faculty, staff, and administrators provided academic, social, and personal support to students in ways that I had never experienced in my time at HWIs. Despite being a stranger to them when I first arrived, SHBU members made every effort to ensure that I was connected to people and resources on campus, that I felt welcome in campus spaces and at

events, and that any questions I had were answered. Having attended a Southern institution as an undergraduate, I knew that these actions went above and beyond "Southern hospitality" or politeness: they were invested in my success as a graduate student, educator, researcher, and professional, and they wanted to support me in my goals during my time there. Over the course of the months that I spent at SHBU, I heard faculty talk openly with students about their personal lives and ask about progress in all of their courses, not just the course the faculty member taught. Faculty and staff maintained an open-door policy, and undergraduates frequently ate, socialized, and did schoolwork in the administrative office of the residence hall where I stayed even though there was a common space down the hall; one of the staff members I worked with was affectionately referred to as "Mama" by some students. Faculty and administrators also used their personal and professional networks to secure academic and professional opportunities for their students. For graduate students, one of the key sources of institutional support on both a structural and interpersonal level was the Graduate College, which I discuss in Section 8.2.

With regard to diversity, equity, and inclusion, SHBU was primarily focused on equity. The structures and practices of the institution were motivated by efforts to make higher education an opportunity that was not only accessible, but also able to be completed by students who faced systemic structural barriers. Low tuition fees and a lack of application fee made applying and enrolling in courses financially feasible for low-income students. Requiring standardized test scores only for merit-based scholarships made admission more likely for students who could not afford to take the tests or did not perform well on them due to structural inequities. For undergraduates, the informal faculty and staff support network helped students progress through their programs, but there was also a formal alert system in

place to minimize the number of students who fell through the cracks. Faculty instructors could use the system to flag when a student missed several classes and was non-responsive to contact from the instructor or other students, which would initiate a process to figure out how to support the student's return. Institutional structures at SHBU were not perfect—for instance, one student in the course I taught had to withdraw from the semester after a few weeks because his financial aid was mismanaged, and multiple undergraduates told me that financial aid problems were common. But the student-focused, equity-based practices that were in place at SHBU were keeping doors open for students who would have likely been shut out from higher education otherwise.

With regard to diversity and inclusion, there were two dominant institutional conversations: diversity among Black people and LGBTQ+ inclusion. Although much of the discourse around Black culture and life that I heard or saw on campus used homogenizing language such as "the Black community" or "the Black experience," I did witness numerous public statements reiterating the fact that Black people are a highly heterogeneous group. For example, at a "400 Years of Black History" Q&A panel, one of the questions posed to the panelists was "How would you assess the social, economic, emotional, health, educational, etc. state of the Black community given its 400-year history in the US?" As part of their response, one panelist said, "We can't talk about 'the Black community' as if we are a monolith…Do we talk about 'the white community'?" I also heard from multiple interviewees about organizations for Black students of different ethnic and/or national backgrounds, specifically the Caribbean Student Association, the African Student Association, and an association for African American students.

SHBU's recently implemented LGBTQ+ inclusion initiative, which was intended to create a more welcoming and inclusive campus environment, was bringing more awareness to LGTBQ+ issues. An LGBTQ+ President's Advisory Board was created to assess campus needs, and some of the biggest changes made based on that assessment were the conversion of at least one gendered bathroom to a gender-neutral bathroom in each major building (and the creation of a downloadable map of their locations), Pride celebrations, Lavender graduation, and LGBTQ+ cultural competency training and Safe Zone workshops for faculty and staff. Socioeconomic and first-generation status were not invoked in diversity and inclusion discourse the way intra-racial diversity and gender/sexual diversity were, but they were clearly built into SHBU's equity framework, which recognized the interconnectedness of race, class, and college-readiness. Additionally, as I discuss below, discourse about racial diversity was far from absent at SHBU; it did not, however, have the prominence there that it had at UCSB because "diversity" as a framework had very limited institutional utility. In the next section, I discuss how my graduate student interviewees described their experiences at SHBU.

8.3 Graduate students' descriptions of HBCU culture and life at SHBU

I interviewed a total of thirteen graduate students at SHBU, all of whom were domestic students who identified as Black or African American. I interviewed seven women and six men, whose ages ranged from 20 to 34 years old. Eleven were master's students, two were Ph.D. students, and seven of the thirteen were SHBU undergraduate alumni. All six of the interviewees who did not attend SHBU for their undergraduate studies attended an HBCU. SHBU had approximately 20 combined graduate certificates and programs, the

majority of which were master's programs; interviewees represented seven of the fifteen master's and doctoral programs. (See Appendix B for a summary of interviewee characteristics.) I knew two of the interviewees from my activities in SHBU Honors College, but the rest were recruited during my follow-up visit, so we met for the first time at the interview. I used the same set of guiding questions to interview UCSB and SHBU students, so SHBU students were asked the same questions throughout their interviews to elicit descriptions of life at the university and in the surrounding area, as well as discussion about diversity in the HBCU context of SHBU. In the following three sections, I detail interviewees' descriptions—supplemented with ethnographic data—of the graduate student population, their access to institutional resources and opportunities, and their relationships to faculty and staff.

8.3.1 SHBU graduate student population

The graduate student population at SHBU included full-time students, working professionals who were full-time employees and part-time students, and students who were part-time because of family or other obligations. The age range of students was greater than what was represented in the sample of interviewees; many graduate students were in their thirties and one interviewee mentioned having a classmate who was in their fifties. For several reasons, the majority of graduate students were commuters or were otherwise only on campus for classes. SHBU did not have graduate student housing, so students who did live locally lived off-campus; all graduate classes were in the evening, to accommodate working students; and on-campus work opportunities for graduate students were limited to Graduate Assistant (GA) positions, which were part-time hourly positions in various offices around campus. Some GAs worked with faculty, others worked as staff in units such as the academic

success center, and others worked in residence halls. At the time of the study, GA pay was minimum wage ($7.25 per hour), so it was common for GAs who were able to to have a second off-campus part-time job.

Reasons for attending SHBU

Interviewees varied in their reasons for pursuing their graduate degrees at SHBU, but nearly all of them chose to pursue a graduate degree for career opportunities. Bethany, a second year master's student in Education and Social Sciences, stated that she chose to go to graduate school because when she finished her undergraduate degree her mother gave her the ultimatum "Go back to school or get a job"; most students, however, described specific career goals—to work for the Department of Homeland Security, to be an investigative reporter, to start their own business, to become a mental health professional—and saw the knowledge and skills they would learn in their graduate program as crucial to their success. Marcus, a second-year master's student in Arts and Humanities, summed up his reasons by saying, "We're in it to win so that we can get a good education, we can get a good job, we can better ourselves." Several students had not initially planned to attend graduate school but were convinced by a coach, former professor, or other mentor in their life to pursue the opportunity. For example, Michelle, a second-year master's student in Business and Management, was encouraged to apply to her graduate program at SHBU by a professor at her undergraduate institution who had at one point been a faculty members at SHBU and knew the program well.

Specific reasons for pursuing a graduate degree at SHBU instead of another institution varied, but every interviewee mentioned the strong support network they experienced in their undergraduate studies at an HBCU as something that they wanted in

their graduate studies as well. There were notable differences between students who were SHBU alumni or had a personal connection to the university and those who were not—the former described people as their primary motivator whereas the latter described the graduate program as their primary criterion. Chidi, an SHBU graduate, and Edwin, a graduate of another HBCU in the region, both followed in the footsteps of a fraternity brother who had completed a master's degree in their area of study at SHBU. Darrell, who had moved to another state to work for a few years after graduating from SHBU, said he knew he wanted to return for his master's degree because he wanted to build on the connections he had made with professors. Rene also stated that her existing relationships with faculty and others on campus was one of the main reasons that she had decided to stay at SHBU and pursue her graduate degree in the same department.

> The reason that I decided to get my graduate degree- my master's here is because, I felt like, it was…it was going to be a easy transition. I didn't have to…Like most of the teachers that are in my master's department I had in undergrad, so I didn't really have to figure out different professors. I already knew the professors that I was, um, that were in the program and then, I liked my undergrad program, so I figured that I loved that experience and I wanted to continue in that experience.

Toni, who completed her bachelor's degree in two years with credits from her specialized high school, said that she stayed at SHBU because the university was "like a family" and she "really wanted to spend four years [t]here." Ada and Yvette, who were both doctoral students and graduates of other HBCUs, described attending an HBCU as the top priority for their undergraduate and graduate educations. When it came to selecting a graduate program, they chose from HBCUs that had the specific Education and Social Sciences degree that they wanted, and SHBU was the top choice for both of them.

Institutional status relative to undergraduates

Like most IHEs, SHBU was an undergraduate-focused institution. Graduate students were less than ten percent of the total student body, so they were greatly outnumbered by undergraduates and had to compete with them for space and resources on campus—not unlike graduate students at UCSB. Eva and Iris, two faculty members who worked with graduate students, described SHBU as not very "grad student-friendly." This description was based on the nine-to-five administrative hours-of-operation that were incompatible with most graduate students' schedules and the lack of infrastructure for graduate students outside of the Graduate College.

1. EVA: And then also, too, our campus=
2. =No shade, but shade.
3. They're not that grad student friendly!
4. IRIS: Oh, no. And that's no shade, that's the *truth*.

Rashon, a second-year master's student in Education and Social Sciences, echoed this perspective, emphasizing that "amongst graduate students, [inclusion] has to be pushed by the students because if it's not, you won't be included." Many campus social events took place on weekday evenings, so graduate students who did want to attend were generally unable to because the time conflicted with their evening courses. The noise of outdoor events on the central campus green could actually be a distraction to students in evening classes. Moreover, interviewees were generally uninterested in attending campus-wide social events since they were geared toward undergraduates: they had already had their undergraduate experience, they saw themselves in a different stage of life from undergraduates, and they had their own events through the Graduate College that they could attend if they wanted to socialize on campus.

The graduate students that I interviewed were highly appreciative of the events that were coordinated by the Graduate College, including Sonia, a first-year master's students in Education and Social Sciences who was an SHBU graduate:

> I do feel like our graduate department tries very hard to give us the same social experience as undergrad students. They try to have a lot of opportunities for us to mingle, social hours, trying to bring professionals in to talk to us and things of that nature. Expos. They try to do all that for graduate students and make us feel that we are equally as important as undergrad students—which I appreciate.

However, several interviewees were also critical of the fact that the College—which consisted of a dean, a staff person, and a few GAs—seemed to bear all of the responsibility for graduate student needs rather than this work being distributed across the university. Michelle, who worked as a GA in the Graduate College, asked why "the whole school" did not "look out for" graduate students the way it did undergraduates.

> I think the school as a whole, needs to be more hands on and think about the graduate students more. Because everything is always focused on the undergrads. But, you know, graduate students come here as well, and we also bring in money, so. Why not try to accommodate to us as well instead of one department trying to accommodate us? Why not have the whole school, you know, look out for us as well?

The marginal status of graduate students relative to undergraduates was especially salient for interviewees who were SHBU alumni, since they had a different SHBU experience as a point of comparison. Brandon, a second-year master's student in Business and Management, expressed disappointment with regard to how he was treated as a graduate student compared to as an undergraduate.

> We kinda made a choice to come back. Some people may think it's ridiculous, "Oh, you need to go somewhere else," but it was a comfortability and knowing that, "Okay, we were taken care of in undergrad, they'll take care of me in grad school." And for me that was like, man we went from the favorite to like, the stepchild, like, just off on the side, and it kinda gets you.

Rene, a first-year master's student in Business and Management, described the first year of graduate school as a transition period in which SHBU graduates needed to shift their expectations for how the university would orient to them in their new role.

> A lot of us, like, were seniors last year. So, we're *just* coming off of undergrad, going to grad school, so we're just used to having a lot of *access* for us, a lot of things *done* for the undergrads and stuff so it's just like…I guess they're trying to make that transition smooth for us, knowing that we are just like- we're used to having things *catered* for us.

In sum, the experiences that many interviewees had as graduate students did not fully align with their expectations based on their experiences as HBCU undergraduates. Although the supportive mentors and networks that drew them to HBCUs in the first place were still part of their graduate programs, the different educational and personal needs they had as graduate students were not always institutional priorities. One of the primary factors that interviewees saw as representative of their marginal status was their limited access to campus resources.

8.3.2 Access to resources and opportunities

Access to resources at SHBU was described by many interviewees as a university-wide challenge. That is, graduate students were not the only university members who faced barriers getting the technology, funding, physical space, or other resources that would benefit them; rather, these resources were limited to begin with and being a graduate student increased the difficulty of accessing them. For example, Sonia, an SHBU graduate, mentioned how certain bureaucratic challenges did not change regardless of degree level.

> I know one thing that hasn't changed [from undergraduate to graduate school] is going through the bureaucracy. Having to struggle with financial aid, having to struggle with housing, like that stuff doesn't change no matter graduate, undergrad, doctorate. It's not going to change.

Sonia also mentioned a proposed fee for her undergraduate major that would have made some degree-relevant technology available to students, but it had not been implemented when we spoke:

> I don't know who it's up to, and I know that there are more students for it than against it just because we see the lack of resources that we have here. And I don't think that's anybody's fault more than, you know, it's neither here nor there. But it is what it is. We have a lack of resources here.

Some interviewees pointed to an uneven distributions of resources that mirrored broader trends in U.S. higher education, such as STEM departments receiving more resources than non-STEM departments. Rene, who was in a non-STEM department, feared the possibility of her department being shut down before she completed her degree because it was understaffed. The limited number of faculty and staff made it difficult for her to complete program requirements since there were few faculty to teach courses and few people department-wide to help students monitor their progress to ensure they were doing all that they needed to in order to graduate. In her own words:

> I wish that the Provost or the President, they kind of focused on- Instead of like building things, like make sure that their in-house is good when it comes to professors, faculty. And make sure that they're staffed right, because, it does kind of affect how our classes and our professors and how we learn, and how we get our information, because there are certain things that fell- fall through the cracks, and the students are mostly the ones that are affected at the end of the day.

From Rene's viewpoint, university leaders were prioritizing buildings over students by investing in renovations or new constructions while her department lacked needed personnel. In my conversations with faculty, staff, and administrators while I was at SHBU, there was a shared understanding that the university was simultaneously trying to modernize the institution and meet students' basic and educational needs, but it was doing so while trying to overcome the financial deficits created by historical underfunding. Some buildings on

campus required physical renovations for compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act or to repair structural issues created by age; others were receiving upgrades to make new types of research possible and some recently completed new buildings made it possible for the university to host events that it could not before. Although SHBU's motivations for "building things" was articulated clearly to me, it did not appear to always be articulated clearly to students.

Another building-related challenge that interviewees mentioned was limited physical space on campus outside of the Graduate College that was dedicated for graduate students. The College was located in a small two-floor building that it shared with another administrative unit. When students came to meet with the College dean or one of the staff members, they would meet in their offices; the Graduate Student Association held its evening meetings in the building's shared conference room; and social events for graduate students would be held in the reception building across the street. But there was no central graduate student space where they could come and go to study, work, and/or socialize on their schedule. Some interviewees mentioned library study rooms that gave graduate students priority access, but this did not resolve the heart of the issue: for students who were on campus during the day, there was not a space where they could go when they wanted to be with their peers and only their graduate student peers for formal academic help or informal information-sharing and relationship-building. This was compounded by the fact that SHBU did not have graduate housing, something that was seen as a detriment by some faculty in addition to students. I interviewed Brandon and Marcus in a study room in the undergraduate residence hall where I lived during my stay, and both interviewees commented on the fact undergraduates had access to this type of space. Brandon said, "I can't tell you where [on

campus] us as grad students can go in there and all study together. Like there's no space. Like, there's nothing like *this* for grad students." Rashon, who worked as a GA in an undergraduate residence hall, discussed how graduate housing specifically would enrich his academic experience:

> Have a dorm dedicated for graduate students, you know. […] Just having spaces to where it's like, you know, while spending time on campus, we kinda go amongst each other and have this whole different- You know, like, if I had a dorm with just grad students, I could only imagine the type of discussions I'll have and the new things I'll learn every day, you know. And when you're staying in the undergrad dorm, you find yourself just being a mentor all the time and sometimes you need those moments to focus on yourself and not others, you know? And I feel that we don't have those moments because we're just…We're with undergrads all day, if we stay on campus.

Ada and Yvette's doctoral program was housed in one of the larger and newer buildings on campus, so they had a department-internal graduate student lounge, similar to the room that Brandon referenced, where students could meet and study together. The space, however, was restricted to students in their program, so it did not solve the challenge of where to connect with graduate students outside of one's program in contexts other than social events.

Multiple interviewees described the logistical challenges created by the nine-to-five culture of the university, or, as Edwin described it, the university's "incompatible hours of operation." Some university offices closed as early as 4:30 pm, which meant that students who worked regular full-time hours and needed to complete tasks in person would have to take time off from work in order to come to campus before class. Some of the tasks required in-person interaction simply because SHBU did not have the infrastructure or policy in place to handle the task online or over the phone, such as resolving payment issues or registering for classes. All of the students that I interviewed—who were not a representative sample—spent a significant amount of time on campus, so they were generally able to visit offices during the day, and even they had trouble getting tasks completed within the available time

frame based on their other responsibilities. Multiple interviewees proposed solutions along the lines of once-a-week extended hours for all administrative offices that worked with graduate students—a change that the Graduate College dean was reportedly already working to get implemented.

Most interviewees discussed some sort of financial barrier that they faced and how it impacted their educational experience. Several students mentioned taking out student loans to pay for their tuition and working one or two part-time jobs to cover other expenses, but still having to make personal or professional sacrifices because their hourly wages were not sufficient. Rashon shared that he had to borrow money from a friend in order to attend a conference: he could not cover the costs up front with his minimum wage GA pay, but he did not want to miss an important opportunity in his academic career.

> And when you're placed in a position where you really can't work a salary job or a job that pays, you know, fairly well, you have to take, like, a assistantship here on campus. […] It's not really enough to say, "Oh, I wanna buy this plane ticket, I wanna buy this hotel room, I wanna eat." You know, it's just *not* enough money to really go to conferences. I remember one conference I went to, this last one, I had to call up a friend, you know, to get me a loan until I got paid, to even *go*. I felt that it was important that I went because that's kinda like a plus, as far as a grad student who's trying to go into a Ph.D. program. I can't say they want anyone who does *not* have any conference experience or presentation experience, so, you have, like, this demand, you know, that you do something, but you don't really have the resources to really do it.

GA positions were the primary, if not the only, form of SHBU-internal funding that graduate students were offered, and for some students it was their only option because their attempts to secure external funding were unsuccessful. Brandon mentioned applying for external fellowships and scholarships but not knowing who on campus to turn to for help writing a successful application because that task was not a designated responsibility or area of expertise for any staff member. Marcus described how alternative forms of funding through

the university would alleviate the stress of having to work multiple jobs and the detrimental effect of that on his academic performance.

> Financial assistance is a big thing. Like in order for us to be cognizant in class and do what you need us to do, maybe finding different ways for us to pay for school would be a big help. Because if I don't have to go out there and work two jobs, the second job to pay for the first job then I have to find a third job to pay for the second job that's there for the first one, then I will probably be more focused, more driven to finish my work. So I think...something about financial assistance needs to be like that also for grad students. Because I don't think there's enough finances out there for us.

Ada and Yvette noted that doctoral students were in different academic and financial situations from master's level students, so the challenges they faced were not exactly the same. The intense time commitment of a GA position was not feasible for doctoral students in their program, who had teaching and training requirements in order to graduate in addition to coursework and research. However, because the stipend they received was not a living wage for everyone, some doctoral students worked part-time jobs off campus. When I asked interviewees what types of resources they would want if there were no restrictions, common responses were higher pay and basic academic and professional supplies. For instance, Darrell suggested free textbooks, a free laptop, and somewhere to get free or discounted professional attire. Yvette also suggested health care through the university, since older graduate students were not eligible for coverage through parents' plans. Overall, students asserted that more money in their pockets through increased income and/or lower expenses would dramatically improve their graduate school experience and performance.

Although their access to some physical and financial resources on campus were limited, several interviewees echoed the sentiments of the HBCU students in Conrad and Gasman's (2015) study: the "human resources" that SHBU offered were some of the most valuable resources on campus. As I discussed above, relationships to faculty and other

members of the university community were a major factor in interviewees' decisions to pursue their graduate studies at SHBU. In addition to the encouragement of mentors while learning new knowledge and skills, interviewees mentioned opportunities that they were afforded because of faculty's networks and faculty commitment to their professional development. The most frequently discussed opportunity type was internships, which were extremely valuable for graduate students who were preparing to enter the workforce. For instance, Michelle, a master's student in Business and Management, had multiple internship opportunities with major institutions in her field.

> What I've liked the most [about graduate school] is the opportunities that have come out of it. I've been able to intern with multiple schools. I've worked with [major corporations in the Southeast]. So, um, I got to apply and have an interview with Minor League Baseball. And then I also got a chance to go to Europe last summer- like, this past summer. […] It was really new to me, it was my first time being out of the country, and it was all because of the school, and that's what I like.

Interviewees' perspectives on the quality of their internships varied based on their field, personal experiences, and career goals. In contrast to Michelle, Chidi felt that his internship opportunities were too local and too small for his planned career of running a family member's international business. In the end, however, he was appreciative of the effort that went into ensuring that he and other students had internship opportunities at all. Fostering professional and academic development opportunities was just one aspect of the relationship between graduate students and faculty and staff that interviewees described.

8.3.3 Relationship to faculty and staff

As is the case at any IHE, graduate students' relationships with faculty and staff at SHBU varied from one individual to the next. Some interviewees felt completely comfortable in their department. Some were content with their department overall but had fraught relationships with specific faculty or staff, and others were in the opposite position—

they got along with only a few specific faculty or staff members and therefore did not have feel comfortable as they would have liked within their department. Overall, discussion about student relationships with faculty and staff generally occurred in response to my questions about why interviewees chose to attend SHBU, what they liked about graduate school, power dynamics in academia, and graduate student needs. Three main topics recurred across interviews: how students were treated by faculty graduates compared to undergraduates, how power differentials impacted their educational experiences, and the differences in their relationship to their department compared to their relationship to the Graduate College.

Graduate versus undergraduate relationships with faculty

Multiple interviewees mentioned supportive faculty and close mentorship as aspects of their graduate education that they liked the most. Edwin said that he felt like it would be difficult for him to fail in his program because he felt like faculty "will help in any way they can." Ada asserted that she "wouldn't have made it through" without supportive faculty and mentors who pushed her, answered her questions, and ensured she had what she needed in order to grow as a scholar.

> When you just have some *loving* mentors who really are like, "Just do this, just do that" even if it's not, like, asking you to do it, it's telling you to do it...They're not gonna tell you to do something you're not capable of doing, so then you get to see, like, "*Da::ng,* I did that!"

The mentor that Ada described was a "warm demander" (Kleinfeld, 1975; Ware, 2006): a teacher who acts as an authority figure and disciplinarian, is committed to students' needs, utilizes culturally responsive methods of teaching, and has high expectations for their students. When other interviewees talked about supportive faculty, several gave an example of a faculty member with a similar attitude to Ada's mentor: someone who believed in their abilities and explained why they were going to push them as a student. The warm demander

approach was also foundational to the teaching and mentoring approach of Eva, a faculty member in Education and Social Sciences. In addition to a fundamental belief in the ability of her students and the desire to see them succeed, Eva believed in rigorous academic training because she knew the barriers that students would face as graduates of an HBCU.

> We know as faculty what our students are up against when they say they got a degree from a place like SHBU, so we have to push them twice as hard to make sure they are *uber* prepared given our lack of infrastructure sometimes or lack of resources. Or just the- people's stigma against what it means to live and learn and work at an HBCU.

As discussed above, faculty support also came in the form of opportunities for academic and professional development through internships, and one interviewee also mentioned receiving financial support from a faculty member to attend a conference.

In response to my question asking about the biggest differences between their undergraduate and graduate school experiences, SHBU alumni made explicit comparisons to how they were treated as graduate students compared to how they were treated as undergraduates. Some interviewees described the changes as positive ones. For example, Sonia stated that much of the institutional behaviors that made her frustrated enough to want to leave SHBU were "miraculously" no longer a problem when she became a graduate student.

> SHBU is kind of filling in the gap for me right now. But the longer I'm here, the longer I see why the graduate students tend to stick around. Just the whole headache of undergrad is completely, like, not here as a graduate student. I- That's one of the main reasons I didn't want to stay for grad school, because I was just tired of having to deal with the little petty things and the yellow, you know, like the- I guess it's red tape. […] But miraculously, as a grad student, you don't have to deal with those things. And so I found my time navigating SHBU to be a lot easier as a grad student than it was as an undergrad.
>
> I mean, you're treated as way more of an adult as a master's student than an undergrad. People aren't going to question you as much, people- I feel like professors and things respect your time a little bit more because they understand that, you know, as a grad student, everybody has different things going on, especially if you're full-time.

Chidi shared Sonia's perspective that graduate students were treated more like adults than undergraduates, saying, "The biggest differences…professors treat grad students differently. Courses are late in the day [to accommodate working students]. Students are given the resources they need. Basically, faculty understand that grad students are all adults and don't have time to dilly dally." Sonia and Chidi's responses suggest that as undergraduates they were infantilized, questioned, and shown a lack of respect for their time by faculty, staff, or both—a jarring contrast to the warm and supportive relationships that others, including Toni, described as part of their undergraduate experience. Toni was in agreement with Sonia and Chidi that instructors were generally understanding of graduate students' many responsibilities, but she did not feel that there were major differences in her treatment as a graduate student compared to an undergraduate. She described her SHBU experience saying, "It's actually like a family here. Everybody's open and honest. I mean there's a lot of people and a lot of resource that are here to benefit you and all you need to do is literally, like, 'Hey! I need help.'" Toni's perspective may have been more rosy-hued compared to others' in part because she had been at SHBU for less time (two years compared to Sonia and Chidi's four), but that does not mean that she had not had genuinely positive experiences.

Other interviewees, SHBU alumni and non-alumni alike, described negative changes in their relationship with faculty when they became graduate students. Brandon and Bethany both stated that in some cases this was a consequence of faculty being stretched thin because of the demands on their time for undergraduate teaching and mentoring—graduate students had to compete with undergraduates for faculty time and attention and they were losing out. Other interviewees described faculty as intentionally making graduate students a low priority. Marcus had interacted with some faculty who would not help graduate students until they had

done enough to "earn" that faculty member's support because they believed graduate students should have a certain amount of baseline knowledge. (Bethany described a similar attitude among some faculty in her department.)

> You have universities where you are seen as a number. Here, it's smaller, it's more intimate, but then you still get left behind. Because in grad school, like, they- Some of the professors, they be like, "I'm not here to baby you." Or, "You haven't arrived yet."

Rashon described seeing faculty focus so intently on their research and other career-related activities that they did not have time to work with graduate students outside of designated class time. He said, "Sometimes professors, they can be so caught up in their *own* work, you know. Trying to publish, trying to, you know…[get] their own career result to where it's just like, 'I don't have time for grad students.'" In the negative experiences with faculty or staff such as those described by Marcus and Rashon, inequitable power dynamics were often a key contributor.

Power dynamics between graduate students and faculty

Although close and supportive relationships between students and faculty were a hallmark of SHBU culture, the university was not immune to the effects of academia's inherently hierarchical structure. Interviewees described incidents in which graduate students and faculty in their department bumped heads, graduate students felt their actions were limited because of possible retribution, or, as in the examples above, graduate students' needs were marginalized by faculty. Some also discussed how faculty's relationships to each other and to administrators impacted students' relationship to those faculty.

Bethany described a situation in which graduate students in her department approached the department chair to express concern that a temporary faculty member who had behaved inappropriately toward students in class and then left mid-semester after

students complained about the inappropriate behavior. Unsure of how the half-taught course would impact their progression in the program, students sought clarification from the chair.

> So we brought it up to the chair, who's like, "Y'all complaining too much," "Y'all don't know how to do hard work," and we were just like, "Okay." Like, @@@, so I don't know, hopefully they change within the years, but, yeah, our suggestions didn't go too far.

Bethany said that the chair's response to students' attempt to be proactive about their academic standing made her not want to interact with that faculty member any more than she had to; it also made her more hesitant to express concerns about other things in the department, because she decided after that incident that "fighting with faculty" was not worth her energy.

Rashon described navigating departmental hierarchy and relationships as "draining," highlighting the fact that a graduate student's academic success can hinge on how well they please specific faculty members.

> It's so *political*. So political where it's *draining* @@. It's tiring where you feel like you have to please *everyone,* because the moment where you don't please someone, then you can risk, you know, certain things like graduating on time or getting that A or B at a class that you want to get, so…@@ I could go all day @@@.

Feeling the need to please faculty to ensure academic progress is a common experience among graduate students (Brockman et al., 2010): for example, having to choose between the research topic that they are passionate about and the one that their advisor or course instructor will approve, keeping quiet about how they would conduct research differently than their advisor, or trying to reconcile different committee members' opinions on their thesis research. With regard to diversity and inclusion, Rashon pointed out how age differences, in addition to the difference in structural power, can hinder efforts toward change.

> You know, the *older* generation not really understanding what it is that they *say* they're @promoting, you know, and they're not having any students at the table to bring their lived experiences, you know, to kind of help inform the way they go about doing things.

Faculty—especially senior faculty who have significant influence in the department—are generally older than students, and even those who support making institutional changes may not understand the nuances of contemporary issues related to ethnoracial identity, gender, sexuality, or disability as students experience them. When faculty do not make space for students to participate in the decision-making process, they can "go about doing things" in ways that are not as helpful as they could be or, in worst-case scenarios, potentially counter-productive. Student feedback through surveys and other means after the fact can help to make changes to diversity programming moving forward (e.g., Roper, 2004), but direct student input during the design and implementation stages of program development could make them more impactful and well-received. Sonia similarly pointed out that if faculty and administrators who have the final say on institutional changes do not understand students' perspectives, it is more difficult for students to successfully advocate for the changes they want to see: "I feel like a lot of times they think that the students are bringing to them frivolous issues when in the students' eyes this is something that could really, like, improve our university." When discussing faculty who were open to graduate student input and intentionally created space for students and faculty to work together toward change that would support students' needs, interviewees consistently mentioned the dean and staff in the Graduate College.

Graduate student relationships with the Graduate College

Interviewees described the Graduate College as a "safe space" for graduate students. When they wanted to talk to someone who would listen, make every effort to accommodate

their needs, and demonstrate that they cared about students as people, they went to the dean of the graduate college, Dr. G., or the lead staff person, Ms. C. For instance, Bethany explicitly compared her positive experience with the College and her negative experience in her department, emphasizing the willingness of the College members to listen.

> I've gone to the graduate school and, like, talked to them about different things, and I feel like they're legit listening. Like, they legit seem genuine and are listening. The department now…I feel like if you have an issue, you need to go to the big dogs.

Rene and Sonia also emphasized how the members of the College listened to, and, crucially, acted on what graduate students had to say.

> So, they really do ask for our input, especially when we have our [GSA] meetings. They do ask like, "Hey, what do you guys like to do?" And, um, we took a survey and stuff. So, they implement it and they also…like if they see that their graduate students are…seem a little stressed or something, they make sure there's an event or meeting about it. (Rene)

> Even as a grad student, I don't feel the *need* to do that because I feel like Dr. G. and Ms. C. handle all of that. They make it very clear that if there's anything that they- that we feel like they're not doing to just bring it to them and they will make the change. So I do appreciate that very open communication with them. (Sonia)

Students were able to build personal relationships with Dr. G. and Ms. C. because they were the two primary people that students interacted with (other than the GAs for minor issues)—that is, students were not interacting with a rotation of various staff members. Interviewees saw the two as their primary advocates and supporters within the university, since they prioritized graduate students' needs and worked to ensure that graduate students felt like they were an important part of the university. Dr. G. also worked closely with the Graduate Student Association even though they were no longer the organization's faculty advisor. Dr. G. had a clear purpose for the organization, and several of the interviewees were able to articulate that clearly, such as Darrell:

> The role of GSA is to– It's *including* all graduate students. Dr. G. created the organization so that no graduate student will be left out. The organization was created for *all* graduate students to be a part of, so we feel we are a part of something here on campus. Dr. G. even said that. That's where I got that, from [them].

Although not all of the interviewees actively participated in GSA activities, even non-participants were aware that the association existed and that it was an available resource for them if they should need it.

Interviewees highlighted that the College offered both academic/professional and social resources that were open to all SHBU graduate students. These included an on-campus graduate research showcase, "Graduate School 101" workshops with guest speakers to provide insight on graduate school experiences, mental health workshops, cookouts, and a recent baby shower for one of the students. This holistic approach to students' well-being—tending to their needs both as academics and as people—and the explicit commitment to graduate students' success were the distinguishing factors between most interviewees' mixed relationships with faculty in their department and their very positive relationships with Dr. G. and Ms. C. in the Graduate College.

8.4. Conclusion

Interviewees' descriptions of life at SHBU demonstrated that SHBU graduate students had high expectations for their institution based on their undergraduate experiences at HBCUs. While they had legitimate criticism of institutional structures and practices at SHBU, they were also intentional in their decisions to enroll there. Graduate students' marginal status within the undergraduate-focused institution was offset to an extent by the dedicated labor of the Graduate College, whose staff and administrator were the central figures in many graduate students' experiences. The Graduate College could not, however,

compensate for the institution's overall limited financial resources, which were a product of inequitable state funding that did not recognize the economic cost of SHBU's mission as an HBCU. Some of the tensions that interviewees described were problems that universities and graduate students faced across academia in the U.S., others were specific to HBCUs, and still others were unique to SHBU. There were striking points of similarity and difference between SHBU graduate students' descriptions of graduate life and those of UCSB students; I discuss these in Chapter 10. The totality of the living, working, and learning conditions described above shaped interviewees perspectives on diversity and inclusion at SHBU and in academia more broadly, and I turn to these in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 9: Reframing diversity through HBCU perspectives

"Black people are diverse wherever we are."
– Ada, graduate student, SHBU

Dominant conceptualizations of diversity in higher education emerged from and primarily apply to HWIs (Berrey, 2011, 2015), so mainstream higher education discourses about diversity are qualitatively different from those specific to HBCU contexts. These differences in institutional understandings of diversity and inclusion manifest themselves in institutional discourse, as seen in Chapters 3 through 5, as well as in how institution members articulate their perspectives on what diversity is and what that looks like in their IHE setting. In this chapter, I analyze SHBU graduate student interviewees' narratives about their experiences at SHBU and their understandings of diversity in higher educations. In Section 9.1, I summarize SHBU interviewees' descriptions of diversity and inclusion and the significance of these descriptions in contrast to dominant HWI-based discourses. In Section 9.2, I analyze the key linguistic and interactional practices that SHBU interviewees used in their discussions of diversity and institutional life; these practices paralleled those used by UCSB students, but often for different interactional purposes. As part of this analysis, I discuss how my positionality as a researcher in an HBCU cultural context influenced some of these practices in the interviews. Next, in Section 9.3, I analyze the central theme in interviewees' perspectives on diversity: the university's commitment to its institutional mission as an HBCU. The significance of this mission fundamentally shaped SHBU graduate students' expectations vis-à-vis institutional diversity, which in turn shaped their praise and criticism of institutional practice. In Section 9.4, I summarize interviewees' explanations of why diversity and inclusion matter in higher education, which reflected their experiences as

Black students at an HBCU and the understandings of diversity that that positionality produced.

9.1 SHBU students' definitions of diversity and inclusion

9.1.1 Defining diversity

In response to my question about what it means for a university to be diverse and inclusive, several keywords recurred in interviewees' answers with regard to diversity: *race, ethnicity, nationality, culture* and *color* (i.e., skin tone and/or ethnoracial identity) were the most frequent, and a few people mentioned the LGBTQ+ community, though most who did referenced only sexuality. Overall, interviewees presented two main definitions of diversity in an IHE context:

1. Diversity is the presence of people from ethnoracial backgrounds that are not part of the institution's dominant group.
2. Diversity is the representation of any form of difference related to people's identities, lived experiences, or learning, including both inter- and intra-group differences.

I discuss each of these definitions below.

Diversity through non-dominant ethnoracial groups

When diversity was defined as the presence of non-dominant ethnoracial groups, the evidence for diversity in the predominantly Black context of SHBU was the presence of white people and non-Black people of color. For example, Edwin broadly defined a diverse university as one where there is a "variety of cultures, traditions, [and] ethnicities" and students are "each able to share and understand each other's backgrounds and traditions," but all of the examples that he gave of diversity at SHBU involved non-Black communities that

were represented on campus. He went on to say that diversity may be harder to achieve at HBCUs than other types of IHEs because being a historically Black institution may "scare other [non-Black] students from applying." Chidi similarly defined diversity in broad terms but demonstrated a narrower definition through his examples. He initially defined diversity as "shades of color" and people of "any nationality coming to the same place to learn," then he specifically discussed his white, Middle Eastern, and Asian classmates. Yvette used the term *HBCU minorities* to differentiate her use of the word *minority* to refer to non-Black people in an HBCU context from its common use to refer generally to people of color—a linguistic strategy I discuss further below

Some interviewees who had spent their lives in predominantly Black areas prior to attending SHBU viewed diversity this way in non-academic contexts as well. For example, when comparing the cities surrounding SHBU and the HBCU she attended as an undergraduate, Michelle said that the latter was more diverse because she saw more white people.

> [My previous city] was pretty diverse as well. I saw a little more white people. Um, here it's still a little diverse. But the areas that I'm living in, you don't see too many white people there. It's mostly our Black counterparts @@.

The HBCU context created an environment in which mainstream notions of racial dominance, both numeric and hegemonic, and who counts as the "Other" could be fundamentally challenged, and this subversion of ideological norms shaped how SHBU students viewed ethnoracial diversity as a concept and phenomenon. Even within the dominant neoliberal framework that individualizes diversity (Berrey, 2011; Urciuoli, 2016a), SHBU students' perspective of white and non-Black students as the ones who "bring" diversity to the institution is a stark contrast to the ideology at most HWIs that non-white and

other minoritized students are the sources of institutional diversity. Interviewees were fully cognizant of how racial dynamics at SHBU were different from those in dominant U.S. society, and that this had both pros and cons in terms of their future experiences outside of the SHBU context; I return to this topic below.

Diversity as any form of inter-group or intra-group difference

Interviewees' second definition of diversity was broader than the first, encompassing ethnoracial background as well as sexuality, gender, geographic origin, educational background and other characteristics—a definition that is strikingly similar to the broad definitions of diversity that appeared in HWI website discourse (Chapter 5). For example, Rashon mentioned faculty members' disciplinary backgrounds and educational training along with students' cultural backgrounds, sexualities, and disabilities. In contrast to the rhetorical face-saving goal of HWI website discourse, interviewees' broad definitions could be seen as an attempt to challenge popular perceptions of HBCUs as "lacking diversity," which homogenize the identities and backgrounds of Black people. Diversity was not only about the presence of people who differed with respect to macrosocial categories such as race or gender, but also about how people seen as belonging to the same macrosocial groups could differ in other ways. As the following example from Sonia illustrates, discussion about the various points of difference that could make an institution diverse typically segued from or into discussions about the diversity that exists among Black people at the institution.

> I think for a university to be diverse, it just exposes you to things that you have not been exposed to in the past. Whether that be cultures, languages, styles of learning, people in general, styles of teaching, I feel like that's what makes the university diverse. I know a lot of people's first thought probably jumps to, like, ethnicities and cultures, and I know there is an argument made for "How can a HBCU be diverse if the population is 98 percent Black students?" but Black has a lot of different ethnicities within one race.

Bethany highlighted the fact that even among Black people from the U.S., who are only one subset of the Black diaspora, there may be many different cultural backgrounds represented. Rene, who moved between predominantly white and predominantly Black cities in the South growing up, shared that coming to SHBU expanded her understanding of Blackness in the U.S. beyond just African Americans.

> Because when I thought Black, I just, like, thought African American. We're just, like, one people. We all do the same things. […] Here I'm with Black people, like, all the time but it's like, different *types* of Black people. Like you have your Caribbeans, your Africans and stuff, and then it's just like, my world opened up to how diverse Black people can be within ourselves.

Ada summarized this perspective concisely with her statement, "Black people are diverse wherever we are."

These definitions of diversity were inextricable from the target demographic and historical mission of SHBU as an HBCU. The university was built to serve Black Southerners, and Black students were still the institutional priority, so orienting to Black people as the baseline or norm was a logical practice for SHBU students. In such a context, non-Black people were the "others," and it was possible to have conversations about diversity with regard to only Black people. "Diversity" was never an institutional priority at SHBU as it was at HWIs, but the diversity that was present at the university was shaped by inclusion practices that were intended to open the doors to education to minoritized people.

9.1.2 Defining inclusion

Like their definitions of diversity, interviewees' definitions of inclusion were specific to the institutional culture and practices of SHBU. Their definitions centered on the following main ideas:

1. Non-hierarchical social structures

2. Students being able to express their opinions
3. Openness to students from different backgrounds
4. Institutional structures for students to share about their own cultures and for others to learn about them

As mentioned in Chapter 2, much of student life at SHBU revolved around student organizations, whether academic, social, professional, or athletic. In fact, multiple SHBU alumni mentioned what they perceived as a drastic shift in focus from socializing to academics when they became graduate students. According to interviewees, students who were involved in campus organizations were prioritized within the institution (e.g., allocated more resources, provided with more avenues to interface with university leaders) compared to students who were not; additionally, organizations had their own hierarchy, with fraternities and sororities at the top. Some interviewees who did not attend SHBU as an undergraduate saw a similar pattern of social hierarchy at their HBCUs. Bethany, who was a member of a sorority, expressed frustration with this social hierarchy and saw it as a hinderance to inclusion because it made it more difficult for students unaffiliated with Greek life to express themselves and have their needs met; she said, “I feel like everybody should be able to voice their opinion and be heard, regardless of whether they’re in an organization or not.” Since student organizations were a permanent part of campus culture, the university could foster inclusion by taking steps to make sure that students were not treated differently based on organizational affiliation.

Interviewees also talked about inclusion in terms of non-hierarchical relationships between Black and non-Black students. Regardless of ethnoracial background, they said, all students should have the same means to express their opinion on campus. Chidi described an

inclusive university as one where "everybody has a voice": "Black students shouldn't only be heard during Black History Month. White students shouldn't be overlooked because they're at a Black school. Everyone deserves to be heard even if you don't agree with their opinion." In addition to all students having the space and means to express themselves, inclusion was described by most interviewees as the institution being open to listening to students regardless of their background and having institutional structures in places that demonstrated that the university cared about students' needs and experiences. For instance, Toni defined inclusion in the following way: "the university is open and welcoming to all sorts of walks of life…making sure everyone is taken care of and accounted for, getting what they need, and someone can help them." She also mentioned her Middle Eastern peers feeing welcomed at graduate student orientation as an example of non-Black students feeling included through university practices.

Darrell said that inclusion goes beyond having resources in place for communities that are recognized on campus, although that is an important first step. He believed that the university should aim to celebrate as many different cultures as possible regardless of whether they knew with certainty that a student from a particular culture attended the university.

> Being aware of what cultures you do have at your university, and if you don't have that culture specifically, *still* celebrate it or I would say include it in a way, because you never know if somebody *may* be of that ethnic background or come from that specific place. […] Not picking and choosing what you want to, I would say, what you want to portray on your campus.

By not "picking and choosing," he suggested, the university would have a better chance of ensuring that no student or particular culture was unintentionally excluded. Brandon and Edwin both described inclusion as having institutional structures in place for students to learn

from their peers about each other's backgrounds, beliefs, and customs. In this way, they would be better able to support one another academically well as be respectful of different cultural practices such as dress, speech, and interactional style.

Multiple interviewees mentioned student inclusion, which was not surprising given the university's LGBTQ+ initiative and active efforts to implement it over the past few years. Some students were more familiar with the goals and full scope of the initiative than others, but most were aware that the university president had created the initiative. Rene, among other interviewees, noted how LGBTQ-focused events and resources on campus had helped to make the university feel more welcoming for queer students, in particular, in the years she had been at SHBU.

> I feel like we're getting better with, um, *embracing* each other when it comes to being, like, gay or bi, and so I feel like…When, like, our freshman year, you didn't really see a lot of [queer] people open with their sexuality, as much, but now it's just like…it's normal.

SHBU was following the trend of many HBCUs to better serve LGBTQ+ students through the institutionalization of resources (Gasman & Nguyen, 2015), but considering the longstanding conservatism of many HBCUs around issues of gender and sexuality (Coleman, 2016; Mobley & Johnson, 2019), it was significant that the needs of queer, trans, and nonbinary students were being explicitly discussed on campus in an effort to make the university more inclusive of their experiences.

These understandings of diversity and inclusion reflected SHBU interviewees' distinct perspectives as students educated in an HBCU context. Their conceptualizations of what it means to be othered and what structural inclusion looks like were shaped by their experiences in two different types of environments: the Black-centered structures and practices of SHBU and the broader white-supremacist structure of U.S. society. While

ethnoracial identity and background were central aspects of SHBU graduate students' discussions, their understandings of diversity and inclusion were not limited to this social categorization since, as faculty member Eva highlighted, "affirmation of Blackness can only get you so far in terms of feeling included and supported." In the next three sections, I analyze the key linguistic and interactional resources that SHBU interviewees used in our conversations about diversity and inclusion, the throughline in their commentary about diversity at SHBU—mission takes precedence over rhetoric—and their responses to the question of why diversity and inclusion matter in higher education.

9.2 Key linguistic and interactional resources

In their discussions of graduate student life and diversity at SHBU, interviewees employed several of the same key linguistic and interactional resources as their UCSB counterparts: stancetaking, pronoun choice, verb choice, and constructed dialogue. As I described in Chapter 6, stancetaking occurred in every utterance, so the other four resources simultaneously contributed to the act of stancetaking while fulfilling other discursive functions. Although the resources are the same as those used by UCSB interviewees, the specific linguistic features involved and the context-specific interactional goals they accomplished were different for SHBU students, and I describe these below.

9.2.1 Stancetaking

In their stancetaking moves, the graduate students that I interviewed at SHBU, like those at UCSB, evaluated people, practices, and structures of their university and discursively positioned themselves relative to other members of the institution (Du Bois, 2007; Jaffe, 2009). In stark contrast to UCSB interviewees, SHBU interviewees had many

positive evaluations of their university, and in some cases, they hedged their negative evaluations because they felt it was unfair to criticize the university, office, or individual they were discussing. Overall, interviewees echoed the sentiment of the university president: they loved the university "with eyes wide open." Their resistance to speaking negatively about SHBU was likely also connected to their socialization in HBCU culture and Black culture more broadly. For decades, African Americans have debated the appropriateness of "airing our dirty laundry": discussing problems that occur in Black families, organizations, and communities in a public manner that makes them visible to non-Black people. Out of fear of reinforcing dominant negative images, many Black people believe that issues such as colorism, patriarchy, and homophobia should not be brought to public attention (e.g., Baker, 2017; Cole & Guy-Sheftall, 2003), and that people who do so should be publicly chastised for their actions. Given the cultural significance of HBCUs and the negative public image they face in U.S. society, as described in Chapter 8, these IHEs are fervently protected components of Black culture, especially by people with personal connections to the institutions. A Black person speaking openly about cultural, structural, or interpersonal issues that occur at an HBCU—especially to an outsider—could become fodder for public discourses arguing that HBCUs are no longer necessary institutions.

Linguistically, interviewees conveyed their reluctance to criticize SHBU through various forms of hedging, which Fraser (2010, p. 201) describes as follows:

> By including a particular term, choosing a particular structure, or imposing a specific prosodic form on the utterance, the speaker signals a lack of a full commitment either to the full category membership of a term or expression in the utterance (content mitigation), or to the intended illocutionary force of the utterance (force mitigation). Simply put, it is attenuation of the full value which the utterance would have, absent the hedging.

Interviewees hedged by starting and stopping their speech multiple times before producing their complete utterance, taking time to "warm up" to the "real talk" about the university (i.e., not offering substantive critiques until later in the interview), and couching criticism in praise. For example, when I asked Rashon what he liked most and least about graduate school—about six minutes into the recorded portion of the interview—he clearly expressed hesitancy about sharing the answer he had in mind for the second part of my question.

1. KENDRA:	Um (.) what have you liked most about graduate school so far and what have you liked least?
2. RASHON:	What I like most about grad school is having the opportunities to (.) do research with faculty members?
3.	Um (1.5) and conferences. I *love* conferences. […]
4.	U::m.
5.	What I like the *least*.
6.	What I like the least (3.0) is my (1.0) particular department that I'm a part of?
7.	U:m (1.0)
8.	On this campus I feel that-
9.	<RAISED PITCH> <FAST> Ah!
10.	See I don't– It– Well– </>
11.	It's–
12.	I guess– I guess I can go *deep* @um
13. KENDRA:	(LAUGHTER)
14. RASHON:	@Um [with the faculty members]
15. KENDRA:	[Say as much as you're comfortable with.]

Compared to his relatively continuous speech in lines 2 and 3, Rashon's extended pauses and multiple truncated utterances in lines 6 through 12 suggested that he was struggling to find an answer that was appropriate in this context. After he named his department as what he liked least, he verbally struggled with how much he coult or should share with me: his raised pitch and increased speech rate in lines 9 and 10 were reminiscent of how someone in distress might say, "I don't know what to do!" Eventually, he decided that he could "go deep" and give me details about the interpersonal politics between faculty and graduate students in his

department (without naming names). Similarly, when I asked direct questions about what the university could improve, some interviewees initially stated that they could not think of an answer, and then, usually after I accepted their response with an "Okay" and was preparing to move on to the next question, they thought of something to say. The hedged and otherwise delayed nature of these types of responses was part of SHBU interviewees' stancetaking through language, and their relative initial reticence to offer criticism of the university compared to UCSB students emphasized the interactional significance of them doing so. That is, when SHBU students critiqued an aspect of their university, it was not because institutional critique was common practice, but rather because the issue was pressing enough to warrant disregarding all the factors that made public institutional critique an uncommon practice in the first place.

It is important to note here my influence as interlocutor on interviewees' stancetaking. As described in Chapter 2, I was at the university for one semester, plus my week-long follow-up visit, and I met the majority of interviewees for the first time when we met for the interview. Although I was welcomed with open arms into the SHBU community by the faculty and staff with whom I interacted regularly, I was still an outsider in the SHBU community. My presence had to be explained when I met new people, especially students, since I did not have a personal connection to the university, I was not from the region, and my professional roles within SHBU were ambiguous and temporary. Interviewees and I shared the community identity of being Black in the U.S.—a shared cultural background that some interviewees leaned on at noticeable moments—and being graduate students, but my positionality as a Black graduate student from an HWI complicated our shared identities. In each interview, I made the purpose of my study and our interaction as clear as possible, but

that did not change that fact that I was someone who did not have a personal stake in what happened at SHBU, was unfamiliar with HBCU culture, and was from the type of university that had historically produced scholarship the perpetuated negative stereotypes about HBCUs and continued to be used as HBCUs' institutional foil to frame them through a deficit lens (e.g., Williams et al., 2019). Interviewees were generally open and detailed in their responses to questions, but they were also protective of their university and HBCUs in implicit and explicit ways. For instance, during my conversation with Marcus and Brandon, Marcus spoke about SHBU the way many people speak about family: only insiders and people with special permission have to right to speak negatively about it.

> [People] talk about our school so much and I'm like, "I earned that right to talk about my school because I go here. You will not sit here and disrespect my school. Yes, we don't have this, yes, we don't have that. We could have better this, we could have better that. But you weren't afforded that opportunity because you didn't come here."

This comment was not directed at me, and throughout the interview Marcus shared freely about both his positive and negative experiences at SHBU—likely encouraged by the presence of his friend as a fellow interviewee who was doing the same—but this comment made clear that he was conscious of how outsiders like me could run with negative perceptions of SHBU without any experiential knowledge about what life at the university is like. Interviewees' (re)positioning of themselves and me at various points within the interaction was reflected in their use of pronouns, particularly their use of *we* in both its inclusive form, which included the interlocutor, and its exclusive form, which did not.

Positioning through pronoun choice

English does not morphologically distinguish between inclusive forms and exclusive forms of the first-person plural pronoun *we,* but discourse context allows for reliable interpretation of who is included. Studies by discourse scholars and social psychologists have

demonstrated that, in a wide range of contexts, individuals strategically use *we*, *us,* and *our* to construct social identities and relationships by creating or breaking down social group boundaries (see, e.g., Pavlidou 2014). By positioning themselves as within or outside of a group, a speaker conveys their stances on the group and its other members. For example, in Cialdini et al.'s (1976) classic study of university students' construction of group identity based on the performance of the university football team, they found that students used *we* more frequently when describing a win and *they* more frequently when describing a loss. SHBU interviewees' use of *we* in reference to the SHBU community was interactionally significant in two ways. First, it explicitly positioned the speaker as a part of the university—even when the university was the object of critique, a notable contrast to UCSB interviewees' consistent distancing with *they*. Second, in its exclusive form, *we* reinforced my position as someone outside of the university community and SHBU interviewees' awareness of that fact.

While discussing inclusion on campus and the LGBTQ+ initiative, Rene used an exclusive *we* to refer to SHBU members, including the student body, and *our* to refer more specifically to her cohort of student peers.

> I feel like we're getting better with, um, *embracing* each other when it comes to being, like, gay or bi, and so I feel like…When, like, our freshman year, you didn't really see a lot of people open with their sexuality, as much, but now it's just like…it's normal.

Ada also used *we* to include herself as part of the university in an instance when she was positively evaluating the treatment of queer and trans students on campus: "Yeah, and I think we- SHBU has done a really good job! Especially with, like, the LGBTQ community." It is notable here that Ada "corrects" herself from *we* to *SHBU.* This statement occurred during a discussion about what it means for a university to be diverse or inclusive, and the dialogue

that preceded this utterance was about university-level practices. Therefore, it was clear that her use of *we* was in reference to the university community. By following that with *SHBU*, Ada emphasized the fact this *we* was exclusive, since I was not part of the university community to which she referred.

As mentioned above, SHBU interviewees' use of *we* was striking because it occurred in both positive and negative evaluations of the university, such as the following statement from Marcus.

> As an HBCU, we're supposed to be a historically Black community- college or university, so everybody is expected to be Black. But then you have people who are *white*. Then you have people who are of *Asian* descent, we have people who are *Latina*, we have people who are *Africans*, who are *Caribbean*, who are *Haitian*. Uh, we have people who, um, like we just have different nationalities and ethnicities on this campus, but we don't- we don't *celebrate* that. We just see them for being different *colors*.

From Marcus's perspective, the university was not doing enough to sufficiently acknowledge and "celebrate" the different ethnoracial identities that were represented on campus. While describing the demographics of the university, he alternated between *we* and *you*, with a preference for *we*; he positioned himself as part of the university in the first sentence when he said, "As an HBCU, we're supposed to be…" When he moved into his criticism of how the university community treated this ethnoracial difference, he continued to use *we* and position himself as part of the community he was critiquing. This linguistic practice suggests that SHBU students like Marcus viewed themselves as a part of the university regardless of how it "performed." Their identification with their HBCU community did not hinge on whether or not they could find fault with it—a reflection of the interviewees' intentionality in being at an HBCU and being at SHBU specifically.

Stancetaking through comparison to non-HBCUs

Another way that interviewees engaged in stancetaking was through comparisons of SHBU to non-HBCU IHEs. Through their comparisons, which were both implicit and explicit, interviewees evaluated aspects of SHBU and also positioned themselves in relationship to SHBU, specific university members, non-HBCUs, people who are part of those IHEs, and ideologies about HBCUs. HWIs are ubiquitous, if not always accessible, alternatives to HBCUs for education, and interviewees were fully cognizant of the fact their choice to attend an HBCU meant that they were choosing not to attend an HWI. As described in previous sections, HBCU students are aware of the reputations and negative stereotypes that circulate about HBCUs, and interviewees were sometimes defensive of SHBU, HBCUs, and their decision to attend. None of the UCSB students, in contrast, explicitly oriented to other types of universities that they could have attended for their graduate education. They named other IHEs to which they applied and were accepted, but they were all institutions comparable to UCSB. Some interviewees had attended MSIs as undergraduates, but the IHEs' MSI status was not part of their decision making–usually they chose the university because it was close to home and financially affordable. This difference in school selection processes demonstrates the significance of institutional mission for HBCU students—a point I return to in Section 9.5.

During my conversation with Chidi, he explicitly engaged with negative perceptions of HBCUs, specifically that HBCUs offer low-quality education compared to other types of institutions. He also revealed his own preconceived notion that only Black people attend HBCUs.

> [I have non-Black classmates], which surprised me! Because I thought HBCUs were just African American schools. I thought no one else, like, saw the value in them. So I was shocked when I saw my classmates and they weren't just Black. So it made me happy, in a sense, showing that like, my school is worth it. It's not just "a Black school

> for Black kids" and the degree doesn't matter. I noticed all shades getting the same education I'm getting, and they're going to major corporations and jobs to show them that this school *is* more than just a HBCU, this is a fountain of knowledge.

In this utterance, Chidi negatively aligned himself (and other Black people) with non-Black people based on what he perceived as their respective evaluations of HBCUs (Figure 9.1). His non-Black peers, however, challenged his perception that non-Black people necessarily devalue HBCUs and the educations that they offer (Figure 9.2). Additionally, he believed that the professional success of non-Black students who graduated from SHBU would evidence the value of HBCU educations to non-Black people who were not convinced by the success of Black HBCU graduates.

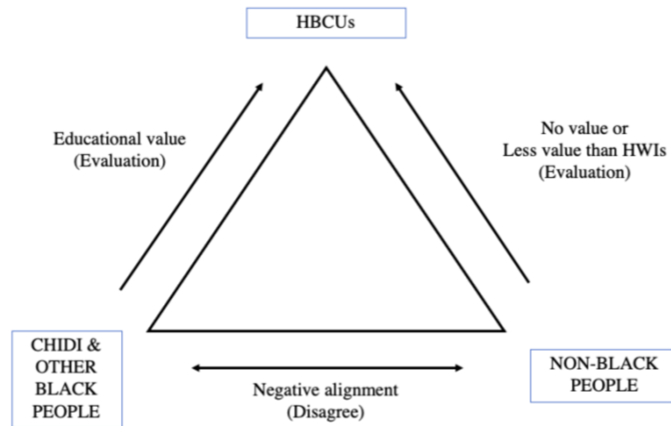

Figure 9.1. Chidi's initial negative alignment with non-Black people

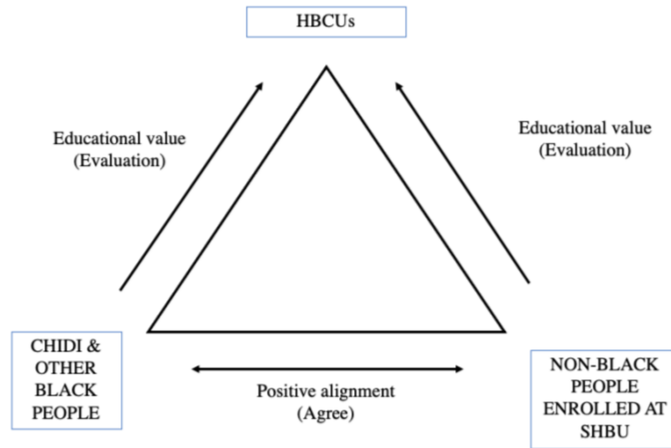

Figure 9.2 Chidi's revised alignment with non-Black people at SHBU

As another example, Brandon evaluated SHBU's policy of not giving honors cords (cords worn at graduation that are colored-coded based on the students' GPA and other honors) to graduate students by comparing SHBU to HWIs. During our discussion, Brandon and Marcus both expressed frustration about not being able to have a visual symbol of their academic achievement at graduation as graduate students in the way students were able to as undergraduates, despite them exceeding the required minimum grade point average. Brandon said:

> We worked so hard for this. It should be just a simple recognition of being able to appreciate the academic challenge that you went through. I mean, I thought that was one of the purposes for us even just *being* in a HBCU compared to PWI. I'm pretty sure we go to a PWI, all their master's students got everything they want to wear all *over* the place.

Brandon framed the institution's understanding of "the academic challenge that [students] went through" as a key characteristic of HBCUs that draws Black students to them. PWIs, by comparison, would be obtuse to the barriers that students like Brandon have to overcome to earn their graduate degree, and therefore they would not understand why that visual symbol mattered to him so much. In other words, SHBU, as an HBCU, should know better than to deny students this opportunity to celebrate their accomplishments—especially if they did not

have a high enough GPA for honors cords as undergraduates. Notably, when Brandon makes his comparison to what graduate students are given at PWIs, he does not reference honors cords specifically; instead he says that students at those schools get "everything they want to wear." The broader term *everything*, along with the emphatic phrase *all over the place* suggests that the heart of Brandon's critical comparison was not about cords, specifically, but feeling as though he had to fight to access resources in ways that students at other IHEs did not. Whereas graduate students at PWIs could get everything they wanted, graduate students at SHBU had to fight for minimally resource-intensive things such as honors cords. Brandon, who was a graduate of SHBU and did not have personal experience with or connections to an HWI, made this comparison based on his perception of HWIs rather than first-hand knowledge—as indicated by the hedge *I'm pretty sure*—but that fact that he made the comparison at all was indicative of the way SHBU graduate students' perspectives on their experiences were shaped by their awareness of how those experience could be different at a non-HBCU.

This was also demonstrated by Rashon, who similarly engaged in stancetaking by evaluating SHBU through explicit comparison to PWIs. He described how he was planning to apply to Ph.D. programs at HWIs, and his motivation for doing so was not so much that PWIs would offer new or unique opportunities that he could not get at an HBCU, but rather that he would be less frustrated with others' behavior toward him because he would expect it in that environment.

> And that was one of the primary reasons I wanted to attend a predominantly white institution for my PhD. I just felt that I was so over, just, you know, *"the Black experience*," you know what I'm saying? Where everybody came from the same experience, and then people thinking they can talk to you any kind of way. And I'm not saying that's gon be @changed at a white college, but, you know, it's just- Sometime I feel that the experience here…has been the *worst* in some ways! You know,

> I have been successful, but the experience indeed has not been a good one. And I just feel, you know, I need something different because if I'm gonna put up with this anyway, I would rather put up with it from someone that I expect it from […] a person I expect to treat me that way.

By *this*, Rashon was referring to department politics and condescending behavior from faculty and staff, which he had described earlier in the interview. Rashon expected Black people's shared experiences to encourage SHBU members to treat each other with respect, but instead he found that people used it as an excuse to treat others however they wanted. Offensive behavior toward Black people was something that he would anticipate at an HWI from the beginning but having to constantly manage his behavior in response to disrespect from fellow Black people was not something he expected when he chose to attend an HBCU. He evaluated his overall experiences at SHBU as "the worst in some ways" as a result of having to deal with these behaviors, even though he had had many positive experiences during his time there.

Through pronoun choice and comparisons to non-HBCU IHEs, interviewees conveyed how they perceived their relationship to the university, to me as an outsider interlocutor, and to other types of institutions. Their identification as part of the university community was not dependent on them having only positive evaluations of the institution, and their discussions about how their experiences would differ at an HWI were one avenue through which they evaluated SHBU. In the next two sections, I discuss two additional linguistics practices that interviewees used: verb choice and constructed dialogue.

9.2.2 Verb choice

Two key verbs that interviewees used in discussions of their interactions with other institution members and their overall relationship to the university were *hear* and *listen*. Interviewees were generally of the opinion that even if the university did not have the

resources to address all of their needs and concerns immediately—or at all—its leaders should still have open communication with students about what was happening on campus and provide avenues for open communication. They described how the university had campus town halls, but they rarely seemed to lead to direct change, and when students brought forward their concerns in other ways, some institutional leaders dismissed them as "frivolous" and did not take action on them. In some cases, students did not know who they could or should seek out to try to make their needs heard in the first place. In both prompted and unprompted contexts, interviewees expressed frustration about not being heard and praised members of the university who did listen to them.

Rene viewed SHBU leaders' priorities as skewed based on the lack of resources in her understaffed department, and Sonia similarly viewed institutional priorities as off-base based on her experience trying to get changes made as an undergraduate. She said, "I feel like they could do a way better job with listening to students' concerns, especially if enough students are saying the same thing that they would immediately address it or address it *faster* than they're addressing other things." From her perspective, since students "make the university," then the things that they see as primary concerns should also be the institution's primary concerns. Sonia and other interviewees, especially those who were SHBU alumni, shared a number of complaints: new security measures that made navigating the campus difficult, limited on-campus food options, limited parking and the cost of permits, and the time it took to get answers from staff. (Issues related to diversity and inclusion were not among students' primary concerns, as I discuss in section 9.5.) Michelle stated that she had not seen the any aspects of the institutional changes she had suggest during her time at SHBU

be implemented yet, and she suspected a few possible reasons why: people were not listening or those who did listen were being prevent by other with more power.

> All the ideas that we put out, were mentioned to people. They have not- I haven't seen any changes, *yet.* And this is my last year. I've been here for two years, and this is my last year a:nd haven't seen any changes. (TSK) I mean hopefully *somebody* will listen at some point and get it done… Because…yeah. I mean after I leave, I'm *done*. So I @mean. I've been putting all the ideas and things out there *last* year and nothing got done, so. And then I tried *this* year, nothing got done. But I know things take *time* but I don't see any, anyone really pushing it for real. I mean GSA probably is, or *trying* to and they keep getting blocked, but I don't know.

Michelle did not say specifically what the proposed ideas were, so I could not assess how feasible action within a year might be for any of them, but it was clear from the way that she described the process that the status of these proposals was not being conveyed to her. She did not have sense of whether they'd been ignored, were sitting in a pile of papers on someone's desk, or had been assessed and rejected; all she could tell from her vantage point was that "nothing got done."

As described above, interviewees had very positive relationships with Dr. G. and Ms. C. of the Graduate College, and that was based largely on the fact that the two actively asked about students' experiences, preferences, and needs, and then did their best to act on the information students gave them. Interviewees consistently described the Graduate College as a resource they could count on because they knew that Dr. G. and Ms. C cared about them as students and as people, and that led them to listen to graduate students. Michelle struggled to select a single example of the way that they listened because it was simply part of the way they operate. As a GA in the Graduate College, Michelle saw up close the effort that went into trying to meet students' needs. She said, "They do a really good job with that. Um, they actually listen and try to accommodate very well. I don't- I can't. What example could I give. @ It's just so many different things."

While the Graduate College was a reliable resource, it was still only two people for hundreds of graduate students, and not everyone had the time or opportunity to interact with Dr. G. and Ms. C. to the same extent. Because of this, multiple interviewees expressed gratitude for the opportunity to talk freely about their needs and concerns and were glad to know that there was one more person prioritizing graduate student needs on their campus. For example, Marcus said that he and Brandon and other graduate students did not typically have the sort of outlet afforded by our interview:

> I just want to say thank you for the opportunity to speak on this issue that has been a pressing issue for a *minute* here. We don't have this sort of outlet. We don't have this opportunity to sit there and just speak our mind. And it's actually shocking that, not saying this on *your* part or anything, but it's shocking that it took us at the end of the semester to get things out. This is something that we should have discussed like at the beginning of the semester or at the beginning of our graduate years.

Brandon concurred, describing how it felt good to be able to talk about these issues with someone other than themselves, but he wished that it was not happening as they were leaving the university. He said, "Like we've said this to each other so long, and now you're here, we're like, 'Yes! Finally somebody can'- It's like a sigh of relief, but I'm like, damn, it's too late now, we're @graduating!" Given his own experience trying to make his needs known to various institution members, Brandon was somewhat skeptical of whether university leader would want to hear what was represented in my data.

> Also, I really really would love to hear [how SHBU responds]. Like, I know we're about to get our master's and walk away, but I would love to even know if they actually wanted to hear you. You know, just maybe *something* could be able to be included. I feel like if something from your report gets done even by fall or spring [of next year], I feel like there's some headway.

Although Brandon's proposed timeline was not possible since I was not presenting the data to the university within the next year, his sentiment was clear: he wanted the university to demonstrate that it cared about graduate students by taking some sort of institutional action

based on the experiences that they shared. Rene described her interview experience as therapeutic, echoing Marcus and Brandon's appreciation for being able to talk about issues they cared about with people other than fellow students. At the end of her interview, she stated, "I felt this was very therapeutic. I feel like my voice was very heard, especially about the, uh, my *program* and stuff. I feel like, I hadn't talked about it, or only talked about with it my classmates."

Interviewees' emphasis on being heard and the university listening to them pointed to communication as a major determiner of whether someone viewed their graduate school experiences positively or negatively. In addition to the use of the verbs *hear* and *listen*, the impacts of poor communication on interviewees' perceptions of the university came across in conspicuous instances of constructed dialogue.

9.2.3 Constructed dialogue

Like their UCSB counterparts, SHBU interviewees used constructed dialogue (Tannen, 1986) to represent versions of real and imagined interactions with other members of the university. The linguistic choices they that made in this double-voiced discourse (Bakhtin, 1981) conveyed information about how they perceived their interlocutors (e.g., as individuals, as representatives of the institution) and how they perceived their relationship to those interlocutors. Compared to UCSB graduate students, however, SHBU interviewees used constructed dialogue less frequently to voice faculty, administrators, or other representatives of the institution, and more frequently to represent interactions with peers or sequences of their own thoughts. When they did use constructed dialogue to represent someone at the institution with more structural power than them, it was a mix of positive and negative representations; here, I briefly analyze three examples of interviewees constructing

negative representations to further illustrate the types of institutional discourse they oriented to in our discussions.

Rene constructed a dialogue between herself and one of her professors when describing some of the department-internal challenges she faced while trying to complete her degree. She was sharing about how she worried about taking the best courses for not only her degree requirements but also her future career; she wanted to take courses that had appropriate content and were taught well, and she followed the advice of her department faculty for many of these decisions. In the example below, Rene expressed her frustration with a professor who would not give her a straightforward opinion about another faculty member's teaching, which led her to enroll in a different course outside of her department out of worry over taking an unhelpful class.

> I was supposed to take a class with professor in my department. I said his name and she was like, <VOX> "Oh. He's teaching that class? *Oh!* Okay! </VOX> And I was like, "Why are you saying it like that." She was like, <VOX> "No, nothing's wrong. It's just…okay!" </VOX> I'm like, "Now I don't want to take this class because you're just saying, like, there's something wrong."

Rene did not name the faculty member she spoke to as a mentor or someone otherwise individually accountable for her progress through the program, but this interaction echoed other statements she made throughout our conversation about how lack of communication between members of the department negatively affected her academic experience.

Brandon used constructed dialogue to contrast institutional messaging and institution members' behaviors, specifically with regard to perspectives on asking for and giving help.

> Again at a HBCU, they always emphasize family is helping- We need a hand up not a handout, like, we're- Our hands are stretched and there's nobody grabbing it for us. We're like, "@Hey, where is it at," like, "I'm holding my hand up, I'm out here, I'm reaching. I want help," but then they're like, "Ehh." That's the problem right there. Some people see us needing help as acts of handouts.

Brandon used *they* and *us* to differentiate graduate students—specifically himself and his co-interviewee Marcus—from the institution members he was critiquing. Since SHBU students frequently voiced institutional ideology and, as described above, interviewees often used *we* to position themselves as part of the university community, Brandon's use of *they* in his first statement is striking. Especially considering his position as a GA who helped other SHBU students, it would have been reasonable for him to say, "*we* always emphasize family is helping." Brandon captures what he sees as dismissal or disapproval by members of the university with the short utterance "Ehh": instead of "grabbing" graduate students' metaphorical hands outstretched for the help the university says it gives, university members offer the verbal equivalent of a shrug. The interaction that Brandon constructed at this moment in the was a product of the many challenges that he had faced in the past years trying to find someone to help him write his master's thesis.

A third example of constructed dialogue to voice institution members came from Toni. Unlike other interviewees, however, her most notable instance of constructed dialogue during our brief discussion was a negative representation of a different educational institution to positively evaluate SHBU by contrast.

> I grew up around in a predominantly white area for half my life, and the school system basically told me like, "No, you're not gonna get it, you don't get it, you're slow." And then I come here and it's nothing but support. If they see you falling short in some area, they're gonna make sure you get. They're not gonna stop until you get it.

Toni contrasted the messaging from her educators in her predominantly white K-12 schooling to the acts of support that she received from people at SHBU as both an undergraduate and a graduate student. Instead of assuming that Toni couldn't understand something, people at SHBU assumed that she could accomplish what needed to be done and gave her the necessary support to do so. The above example from Toni is illustrative of the

topic that was discussed in nearly every interview: how SHBU's structures and practices were shaped by its history and mission as an HBCU.

9.3 SHBU's commitment to institutional mission

As discussed above, diversity was not a central focus of institutional discourse and practice at SHBU. Relatedly, interviewees' major critiques of the university were not about diversity and inclusion, although many said that there were areas in which the university could improve. When asked directly about the topic, interviewees had opinions about how diversity and inclusion could and should operate at SHBU, and these were based on an explicit awareness of the university's educational mission and societal influence as a historically Black university. A few interviewees mentioned institutional diversity discourse or rhetoric, but only to point out that what SHBU said about diversity and inclusion was less important than what the institution did. Sonia expressed this sentiment best; in response to the question "Do you think that diversity and inclusion are important to SHBU? And what gives you the impression that they are or are not?" she said:

> I think that they are, but I don't think that they [SHBU] try to throw it in your face every ten minutes like, "Oh, we're about diversity. Oh, diversity training. Oh, we're so inclusive. Look at what we're doing." I think it's just second nature to them because they know what it feels like to be- to not be included. They understand what it feels like to be the only one somewhere. So I feel like it's just very second nature. And they do a good job of weaving it into our education and weaving it into our social campus life.

From Sonia's perspective, the university integrated diversity and inclusion into students' academic and social life in ways that made them unmarked. They were "weaved into" rather than added onto the practices of SHBU, and therefore the university did not need to prove its commitment to diversity by rhetorically "throw[ing] it in your face every ten minutes." Sonia

attributed this practice to university leaders' personal familiarity with exclusion and discrimination, which would inspire them to work to minimize those experiences for students.

Multiple interviewees invoked the idea of institutional "purpose" when talking about the university, with regard to diversity and inclusion specifically and university practices more generally. There was a shared understanding among interviewees that the education offered by HBCUs was about more than educating individuals: it was about molding Black people for success, creating opportunities for Black individuals that could lead to collective uplift, and doing so in a Black-centered educational environment. Bethany referred to this as the "job" of SHBU, and she saw the university as doing its job well based on the accomplishments of its alumni.

> Yeah, I feel like it's done its job. I really do, because a lot of great people have come from this school that are doing really well in their life…[and] like they're big. Congressmen, teachers of the year–I feel like they're doing good. I feel like they've served their purpose.

Yvette used similar language while discussing how SHBU served Black students. For her, how the university accommodated students of other ethnoracial backgrounds was not the measure of institutional success: "At the end of the day, HBCUs were built for a purpose and that purpose is being fulfilled." Other interviews expressed a similar sentiment about the intentions behind institutional actions without using the language of "purpose." For instance, Rene highlighted the fact that HBCUs were "originally created just for [Black people]"—using *we* and *us* in reference to the Black members of the SHBU community.

> We're all- Like I feel like, in the real world we are the- we are the *minorities* and stuff. But here, Latinos and the whites? *They're* the minorities. So it's like, how do we include them in a space that was originally just created for us.

Rene supported university practices and structures that would make non-Black students feel included, but here she was pointing out the difficulty of creating spaces that were inclusive of everyone's ethnoracial backgrounds since that was not what the university was created for.

As discussed above, ethnoracial diversity was not one of the criteria that SHBU students sought out in their chosen IHE; to the contrary, they wanted to be surrounded by people from the same ethnoracial background because of the social support that that would provide. Toni asserted that for Black students who sought out the HBCU educational experience, the "lack of" diversity among not only the student body but also faculty, staff, and administrators positively impacted their education. The following exchange between Ada and Yvette captures the complexity of "diversity" and racial inclusivity at SHBU given its institutional mission as an HBCU—the aspect of the university that drew most students to it. Their interaction was in response to my question about what it means for a university to be diverse and inclusive. I analyze this exchange in detail because there are several theoretically, thematically, and linguistically significant features—for one, it is the only instance, among both SHBU and UCSB interviewees, in which an interviewee explicitly stated that understandings of diversity and inclusion are context-dependent.

1. KENDRA: So::, in your opinion, what do you think it means for a university to be *diverse*, and what do you think it means for a university to be *inclusive*?
2. (1.0)
3. YVETTE: I think it depends on the uni[versity.]
4. ADA: [Yeah:.]
5. YVETTE: So:, if this is a– since this is a HBCU (.) li::ke w–
6. (1.0)
7. ADA: (LAUGHTER)
8. YVETTE: @@ <SMILE> Diverse– As far as diverse, like </> in, in–
9. I think we need to be diverse in (.) like, learning different cultural perspectives.
10. U::m I mean, we can even be *somewhat* diverse in (.) allowing minorities to come,

11. but I think we should have a cap on how many we allow in.
12. ADA: The *HBCU* minority.
13. YVETTE: Yeah.
14. ADA: Not saying [# # #].
15. KENDRA: [Non-Black students.]
16. ADA: [Yes.]
17. YVETTE: [Yeah.] Mhm. [...]
18. Yeah I would say- I would say being culturally competent, and um, I think that's, like, you know, being open, but also: still being firm in your foundations with things.
19. ADA: <QUIET> Yeah. </>
20. YVETTE: We can be inclusive.
21. I think that *is* important, but,
22. don't lose the focus <QUIET> of the revolution. </> @ @ @
23. ADA: Yeah, and I think we- (.) SHBU has done a really good job! Especially with like the LGBTQ community,
24. like there has been trainings, the [safe zone] ally signs are everywhere, like.
25. I think as far as the Black community we do: what we (.) *can.*
26. I mean, of course there's always more work to be *done*, but I think we *are* doing a good job,
27. to ensure that Black people feel safe on this historically (.) *Black* university.

In line 5, Yvette subtly asserted that broad questions about diversity and inclusion do not make sense in an HBCU context. As it was used here, *like* is a discourse marker that brackets and links elements of discourse (D'Arcy, 2007), and, based on context (e.g., *if*), the truncated *w-* would have likely been an interrogative word, such as *what,* at the beginning of a question. In English, vowel lengthening has social significance in interactional contexts, including intensifying defiant or otherwise resistance stances (e.g., Goodwin et al., 2012). Combined with the intentionality of the truncation, as suggested by the following pause, Yvette conveyed that she found it odd that I would ask these questions and could not or would formulate an answer, at least initially. In line 7, Ada laughed with increasing volume following Yvette's pause, and that laughter was taken up by Yvette when she spoke again in line 8. Given that the two were close friends and based on their interactions throughout the

interview prior to this moment, it was clear that Ada's laughter was a form of alignment (Glenn, 2003). That is, Ada laughed as if her friend had made a joke and she agreed with the idea that was expressed. In this case, Ada's laughter in line 7 and the laughter it inspired in Yvette emphasized the laughable nature of what they saw as a silly or out-of-place question.

In lines 9 through 11, Yvette explicitly stated her boundaries for what diversity-based practices should be like at SHBU: students should know about the perspectives of other cultures, but that should not entail a large population of non-Black students at the university. In her opinion, SHBU should have a set maximum for the number of non-Black people enrolled so that it does not exceed being "somewhat" diverse. Yvette's proposal for a cap on non-Black students was an interesting parallel to the "racial quotas" of race-based affirmative action policies at HWIs that were contested in *Bakke* (1978) and other Supreme Court cases. Instead of trying to ensure access for people from groups minoritized within the institution, however, Yvette's cap would ensure access for members of the dominant group within the institution—with the contextually specific understanding of how HBCUs were situated within larger society. The demographic differences between HBCUs and the "real world" were reflected in Yvette's use of the term *minorities* in line 10 and Ada's clarification in line 12. Yvette used the term to refer to people who were numerical minorities at SHBU, i.e. non-Black students. Institutional data showed that at the time of the interview 65% of graduate students and 55% of undergraduates were Black/African American. Ada reiterated the context-specific use of the term by adding, "the *HBCU* minority," recognizing that *minority* is frequently used to refer to people of color who are marginalized within dominant society, even when they are not a numerical minority in a particular context. Ada herself used

minority in this sense multiple times during her interview, as did Sonia in the following example:

> I think that's why it's so important for this degree to be offered at, you know, minority-based schools because there needs to be more minorities in my field. It needs to be more women. It needs to be more people of color, because that's what the world looks like. That's what the country looks like– its more minorities than other people.

In line 18, Yvette returned to the idea of understanding other cultures as a way of being inclusive, but again asserted that the university's mission as an HBCU should take precedence. "The revolution" to which Yvette referred could be the historical revolution of Black political activism that emerged from and took place at HBCUs (Douglas et al., 2020) and/or the ongoing efforts to revolutionize higher education and U.S. society through Black-centered, racially conscious education for Black people. In either case, her reference to "the revolution" indicated an awareness of not only SHBU's mission but also its sociohistorical context as an institution. In line 27, Ada demonstrated her agreement with Yvette that Black people should be the priority at SHBU. Although the LGBTQ+ initiative that she referenced in lines 23 and 24 did not impact only Black students, she framed it in terms of its impact on the safety of Black students and as an effort of "the Black community." Ada's slight pause for emphasis before *Black* in line 27, along with her prosodic emphasis on the word itself, made clear her position on the significance of SHBU's identity as an HBCU.

Interviewees did not all agree on how SHBU should implement diversity and inclusion practices, but they did agree that the university's HBCU mission was or should be the guiding principle behind the practices that it did implement. They saw the foundational commitment to serving minoritized students and creating opportunities for Black people manifest in the structures and day-to-day practices of the university and its community—a stark contrast to diversity rhetoric disconnected from institutional action that was the core of

UCSB students' criticism. In addition to informing interviewees' understanding of what diversity and inclusion look like and how they are operationalized in higher education, SHBU's Black-student-centered educational framework also informed graduate students' perspectives on why diversity and inclusion matter in higher education.

9.4 SHBU students' arguments for diversity in higher education

The most frequent response among interviewees to the question of why diversity and inclusion matter in higher education was that it prepares students for "the real world." Rashon stated plans to pursue a Ph.D., and a few other master's-level students expressed interest in the possibility, but in discussions of their future plans all of the interviewees were focused on their post-graduate school careers, none of which included a career in academia. They explicitly contrasted their experiences within SHBU and outside of SHBU in two ways. The first was that the day-to-day life of a full-time graduate student is different from that of someone working a full-time job. For example, Rene described being a student, particularly being an undergraduate, as being in a bubble away from the rest of society.

> [Diversity] matters because we're going to step into the real world very soon. I think a lot of people don't understand college is kind of like a bubble and stuff. We're not really in the *real world* real world because some of us still stay in a dorm, we don't pay rent or, we're not working a corporate or a *high demand* job yet.

The second difference was that the ethnoracial makeup and sociopolitical culture of SHBU did not reflect dominant U.S. society or the majority of the world. Edwin summarily stated, "HBCUs are cool or whatever, but it's not the real world." Interviewees described diversity––particularly ethnoracial diversity—within the predominantly Black environment of SHBU as something that helped to prepare them to move into a work environment that would most likely not look like their university campus. This was especially true for graduate students

who had spent the majority of their lives in predominantly Black spaces, such as Michelle, who said:

> I feel like college is supposed to prepare you so that it's easier for you when you actually get out into the real world. Because @, if you don't know how to work and operate with different people that you're not used to, I don't think you're going to make it.

Michelle had had few non-Black classmates during her time at SHBU—she specifically mentioned how few white classmates—so she was especially thankful for the internships that she had, because she felt they provided her with the opportunity to work with many different people in addition to gaining practical knowledge and skills. Although they did not all say so explicitly, or say so in response to this specific question, preparing to be part of the "real world" for many interviewees meant preparing to work with white people. The explicit discussions of hegemonic whiteness and white supremacy that are common at HBCUs, plus comparisons in public discourse between HBCUs and HWIs or other predominantly white spaces, bolstered a binary Black-white racial paradigm (Perea, 1997). In the context of the U.S. South, where the legacies of whites' legally codified anti-Black racism continue to shape Black people's lives, the primacy of whites as non-Black racial others is unsurprising.

Interviewees who described diversity as having future career benefits aligned with institutional rhetoric that put forth the "diversity rationale," which asserted that institutional diversity benefited students by preparing them to participate in an increasingly globalized workforce (see Chapter 3). Again, however, IHEs and students had different reasons for using similar discourse. IHEs invoked the diversity rationale in order to comply with legal restrictions related to affirmative action or otherwise race-conscious institutional policies, as well as to make themselves appear competitive in a global education market. SHBU students were not "rationalizing" or trying to justify diversity; they were describing what they

perceived to be tangible positive outcomes of interacting with people who were unlike themselves, based on their lived experiences and future goals. This perspective on diversity, especially when compared to UCSB graduate students' most frequent answers to the same question, reflected differences in viewpoints on the purpose of higher education based on IHE type and class background; I return to this point of discussion in Chapter 10.

Based on interviewees' responses to my questions about why they chose to attend SHBU and how they selected their undergraduate institution, diversity was something that they saw the personal and institutional benefits of after they were immersed in SHBU culture. That is, diversity was not a criterion for school selection, but when asked about it, most interviewees framed it as an institutional necessity. Several interviewees also mentioned that, independent of preparing them for their future job, student diversity on campus created opportunities to learn about peoples and cultures through face-to-face interactions and friendships that they might not have had otherwise. Bethany said that she enjoyed learning about the research that international and non-Black students conducted on aspects of their own communities at the graduate research showcase. She believed that students and researchers at HBCUs could fall into a trap of thinking that everyone in the institution should do research on Black people and experiences; research that was not about Black people demonstrated that SHBU could train students to produce high quality research about people from any ethnoracial background, and it also created an academic space beyond the classroom for students to learn more about each other. Edwin described the pleasant experience of getting to know a Middle Eastern woman in one of his classes, including learning about why she wore a hijab, what her life was like in her home country, and learning some common greetings in Arabic; he said that in exchange, he answered her questions about

U.S. culture and taught her some Black slang, and that the experience overall was "very eye-opening" and sparked in interest in learning Arabic.

Edwin's and others' descriptions of their experiences illustrated how they saw institutional diversity as a benefit to Black students like themselves. As mentioned above, this was an inversion of the dominant ideology about who is "diverse" (people of color) and who benefits from diversity (white people) in higher education (Ahmed, 2007; Urciuoli, 2016a). Interviewees largely upheld the framework in which the presence of the minority group(s) benefits the educational experience of the dominant group, but in the predominantly Black context of SHBU the composition of those groups was different from what is imagined in dominant HWI-based frameworks. Ada, with concurrence from her fellow interviewee Yvette, was the only person to talk about diversity in the broad scope of higher education, engaging with the structure of higher education in the U.S. beyond the boundaries of her HBCU. She said that diversity and inclusion matter "because everything isn't white" and "@white @don't @mean @right." Ada implicitly pointed to the hegemony of whiteness and how that hegemony is used by many as evidence of the "rightness" of white ideologies and practices (Feagin, 2010). The presence of non-white people, practices, and belief systems can challenge white hegemony, and their representation in educational spaces is an acknowledgement, at the very least, of their existence. Overall, SHBU graduate students' explanations for why diversity and inclusion matter in higher education were significantly different from those of UCSB graduate students, and I discuss this and other points of comparison in Chapter 10.

9.5 Conclusion

SHBU interviewees' definitions of diversity and inclusion, their explanations of why these concepts matter in higher education, and their emphasis on the institutional mission of HBCUs challenged dominant diversity ideologies that emerge from HWI contexts. Ada and Yvette explicitly challenged the idea that ethnoracial diversity is necessarily a goal for IHEs, even at institutions committed to racial equity; in doing so, they challenged the idea that racial equity at a university entails significant representation of people from different ethnoracial groups. By highlighting the fact that Black students seek out HBCUs to be surrounded by Black people and culture, interviewees also reframed the perception that HBCUs "lack" diversity, which implies that certain types of diversity (i.e., non-Black people) are "supposed" to be there in the first place. Interviewees described how sharing space and interacting with non-Black people could benefit them in their future career, but their educational experiences overall did not depend on the presence of non-Black peoplw. When Rene recounted how her understanding of Blackness expanded when she arrived at SHBU, she echoed the ideas of other interviewees who pointed out that Black people come from diverse national and ethnic backgrounds, in addition to having varied gender and sexual identities and class backgrounds, among other aspects of identity. From this perspective, if someone perceives a lack of diversity in a predominantly Black space, then, the problem is their essentialist view of Blackness and not the institution's demographics. Based on this understanding of diversity in their HBCU context, Black graduate students at SHBU did not have strong, negative emotions in response to issues around diversity, unlike students at UCSB. They were, however, critics of other institutional structures and practices.

The HBCU context that engendered interviewees' perspectives on diversity in higher education also influenced how they talked about their institution and their place in it. Black graduate students at SHBU saw themselves as part of an institution that was created for people like them and that centered their needs and experiences. Interviewees' feelings of belonging to the SHBU campus community—an institutional "family" for many—was evidenced by their use of first-person plural pronouns to refer to the university. The fact that *we* was used when offering critique as well as praise indicated that Black students saw themselves as part of the SHBU community regardless of its flaws. In fact, many of their criticisms were grounded in the belief that SHBU could do better because they had seen it do well before and they believed that, overall, their university cared about students' well-being. The negative shift in institutional position and priority from undergraduate to graduate students—competing with undergraduates for access to faculty, limited campus spaces for graduate only use, and incompatible hours of operation—was especially frustrating for graduate students who were SHBU alumni. Because of graduate students' marginal status in the university, some interviewees perceived SHBU as failing to or choosing not to engage with graduate students' expressed concerns, with the exception of the Graduate College, who interviewees praised for listening to students.

Throughout this chapter, I have indicated several points of similarity and contrast with findings from UCSB. For instance, interviewees evaluated SHBU in institution-internal ways as well as through comparisons to HWIs, reflecting their understanding of how SHBU and other HBCUs were positioned in broader U.S. society. UCSB interviewees, in contrast, made no explicit comparisons to other types of IHEs. In Chapter 10, I discuss the key points

of comparison between SHBU and UCSB and their theoretical and practical significance, including the structural issues in higher education that they reflect.

CHAPTER 10: Key comparisons between UCSB and SHBU

In my interviews with SHBU and UCSB graduate students, they aligned in their responses to several questions, an indication that those experiences and perspectives are likely common to graduate students of color, and potentially graduate students more broadly. Conversely, the differences in their responses according to institution pointed to how institutional values, structures, and practices—and how these shape and are shaped by institutional discourse—impacted graduate students' educational experiences. In sections 10.1 to 10.7, I compare SHBU and UCSB interviewees' responses to the following seven topics, which had the starkest overlap or difference in responses:

- Why pursue graduate school? Why at SHBU/UCSB?
- Resources needed to be successful
- Relationship to faculty and administrators
- What is diversity?
- What is inclusion?
- Why do diversity and inclusion matter in higher education?
- Institutional diversity discourse versus action

In Section 10.8, I highlight four structural issues in graduate education that emerged in the data and can be addressed with concrete institutional changes.

10.1 Why pursue graduate school?

Across the board, SHBU interviewees described graduate school as an opportunity for advanced training in their area of specialization and preparation for the workforce. They likely received this message from the faculty mentors and others who encouraged them to

pursue an advanced degree. It also appeared directly on the Graduate College website, which stated that the primary purpose of the College is to provide opportunities for students to pursue "advanced study and research in their fields of specialization, and one of [the College's] aims is to assist students in achieving an advanced level of understanding and competence necessary for successful professional careers." UCSB students, in contrast, did not express a shared sense of why they decided to pursue an advanced degree. Some were passionate about research, some wanted to solve social problems, and others enjoyed working with undergraduate students, among other unnamed reasons. These differences were likely due in part to the differences between master's and Ph.D. programs: the latter are research-based, while some master's programs do not contain any major research component. The differences in responses between the two groups of interviewees are also a reflection of class-based differences in perspectives on the purpose of higher education. Students from low-income households are more likely to view higher education as a means to social mobility for themselves and their family (Blackwell & Pinder, 2014; Guiffrida et al., 2013)—doctoral students from low-income backgrounds have publicly shared on social media and in other contexts that their income as a graduate student is the highest salary anyone in their family has ever made, so they were able to improve their financial standing even before they began their long-term career. Among UCSB interviewees, those with the most clearly articulated reasons for being in graduate school and/or plans for their careers all self-identified as being from a working-class or low-income background.

Interviewees also differed with regard to their reasons for pursuing their advanced degree at their chosen institution. Among SHBU interviewees, seven of the thirteen had attended SHBU as undergraduates and decided to stay or return because they wanted to

maintain the close-knit and supportive academic network that they had formed there. The other six had attended other HBCUs as undergraduates and wanted to remain immersed in HBCU culture as graduate students, but additional factors drew them to SHBU. All thirteen were attracted to their undergraduate HBCU because it was local, familiar, financially affordable, academically feasible, and/or offered the specific support they needed as a first-generation student and/or student of color. These are common reasons that Black and non-Black students of color opt to attend HBCUs (Winkle-Wagner & Locks, 2020). At both the undergraduate and graduate levels, SHBU was an "opportunity university," enrolling students who likely would not have been accepted elsewhere based on their academic measures or financial resources, and enrolling mostly in-state students. UCSB students, on the other hand, came from across the country and around the world to pursue their advanced degree there. The top criteria for UCSB interviewees, who all had a choice among several IHEs, were the research fit with their advisor, the prestige of the university and/or their department, and the funding they were offered. Unlike SHBU students, they did not select their university based on its status as an MSI; instead, they chose it based on its status as a major research university, knowing that the institution they were joining was historically white, but not necessarily knowing exactly how that status shaped the institutional structures and practices that impacted their daily lives.

Interviewees at both institutions expressed ambivalence about pursuing graduate school at their selected institution. They were appreciative of the opportunities that graduate school provided while also frustrated by their inability to get certain resources they needed to be successful (as I discuss in the following section) or to make needed changes at the university. At UCSB, students of color weighed the academic and professional benefits of

being at a major research university against the personal toll of being a racially minoritized student at an HWI. SHBU students showed no regret in their decision to attend an HBCU, knowing the strong support networks that HBCUs could provide. They did, however, recognize that choosing to attend SHBU impacted their academic experience by limiting the types of institutional resources to which they had access, and some openly imagined what their academic life could have been like if they had gone to an HWI.

10.2 Limited resources impacting educational success

SHBU and UCSB students alike described limited access to key resources as one of the major challenges of their graduate school experience. This was related to graduate students' marginal position with their university relative to undergraduates, in particular, as well as graduate students' ambiguous position within higher education overall. Having to compete with undergraduates for many resources, graduate students lost out based on numbers alone. Over the course of our conversations, interviewees shared, without prompting, the resources that they saw as most urgently needed. I also asked them directly about their "wish list" resources: if there were no barriers to accessing resources—if they could wave a magic wand and get whatever they needed or wanted, no questions asked—what would those resources be? As a result, interviewees at each institution created a list of resources that ranged from most feasible to least feasible given the current realities of their university. Every item on these lists, however, was a resource that was missing in minoritized graduate students' experiences that could improve their living, working, and learning conditions. Resources named by students at both universities, as previously stated, were

related to graduate students' position in higher education; the differences in the resources pointed to conditions specific to the type of university they attended and their institution.

10.2.1 Resources collectively sought by graduate students of color

The most frequently named resource that would improve graduate students' conditions was higher pay—specifically, pay that would constitute a living wage based on the local cost of living, students' financial backgrounds, and their institutional responsibilities. As is the case in any context, limited financial resources created extra stress: students had to constantly monitor whether they had sufficient funds to pay for food, rent, health expenses, insurance, and the needs of family members while also finding ways to pay out-of-pocket for academic materials such as books and computers as well as professional development expenses such conferences. At both universities, it was common for graduate students to have multiple part-time jobs in order to make ends meet, which often negatively impacted their academic work. SHBU interviewees described the low hourly GA wage and difficulty securing external funding as two of the major reasons they struggled financially. One interviewee said that options for health insurance through the university, which was not currently available, would be helpful for older students who were no longer eligible for coverage through a parent's plan (i.e., students over the age of 26, under the Affordable Care Act guidelines). At UCSB, graduate student pay was at the front of interviewees' minds at the time because of the COLA movement; the issue of funding was longstanding, but it had become urgent at UC and other major research universities across the country and was further exacerbated by the conditions created by the coronavirus pandemic. From late 2019 to mid-2021, with national news coverage, graduate students went on strike for higher pay at

nine UC campuses, the University of Michigan, Harvard, and Columbia (e.g., Cowan, 2020; Houlihan, 2021; Zialicita, 2019).

The second frequently cited resource was mental health resources. At the time of the study, mental health in U.S. higher education had become a prominent issue, catalyzed by the dire state of mental health in academia as a whole (e.g., Allen et al., 2021; Watts & Robertson, 2011) as well as ongoing public efforts in the U.S. to destigmatize mental illness, normalize discussions of mental health, and increase the use of therapy to improve quality of life (American Psychological Association, 2019; Gold, 2020; James, 2019). Research on graduate students' mental health, specifically, has documented high rates of depression, anxiety, and negative emotions (e.g., loneliness, anger, hopelessness), which has led some students to self-harm and, in the most severe instances, to attempt suicide (Evans, 2018; Garcia-Williams, 2014). Research has also demonstrated that graduate students from minoritized groups face additional mental health stressors as a result of discrimination (Posselt, 2021), and that students' financial stability and relationship with their advisor are major determinants of their overall mental well-being (Hyun et al., 2006). Interviewees at both schools said that designated on-campus mental health resources for graduate students were greatly needed to help them deal with the stress of graduate school as well as the stress of being marginalized in a white-supremacist, xenophobic, sexist, homophobic, transphobic, ableist, classist society. At SHBU, Dr. G. had recently implemented mental health workshops where students heard from professionals about stress and mental health in graduate school, as well as informal meetings for graduate students to share concerns and socialize, which one interviewee described as "venting sessions." Interviewees who were able to attend the workshops said they were very helpful, but, like other on-campus events, these workshops

were not compatible with many graduate students' schedules. Therefore, dedicated resources as part of the university's counseling services—a counselor and/or evening time slots reserved for graduate students—were suggested to resolve this issue. Interviewees at UCSB focused on the inaccessibility of community therapists—whom many would have used to avoid competing with thousands of undergraduates for time with on-campus counselors—as well as the lack of ethnoracial diversity among available on-campus counselors. At both institutions, graduate students sought out mental health resources to cope with existing everyday stress and the psychological impact of major incidents (e.g., conflicts with faculty, personal trauma), but they were also trying to be proactive about protecting their mental well-being as they continued in their academic and professional careers.

The third resource that was named by interviewees at both universities was close faculty mentorship tailored to students' individual needs. Based on their background and career goals, graduate students enter graduate school with various levels of knowledge about higher education and the steps they should take to navigate the academy and be a "successful" student. Interviewees sought mentors who would guide them in developing major research skills, planning for their long-term careers, and applying for jobs. SHBU students who had a specific faculty mentor described that mentor as instrumental to their success; those who did not have a mentor struggled to get face time with faculty instructors, who were also working to meet the needs of undergraduate students. Without mentors, some students struggled with writing their thesis, applying for fellowships, and deciding whether to apply to a Ph.D. program. At UCSB, every student had a faculty advisor, but for many graduate students of color, their advisor did not share or understand their background and how it informed their goals and priorities. Many graduate students of color are first-

generation students who do not know the "hidden curriculum" (e.g., Portelli, 1993) of higher education, and therefore need to be explicitly taught what institutional structures and experiences should look like and how to engage in key practices such as networking. Even for students who are not first-generation, the nuances of successfully navigating the academy as a person of color, a woman, and/or someone who is queer, trans, from a low-income background, disabled, or otherwise minoritized may not be in their repertoire of knowledge.

Finally, graduate students at both universities stated that a sense of community, and institutional structures that foster it, are necessary resources for graduate students' success. Interviewees said that community-building social activities were not incorporated into the structure of graduate school as they were at the undergraduate level; as a result, graduate students had to seek out experiences and connections, which was harder to do without institutional structures in place and given the academic and professional demands on their time. Because the majority of SHBU graduate students were commuters and those who worked on campus spent much of that time with undergraduates, interviewees did not have the same sense of community with their fellow graduate students that they had felt with their peers as undergraduates. Social events hosted by the Graduate College were one way for graduate students to meet each other, and while I was at SHBU the GSA was planning volunteer opportunities and an end-of-year celebration. Most students, however, interacted with other students in their department only during classes. (None of the interviewees mentioned spending time with their colleagues at events not coordinated by the university.) UCSB interviewees mentioned spending time with fellow graduate students in informal settings (e.g., living together, outdoor activities, going to restaurants), as well as at social events organized by graduate student organizations or the Graduate Division. They

highlighted that, although most graduate students found ways to build community within the university, the institution overall did not promote "fun and joy" through community for graduate students as it did for undergraduates.

In addition to these four types of resources that interviewees at both universities named as important, some resources were named by interviewees at only one of the institutions. I summarize these in next two sections.

10.2.2 Resources specific to SHBU

The desired resources that were named by only SHBU students fell into three main categories: infrastructure, learning materials, and academic preparation/professional development. With regard to infrastructure, interviewees desired a space on campus exclusively for graduate student use. Some wanted it to be a quiet workspace, whereas others described something more like a social lounge, but in any case, they wanted a place where graduate students could create community with and learn from each other away from undergraduates and faculty. Multiple interviewees expressed a desire for on-campus graduate housing, which would alleviate some of the housing-related concerns that students had and also offer the graduate-only spaces that students sought. When I asked SHBU students what their "wish list" resources were, most answered practically. In addition to more money, several people mentioned learning materials, particularly free textbooks; one interviewee said free laptops so that students would not have to rely on the computers in the library. The primacy of physical resources at SHBU was a noticeable contrast to the answers of interviewees at UCSB, who generally felt that physical space was adequate and that they had the necessary materials to do their coursework and research. Although the quality of physical spaces at UCSB varied between STEM and non-STEM departments, graduate students had

offices, labs, study rooms in the library, department spaces, and the GSA lounge in which to work and socialize, in addition to options for graduate housing, so they viewed access to other types of resources as higher priority. Because SHBU is an undergraduate-oriented and teaching-focused university, graduate students' material needs were not an institutional and departmental priority to the same extent as they were at a research university like UCSB, where students' lack of access to basic resources could negatively impact the department itself.

In the third category, academic preparation and professional development, SHBU interviewees mentioned workshops on "how to be a graduate student" (including information about how to tailor one's graduate program based on career goals), in-depth check-ins with faculty each semester or year, and a graduate-only academic and career fair in the fall. Interviewees said that they wanted more follow-ups on their progress in the program and overall well-being throughout the process of getting their degree, not just at the initial orientation when they entered their program. More regular check-ins would also help to ensure that students were taking the most advantageous steps to prepare them for their chosen career. The graduate student fair was suggested by SHBU alumni, who had seen how helpful the academic and career fairs organized for undergraduates could be for finding fellowships, internships, and jobs. Since the event was open to all university members, they had each attended in the fall of their first year as a graduate student and realized that it offered few, if any, relevant resources for graduate students, and those that were available had undergraduates vying for them as well. The resources that SHBU graduate students focused on once again reflected the institutional understanding of graduate school as advanced preparation for their career.

10.2.3 Resources specific to UCSB

Resources named by only UCSB graduate students reflected the institutional environment of a research university and the type of students that it attracted. Unlike at SHBU, graduate students at UCSB were expected to be full-time students, many graduate students aspired to a career in academia, people from minoritized backgrounds were the minority, and international students were a significant segment of the student population. Each of these factors shaped institutional practices and their relevance to graduate students. Because students were expected to be enrolled full-time, courses occurred throughout the day and there were no set windows of time for other graduate student activities. Multiple interviewees emphasized that the heterogeneous population of UCSB graduate students faced a diversity of personal and academic circumstances, so one of the most needed resources was flexibility in program requirements to accommodate family responsibilities as well as the different types of professional activities that placed demands on students' time. On many interviewees' "wish list" of resources was more funding options that did not include teaching so that they had more time to focus on research and research-related activities like presenting at conferences and publishing their work. Another desired resource related to research activities was professional development—including learning how to network at conferences, how to publish, and how to market their research in job applications—built into program curricula. Like their SHBU counterparts, UCSB interviewees wanted to be sure that they were making the most of their time in their program in preparation for their career, but many were interested in careers as academic faculty rather than as professionals. For graduate students who did not have a close mentor/mentee relationship with their academic advisor,

having professional development built into their department curriculum ensured that they would receive at least some exposure to that information.

As students of color in a predominantly white institutional context, UCSB interviewees also sought resources that would meet their specific needs as minoritized students in that space. Multiple people mentioned that having access to faculty who shared their ethnoracial background was critical to their professional development—even if that faculty member was outside of their home department. One Black interviewee, for example, pointed out that only Black faculty would have the lived experience of being the first and/or only Black faculty member in a department, which they could share with a Black graduate student who would likely find themselves in a similar position at some point in their career. International students unanimously expressed a desire for a larger office international student services that could offer more comprehensive resources, including a more in-depth orientation to the social and cultural dynamics of being a student at UCSB in addition to the academic structures. One international student said they would benefit from writing services tailored to non-native U.S. English speakers. Another frequently requested resource was consistent funding for identity-based graduate student organizations. These organizations were crucial to many interviewees' persistence in their program, yet they had to scramble for funds to offer the resources that members wanted.

The feasibility of making interviewees' desired resources available to graduate students varied between the two universities based on each institution's overall resources and priorities. Regardless of feasibility, however, these lists demonstrate what graduate students prioritized and felt was lacking based on their educational and social needs and their planned careers. The consistency with which financial, mental health, mentorship, and social

connection resources were named by interviewees highlighted that these are essential in enabling graduate students of color to persist in their programs. The different types of resources sought by interviewees at an HBCU compared to an HWI highlight how the status of students of color within an institution—and the structural and interpersonal opportunities or barriers that this status creates—shape the types of resources that graduate students of color need most in that specific context.

10.3 Relationships to and with faculty, administrators, and staff

One of the most striking differences between the institutional cultures of SHBU and UCSB was graduate students' relationships to and with faculty, administrators, and staff (FAS). The number of graduate students at each university—approximately 300 at SHBU compared to 3,000 at UCSB—largely determined how feasible it was for students to have close relationships with FAS. The more telling finding in each context, however, was not whether interviewees did have such relationships, but whether they even saw them as a possibility.

At SHBU, student access to FAS for academic and non-academic reasons was the default expectation. As described in Chapter 8, students could meet with the president of the university, faculty generally had an open-door policy when their offices, and it was not unusual for students to share openly with FAS about their personal life and how it impacted their academic performance. In the HBCU framework, students' relationships with other members of the university were understood by FAS as key to their persistence and academic success. Those relationships were the means through which students were able to get their needs met, and the responsibility to meet those needs as a part of an HBCU community was

taken seriously by FAS at SHBU. Those FAS that I interviewed, along with others I met during my time there, had made the conscious decision to work at an HBCU; they knew the mission of the institution, the types of students they would serve, the challenges they would face, and the positive impact that they could have on others. This commitment to students was illustrated clearly in interviewees' descriptions of Dr. G and Ms. C. in the Graduate College. One interviewee described Dr. G. as "always making sure we're good," and the Graduate College was seen as a "safe place" for graduate students where they could socialize, get academic help, and freely express their concerns, knowing that Dr. G. and Ms. C. would do all in their power to help them. FAS at SHBU were not perfect, and interviewees described some who they perceived as not invested in students and others with whom they had difficult relationships. Academic hierarchy was also a factor in student-FAS relationships at SHBU. Interviewees' descriptions of even these relationships showed that students entered into them with the expectation that FAS necessarily would be invested in them as people, and that students would be able to communicate openly with them.

In contrast to the supportive social network, open communication, and warm demander (Kleinfeld, 1975; Ware, 2006) approach to teaching and mentoring that defined SHBU interviewees' graduate experiences, UCSB interviewees described a culture of fear, retribution, and power struggles between students of color and FAS. Multiple interviewees had at least one example of themself or a peer being punished for exposing inequity within their department or challenging a faculty member's behavior. They described how their attempts to implement change to make the institution more inclusive and equitable—through their own uncompensated time and labor—were squashed or made more difficult by FAS. Concerns that they expressed about departmental or university practices were dismissed or

deemed low-priority. As described by UCSB interviewees, FAS were not invested in or concerned about graduate students' well-being as part of their job in the way that FAS at SHBU were. In the context of a historically white research university, graduate students of color were seen by many in positions of power as researchers and teaching assistants first, and those identities were preferably separate from their identities as people. Several interviewees could name at least one faculty, administrator, or staff member who they felt prioritized their best interest—and others with whom they had a neutral relationship—but relationships based in holistic care about students were presented as the exception rather than the rule. These differences in institutional culture and the positions of graduate students of color within the university at each institution greatly informed interviewees' perspectives on diversity, inclusion, and why they matter in higher education, which I discuss in the following three sections.

10.4 Definitions of diversity

Interviewees' understandings of diversity reflected their experiences as students of color at institutions with very different demographics and institutional cultures. The Black graduate students at SHBU were part of the university's racial majority, whereas graduate students of color were the racial "others" in the historically white context of UCSB. SHBU exhibited the social conservatism common at HBCUs as a result of the foundational influence of Christianity. UCSB, in contrast, had a decades-long history of sociopolitical activism based in left-leaning politics. Students at both institutions aligned with the dominant ideology of diversity as representation of difference (Andersen, 1999), but *difference*, and by extension *diversity*, meant something different in each context. Ethnoracial diversity was the

default form of diversity for graduate students in both contexts—a reflection of the primacy of race as a visible form of difference in U.S. culture and education (Taylor, Gillborn, & Ladson-Billings, 2009) as well as the central focus on race in the *Bakke*, *Gratz*, and *Grutter* cases, which shaped diversity ideology and practice in U.S. higher education (Berrey, 2011).

SHBU students' descriptions of ethnoracial diversity included the presence of non-Black people in the predominantly Black space of an HBCU, the presence of people of color, and ethnic or national difference among Black people. Several interviewees mentioned diversity in gender and sexuality, which were brought to the fore of university culture by the recently implemented LGBTQ+ inclusion initiative. Discussion of gender and sexuality focused primarily on sexuality, and although gender-neutral bathrooms were referenced as part of the inclusion initiative, no interviewees explicitly named inclusion of trans and non-binary people as the motivation for their creation. One student who studied disability mentioned it as an underdiscussed aspect of diversity. UCSB interviewees, who were a more heterogeneous sample of graduate students than interviewees at SHBU, had more heterogeneous understandings of diversity. Ethnoracial diversity was described as the presence of people of color in the white public space (Hill 1998) of an HWI, with an understanding that "people of color" is a heterogeneous group—interviewees talked about ethnoracial diversity from their positionalities as Black, Native, Latinx, East Asian, South Asian, Southeast Asian, and Middle Eastern. UCSB interviewees also frequently discussed diversity in terms of gender and sexuality, a product of the visible and vocal LGBTQ+ community on campus, bolstered by the Resource Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity, as well as the fact that several interviewees were queer, trans, and/or non-binary themselves. Discourse about race and gender among UCSB interviewees frequently framed these two as

interconnected, resonating with discourse about intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1989) that circulated on campus, in public discourse, and, for many, in their discipline or subfield. Intersectionality was also familiar to interviewees through lived experience. Overall, the interconnectedness of race and gender was articulated more explicitly by women and deandre (the only nonbinary interviewee), who discussed how it manifested in the forms of discrimination and marginalization that they faced; the men whom I interviewed also demonstrated awareness of this reality, often by pointing to “white men” as the more specific group of people who dominated academia, not simply “white people.” This understanding of the relationship of ethnoracial identity to gender identity also extended to sexuality, nationality, citizenship, religion, class, and ability: in other words, while UCSB interviewees talked about diversity primarily with respect to race, they demonstrated an understanding of race as only one aspect of the complex identities that made people of color “diverse” individuals in the eyes of the institution.

The differences between SHBU and UCSB interviewees’ explanations of diversity demonstrate that diversity cannot be understood as a monolithic, agreed-upon concept. Although individuals across and within institutions had similar explanations for diversity as representation of difference, their descriptions of what diversity looked like differed in significant ways. These differences illustrate the malleability of the term *diversity* (Ahmed, 2007; Urciuoli, 2003) even among people who are not aiming to define it strategically for self-serving reasons as in IHE institutional discourse.

10.5 Definitions of inclusion

Interviewees' individually filtered and contextually-specific understandings of diversity were inextricable from their understandings of inclusion. SHBU and UCSB interviewees agreed that inclusion within the university is a form of care. In this view, care requires institutional action to create structures to ensure that students feel welcomed and that they are supported. Achieving this goal in turn entailed making space for students of different backgrounds and taking action to meet their needs. SHBU students described inclusion from the perspectives as majority students at an institution that promoted an ethic of care (Gay, 2018). Their responses primarily concerned the student body at a general level—for example, pointing out that students who were members of organizations were more included in student life than students who were not. When interviewees spoke about inclusion with regard to more specific populations (based on race or other aspects of identity), they framed inclusion as something that needed to be improved in order to benefit others. As Black students, they already felt included in the university's Black-centered culture, so changes to make the institution more inclusive were those that better acknowledged and incorporated the ethnoracial backgrounds of non-Black students. Through this lens, SHBU interviewees saw inclusion as benefitting them as majority students, since it would create opportunities for them to learn about the cultures and perspectives of non-Black peers.

UCSB interviewees' descriptions of inclusion conveyed a desire for features of institutional life that SHBU students took for granted. In an HBCU context, minoritized students have access to colleagues and FAS from similar backgrounds, and there is structural support in the form of institutional resources. Although SHBU students had their complaints

about communication, social hierarchy, and access to resources, overall, they viewed the institution as committed to supporting Black students' education, despite the need for some improvements. UCSB students, on the other hand, felt they had to constantly fight against the university to create even the smallest changes toward inclusion because the university was not fundamentally committed to making UCSB an inclusive space for students of color. Each university's inclusive practices or lack thereof were the result of its founding mission, i.e., its envisioned activities and constituents. This difference in institutional mission was captured comments by Rene and Jodi that I quoted in previous chapters.

> In the real world we are the minorities. But here, Latinos and the whites? They're the minorities. So it's like, how do we include them in a space that was **originally just created for us**." – Rene, SHBU

> Grad school as an institution thinks it's addressing the "diversity problem" but they're only approaching it from a quota perspective, not "How do you support students of color in an institution that **wasn't designed for them**?" – Jodi, UCSB

At both institutions, inclusion was a process of making space for people who were not the intended student population when the university came into being. Rene pointed out that SHBU was "originally just created for [Black people]" because they are minoritized in "the real world." As Ada and Yvette discussed in the exchange analyzed in Chapter 9, the challenge of inclusion for HBCUs is to balance opening their doors to non-Black students who may face similar structural barriers in higher education with maintaining the Black-centered culture and practices of the institution. Conversely, as an HWI, UCSB "wasn't designed for" students of color," as Jodi pointed out, but it had no explicit commitment to serve any particular group of people more specific than "the population of California." As long as it appeared to meet that goal, UCSB could make surface-level changes (i.e., enrolling more students of color) that did not fundamentally change the white-supremacist structures

that made the university an exclusionary institution (e.g., Ford & Patterson, 2019). These institutional perspectives on inclusion and conceptualizations of diversity shaped interviewees' responses to the question of why these issues matter in higher education, which also patterned by institution.

10.6 Why diversity and inclusion matter in higher education

Interviewees' explanations of why diversity and inclusion are important in higher education once again reflected their respective experiences as majority or minority students within their institutions and their socialization in a specific type of educational environment (i.e., a comprehensive university versus a research university). They also reflected different class-based perspectives on the purpose of higher education. Across both institutions, however, many interviewees' explanations were based in a shared understanding of their positioning in U.S. society as racially minoritized people.

SHBU interviewees discussed institutional diversity as part of their preparation for a transition into the workforce of "the real world." Graduate school as a whole was framed as advanced training for their careers as professionals, reflecting an understanding of higher education as a means to social mobility. Students knew that beyond the boundaries of their HBCU, predominantly Black spaces would be the exception rather than the rule in their professional lives, so they had to be prepared to work with people from varied ethnoracial backgrounds. Interacting with their non-Black—and especially their white—classmates gave them practice in talking to, collaborating with, and learning from non-Black people as they would need to in their future careers. Ada and Yvette were the only interviewees to connect

diversity and inclusion to racial equity in the broader scope of higher education, stating plainly that education should not center whiteness because not everyone is white.

By contrast, the primary reason given by UCSB interviewees to justify diversity and inclusion was research quality and innovation, demonstrating their socialization in a research university. That is, in order to solve social problems, which many explicitly stated as the purpose of research, they believed that questions should be investigated from as many perspectives as possible. In contrast to SHBU graduate students, UCSB interviewees described graduate school as a time to cultivate new knowledge, explore new ideas, challenge assumptions, and, for many, prepare for a career in academia; as a result, research rather than professionalization was at the center of their graduate school experience. The second mostly frequent reason that students gave for why diversity and inclusion matter in higher education was that it was part of the process of creating a better world and working toward social justice. Interviewees saw firsthand that what happens in society and what happens in academia mutually inform each other, and therefore they viewed education—gaining factual knowledge and the experience of being in a diverse academic setting—as a necessary tool to change institutional structures across society. A few interviewees discussed diversity and inclusion as part of the process of righting historical wrongs: increasing the representation of minoritized groups by changing the institution to be inclusive of their experiences, perspectives, and needs was integral to such equity work. The impact of institutional structures and practices on these different perspectives between SHBU and UCSB interviewees was captured in the ways that they discussed institutional discourse.

10.7 Diversity discourse versus institutional action

For both SHBU and UCSB interviewees, institutional action was more important than institutional discourse about diversity and inclusion. What is or is not discussed in that discourse and how it is talked about reflect institutional priorities and ideologies. Graduate students at both universities acknowledged that, in general, university leaders "say all the right things" to promote a positive image of the institution, including obscuring the institution's flaws and strategically highlighting its strengths. Because every IHE is different, these flaws and strengths vary; but, regardless of what they are, the extent to which these realities that are so clearly visible to students are discursively promoted or hidden is telling. As Ludwig remarked about UCSB, he did not expect the university website to state outright that many students face food and housing insecurity, but he and other interviewees found it misleading for the university to promote a Southern California lifestyle as a selling point while glossing over the high cost of that lifestyle.

Institutional discourse can also be a key part of university culture, with the circulation of particular discourses as an established community practice. At SHBU, the articulation of the university mission and slogans by FAS and students alike was a form of discourse as institutional culture.

With regard to diversity and inclusion, the relationship between action and discourse was viewed very differently by SHBU and UCSB graduate students as a result of their lived experiences within their respective institutions. For Black graduate students at SHBU, who were part of an institution structured to meet their particular educational needs, the discourse about diversity and inclusion was essentially a non-issue because the actions of the institution

were manifestations of diversity and inclusion in practice. Because SHBU showed students every day that it was committed to diversity and inclusion, it did not need to constantly remind students of that fact through discourse. Again, SHBU students did not think that the existing structures and practices were without flaws, but they had no doubts about the commitment to supporting minoritized students at the institutional level. Graduate students of color in the historically white context of UCSB saw the university taking the opposite approach: claiming but not demonstrating a commitment to diversity. From their perspective, institutional diversity discourse was promoted instead of—and in many cases openly contradicted—institutional action. This kind of "shoving [diversity] in your face every ten minutes" was unnecessary for SHBU, as Sonia emphasized. UCSB's HSI status, in particular, was framed in institutional discourse as evidence of the university's commitment to support minoritized students; interviewees, however, highlighted that this status was not based on structures or practices in place to support students, but merely the accidental demographic makeup of the institution. The happy talk of the university's discourse belied a lack of action, which allowed structural and interpersonal discrimination to occur in interviewees' everyday lives alongside continued marginalization of their institutional needs.

It is important to reiterate here that, in addition to the other factors the interviewees discussed, their criticisms of institutional diversity discourse and practice, and of their university more generally, were tempered or fueled by the factor of choice. SHBU students' decision to attend SHBU was based in an explicit desire to attend an HBCU because of what it could offer them as Black students. For several interviewees as well as other SHBU students, SHBU also provided an opportunity to pursue higher education that they would not have had otherwise. As part of its mission as an "opportunity university," SHBU enrolled

students who would be ineligible at most other four-year IHEs based on their GPAs and standardized test scores; by making undergraduate education attainable for these students, SHBU also made graduate school a possibility for them. Therefore, SHBU's graduate students' complaints were couched in appreciation for the opportunities that the university had provided them. UCSB interviewees, in contrast, chose to enroll at UCSB instead of the multiple other institutions where they had been offered admission. Because they had the option to pursue graduate study somewhere else, their criticisms of UCSB were intensified by the knowledge that they might have been able to have a better experience at a different institution and were suffering at UCSB unnecessarily. Additionally, unlike SHBU students, they did not feel that they "owed" anything to the university: UCSB had provided them with opportunity, but nothing that could not have been attained at another IHE. UCSB students would have most likely faced similar structural challenges at the university level at other institutions that offered them admission, since all were prominent research institutions as well as HWIs. Nonetheless, students' day-to-day experiences in their department and with their advisor could have been very different elsewhere. One interviewee said outright that if they could have worked with their current advisor at a different university, they would have been much happier.

The similarities and differences between graduate students' experiences and perspectives at SHBU and at UCSB demonstrate that, while no single IHE can serve every student in all the ways that they need, there are clear areas of common need for graduate students of color in U.S. higher education. These have been illustrated by interviewees' perspectives on the purpose of graduate school, access to resources, relationships to more powerful institution members, definitions of diversity and inclusion and their importance in

higher education, and the relationship between institutional discourse and action. Each IHE's specific mission, historiy, and legal restrictions or requirements make a one-size-fits-all solution impossible. However, this comparison makes it possible to imagine an educational model that incorporates the best of both worlds to structurally improve graduate education at SHBU, UCSB, and other institutions.

10.8 Structural issues impacting the experiences of graduate students of color

The majority of interviewees' experiences could be traced back to four overarching structural issues that shaped their graduate education. Two were specific to UCSB: UCSB has MSI status but did not operate in an MSI model, and UCSB was institutionally resistant to talking about the realities of higher education. The other two occured in IHEs across the U.S. and manifested in institutionally specific ways at both UCSB and SHBU: graduate students did not have a clear understanding of their university's structure and fiscal operations, and the cost of creating a supportive institutional culture for students of color was uncompensated labor. Below, I describe how specific experiences described by interviewees were connected to these structures and practices.

10.8.1 UCSB had MSI status but did not operate in an MSI model

The preceding comparison between UCSB and SHBU has made clear that the integrated and synergistic institutional structures to support minoritized students that exist at other MSIs were not in place at UCSB. As discussed above and in Chapter 8, SHBU's mission as an HBCU provided an explicit, student-centered framework for operations at all levels of the university; SHBU promoted access to higher education for everyone, and it had structures and practices in place to foster students' persistence through their programs.

UCSB's mission as a public research university did not have the same clear focus on student success, and its diversity and inclusion framework focused primarily on access to the university for underrepresented students without an accompanying focus on retention and student success. As defined by Conrad and Gasman (2015, p. 23), "Central to the shared mission of MSIs is a widely shared assumption about postsecondary education: not only can all students succeed, but faculty, staff, students, and surrounding communities share an obligation to see that all students are successful." At the regional comprehensive IHEs that constitute the majority of HSIs, structural support for undergraduates may take the form of tailored mentoring programs, academic coaching, and dedicated staff who support students from minoritized backgrounds in ways that integrate academic and social life (Conrad & Gasman, 2015). At UCSB, Academic Affairs and Student Affairs were two separate arms of the university, and although there were offices dedicated to resources for certain populations of students, there were not the type of comprehensive mentoring programs to support undergraduate students from minoritized backgrounds described in Conrad and Gasman (2015). As a result, labor that should have been the responsibility of faculty or dedicated staff fell on graduate students in their roles as course instructors and supervisors of undergraduate research assistants. Graduate students of color felt especially compelled to support undergraduates because they knew firsthand how difficult it could be to navigate an HWI without support and that if they did not step in to help students it was possible no one else ever would. The burden for graduate students who provided this informal mentoring was exacerbated by UCSB's constantly increasingly undergraduate enrollment but relatively stagnant number of faculty and graduate students of color. The university created larger class

sizes and lab sizes but did not increased the number of graduate students that undergraduates from minoritized groups would seek out for mentorships.

Because UCSB did not operate according to an MSI model, the university was a hostile, exclusionary space for graduate students of color. UCSB interviewees described it as a structurally, culturally, and ideologically white-dominated institution. There were few faculty of color, and the white faculty responsible for advising the majority of graduate students of color generally did not know how to support them, or, in some cases, had no interest in trying to do so. In the competitive research-focused culture of UCSB, proactive faculty mentoring of graduate students was the exception rather than the rule. Academic advising—which varied in form from one faculty member to the next—typically did not go beyond ensuring students progressed through program requirements. But, as discussed, professional practices that are expected of graduate students in addition to their formal program requirements (e.g., attending conferences, publishing) are often part of the hidden curriculum for graduate students of color.

Graduate students at UCSB, including but not limited to those I interviewed, took drastic measures to make the white-supremacist institution they were part of survivable, but enduring discrimination, the emotional labor of educating others about social and political issues, and fighting for structural change without structural support negatively impacted their mental health and academic performance. For some, the solution was to spend as little time as possible physically present on campus and to interact minimally with people outside of their carefully constructed support network while they finished their program. In an MSI model where faculty and staff are invested in students' well-being as much as their academic success, these behaviors of withdrawal would have been flagged and followed-up on, but this

was not the practice at UCSB, and as a result many students suffered through their program or left completely.

10.8.2 UCSB did not publicly discuss the realities of higher education

At IHEs that serve students from minoritized backgrounds, including both HBCUs and regional HSIs, informing students about the logistics and practicalities of pursuing higher education is standard practice. First-generation students, students from low-income backgrounds, and non-traditional students—all categories that include many students of color—must make decisions about finances, location, and time commitments, and the institution itself is typically the best, if not the only, source for the information that determines whether they will enroll (e.g., Engle, 2007). This information includes the cost of pursuing a degree compared to the opportunities that that degree creates: How much are tuition, fees, and room and board? What are options for financial aid? What percentage of students find employment after they graduate? What fields are they in and what are their salaries? This type of information is often easily found on MSI websites and presented in accessible formats like charts and graphs. Research has shown that students' motivations for pursing higher education have become increasingly extrinsic over the past few decades —that is, preparing for jobs with good salaries increasingly outweighs any intrinsic desire to learn. Moreover, students' extrinsic motivation increases during times of increased income inequality (Twenge & Donnelly, 2016). For many students from low-income households, higher education is a crucial means to social mobility for themselves and their family (Blackwell & Pinder, 2014; Guiffrida et al., 2013), so even if they are also intrinsically motivated, they understand education as an investment in their financial future as much as an opportunity to gain new knowledge and experiences. If students cannot be certain that attending a specific university,

pursuing a particular degree, and spending large amounts of time and money to do so is a good investment, they will find alternatives.

Openly discussing this economic reality was much less common at UCSB than at SHBU. At SHBU, where serving students who face structural barriers was a core commitment of the university, students' financial situations, educational goals and reasons for enrolling at SHBU, and institutional needs to achieve academic and career success were common topics of discussion among faculty and staff as well as in institutional discourse. At UCSB, in contrast, talk about money centered on research grants, prestigious monetary awards, and other sources of faculty and institutional funding that enhanced the university's reputation. Institutional discourse referenced the number of enrolled students who received Pell Grants (need-based grants for students from low-income families) and similar statistics as evidence of institutional diversity, but students' economic realities and how that impacted their decision making throughout their educational and economic careers—including their decision to pursue higher education in the first place—was not a common point of discussion, at least in public spaces. UCSB had only a few undergraduate professional programs (e.g., pre-law) and no full professional schools or colleges (e.g., business school), and these are the types of programs that explicitly focus on students' specific career goals and discuss the costs and benefits of pursing an advanced degree. Because many students must take out loans for professional programs, in contrast to the expectation that one is paid to do research as a Ph.D. student, financial considerations and career prospects are far from taboo topics in these programs. The lack of public discussion about the economic reality of higher education was a result of UCSB's institutional identity as an elite research institution. The UC mission statement frames the university as a place where knowledge is generated

and frames that knowledge as the university's primary service to society. It references jobs and economic impact only with regard to UC as an employer of researchers and the economic impact of inventions based on research conducted at UC. Through this framing, it is implied that the pursuit and generation of knowledge would be students' primary motivation for enrolling at a UC campus, whether as an undergraduate or graduate student, regardless of cost or career plans.

At the graduate level, learning and conducting research were students' primary motivations for pursuing an advanced degree, as would have been true whether they attended UCSB or another research institution. On the other hand, graduate students' reasons for pursuing their degree—that is, what they wanted to do with the knowledge they learned and generated—varied. Some students were interested in pursuing jobs in industry, the non-profit sector, politics, or other fields, but the university was primarily structured as if all Ph.D. students would become faculty at research institutions. This institutional assumption about graduate students' reasons for pursuing a research-based degree, specifically, and their motivations for attending UC, generally, were major contributors to UCSB interviewees' frustrations. These assumptions perpetuated a mismatch between students' needs and expectations, on the one hand, and the type of academic and professional training they were receiving, on the other. The type of students that faculty assumed they were teaching and training and the types of students that were actually in their classrooms and labs were not aligned. Many interviewees felt their graduate program and/or UCSB as a whole did not provide the resources they needed in order to develop a clear plan for how to make themselves competitive for jobs after graduation. Because the career interests of graduate students of color are often closely related to their cultural background, many interviewees felt

marginalized in multiple ways by the institution: by the inequitable institutional structures, by the diversity efforts that failed to change these structures, and by the practices of faculty who ignored or made assumptions about their interests, needs, and goals.

10.8.3 Graduate students did not have a clear understanding of their university's structure and fiscal operations

A reality that was made abundantly clear by what both UCSB and SHBU interviewees shared was that graduate students wanted to understand the institution they attended so that they could navigate it strategically, but they were not given the information they needed to do so. They did not have the necessary knowledge about the hierarchical structures of the university, how financial decisions were made and by whom, and/or the relationship of the university to other institutions. Even at the departmental level, graduate students did not necessarily know how practices were determined by Graduate Division, divisional deans (e.g., Dean of Social Sciences), the university Chancellor, and the UC President. Without that information, graduate students of color could not fully understand why certain institutional decisions were made and what types of institutional changes were feasible and worth pursuing.

UCSB's numerous offices, divisions, colleges, and departments, combined with its status as a campus in a ten-university system, made the university's structure opaque to many. At the same time, despite its rhetoric about its mission as a public university, UCSB did not demonstrate a clear connection with or responsibility to the public it served. In its institutional discourse, the impact of research conducted by members of the institution was framed as the main way the university contributed to society; although partnerships with individuals, local communities, other universities in the state existed at UCSB, these types of relationships were not promoted as prominently as research. This created an insular view of

the university as distanced or disconnected from most sectors of society, which obscured the intricate relationship of the university to local and state lawmakers, federal institutions, businesses, and individual donors.

There was also persistent and overt refusal among faculty and administrators to provide graduate students of color with information about the structures and practices of the university and academia more broadly. This practice was justified using infantilizing discourses about what students could "handle" or "needed to know"—an assessment that people in positions of power made without input from the students themselves. Several UCSB interviewees described asking for information precisely because they possessed the knowledge and skills to understand it (e.g., based on their experience managing projects for major organizations) and/or they because they knew it was precisely the information they needed to make an informed decision about a given issue. These requests were met with statements such as "You wouldn't understand it," "You don't need to know that," or "Focus on getting through X right now before worrying about that." The requested information usually related to accessing people or resources on campus, participating in equity and inclusion work, or trying to take actions that would yield future career benefits. Students were actively trying to learn and change the system and faculty and administrators were actively making that process more difficult. For example, one interviewee described an effort by graduate students in their department to make funding for graduate student initiatives a line item in the budget (modeled on similar efforts of graduate student organizations with Graduate Division). They were asked by staff to make a budget for the proposal but were denied access to the department's existing budget when they asked to see it. Without that information, the students had to guess what a reasonable budget request was instead of

making an informed proposal. In this particular case, the fraught relationship between graduate students and staff in the department contributed to tensions, but in my conversations with UCSB faculty, it became clear that the department staff may not have had a concrete budget to give the students regardless of whether they wanted to or not. This example captured graduate students' frustration trying to work within an institutional structure that they knew was money-motivated without knowing exactly how it worked.

Because SHBU was a fairly small university and a close-knit community, graduate students knew who institutional leaders were: they could identify leaders by name and had likely met them at least once. This was especially true of graduate students who were SHBU alumni, since they had had additional years to figure out the university. The graduate students that I interviewed were not actively involved in trying to change the university structure, but they expressed frustration with distribution of resources, and part of that frustration seemed to stem from being unable to discern the motivations behind institutional choices. Rene critiqued the university's focus on new buildings over her understaffed department and attributed this to the prioritization of STEM by the President and Provost. Most interviewees, however, spoke about funding and other resources using language such as "I don't understand why they don't do X/aren't able to provide X." This applied to higher wages for GAs, building graduate housing, and other resources. One interviewee acknowledged that SHBU's relatively low tuition meant that it had less institutional revenue to allocate to these types of resources. Noticeably absent from interviewees' criticisms were mentions of the institutions other than the university—particularly the state government—that also influenced the university's structures and practices. This suggested an inaccurately insular understanding of the university and who made decisions on its behalf.

At neither university was the budget discussed publicly with students, and neither institution at the time had a program in educational administration where interested students could learn about university operations in a structured course. This meant that if graduate students wanted to know more about the university budget, they had to ask a faculty or staff member, who might also not have much concrete information either, or wade through publicly available formal documents like UC's operating budget report and annual financial report. For students who are unfamiliar with the genre of university reports and are simply trying to develop a basic understanding of why certain financial decisions are made, these dense documents are inaccessible and likely do not answer their core questions.

At SHBU, talking about money was not taboo and neither was talking about structural racism, but during my time there I never encountered a discussion of how structural racism impacted the university's finances and how that shaped the university's operation at every level. With a few exceptions, interviewees did not orient to the university budget as shaping their experiences as minoritized students, even if they oriented to finances more generally. While on the surface, university budgets and the lived experiences of graduate students of color may not seem intimately connected, institutional commitment to equity and inclusion for minoritized students in the current corporatized model of higher education is fundamentally shaped by money. If students of color are denied information about the structures and operations of their institution, they are denied the opportunity to advocate for themselves and for institutional change as successfully as possible: without nuanced understanding of the institutional ecosystem in which they work and learn, it is difficult for students to truly challenge, or at the very least avoid replicating, the rhetoric and practices that perpetuate the inequity they critiqued.

10.8.4 The cost of creating a supportive institutional culture for graduate students of color is uncompensated labor

Academia in the U.S. is not structured to systematically support students from minoritized backgrounds. Individual institutions, departments, and offices may have structures in place that attend to the specific needs of students of color, such as the MSI model discussed above, but on the whole, university members have to work against university structures to offer students meaningful support. As discussed in Chapter 6, responsibility for the types of activities that create inclusive institutional spaces tends to fall on minoritized scholars, particularly women of color (e.g., Duncan, 2014; Jimenez et al., 2019; Moore, 2017), and the typically uncompensated labor they perform is not viewed as academically meritorious in the dominant "teaching, research, and service" framework used to measure faculty and graduate student success. In other words, scholars whose academic work is already under great scrutiny within the white-supremacist structures and expectations of higher education are expected to take time away from that work to support students of color because the academy is not designed to do so—and they are generally expected to do so without pay or other reward. This labor includes mentorship outside of a structured program; leading workshops, panels, and townhalls to educate community members on issues; establishing safe spaces for minoritized members of the university community; revising institutional statements and websites; and other forms of labor that are considered "service" by the institution, yet they frequently do not count as the "right" kinds of service in merit and promotion reviews.

The lack of structural support for graduate students and faculty of color is detrimental to both groups. Graduate students of color seek mentorship from faculty of color, but faculty are stretched thin trying to support undergraduates. Undergraduates who are unable to access

faculty of color turn to graduate students of color instead. Without advice from faculty of color about how to manage the institution's and undergraduates' expectations about graduate students' time and labor, graduate students of color may overcommit to diversity and inclusion work at the expense of research that will help them be competitive in their target career; faculty of color may do the same and jeopardize their progress toward tenure and promotion (e.g., Garrison-Wade et al., 2012). The need for the labor of scholars of color to make IHEs survivable, if not welcoming and supportive, for students of color is unavoidable until the systems of higher education change drastically. However, the fact that such labor is almost entirely uncompensated—whether financially or through formal recognition as meritorious work—does not have to be the case.

Although this issue is most pronounced at HWIs, the burden of creating supportive institutional spaces through uncompensated labor is not unique to them. At HBCUs like SHBU, faculty of color are still doing the majority of the labor to foster inclusive spaces that meet students' needs: they just happen to be the majority rather than the minority in that setting. The state funding structures that deny HBCUs sufficient economic support lead to the lack of resources that SHBU interviewees described, and faculty, administrators, and staff are expected to maintain the high-touch, close mentorship MSI model of support despite inadequate resources. In the words of one SHBU faculty member, "You know how back in the day the slaves made do with the scraps? And they made something out of nothing? That's what they still expect around here...They want champagne out of champipple." Fostering students' social and emotional well-being is as much an expectation for faculty as is fostering students' academic success—an expectation that faculty are aware of when they take the job. Compared to faculty at high-resourced HWIs like UCSB, SHBU and other MSI faculty are

expected to do much more to support students but with much less. The model of uncompensated labor to support equity and inclusion efforts, in whatever form it takes at a particular IHE, is unsustainable and contributes to burnout and attrition among students and faculty of color alike (e.g., Lam, 2018; Lerma et al., 2020).

10.9 Conclusion

The four institutional structures and practices discussed in this section are not the only ones relevant to interviewees' experiences, but all are connected to multiple facets of the negative experiences that graduate students described. The consequences of UCSB's lack of an MSI model for student support and its resistance to open discussion about students' varied motivations for pursuing higher education, as well as the inaccessibility of information about university operations and the burden of uncompensated equity and inclusion work on minoritized scholars at both institutions, consistently manifested in graduate students' lives. In Chapter 11, I discuss recommendations for institutional changes to address these structural issues based on the findings of this study and existing literature.

CHAPTER 11: Conclusions and recommendations for change

The narratives shared by interviewees resonate with the findings of years of scholarship on the experiences of students of color in public higher education, including studies that have demonstrated the numerous ways that graduate education can be academically and emotionally challenging for students of color (e.g., Gay, 2004; Gildersleeve et al., 2011; Posselt, 2021). The racism and white supremacy that are endemic to the U.S. have made higher education dehumanizing for students of color at HWIs in particular (e.g., Smith et al., 2007; Solórzano & Yosso, 2001) due to racial isolation and tokenism (Niemann, 2016), poor relationships with faculty advisors (Hyun, 2006), and overall campus racial climate (Ward & Zarate, 2015). My finding that diversity efforts fail to address structural barriers to racial equity in higher education such as these also resonate with previous research, as the robust literature in critical university studies and critical diversity studies elucidate (e.g., Ahmed, 2012; Andersen, 1999; Urciuoli, 2003). This study's data-rich descriptions of graduate student life at two very different MSIs have made clear the complexity and messiness of diversity in a way that pushes back against oversimplified notions of universally applicable "best practices" for fostering diversity. By documenting and analyzing students' experiences and the institutional factors that shape them in the level of detail that I have provided here, I have laid the foundations for a body of ethnographically based critical diversity scholarship that centers graduate students of color and can be used to paint a more comprehensive picture of U.S. higher education in order to make more appropriate plans to address ongoing issues.

Through my analytical focus on discourse and especially narratives, I have illustrated key features of institutional diversity discourse that are used to normalize ideologies and

practices that can harm graduate students of color. Although interviewees were aware of this discourse's impact on their educational experiences, many did not engage with it closely or critically. Laying out the common features and functions of institutional diversity discourse as I have done in Chapters 3 through 5 provides a guide for how and why students of color should interrogate the nuances of the diversity discourse they see and hear. Beyond being cringe-worthy, confusing, or semantically empty, this discourse may reinforce these students marginal institutional status by objectifying them as commodities, shifting responsibility to support students or affect meaningful change away from the institution, or discussing diversity in ways that are disconnected from histories of oppression and exclusion. Knowing what to look for, students of color can glean more insights about an IHE or a department's values and ideologies from its website and other official discourse—insights that may sway decisions about where to enroll.

UCSB graduate students' narratives in Chapters 5 and 6 showed that students of color in an HWI context were especially aware of the messaging of diversity discourse. From their perspective, informed by the discrimination that they faced in their everyday lives at the university, this discourse was optimistic at best and intentionally deceptive at worst. The mismatch between the pro-diversity discourse circulated by faculty and administrators, on the one hand, and the inequitable structures and practices that graduate students observed, on the other, played a major role in how much students felt they could trust or believe in their department or the university. In this way, diversity discourse shaped how graduate students of color moved through UCSB—for example, who they interacted with, who they avoided, and how they felt about doing typically uncompensated or poorly compensated labor that benefited the institution. As discussed above, their narratives also revealed the limitations of

their knowledge about the academic ecology they were part of, but that limitation was often externally imposed by faculty or administrators who used their institutional positions to make decisions about what they believed graduate students should or needed to know.

One of the major innovations of this study as critical diversity research is the use of comparative ethnography at two MSIs. UCSB's status as both an HWI and an HIS, combined with SHBU's status as an HBCU, enabled me to interrogate the relationship between MSI status and diversity. SHBU students' narratives in Chapters 7 and 8 demonstrated that this relationship depends greatly on the mission of the IHE. These students' perspectives as Black students at a predominantly Black university posed questions that were not applicable to a an accidental MSI like UCSB: If an institution was created to serve students from a particular minoritized ethnoracial group, what types of diversity should that institution strive to represent? How does diversity fit into the institutional structures designed around this original purpose? These students' narratives collectively brought to light the assumptions inherent in dominant discourses about diversity in higher education by nature of their origins in HWI contexts.

The questions and contradictions that came to light in this study must be further probed in future scholarship. In particular, investigating the experiences of graduate students of color at other types of institutions (e.g., small liberal arts colleges, historically HSIs) will provide new insights into the institution-specific factors that impact students of color and how they navigate these IHEs. As the country's demographics and sociopolitical climate continue to change, scholarship from different time periods will also contribute to the diachronic understanding of diversity, which was indispensable in my own analyses. In this final chapter, I offer recommendations for changes to improve efforts toward racial equity in

U.S. higher education. These recommendations are actions that can improve institutional diversity discourse and improve institutional structures and practices to more closely align with the idealized images constructed through that discourse.

11.1 Examples of recommendations from graduate student interviewees

The interviewees in this study wanted changes in their day-to-day lives as much as large-scale structural changes—the two, of course, being inextricable. They highlighted the benefits of being part of a diverse university community and also recognized that representation of difference is an insufficient goal for their IHE if the target is structural change. Graduate students of color imagined how their universities could be different and could better meet the needs of students from minoritized backgrounds; some of their imaginings depended on altruism that does not exist in today's higher education system, but their desires for IHEs to actively work to increase structural equity were not fantastical. As discussed in Chapter 7, many of the negative experiences that interviewees shared could be traced to specific institutional structures, practices, and people. In this chapter, I provide a non-exhaustive list of examples of small-scale and large-scale actions that can be initiated at IHEs to remedy these negative experiences in short-term and long-term ways. The scope and scale of changes, like graduate students' experiences, depend on institutional resources and priorities, and the recommendations range in cost and difficulty, as well as responsible parties. The examples in this chapter also include possible workarounds to common forms of pushback or resistance to suggested changes.

To illustrate what I mean by varied scope and scale and short-terms versus long-term changes, the following five examples are suggestions offered by graduate students, each with

a discussions of possible ways that a department or IHE could implement or approximate that change.

1. Vary days and times of campus events so more commuter students can attend.

At the department level, assign events such as colloquium talks and research group meetings consistent timeslots over the term. Make these events a formalized part of the department schedule so that classes, meetings, and other department obligations can be scheduled around it. This way students who want to attend can make it part of their schedule and make the necessary arrangements to be present. Avoid days and times when fewer students are on campus or commuter students have likely already left—by "vary days and times" the interviewee who made this suggestion meant avoid Friday afternoons, which was when many of their department's professional development events occurred. If possible, record events so that people who are not able to attend in person have access to the content asynchronously; many of the institutional adjustments and accommodations made for talks during the COVID-19 pandemic, including recording equipment and online venues to upload videos, can be used to increase students' access to these events.

2. Set up a digital department forum so that new graduate students can be in dialogue with advanced students who are not physically present.

During the pandemic, platforms such as Slack and Discord became popular tools to facilitate remote and asynchronous communication in addition to IHEs' established digital platforms for courses and departmental communications (e.g., Moodle, Blackboard). Graduate students can create a student-only digital space where new students could connect with older students, current students could connect with alumni, and commuters and other students who spend less time physically present in the department could stay connected with

their peers. Asynchronous online communication would be a no- to low-cost resource to foster relationships, building up to a live event with department alumni (potentially an annual virtual event), where current students could ask alumni about how knowledge, skills, and experiences within the program transferred to jobs afterwards. Current students could also ask alumni what they wished they had done during their time in the program and other general recommendation for successfully completing the program. This would benefit new and advanced students alike by giving them access to directly relevant information that can inform how they strategically plan their time in the program.

3. **When the department has a job search, have the hiring committee tell graduate students what qualities they looked for in candidates to help students prepare for the academic job market.**

Because of confidentiality concerns, members of a search committee may not be able to tell students very much about the pool of candidates. Faculty can, however, share with students how a job ad is created: what experiences, skills, and interests does the committee want candidates to have and how is that translated into the language of the job ad? Faculty can also share what they expect candidates to demonstrate at each stage of the job search—initial application, first-round interview, final-round interview, and job talk—and how faculty preferences may differ from students' based on each groups' perceptions of department needs. Additionally, offering graduate students the opportunity to serve as members of hiring committees for faculty positions related to their area of research will give them first-hand insights into how applications are read, qualities are assessed, and candidates are compared by committee members. (I had the opportunity to serve on two search committees, and the experience of reading applications, acting as an interviewer, and

engaging in discussion with the other committee members greatly informed my preparation for the academic job market.)

4. Provide dedicated mental health resources for graduate students.

Encourage graduate students to seek out mental health resources by having counselors interact directly with students as part of department or campus-wide graduate student orientations, mental health workshops, or other graduate student-specific events. If there are no mental health resources dedicated to graduate students, demonstrate the importance of making time to access the shared recourses that are available and/or have professionals share trustworthy alternative resources. Depending on the institution-internal resources available, bringing in specialists may require additional spending.

5. Create new or additional graduate housing.

Building new housing is a years-long and often administratively onerous process, made more or less difficult by an IHEs' available physical space and financial resources. Building new housing for graduate students may be low priority relative to new undergraduate housing or renovating existing housing structures. If new housing space is not an option, one alternative that benefits graduate students and others is reallocating existing housing space to graduate resident assistants (RAs) who live in the residence halls and have their housing paid as part of their employment (in addition to an hourly wage). This reduces those students' financial burden, and they fulfill needed roles within IHE housing including monitoring activity, responding to problems, and create programming. If graduate RAs work in undergraduate housing, their presence creates opportunities for connection between graduate and undergraduate students who might not cross paths otherwise, which may pique undergraduate students' interest in graduate school.

The suggestions above are a sample of the many suggestions offered by interviewees to address both structural and interpersonal issues at their university and in academia. In the following sections, I offer recommendations for change in three areas based on interviewees' direct suggestions, other findings of this study, previous literature, and current models of interventions to increase equity in higher education. In Section 11.2, I recommend changes to diversity discourse on IHE websites based on my findings in Chapters 3, 4, and 5. In Section 11.3, I recommend changes to address the four structural issues identified in Chapter 10. Then, in Section 10.4, I provide critical questions for graduate students, faculty, and administrators to ask about institutional structures and the experiences of students of color at their institution. In Section 11.5, I provide sample resources including models of institutional interventions and online resources for professional development. As I will reiterate throughout this discussion, it is not the responsibility of people from marginalized groups to change their department, institution, or discipline on their own. The recommendations below are the responsibility of people in positions of institutional and structural power more than anyone else, guided by the (compensated) expertise of students and faculty of color.

11.2 Recommendations for IHE websites

Although graduate students did not look at their universities' websites often or in great detail, they were very familiar with the types of institutional diversity discourse that appeared on them. The UCSB students interviewed in focus groups expressed a general wariness of website discourse. They recognized it as institutional marketing intended to present a positive image of the university to the public, and they knew from firsthand experience that it minimized or elided the very real challenges that minoritized students face every day. Like students of color in other studies (e.g., Shook, 2019), UCSB interviewees

were frustrated by what they perceived as an intentional institutional decision to misrepresent the university's degree of diversity and support for students of color—a decision that hinged on the assumption that students would not notice these differences, or at least not until they were already committed to the university. In addition to idealized portrayals of university life, IHE website discourse conveyed institutional ideologies about diversity that informed decisions about institutional structures and practices. Below are recommendations for website diversity discourse to minimize perceptions by students of color that such discourse is misleading or deceptive. These discourse practices should, of course, be accompanied by institutional action.

11.2.1 Avoid diversity "happy talk" (Bell & Hartmann, 2007) and do not perpetuate the "fiction of diversity without oppression" (Anderson, 1999).

Diversity is a quality of the university community. It is something that exists when people of different backgrounds are part of the same institution; it is not a sociopolitical belief system. To avoid equating diversity with equity, inclusion, justice, or anti-racism, websites should explicitly name the latter and explain each is needed at the institution. HWIs should publicly acknowledge the forms of structural exclusion that have perpetuated homogeneity and segregation in U.S. IHEs—often intentionally—and that structural change, not just compositional diversity, is needed for progress. In particular, elite IHEs that operate in prestige (i.e., limited access) models should acknowledge their institutional histories of structural exclusion and the exploitation of minoritized communities that afforded their establishment and generation of wealth. In other words, HWIs need to state that a lack of institutional diversity is the product of oppressive structures, and therefore oppressive structures have to be eradicated in order for diversity to increase. Legally, public IHEs must

demonstrate diversity's "compelling institutional interest," but that requirement does not preclude them from acknowledging the relationship between structural oppression and institutional diversity. Discussing diversity through this lens centers the needs and experiences of students of color and other minoritized students, who may be marginalized in IHE diversity discourse despite being the "diverse" students. Diversity "happy talk" that elides the discrimination and inequity that students of color face—in combination with the behaviors of students' white peers and faculty—can have the effect of institutional gaslighting (e.g., Abramson, 2014; Davis & Ernst, 2019): these students may begin to doubt the severity or reality of racist experiences, feel confused by others' lack of attention to issues, and consider themselves trapped by an inability to make others see what they see.

11.2.2 Be concrete and be specific about institutional action.

When institutional discourse is connected to tangible actions, discourse about diversity seems less empty and abstract. IHE website creators should aim for active framings of diversity and inclusion with specific details, which convey that working toward meaningful diversity is an-ongoing process and that the institution has a plan to do so. Graduate students and undergraduates alike can recognize when rhetoric is only rhetoric, and empty rhetoric on websites is precisely the type of diversity discourse that frustrated interviewees.

In their analysis of commitments to diversity and social justice on IHE websites, LePeau et al. (2018, p. 24) found that "overall, while campus educators espoused goals, statements and strategic plans related to these goals, rarely was tangible evidence included regarding how they are achieved." To remedy this lack of evidence, websites should explain how the institution and its members will actively work to change the current state of diversity

on campus: what are the institutions' goals, what actions will be taken to reach them, and what are the plans to assess these actions? For example, as suggested by multiple focus groups participants, a website should list financial resources available to low-income students and/or students of color to support their academic development, such as research fellowships and program application fee waivers. In line with avoiding "happy talk," websites should explicitly name the barriers to diversity that currently exist, such as white supremacy and classism, and the concrete actions the institution will take to dismantle them. Minoritized students face structural barriers every day and therefore already know these barriers exist—they want to know what the institution is going to do about them.

It is important to emphasize here that the actions and resources presented on a website as evidence of the institution's commitment to diversity and its plan to improve racial equity cannot be the co-opted labor of students of color (Lerma et al., 2020). Identity-based campus organizations and department groups that are founded and sustained by students from marginalized backgrounds lead campus efforts for social justice: they center students' needs, identify the necessary actions needed to meet them, and put pressure on institutional leaders to pay attention. Through informational meetings and workshops, social events, research showcases, and community networking events, these groups also offer the social and psychological support that many students need in order to persevere at racist IHEs. As described by UCSB interviewees, these groups also often struggle for consistent institutional funding despite being showcased on websites. An IHE website needs to give credit to students for forming and leading organizations, hosting events, and creating other campus resources; the website should specify how the institution supports these efforts (e.g.,

providing funding, space, major advertisement) rather than claiming those efforts as those of the institution.

11.2.3 Choose diversity-related terminology carefully.

Poorly defined and poorly chosen terminology can hinder the intended meaning of discourse, and some linguistic choices reinforce rather than challenge discriminatory ideologies. Although some language, like ethnoracial labels for domestic students, is imposed top-down by state or federal guidelines, other language choices are the within the power of the individuals responsible for website content. Whichever terms are used, websites should define them and explain their relevance to the institution so that students know exactly what the message of website discourse is supposed to be. For example, websites should define the identities and backgrounds that fall under the umbrella of *diversity* and explain how *equity* means something different than *equality*.

Taking the time to reflect on and research linguistic options for diversity discourse can also help to minimize unintended messaging that may deter minoritized students from enrolling and/or may bolster ideologies about diversity that hinder meaningful structural changes. Website copywriters should ask whether current buzzwords capture what the institution does or is aiming to achieve: that is, are concepts such as “inclusive excellence” used because they are accurate or because they are popular? The history and connotation of popular terms should also be researched, and there is a constantly growing body of critical academic literature on IHE websites that can facilitate this practice (e.g., articles in *Journal of Marketing for Higher Education* and *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education*). Institutions should provide access to relevant literature to website copywriters, as well as

compensate them for the time spent engaging with this scholarship by including it as part of the expectations for their job from the beginning.

Two additional diversity discourse features that should be used with intentionality and reflexivity are acronyms and descriptors for minoritized populations. Cutesy or clever acronyms may come across to readers as "cringe-worthy" and belittling the seriousness of an issue; readers may perceive the institution as prioritizing words that make a good acronym over words that best convey meaningful and accurate ideas. UCSB interviewees criticized Stanford University's acronym IDEAL (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access in a Learning Environment), and the acronyms HUGs (historically underrepresented groups) and JEDI (justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion) also fit this category. With regard to descriptors for minoritized populations, websites should avoid passive labels that erase the structures and institutional practices that contribute to the marginal status of these groups. For instance, the adjectives *minoritized* and *marginalized* capture the fact that unequal institutional status among different populations is the result of an ongoing process. People are pushed into the minority or the margins; it is not simply "the way things are." *Minoritized* reflects the fact that people can be structurally disadvantaged regardless of their relative representation: one clear example in U.S. higher education is the treatment of Asian American students, who are overrepresented at numerous IHEs but whose ideas and cultures are still minoritized because they are people of color. *Minorities,* in comparison, is used by many people interchangeably with *people of color* and some use it strategically to mean compositional minority (e.g., "diversity of thought" arguments discussed in Chapter 5). Another common passive term, as discussed in Chapter 5, is *underrepresented*, which is used

in reference to people from communities that are more accurately described as *structurally excluded.*

Additionally, descriptors in the form of ethnoracial labels should be selected carefully based on who the labels are meant to represent and the relative clarity of one term over another. For example, *people of color* has been criticized, by Black and Indigenous people in particular, for homogenizing the experiences of all racially minoritized groups; many people who are included within that category do not identify with that label (see Chapter 2 for a discussion of why I chose to use this term). To address this issue, the acronym BIPOC was introduced and adopted in many academic circles, but it is has been used by some to mean "Black and Indigenous people of color" and by others to mean "Black, Indigenous, People of Color," making phrases like *BIPOC students* unclear.

11.2.4 Acknowledge intra-group difference and the interconnectedness of identities.

Umbrella terms such as *students of color*, *underrepresented groups*, and *students from diverse backgrounds* refer to heterogeneous populations. In some cases, it is sufficient to use general term such as these, because no specific group is being referred to; however, differences in backgrounds and identities among students that fit these labels lead to different educational experiences. Like stating the reality of white supremacy in U.S. higher education, acknowledging the heterogeneity of minoritized students' identities and experiences on an IHE website reflects institutional awareness. A website does not have to delve into the nuances of intersectionality theory to point out that, for example, queer and trans students of color face different social and institutional challenges than white queer and trans students as well as cisgender and heterosexual students of color, or that disabled students of color

experiences institutions differently than their able-bodied peers. Websites should convey an understanding that broad ethnoracial categories such as *Black* and *Latinx* include a diversity of nationalities and ethnic groups, that *students of color* includes domestic and international students, and that *international* is not, in fact, an ethnoracial category despite being frequently represented as such in demographic data (Ford & Patterson, 2019). Websites should also acknowledge that there is significant overlap between the varied groups that are the focus of diversity discourses and practices—for example, domestic students of color, low-income students, and non-traditional students, and first-generation students—so that students do not believe themselves to be siloed into one group or another or that only one aspect of their identity is relevant to diversity at that institution.

11.2.5 Use student-centered language.

Because students, particularly prospective students, are IHE websites' primary target audience, websites should speak directly to that audience and center them in discourse. As discussed in Chapter 5, historically Minority Serving Institutions in my analysis did both: one strategy was to use second-person pronouns (forms of *you*) and another was to explicitly state that students were the institution's top priority. Student centered language conveys the institution's commitment to students beyond the consumer or bureaucratic relationship characteristic of contemporary neoliberal models of higher education. Highlighting a commitment to students—the institutions' responsibility for their academic success, at the very least—contrasts with institution-centered discourse that implicitly tell students that they are lucky to even be part of the community.

11.2.6 Feature naturalistic photos and ensure students understand how their photos may be used in campus materials.

Students look at enough IHE websites to recognize photo cliches, and students who have appeared in website photos know how they came to be: photos were either taken without students' awareness for candid shots of campus life, or students were approached directly by a photographer while somewhere on campus. Being chased by a campus photographer and/or being the unwitting face of diversity on multiple pages of an IHE website are common enough experiences among students of color at PWIs that they have become running jokes on TikTok and other social media platforms. UCSB focus group participants criticized non-candid website photos for looking staged and unrealistic in their composition, and both are consequences of how these types of photos are achieved.

Photographers and website creators should avoid highly staged group photos: these are the ones in which nearly everyone is conveniently of a different perceived ethnoracial background, everyone is grinning widely, and/or the models do not appear to be friends with each other based on their stiff posture. In organically formed friend groups, even very ethnoracially diverse ones, there is not typically "one-of-each" person of color; instead, there are at least two people with similar ethnoracial backgrounds, since students like to be around people similar to themselves (Tatum, 2017). For more naturalistic group photos, at least some of the multiracial groups featured should reflect this reality by having two or more students of color from similar ethnoracial backgrounds. Another way to achieve less staged-looking group photos is to photograph groups of people that actually know each other. Their body language and style of interaction will likely be more friendly and open compared to that of strangers asked by another stranger to stand closely together in public. One alternative (or supplement) to these types of staged photos would be to have students submit their own high-

quality photos of student life and community to be published on the website with credit and consent.

Students do not always know what they agree to when they consent to have their photo taken by the university—or know that they ever consented to having their photo used on the website in the first place. Ensuring that students have a clear understanding of when and how they may be photographed on campus and what those photos may be used for is a form of institutional transparency that can mitigate students' perceptions of the IHE as intentionally deceptive. On the admissions page, at first-year and transfer orientations, in the online form for event tickets, and anywhere that is it relevant, remind students of the photo policy: make it bold print rather than fine print, in every sense of the phrase. Require students to sign consent forms before being photographed in posed photos so that they know what they are consenting to (e.g., where on the website might this photo appear if it is used), and they have a clear opportunity to opt-out of being in the picture.

Finally, as a general rule, do not under any circumstances digitally alter photos so that students who were not physically co-present appear to be so. Having seen this done to a photo I was in at one of my three universities, I can attest to the jarring nature of seeing the final product—as well as the intense desire to tell anyone who would listen about what had happened. As evidenced by the outcomes at University of Wisconsin (Prichep, 2013) and York College (Jaschik, 2019), which faced public criticism for digitally editing students of color into promotional images, the backlash far outweighs any potential boost in institutional reputation from the altered photograph.

11.2.7 Do not assume that students will interpret website discourse exactly as it is intended or that all students will interpret it in the same way.

As I have demonstrated throughout this study, students' interpretations of institutional discourse can be very different from the institutions' intended message, even when students know what that intended message is. However, students do not always know what a word or phrase is "supposed" to mean, and in those cases they interpret what they see and hear based on their individual perspectives and what they are able to understand. Without knowledge about how and why decisions about website content are made, students will draw their own conclusions about intentionality, motivation, target audience, and other aspects of website discourse.

Website discourse is aspirational, but students may perceive that aspirational rhetoric as misleading or dishonest. If the people creating an IHE's website content do not ever interact with students who visit the website or directly engage with those students' interpretations of it, they may go on believing that aspirational discourse is an effective rhetorical strategy. They may also write, consciously or unconsciously, for a primarily white audience or for an imagined homogeneous audience of students of color. Therefore, it is important to get feedback on website discourse from different populations of students in order understand how they interpret the website discourse, how they perceive the institution based on that discourse, and what are (in)effective discourse strategies to different types of readers. For instance, white students may view diversity discourse more positively than students of color overall, but Black and non-Black students of color may have different perspectives, and the same is likely true for domestic and international students of color. For high numbers of responses, a survey could be used, but for richer and more nuanced perspectives (and a guaranteed number of responses), focus groups are recommended. Student focus groups participants should be compensated as they would be for participating

in a research study or other focus group for the institution. As with other forms of labor done by people of color to improve the conditions of IHEs, students of color should not be expected to offer their time as volunteers. Depending on the number of participants and the funds available to pay them as well as whoever runs the study, students should either be paid directly or entered into a raffle for cash or gift card prizes.

11.2.8 Conclusion

The above recommendations for improving website diversity discourse incur minimal, if any, additional costs and labor for institutions. Changes to language can be implemented simultaneously as part of a website overhaul; procedural changes such as reading literature on website discourse and establishing venues for student feedback will take longer, but they are still feasible within a relatively short period of time. Websites are an archive of institutional ideology and practice, and website diversity discourse influences students of colors' opinions of an institution. Improving that discourse is an investment in the institutions' reputation among current and prospective community members. While it is a crucial site of ideological production and messaging, website discourse is only one factor among many that shape the educational experiences of students of color. Changes to the text and images on a website without changes to institutional structure and practice will not meaningfully contribute to racial equity in higher education. In the next section, I discuss recommendations to address structural issues highlighted by the findings of this study.

11.3 Recommendations to address structural issues reflected in UCSB and SHBU students' experiences

In chapter 10, I outlined four structural issues that negatively impacted interviewees' experiences at their respective institutions. Two of these issues were specific to UCSB, and the other two were relevant to students are both IHEs, reflecting larger issues within academia in the U.S. Below, I turn to teach of these issues and offer multiple recommendations, which range in cost and difficulty as well as the primary parties responsible.

11.3.1 Issue: UCSB had MSI status but did not operate in an MSI model.

As discussed in Chapters 6 and 7, UCSB was designated a Minority Serving Institution in 2015 based on its sizable populations of Hispanic/Latinx and Asian American students. The university emphasized its MSI status—especially its status as a Hispanic Serving Institution—but UCSB interviewees critiqued this rhetoric as "lip service" to diversity because they believed that the university did not serve students of colors in structural, systematic ways. UCSB's primary institutional identity was as a top-tier research university: it happened to have MSI status and attempted to leverage that, but the university did not fundamentally change its institutional structures to operate as other types of MSIs do. As part of the UC Hispanic-Serving Institutions Initiative started in 2018, scholars at multiple UC campuses had begun to address what it meant for UC to be a "Hispanic Serving Research Institution System" (Paredes et al., 2021). As an individual campus, however, UCSB was not explicitly engaging with the tensions of being both a research institution and an MSI, or with the responsibilities of being the highest-ranked and highest-resourced MSI in the country at the time. The recommendations below are based on the specific institutional context of

UCSB, but they are relevant to other historically white research institutions that aim to become MSIs. As stated above, the responsibility for these changes lies primarily with people who have institutional and structural power, and especially those who have benefitted most from the inequitable institutional structures in place.

Recommendation 1: Model the institutional structures of regional, comprehensive, historically Minority Serving Institutions.

IHEs that were founded with the mission to make education accessible to as many people as possible and to serve students as holistically as possible operate in ways that are fundamentally different from exclusionary HWIs. Because they were designed to serve students who face structural barriers to education, comprehensive institutions including HBCUs and regional public universities approach students' academic and personal well-being and progress as one in the same. Typically, there are dedicated staff to mentor students in different areas of student life or faculty understand that to be part of their jobs. Conrad and Gasman's (2015) case study of MSIs found that the academic coaches in one program who focused on overall academic skills and success and were informed about students' cultural backgrounds effectively supported undergraduate students to graduation. UCSB could better support both undergraduate and graduate students of color by finding alternative ways to implement the undergraduate support that currently falls on graduate students as unpaid labor. This could take the form of training and paying graduate students to do this work, or hiring professional staff to take it on. Staff could be dedicated coaches or mentors, like in the program above, additional housing staff to foster students' social development, or staff in other relevant areas. Not only will increased staff alleviate the burden on graduate students to be teachers, academic advisors, and all-around mentors on top of being students and

researchers, but undergraduates will also get better quality support since staff are formally trained to do the tasks that their jobs require.

Recommendation 2: Diversify in meaningful ways.

Many IHEs have a stated goal to diversify the institution, but their strategic plans often fail to target the root causes that have hindered diversity. For example, an HWI's strategic diversity plan may include increasing the recruitment of students and faculty from underrepresented groups but lack a critical assessment of why students and faculty from those groups have been opting not to attend the institution or have decided to leave. Likewise, campus climate surveys may be implemented to assess students' current experiences at the institution, but these surveys generally cannot capture the mechanisms through which harmful behaviors are condoned or normalized (e.g., departmental cultures of silence). To diversify in meaningful ways, HWIs like UCSB must root out the structural causes of institutional inequity, not just treat the symptoms.

HWIs and individual departments need to interrogate the structures, practices, and ideologies that hinder them from having a more diverse population at every level (i.e., student, faculty, administration, staff). This includes seeking answers to the questions: Why do students and faculty from marginalized groups choose to be members of HWIs or not? Why do they choose to remain or not? What contributes to the continued underrepresentation of people from marginalized groups in the professoriate overall, and at HWIs in particular? To answer these types of questions, IHEs and departments can survey current students and faculty of color, incorporate these questions into exit surveys administered when they graduate or leave the institution, and review scholarly literature on the topic, which explores these questions within specific disciplines and IHE types. For example, Trent et al. (2020)

found that racial climate, availability and quality of social support within their program, and access to resources and support outside of their program contributed to the persistence of graduate students of color in psychology programs at HWIs. With regard to faculty diversity, Sensoy and DiAngelo (2017) demonstrate how status quo practices of faculty hiring committees maintain the hegemony of whiteness through the façade of "objective" candidate assessments, and they offer concrete actions that committees can take at each stage of the hiring process to make it more racially equitable. Morgan et al.'s (2021) study of faculty socieoeconomic backgrounds found that academia is most accessible to people from socioeconomically privileged backgrounds and that a significant percentage of faculty have at least one parent who was an academic. Faculty from economically privileged backgrounds have more economic capital that allows them to maximize opportunities (i.e., they are able to fund research and professional development opportunities), and faculty from academic families are more likely to have a greater understadning of how academia operates. In order to diversify the faculty, knowledge about higher education structures has to be made accessible to all faculty as well as to graduate students as they prepare to become faculty; I return to this point below.

A crucial step in diversifying faculty at U.S. IHEs is increasing graduate student diversity. One strategy to diversify the graduate student population is to diversify the pool of prospective students who are interested in and competitive for graduate programs through partnership and exchange programs with MSIs. Several models of successful programs already exist, including the National Science Foundation's Research Experience for Undergraduates (NSF REU), the University of California-HBCU (UC-HBCU) Initiative, and the University of Chicago HBCU and HSI Bridge Program. These programs provide

opportunities for students from minoritized backgrounds to build mentoring relationships with faculty, develop research skills, demonstrate their potential to do graduate level work, and expand their academic networks.

REU programs offer students in the sciences the opportunity to work directly with faculty and a small cohort of fellow undergraduates on a specific research project; since faculty propose the projects that students will participate in, faculty have the agency to design programs that specifically support students of color. Through the REU website, faculty can see the abstracts for previously awarded projects, which can help them to design a highly fundable project that aligns with the Foundation's goal of broadening diversity and participation in the sciences. The UC-HBCU Initiative targets enrollment of Black graduate students by establishing relationships with HBCUs. The initiative funds grants for undergraduate HBCU students in any field to spend the summer at UC campuses conducting research on a faculty project; faculty can design programs to work with students from one HBCU or from multiple, and grants are renewable for up to three years. Students who successfully complete one year of the program are incentivized to apply to a UC graduate program through application fee waivers and guaranteed funding if admitted to a program. The UCSB-HBCU Scholars in Linguistics Program of which I was a part was open to students from any HBCU and combined UC initiative funding with REU funding so that Black students from UCSB and other HWIs could participate. Multiple students have enrolled in language-related graduate programs since participating in the program, including at a UC campus. The University of Chicago's bridge program offers "a merit-based, full-tuition award for graduating seniors of [HBCUs] and [HSIs] who would benefit from a year of academic study at a leading research university" to hone their research skills and academic

interests before applying to graduate programs. Departments nominate applicants for consideration and support those students during their year of study at the university. These three examples show that there are both institutional-internal and institution-external resources for supporting prospective graduate students of color, but both require faculty initiative and a commitment to structurally support the students of color who participate. Once again, faculty of color should not be the only faculty proposing grant ideas or running these programs: white faculty should be initiating ideas, offering to collaborate (or at the very least, provide feedback) on grant proposals, participating in programs as PIs or faculty mentors, or volunteering their time in whatever ways would meaningfully support their colleagues. Grant-writing is a skill that takes time to master, winning grants typically takes multiple tries, and students' progression from program participant to graduate student can take years, so this strategy is one for the long term and must be implemented as such.

To recruit more faculty of color to HWIs, one UCSB interviewee suggested faculty of color cluster hires, a practice that increased in the U.S. in 2020-2021 after the public criticism of racism and white supremacy in higher education; they also suggested that as part of these faculty members' hiring offers, they should have the freedom to actively recruit graduate students of color that they want to enroll in the program. In departments that have struggled to recruit and retain faculty and students of color because the department is all or majority white, this would be one way to address the issue of timing that often leads to students or faculty experiencing solo status. Students of color often prefer and seek out faculty of color as mentors, and many faculty of color are attracted to the opportunity to work with students of color: as a result, it is more difficult to recruit students if there are no faculty and difficult to recruit faculty if there are no students. If faculty know that once they are in the department

they will be able to actively recruit students of color to advise, that can help to offset hesitancy created by the current department demographics.

Changing recruitment, admissions, and hiring practices, along with implementing student-faculty partnership programs like those described above, are ways to institutionalize practices that promote racial equity in higher education. Another way is to ensure that students of color have sustained access to relevant cultural resources that support their social and academic development, and this requires prioritizing these resources financially. Identity-based organizations, cultural centers, and ethnic studies programs and departments all serve students from minoritized groups, but, as described in Chapter 7, they can face persistent threats to their existence at HWIs. One UCSB interviewee pointed out the gap in the university's resources for Native students and wanted to see the establishment of an interdisciplinary American Indian Studies Center; that center would serve as the hub from which an American Indian/Native Studies minor, major, and eventually Ph.D. program could develop. Multiple interviewees sought guaranteed minimum funding for identity-based organizations that support graduate students of color by making that funding a line item in the appropriate university budget. Organizations, centers, and academic programs vary in the amount of time required to become established, and they have different associated costs that must be covered by different sources. HWIs can start by working with graduate student organizations that do diversity work on campus to determine a minimum organizational budget, then commit a certain amount of annual funding to those organizations through the budget of the graduate school, the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion office, the Office of Student Life, and/or any other relevant units. Because graduate student organizations are often closely connected to cultural centers and related academic programs and departments,

they have the potential to help facilitate their expansions or creation (e.g., recruiting staff and faculty)—but this is labor that graduate students will be less than eager to do for an institutional that regularly diminishes the important role that their organizations play on campus.

At HWIs, diversifying the institution in meaningful ways requires institution members to understand why many existing structures and practices are at best ineffective and at worst harmful and counterproductive. Diversity workshops, seminars, and other one-time trainings are points of entry for people with little knowledge about the issues, but they are not in themselves the work that leads to structural change and racial equity (see, e.g., Dobbin & Kalev, 2018, for a discussion of why diversity trainings are ineffective). Attending a seminar may be a necessary precursor to doing diversity, equity, and inclusion work because it tells participants where to start, but the work has not begun until people have moved past conversation to initiate long-term goals and tangible action items.

Recommendation 3: Teach graduate students and faculty how to mentor students.

Close, intentional mentorship is central to MSI educational models, and supporting students in all aspects of their education for the duration of their time at the institution was expected at SHBU. Graduate student-advisor relationships at UCSB, however, varied dramatically. Some interviewees had faculty advisors with whom they met regularly to discuss progress on program milestone, applying for grants and jobs, submitting to conferences and journals, and all the other parts of being a graduate student in between. Others had hands-off advisors who checked on their progress only as much as necessary or only when they initiated it. Additionally, some faculty were open to sharing aspects of their personal lives and hearing about students' lives whereas others maintained a strictly work-

only relationship with students. In other words, graduate students across UCSB saw a wide range of models of what it means to be a faculty advisor. UCSB faculty were not necessarily taught how to mentor as part of their preparation for the role, nor were there any university-wide expectations for faculty advising beyond getting graduate students through their program. At the same time, many graduate students were mentors to undergraduates but did not receive any explicit training through the university on how to mentor effectively, so they learned it on the job and sought out other resources.

Most graduate programs at research institutions like UCSB are structured around the expectation that graduate students will become faculty at an IHE. If these graduate programs are training future faculty, that training needs to include explicit guidance about how to mentor students when they take on that role, and that training should continue at the faculty level with institution-specific practices. This is a matter of equity because students from minoritized backgrounds should not have to happen upon an effective mentor at an HWI—there should be an abundance of people who can at the very least point them in the right direction for appropriate guidance because they understand what different types of students need. Research on the experiences of faculty from minoritized backgrounds (e.g., Stockdill & Danico, 2012) has highlighted that graduate programs in general have not prepared them for the responsibilities of being faculty, yet these faculty take on a disproportionate amount of additional labor in the form of diversity work (e.g., Duncan, 2014; Flaherty, 2019). Two ways to make mentoring more equitable and effective are to make engagement with scholarly literature on faculty-student mentorship a standard and rewarded practice within departments and institutions, and creating structured programs that model effective faculty mentoring to graduate students.

At the department level, faculty can create a system that rewards those who stay informed of best practices for advising and mentoring in their field the way they would stay informed about current research methods or theoretical debates. Through a working group, rotating individual responsibility, or some other distribution of labor that is equitable based on faculty demographics, faculty can identify research articles, book chapters, blogs, and news articles to review at regular intervals. This literature can cover the need for contextually relevant mentoring models (Zellers et al., 2008), the benefits of informal and formal mentoring structures (McKinsey, 2016), examples of successful practices when mentoring someone of a different background from your own (Turner & González, 2016), and other topics most relevant to faculty interests, department needs, and IHE culture. Inevitably, some faculty will deem this unnecessary labor that distracts from their "real" job of conducting research, which makes having an incentive to do this work (e.g., counting toward a course release) very important. With regard to the second strategy, partnership programs are once again an effective way to afford students of color access to institutional practices and resources they cannot get at their own institution. One example is a program through the National Science Foundation's Alliances for Graduate Education and the Professoriate (AGEP). The AGEP California Hispanic Serving Institutions (HSI) Alliance to Increase Underrepresented Minority Faculty in STEM is a partnership between HSI campuses of the University of California system and the California State University system. The alliance "focuses on pedagogical training and faculty career mentoring to prepare historically underrepresented minority doctoral students…for teaching-focused faculty careers at colleges and universities." Graduate students in the research-focused UC system are paired with faculty mentors in the teaching-focused CSU system, and the program includes pedagogy

workshops and scholarly research about teaching in addition to the mentoring modeled through one-on-one relationships.

As stated throughout my discussion above, these recommendations to address the issue of UCSB having MSI status without an MSI educational model require different levels of investment in terms of money, time, and labor. Wherever an HWI or individual department currently is in its diversity, equity, and an inclusion work, there is always a first or next step that can be taken toward the three major recommendations above. Faculty and administrators, particularly those with the most institutional privilege and power, should be leading efforts to model the institutional structures of historically Minority Serving Institutions, diversify the institution in meaningful ways by focusing on equity and structural issues, and teaching graduate students and faculty how to mentor students.

11.3.2 Issue: UCSB did not publicly discuss the realities of higher education. Recommendation: Publish information about the costs and benefits of attending the university on the website where it is easily accessible.

First-generation students and students from low-income backgrounds—many of whom are students of color—often choose undergraduate and graduate IHEs based primarily on cost effectiveness: What institution can offer the quality of education and training needed to later secure a job and does so at the lowest out-of-pocket cost? What opportunities and experiences are only available at more costly institutions? Would it be beneficial to pay for them? Students (and their families) that ask these types of questions want to know about the average out-of-pocket costs for different expenses (e.g., tuition, housing), how much debt students have when they graduate, and how those compare to graduates' employment rates and salaries in their area of study. At the graduate level, students want to know all of this plus

the average number of years it takes to complete a program. For those deciding between a master's and a doctoral program, the differences in career outcomes between graduates of the two can significantly inform a program's perceived cost effectiveness. For example, if a two-year master's program at university A costs more out of pocket than a five-year doctoral program in the same discipline at university B, but A's graduates have higher rates of employment in the types of jobs that a prospective student wants, they will likely be drawn to program A.

UCSB's website did not have this information listed on its main pages, where it could help students make financially wise decisions. Some campus-level statistics about student debt and alumni earnings are available through the UC Information Center and the annual UC Accountability Report, but it does not provide information by discipline; additionally, the average student is more likely to look at individual UC campuses' websites than try to compare them through the Information Center data (if they even know that data exists). UCSB's website discourse focused on research and preparation for a global workforce, but without the specificity needed for it to be meaningful to prospective students in a practical way. High-traffic pages such as the Office of Admissions should feature easy-to-interpret summaries of (at minimum) undergraduate students' average total cost, average amount of debt at graduation, and alumni employment rate and areas. Graduate student-specific statistics can be featured on the homepage for the office of graduate studies and on department pages. Department pages can feature both statistical summaries and individual profiles of graduate program alumni that describe where they now work and the type of work that they do. Having this information available to feature on various pages of the university website requires intentional efforts on the part of individual departments, staff and faculty

involved in alumni affairs, and career center staff, who will have to collect and regularly update this information using online tools like Qualtrics surveys and/or direct emails. By making this information publicly available to all current and prospective students through the website, students of color will not have to guess about the basic cost-effectiveness of their program choice or make their decisions based primarily on the perspectives of a few individuals who were willing to share their experiences (though this information is crucial in decisions about appropriate department culture). The available data about alumni employment will of course depend on overall response rates and the type of information that former students are willing to provide, but some information is better than none since it provides examples of what it possible for students with a particular degree.

11.3.3 Issue: Graduate students did not have a clear understanding of their university's structure and fiscal operations.

Recommendation 1: Teach students what graduate school entails and what they should expect. Teaching about how the university and academia operate should be standard practice, not an innovation.

Starting at the undergraduate level—preferably in the first year—students should receive information about the different types of IHEs that exist and what it means to attend one type compared to another. Although by this point students have enrolled at an institution, they likely do not have a thorough understanding of the institutional structures and priorities of, for instance, a public research institution compared to a private liberal arts college. (This was the case in my own undergraduate experience choosing to attend the University of South Carolina: its status as a research institution did not factor into my school selection process, and if someone had told me that the university was that type of institution, I would not have

known what to do with that information if they did not explain it.) With an understanding of how their own IHE and different types of IHEs operate, students will have more accurate expectations about the resources and opportunities available and the types of classroom experiences they may have; some students may look into transferring to a different type of school that can better meet their needs instead of assuming that their IHE's structure is the college status quo. Campus tours, first-year orientations, and first-year experience courses are all venues for at least basic explanation of how institutions' structures, operations, and populations can differ and how they impact students' educational experiences. IHEs should also have resources available at the undergraduate level that explain what it means to attend graduate school at different types of IHEs. For example, undergraduates at a public research university should be able to access information about how their experience would be different at the graduate level if they decided to pursue an advanced degree at another research university or shift to a liberal arts college. How do the expectations for research, teaching, and mentorship differ?

To make this and other information about IHEs accessible starting at the undergraduate level, one interviewee at SHBU suggested that every department have an undergraduate course that reviews different career and advanced education options for that field, including the process for applying to graduate school as well as explanations of typical program structures. This would institutionalize access to relevant information in a way that was equitable for all students, and both students and faculty would receive credit for their participation in the course—as an elective course that counts toward degree requirements or as credit toward their expected annual teaching load, respectively. At the graduate level, a university-wide "Introduction to graduate school" course or workshop series (a one-time

workshop will not be sufficient) for first-year graduate students could cover information about the university and higher education as an academic ecology. Students and instructors would collaboratively explore questions such as: What is the relationship of this institution to other IHEs? What information is needed to navigate this IHE successfully (e.g., institutional leaders and their responsibilities)? What should graduate students be doing now to prepare for their next role at another institution or a career outside the academy?

These courses or workshops should be explicit about the limitations of the academy by laying out what type of institution a college or university is. IHEs may be connected to non-profit work and students on campus may be members of non-profit organizations, but IHEs are not the same type of not-for-profit institutions and therefore have different social and political priorities. IHEs and their members may be frequently involved in sociopolitical issues (as demonstrated by the numerous Supreme Court cases involving IHEs), but colleges and universities are not political entities like local and state governments or political action committees. They are educational institutions that must operate like businesses because of competition for finite financial resources. Thus, an institution's financial structures and practices—and how they directly impact graduate students' experiences—should also be part of this introduction to graduate school and the limitations of the academy. This entails discussions of where the institution's revenue comes from (e.g., government funding, tuition, research grants) and how that determines how funds are allocated. This information is important for new graduate students because it will help them to understand, throughout their graduate career, what an institution is capable of doing vis-à-vis student interests as well as how that compares to what an institution is more or less likely to do, regardless of ability. With this information from the get-go, graduate students at UCSB, SHBU, and other IHEs

would have insight as to why, for example, their institution has the funds to construct multiple new buildings while their administration asserts that increased tuition is necessary to cover institutional operations. Regardless of whether that information changes students' opinions about the buildings or administration, having access to it will allow students to advocate around financial issues more effectively.

In addition to instruction about graduate education at different types of IHEs and the financial structures of the IHE that students are at, IHEs can teach graduate students how academia operates by institutionalizing professional development that is tailored to students' and faculty's disciplines, career goals, and backgrounds. All students should receive explicit information about how to navigate higher education, but scholars of color and other minoritized scholars need different information than their peers from dominant groups because they need a strategic plan to navigate the discriminatory structures of academia. For example, students from minoritized backgrounds need to know the race, gender, and class politics of publication, hiring, and tenure and promotion so that they can use their time as graduate students to set themselves up for success as faculty. Like the examples describe above, this instruction can take the form of a workshop series, a full course, or even a series of courses that utilize published research, guest speakers, and other available resourses to provide this information; if offered as courses, both students and faculty can earn credit toward their department requirements. One example is Professor Anne Charity Hudley's seminar courses on Scholarly Communication, which were taught in the Department of Linguistics at UCSB. The courses covered topics including peer review, submitting and revising manuscripts for publication, and using social media to grow one's academic reputation. Discussions were structured around students' areas of research specialization,

career interests, and individual challenges, and assignments produced useful research, practical skills, and scholarly documents that students could apply in their academic career.

Professional development resources are not offered to graduate students as a standard across departments or IHEs, and this disproportionately impacts students from minoritized groups who lack access to the "hidden curriculum" of higher education and how it operates. Providing students access to information about how IHEs are structured and what that means for them at the undergraduate and graduate stage is one way to level the academic playing field. Tailoring resources to students' needs and backgrounds to highlight differences in experiences and structural barriers is even better. Neither happens without faculty initiative. Even if students advocate for access to these resources to help them better understand their institutions, their efforts will not lead anywhere if there is no one to instruct them. Once again, this labor should not fall only on faculty from minoritized groups, but whoever does teach this information to students can do so in a way that benefits their own academic career. Faculty can apply for funding to teach these types of courses through national organizations such as the National Science Foundation and the National Endowment for the Humanities, which will boost both their teaching profile and award record; Charity Hudley's courses were funded through the NSF AGEP HSI Alliance grant mentioned above.

Recommendation 2: Include students in decision making processes that directly affect them.

When students do not learn of a policy change or new initiative until the time it is put into effect, they may have little information (or misinformation) about who created it and what it is intended to do. Decisions about students' learning, working, and living conditions that are made without student input may miss the mark on what students need, and changes

that do involve student input may seem as if they do not if the process is not transparent. All of these factors can foster feelings among students that their institution does not care about them, and for marginalized students, as described above, lack of institutional transparency hinders their access to information that can make their educational experience more equitable.

For diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts, there are several ways that students can be directly and iteratively engaged. In the development stages of generating ideas and deciding which ones to pursue, whoever is leading the initiative can distribute online campus surveys to get overall student feedback—and announce that a new initiative is being developed—and/or conduct paid focus groups with students from target populations to get more in-depth feedback. For more sustained student engagement throughout the process, student representatives (e.g., leaders of relevant student organizations) can be part of the team working on the initiative. They would attend meetings and be included in email communications about the initiative so that they would understand who is involved, why they are involved, next steps in the plan, and roadblocks affecting progress; they would then be able to convey that information to members of their organizations and the wider student public. The most appropriate approach depends on the issue being addressed, who is most impacted, and students' ability and willingness to participate, but the development of campus initiatives should include structures for sustained dialogue with students from the beginning. Iverson (2019) argues that this type of iterative dialogue is necessary up to the level of institutional policy. Regarding diversity action plans, Iverson (2019, p. 252) states, "One move toward equity would be to include (beyond tokenism) those who are typically marginalized in the policy process. Diversity action plans are authored by institutional

agents, faculty, administrators, and experts (at times guided by contracted consultants), and consequently these documents tell only one (part of the) story." In other words, for diversity initiatives to be comprehensive, effective, and equitable, student involvement is a necessity.

Recommendation 3: Be transparent about how the institution spends money received for diversity.

As discussed with Recommendation 1, students do not have a clear understanding of IHEs' financial structures and how funds are allocated for different purposes. This means that students do not know exactly how much money their institution receives for diversity-related purposes, what that money can legally can be spent on, and what is has been spent on. At HWIs like UCSB that emphasize diversity and MSI status in institutional discourse, students of color want to see evidence that MSI grants or other diversity-related funds are spent in ways that support students of color. One way to provide this information is on the diversity office website. For UCSB specifically, the page that explains how MSI status benefits the university by making it eligible for federal grants should also state how much MSI grant money the university has received and what it has been used for. The same applies to any other money that the university has received based on its student demographics: Who has been hired? What centers, organizations, or offices have been established or better funded? What new scholarships, grants, or other funds are available to students and faculty of color? What new research opportunities have been created?

Within the UC system, making this information accessible requires upending the lack of public discourse about the university's budget. As a campus in the public UC system, UCSB is required to make certain information available, but that does not mean that the information is made easily accessible or legible to the university community or broader

public. For example, interested individuals have the option to download tables of revenue and expense data for any UC campus from the UC Information Center, but this is not helpful to a student just looking for a dollar amount that conveys how much money their campus spent on diversity in the past year.

Transparency in institutional spending, involving students in the process of developing diversity initiatives, and explicitly instructing students about the structures and priorities of academia are three ways to provide students from minoritized backgrounds access to information that can help them navigate IHEs successfully. Access to this information is institutionalized by teaching about higher education in workshops or courses, establishing a protocol for student participation in the creation of new initiatives, and publishing data about diversity funding in accessible formats on IHE websites. With this information, students will not only be able to optimize how they approach their scholarly work and professional development to best set themselves up for success, but they will also be able to work toward institutional changes more effectively because they will be able to strategize around what is most institutionally feasible in addition to what is most urgent among students.

11.3.4 Issue: The cost of creating a supportive institutional culture for graduate students of color is uncompensated labor.

Because academia as an institution is structured around the interests, needs, and abilities of people from dominant groups, making IHEs equitable institutions for people from non-dominant groups requires intentional effort. Culturally relevant pedagogy, financial resources, social support systems, and more must be established and maintained through the labor of people committed to educational equity, but the structures that make academia

unequal in the first place devalue this labor and make it more difficult to do. Even at MSIs, where educational equity is a core principle, dominant ideologies and funding structures in higher education create conditions such that faculty, staff, and administrators are often overextended and undercompensated trying to serve students. Graduate students of color and faculty of color alike often have to choose between work that will benefit them by improving their academic environment and work that "counts" according to the long-standing metrics of academic merit—and typically they must engage in the former without any form of recognition or compensation. Change starts within departments and individual IHEs by valuing efforts toward educational equity in ways that meaningfully reward those who do that labor.

Recommendation 1: Teach graduate students and faculty how to make equity, inclusion, and service work fit within the requirements of their current institution.

Departments and IHEs need to instruct graduate students and faculty how to ensure that the important labor that they do does not end up being a detriment to their professional success. For example, professional development activities that discuss the academic publishing process should cover how to publish about diversity and service work from a theoretical, methodological, or application framework; the discussion should encompass how to identify venues that accept work on the topic and will also count toward the expected publication record for tenure and promotion at the faculty level. Likewise, workshops or seminars about applying for funding need to include grants of varying sizes so that scholars of color know that they can apply for small grants for organizing events or other on-campus work that is typically outside the purview of major research funding. Even if campus funding is available, awards from external agencies is a form of academic currency that scholars of

color can use demonstrate the significance of their work when it is challenged by others. Graduate students of color should know from their first year that the experiences and knowledge they gain by serving in leadership positions of identity-based organizations, mentoring undergraduate students, or contributing to the development of a new campus program can be presented at an academic conference, which will count toward departmental expectations for professional and peer-reviewed presentations (and can be later developed into a publication). All of this information can be incorporated into the types of institutionalized professional development discussed above.

Recommendation 2: Adjust the merit system so that faculty can be compensated for teaching information that students need to know or change how this work is evaluated so that it fits the existing merit structure.

Across academia, with some institution- and department-specific nuances, faculty are assessed based on their teaching, research, and service in the academy. What is considered meritorious teaching, research, and service at many IHEs can minimize, if not totally exclude, meaningful equity and inclusion work, which is done disproportionately by people from minoritized backgrounds. Merit systems are multi-level, but changes to make them more equitable can begin within departments. For example, the faculty in an individual department cannot change how their institution assesses teaching for the purposes of tenure and promotion, but they do have the ability to decide what they believe should receive teaching credit. As discussed above, institutionalizing professional development as courses that students take for credit is one way to ensure that faculty receive institutional recognition for doing that work. Restructuring the criteria for meritorious faculty work also benefits students. When faculty do not have to take on twice as much labor and do not have to

jeopardize their professional progress in order to do equity and justice work, they are able to do that work better and more systematically. This will benefit students who are the target beneficiaries for this work, and it will also positively impact students who want to do similar work when they are faculty by providing a model that they can adapt in their own academic context.

Recommendation 3: Compensate graduate students' diversity labor financially and/or through course credit.

At the graduate level, "You can put it on your CV" is frequently offered as the reward for uncompensated intellectual, physical, and emotional labor in the name of diversity—labor that, again, disproportionately falls on people from marginalized groups. Within departments and at the institutional level, individual students should be paid for activities such as organizing workshops, presenting on panels, and reviewing written material. In general, if the activity is something that an outside consultant would be paid to do, graduate students who are qualified enough to be asked to do it should also be paid. The labor needed and the budgets available to compensate it vary across departments and IHEs, so payment will not look the same in every institutional context. Money, however, is not the only way to compensate graduate students' labor. Similar to making a course out of faculty's professional development instruction, departments can offer elective course credit for time-intensive work that extends over a quarter or semester. If financial compensation or course credit is not an option (yet), an important strategy for supporting students of color is to ensure that the diversity work that they do contributes to rather than undermines their competitiveness for a job by creating institutional structures that allow them to integrate their research, teaching, and service work.

11.3.5 Conclusion

The four issues and the recommendations to address them that have been discussed in this section are deeply interconnected: they are all products of institutional structures that were not intended to meaningfully support students from minoritized groups. The issues manifest within departments, across the schools and offices of an IHE, and between the many IHEs that constitute the institution of U.S. higher education. Any efforts to meaningfully remedy these issues and improve conditions for graduate students of color therefore require action at multiple institutional levels. Graduate students, faculty, and administrators all have roles to play in developing innovative, effective, financially feasible, and sustainable models of labor that can be adjusted and refined over time; however, faculty and administrators from dominant groups, as people with more institutional and structural power, should be taking on a large portion of this labor. Some of the recommendations for change offered above can be implemented more immediately than others, but short-term and long-term solutions are both needed since racial inequity in U.S. higher education is urgent as well as persistent. In the next section, I discuss reflection questions that IHE members can ask of themselves and their institutions to assess the structural barriers in place, how graduate students may be impacted by them, and how prepared they are as institution members to address them.

11.4 Critical reflection questions

Making higher education more equitable for students of color requires proactive thinking: members of the academy should be anticipating how structures and practices might negatively affect students from marginalized groups, not only reacting when those negative effects materialize. This applies to people from dominant groups and people in positions of

power, as well as students of color. When students have the right information, they can anticipate how they might fare in different settings and make decisions that will minimize their negative experiences. Faculty and administrators from dominant groups who want to further institutional equity and inclusion cannot wait for people to bring issues to them and then hope for the best. For both groups, being proactive begins with asking the right questions; this section lists critical reflection questions for graduate students of color, white faculty, and administrators to ask of themselves with regard to graduate education and diversity work.

11.4.1 Questions graduate students of color (and all students from marginalized groups) should ask before and during their graduate program

General

1. What are the costs and benefits—academic, economic, and personal—of attending this university? Being in this department? Working with this faculty advisor?
2. How many graduates of this program—and of my potential advisor in particular—have gotten jobs?
3. What is the quality of life like for current students? What aspects of the program make it better or worse (e.g., university culture, department culture, specific faculty)? How does quality of life differ between different types of students?
4. If quality of life while in the program is low, is there a worthwhile deferred reward, such as a very high likelihood of securing a good job upon graduation?
    a. **Note**: Students' ability to answer this question depends on the availability of information about alumni employment and satisfaction. As discussed above, departments should maintain up-to-date information about graduate program

alumni on their websites as well as foster connections between current graduate students and alumni to discuss what life is like after the program.

Available resources

1. What resources are available to support me as a student?
2. What resources are available to support me as a researcher?
3. What resources are available to support me as an instructor?
4. What resources are available to support my mental and physical health?
5. What resources are available to ensure my basic needs are met?
6. What social resources are available (e.g., interest- and identity-based organizations)?
7. In all of these areas, what resources are available specifically for students from marginalized groups (e.g., students of color, low-income students, first-generation students, queer and trans students, disabled students)?
    a. Does the department have connections to professional organizations created for minoritized scholars?
    b. Does the department facilitate connections to faculty that share students' backgrounds by allowing teaching or research assistantships in other departments?

Funding and workload

1. Is funding guaranteed? Does available funding align with the typical amount of time students take to finish the program?
2. How will I be funded (e.g., teaching assistantships, research assistantships, research fellowships)?

3. How will my funding source impact my academic performance and overall workload?
    a. Will I be able to balance my responsibilities as a teaching or research assistant and my responsibilities as a student/researcher (e.g., coursework, program milestones, presenting research) in ways that allow me to prioritize my professional and academic interests?
    b. Is the income a living wage for my situation (able to pay housing, afford food, cover other basic needs) or will I need another source of income to cover expenses?

Research and career training

1. Who is the audience for my work (e.g., specific disciplines or communities), and how does that compare to the audience for my advisor's work?
    a. Are they willing and able train me in what I want to do?
2. What opportunities are available for interdisciplinary work?
    a. Can I take courses in another department?
    b. Are there interdisciplinary research groups, emphases, or certificates?
3. How does the program or university prepare students for the type of career I want?
    a. Do faculty value careers that are different from their own?
    b. Is there an opportunity for structured mentorship with someone in my field?
    c. How have alumni fared in employment? How have alumni from marginalized backgrounds, in particular, fared in employment? (For example, how have scholars of color from this program fared compared to scholars of color in the field overall?)

Relationship to faculty and administrators

1. Are there other faculty in the department that I could work with if my initial advising relationship does not work out? Is co-advising an option?
2. If I have a problem with another university member, who is my advocate as a student?
    a. **Note:** It is the job of anyone who mediates on behalf of the institution to protect the institution. If you are unsure if someone is your advocate in a particular situation, ask them directly, "Are you my advocate?"
    b. Do I know what I need to do to get an advocate who is not affiliated with the university (e.g., an independent lawyer)?
3. Who mediates or advocates on behalf of graduate students in general (e.g., GSA, student organizations, Graduate Dean)?
4. Who mediates or advocates behalf of graduate students to campus administrators?

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI)

5. What is the role of a diversity officer (at the department, graduate, or university level)?
    a. What are they trained to do? What skills or qualifications do they have?
    b. Who are they advocates for?
    c. What do they have the institutional power to do?
6. If I want to participate in DEI work, (how) is that accounted for in my program requirements? If it is not accounted for in the program, is there someone who can tell me how to make it count in the larger system of academia and my career?

7. If I do not want to participate in DEI work, will the department protect me from being exploited by the institution?
8. How do administrators' ideas about diversity compare to students' ideas?
    a. Have students and administrators clashed over DEI issues in the past? What were the outcomes?

11.4.2 Questions white faculty should ask before taking on graduate students of color

1. Do I actually want to do something about the structural racism at my institution?
2. Am I knowledgeable about the resources that are specifically for students of color and other minoritized students (e.g., grants, fellowships, internships)?
3. Do I know where to direct them for resources or additional help if I cannot offer what they need?
4. How can I find out what I do not know without burdening my colleagues of color?
5. Am I willing to be uncomfortable as I learn how best to mentor students of color?
6. Am I willing to support students with non-academic issues that impact their academic life?
7. Am I able to see beyond my own experiences as a graduate student and faculty to advise students effectively based on their interests and needs?

11.4.3 Questions administrators should ask about the experiences of graduate students of color

1. Do we have input on policy, practice, and/or structure changes from students who will be directly impacted by them? Is this through repeated, regular interaction (e.g., meetings, focus groups) and not only when we have an issue?

2. Are we willing to think creatively about how to best support students of color, even if this runs counter to institutional tradition or "culture"?
3. Do we adequately reward graduate students of color (monetarily and professionally) for their time and expertise giving us input on our DEI efforts?
4. What kind of accountability is in place to ensure that institutional rhetoric is matched by effective institutional action?

The questions above are not an exhaustive list, but they are starting points for graduate students, faculty, and administrators to think critically about the institutional environments that they enter into and/or have the power shape. Asking these questions will exposes gaps in knowledge and resources, generate new questions, spotlight institutional resistance to change, and open up new possibilities for interventions. In Section 8.5, I list sample resources that students, faculty, and administrators can use to inform themselves and others about the realities that students of color face in U.S. higher education and to develop initiatives that undermine structural barriers to educational inequity in academia.

11.5 Sample resources

11.5.1 Examples of websites with critically aware diversity messaging

California State University – Channel Islands "About" page

- In addition student-centered language, this page demonstrates the university's relationship to the local and state community
- https://www.csuci.edu/about/

Stanford University Biosciences "Commitment to Justice and Action"

- This page lists concrete DEI goals, specific actions to meet those goals, and how much progress has been made toward those goals. The page also provide a way for site visitors to provide feedback.
- https://biosciences.stanford.edu/biosciences-commitment-to-justice-and-action/

University of San Diego "Social Justice" page

- DEI efforts are connected to both the university's mission as a Catholic institution and a framework of social justice.
- https://www.sandiego.edu/about/social-justice.php

11.5.2 Examples of inter-institutional partnership programs

National Science Foundation Alliance for Graduate Education and the Professoriate (AGEP)

- Main site: https://www.nsf.gov/funding/pgm_summ.jsp?pims_id=5474
- California Hispanic Serving Institutions Alliance to Increase Underrepresented Minority Faculty in STEM: https://www.nsf.gov/awardsearch/showAward?AWD_ID=1820886

National Science Foundation Research Experience for Undergraduates (REU)

- Main site: https://www.nsf.gov/crssprgm/reu/

University of California-HBCU Initiative

- Main site: https://www.ucop.edu/uc-hbcu-initiative/index.html
- UCSB-HBCU Scholars in Linguistics Program: https://ucsbhbculing.com/

University of Chicago HBCU and HSI Bridge Program

- Main site: https://professional.uchicago.edu/find-your-fit/personalized/graduate-student-large/hbcu-and-hsi-bridge-scholarship-program

11.5.3 Sample resources for faculty and graduate student development

Professor Anne Charity Hudley's "Scholarly Communication" seminar courses

- Charity Hudley's teaching website: https://annecharityhudley.com/teaching/

American Educational Research Association's (AERA) professional development courses

- Courses taught by leading experts cover topics including research methodologies, writing strategies, and publishing in the field; attendees pay a fee per course attended.
- Main site: https://www.aera.net/Professional-Opportunities-Funding/Professional-Development-Courses

Linguistic Society of America (LSA) student resource directory

- The "Academic and Professional Development Workshops and Guides" page links to free webinars and presentations about conferences, fellowships, graduate school applications, job searches, and other topics relevant to students in linguistics.
- Main page: https://www.linguisticsociety.org/resource/student-resource-directory-topic

National Center for Faculty Diversity and Development (NCFDD)

- Offers webinars, mentoring, writing instruction, and more for faculty and advanced graduate students; many colleges and universities have an institutional membership that allow faculty and graduate students to access the site at no cost.
- Main site: https://www.facultydiversity.org/home

11.5.4 Sample resources on the experiences of people of color in higher education

A significant body of scholarly research exists on the experiences of students of color in U.S. higher education, and the texts on this topic referred to throughout this dissertation are listed in the references. Below are sample resources for first-person and informal discussions of life in higher education as a marginalized person.

Inside Higher Ed

- Education news site that reports on current events and trends in U.S. higher education; the Views opinion section regularly features pieces on diversity, sociopolitical beliefs, and institutional change.
- Main site: https://www.insidehighered.com/

@diversityinhighereducation

- Instagram account with nearly 70K followers that compiles popular tweets about race, power, and privilege in academia.
- Main site: https://www.instagram.com/diversityinacademia/

@blkingradschool

- An online community of students of color in graduate school that offers support and resources.
- Main site: https://twitter.com/blkingradschool

Academic blogs written by scholars of color

- Website of Professor Menah Pratt-Clarke, Vice President for Strategic Affairs and Diversity and Professor of Education at Virginia Tech, which details the experiences of being a Black woman in academia.
- Main site: http://menahprattclarke.com/

11.5.5 Sample scholarly writing on faculty mentorship of students

Gay, G. (2004). Navigating marginality en route to the professoriate: Graduate students of color learning and living in academia. *International Journal of Qualitative Studies in Education*, *17*(2), 265–288. https://doi.org/10.1080/09518390310001653907

Johnson, W. B. (2016). *On being a mentor: A guide for higher education faculty* (2nd edition). Routledge.

McKinsey, E. (2016). Faculty mentoring undergraduates: The nature, development, and benefits of mentoring relationships. *Teaching & Learning Inquiry: The ISSOTL Journal*, *4*(1), 25-39. https://doi.org/10.20343/teachlearninqu.4.1.5

Padilla, A. M. (1994). Ethnic minority scholars, research, and mentoring: Current and future issues. *Educational Researcher*, *23*(4), 24-27. https://doi.org/10.2307/1176259

Thomas, K. M., Willis, L. A., & Davis, J. (2007). Mentoring minority graduate students: issues and strategies for institutions, faculty, and students. *Equal Opportunities International*, *26*(3), 178–192. https://doi.org/10.1108/02610150710735471

Turner, C. S. V., & González, J. C. (Eds.). (2015). *Modeling mentoring across race/ethnicity and gender: Practices to cultivate the next generation of diverse faculty*. Stylus.

Zellers, D. F., Howard, V. M., & Barcic, M. A. (2008). Faculty mentoring programs: Re-envisioning rather than reinventing the wheel. *Review of Educational Research*, *78*(3), 552–588. https://doi.org/10.3102/0034654308320966

11.6 Conclusion

Making U.S. higher education equitable for graduate students of color will require dramatic shifts in institutional ideology, language, structure, and practice from the level of individuals and departments to the federal government. Language reflects and informs ideologies about race, identity, diversity, and education; those ideologies shape and are shaped by institutional structure and practice, so changes to all are required for true systemic change. Some individual changes can be quickly implemented, but the structural changes they build up to necessarily take extended periods of time to be fully and effectively realized. Therefore, IHE members with institutional power need to take initiative to advocate for and implement changes that are within their institutional control without expecting a quick-fix solution to long-standing problems. Across the academy, equity requires changing dominant ideologies about what types of IHEs, what types of labor, and what types of scholars are most “worthy”—of compensation, promotion, celebration, protection. The U.S. academy overall operates on the false belief that prestigious IHEs (i.e., old, wealthy, historically white

institutions) are necessarily the best institutions, and this has hindered educational equity and inclusion by marginalizing the work of historically minority-serving institutions, i.e., IHEs that for decades, if not centuries, have served students of color in ways that HWIs still talk about as aspirational. Equity also requires more widespread critical understanding of the complex identities that diversity encompasses—or, more accurately, oversimplifies—and the necessity of structural frameworks focused on justice. If diversity alone was the solution to exclusion and inequity, graduate students of color would not still be experiencing overwork, race-based stress and trauma, or overall poor mental health when they enter into “diverse” spaces.

IHEs that claim to value diversity and assert it as part of their missions—especially institutions with graduate programs—cannot sideline the specific and pressing needs of graduate students of color. Graduate students may be smaller in number compared to undergraduates, but they should not be less of a priority. No diversity, equity, and inclusion effort is perfect, but it must be comprehensive and attend to the needs of marginalized students at all levels. Institutional practices have to account for how graduate students occupy different institutional roles than undergraduates and that students of color experience higher education differently than their white peers (and often differently from each other). Adequately supporting graduate students of color positively impacts all IHE members, not just graduate students, because their experiences are interconnected. Graduate students’ teaching, research, mentoring, and other campus activities all contribute to campus life and institutional operations, and diversity practices that do not reflect that need to be changed to do so.

The movements for racial justice that defined the summer of 2020 in the U.S. led to heightened scrutiny and critique of IHEs' diversity practices—scrutiny and critique that have continued a year later and show no signs of abating. The momentum of the current moment emerged from the convergence of multiple events that collectively amplified the depths and interconnectedness of structural inequality in this country—including a pandemic that has disproportionately impacted people of color and extreme political polarization exacerbated by a high-stakes election; the revelations of the past year are ones that are difficult to ignore once seen. In academia, conferences, special issues of journals and academic news publications, public scholarly talks, faculty and graduate students on Academic Twitter (e.g., #BlackInTheIvory), and undergraduate students on TikTok and Instagram have sustained conversations about educational inequity and ensured that these conversations are visible to the public. As part of this movement for racial justice, the U.S. public has been grappling with the ongoing consequences of the nation's history of slavery, colonialism, and imperialism, and the academy has not been exempt from these interrogations. Students and faculty, in particular, have been highlighting how the academy and various disciplines are rooted in white supremacy and colonialism; practices that condone racism, xenophobia, gender discrimination, classism, homophobia, transphobia, and other forms of discrimination that negatively impact marginalized scholars' experiences; how anti-Blackness and anti-Indigeneity manifest in IHEs; and the myriad reasons why "diversity" is not the answer to these issues. IHEs continue to use discourse to excuse these actions, to convince people that an institution's history has been misrepresented, or to give the impression that these issues are being meaningfully addressed through a focus on "diversity" when they are not. Applying a critical linguistics lens to this institutional rhetoric demonstrates how language is

fundamental to these face-saving efforts in the wake of institution-internal and external criticisms. Centering the discourses and perspectives of students of color shows us that these efforts are not as successful as institutions might think—students of color may not be able to articulate the exact factors in institutional history that have led to the conditions that they currently experience, but they can easily see through rhetoric that has no connection to or that contradicts institutional actions. As graduate students of color and other academics continue to fight for structural change in U.S higher education, critical analysis of discourse must be an integral part of these efforts.

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APPENDIX A. Summary of UCSB interview participants

UCSB Graduate Student Interviewees						
Pseudonym	**Year in program**	**Area of study**	**Age**	**Gender identity**	**Ethnoracial identity**[16]	**Domestic or International**
Althea	2	Arts & Humanities	29	Cis woman	Asian American, mixed race (Southeast Asian, white)	Domestic
Aquila	2	STEM	23	Cis man	Black, biracial	Domestic
Aria	1	STEM	23	Cis woman	Indo-Caribbean	Domestic
Archie	5	Education & Social Sciences	27	Cis woman	Black	International
Birdie	2	STEM	23	Cis woman	Asian, Chinese	International
Biyu	2	STEM	24	Cis woman	Chinese	International
Borden	6	Education & Social Sciences	28	Cis man	Black	Domestic
Brona	5	Education & Social Sciences	28	Cis woman	Black	Domestic
Celeste	3	Education & Social Sciences	33	Cis woman	Asian American (South Asian)	Domestic
deandre [17]	2	Arts & Humanities	24	Nonbinary/ gender non-conforming/ trans	Black	Domestic
Diana	3	Education & Social Sciences	29	Cis woman	Mexican, Hispanic	Domestic (immigrant)

[16] I use the ethnoracial labels and descriptors that each participant used to describe themself during their interview. In some cases, I include only the more general terms in order to maintain confidentiality.

[17] deandre requested to have their real first name included. All other names for interview participants are pseudonyms.

Francesca	1	STEM	26	Cis woman	Biracial (Filipina, white)	Domestic
Gwen	6	STEM	29	Cis woman	Japanese American	Domestic
Jameison	1	STEM	23	Cis man	Black	Domestic
Jodi	2	STEM	24	Cis woman	Black	Domestic
Kendrick	4	Arts & Humanities	34	Cis man	Black	Domestic
Lavender	2	STEM	25	Cis woman	Black	Domestic
Liana	1	STEM	24	Cis woman	Ethnically Chinese, from Southeast Asia	International
Lilly	4	Education & Social Sciences	29	Cis woman	Middle Eastern	International
Ludwig	4	Education & Social Sciences	N/A[18]	Cis man	Native	Domestic
Lupita	2	STEM	24	Cis woman	Black	Domestic
Marisol	7	Education & Social Sciences	31	Cis woman	Latina, Chicana, Mexican American	Domestic
Milo	2	Arts & Humanities	56	Cis man	Mixed race (Japanese, white)	Domestic
Netta	3	STEM	25	Cis woman	Taiwanese American	Domestic
Robert	2	Education & Social Sciences	26	Cis man	Biracial (Mexican, white)	Domestic
Rosalie	6	Education & Social Sciences	40	Cis woman	Asian Latina	International

[18] Because there are so few Native graduate students at UCSB, I have omitted Ludwig's age to maintain his confidentiality.

Ruthi	3	STEM	31	Cis woman	Indian	International
Steve	2	STEM	26	Cis man	Ethnically Caucasian, from the Middle East[19]	Domestic (immigrant)
Tilly	5	Education & Social Sciences	30	Cis woman	Black	Domestic
Zara	4	STEM	25	Cis woman	Asian American	Domestic

UCSB Staff and Administrator Interviewees		
Pseudonym	**Office**	**Role**
Camden	Graduate Division	Full-time staff/administrator
Garrett	Graduate Division	Full-time staff/administrator
Keane	Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion	Full-time staff/administrator
London	Graduate Division	Part-time graduate peer advisor
Austin	Graduate Division	Part-time graduate peer advisor

[19] *Caucasian* here means "from Caucasia," not the ethnoracial label often used for "white"

APPENDIX B. Summary of SHBU interview participants

SHBU Graduate Student Interviewees						
Pseudonym	**Year in program**	**Area of study**	**Age**	**Gender identity**	**Ethnoracial identity**	**Domestic or International**
Ada	3	Education & Social Science	26	Cis woman	Black	Domestic
Bethany	2	Education & Social Science	25	Cis woman	African American	Domestic
Brandon	2	Education & Social Science	34	Cis man	African American	Domestic
Chidi	1	Education & Social Science	22	Cis man	African American	Domestic
Darrell	1	Business & Management	27	Cis man	Black	Domestic
Edwin	1	Education & Social Science	24	Cis man	African American	Domestic
Marcus	2	Arts & Humanities	29	Cis man	African American	Domestic
Michelle	2	Business & Management	27	Cis woman	Black	Domestic
Rashon	2	Education & Social Science	26	Cis man	Black	Domestic
Rene	1	Business & Management	23	Cis woman	Black	Domestic
Sonia	1	Education & Social Science	21	Cis woman	Black	Domestic

Toni	1	Education & Social Science	20	Cis woman	Black	Domestic
Yvette	4	Education & Social Science	32	Cis woman	Black	Domestic

SHBU Faculty and Administrator Interviewees		
Pseudonym	**Office or Department area**	**Role**
Eva	Education & Social Science	Faculty
Iris	Education & Social Science	Faculty
Oliver	Honors College	Staff/Administrator

APPENDIX C. Interview questions for graduate students

Part I: Biographical information

1. How old are you?
2. Where are you from? Where have you lived?
3. How would you describe the place(s) you've lived (e.g., (sub)urban/rural, size, culture)
4. How do you describe yourself to others (identity and personality)?
5. What do you like to do in your free time?
6. Who do you spend the most time with when you're on campus? Outside of school?

Part II: Educational background

1. Where did you complete your undergraduate degree? What did you study?
2. What advanced degree are you currently working on (M.A., M.S., Ph.D., etc.)? What is your field of study?
3. If a Ph.D. student: where did you complete your master's degree? What was your discipline?
4. How did you decided on each of the institutions you've attended? What were the biggest factors you considered at each stage (UG, master's, Ph.D.)?
5. What are the biggest differences you've noticed between your undergraduate and graduate experiences (in yourself as a student and in what school is like)?
6. What have you liked most about graduate school? What have you liked least?

7. What do you wish you had known (better) before starting graduate school?

Part III: Diversity and inclusion in academia/your discipline

1. What do you think it means for a university to be diverse? What do you think it means for a university to be inclusive?

2. In general, what have been your experiences with or perceptions of diversity and inclusion in higher ed so? Anything that stands out as particularly good or bad?

3. Do you think your discipline/area of study is diverse?

4. Have you noticed any diversity and inclusion efforts within your discipline (e.g., meetings, workshops, retreats, reports)?

5. What do you think your discipline does well with regards to diversity and inclusion?

6. What do you think it could improve?

7. How do you think power dynamics in academia (e.g., difference in power between grad students and faculty, between tenured and non-tenured faculty) can affect diversity and inclusion efforts? Have you seen or heard of examples?

Part IV: Diversity and inclusion at your institution

Note: For the following questions, you can answer about your university as a whole as well as your home department

1. Would you describe [UCSB/SHBU] as diverse? Is there diversity among the students? Faculty? Staff? Administrators?

2. “Diversity” is often discussed in terms of diversity of people. What do you think about diversity in curriculum or “diversity of thought”?

3. Are diversity and inclusion important to your university? What gives you the impression that they are (not)?

5. What identities or groups do you hear/see most frequently in discussions of diversity or inclusion at [UCSB/SHBU]?

6. What identities/groups do you feel aren’t included enough in these discussions?

7. What do you think [UCSB/SHBU] does well with regards to diversity and inclusion?

8. What do you think it could improve?

9. UCSB: In your opinion, how does UCSB’s history as a historically white institution in “liberal California” that is now an HSI influence its approach to diversity and inclusion?

10. SHBU: In your opinion, how does SHBU’s history as a southern HBCU influence its approach to diversity and inclusion?

Part V: Diversity and inclusion for graduate students at your institution

1. How do graduate students fit into campus culture at [UCSB/SHBU]? Are they integrated into campus life?
2. How do the demographics of graduate students compare to the demographics of undergraduate students? (e.g., race, gender, local/regional, (non)traditional)

3. Do you think the demographics of undergraduate students has impacted (directly or indirectly) your graduate school experience?
4. Do you think the demographics of faculty and administrators has impacted (directly or indirectly) your graduate school experience?
5. What needs do graduate students have that are different from undergraduates at [UCSB/SHBU]?
6. What needs do graduate students of color have that are different from white graduate students, particularly at [UCSB/SHBU]?
7. If international student: what needs do you have as an international student that domestic students don't typically have? How are your experiences in academia (broadly) different from domestic students?
8. If international students: do you feel like the experiences of international students of color are taken into account in conversations about racial/ethnic diversity among graduate students?
9. Do you think these differences are more specific to graduate students at your university or applicable to graduate students at other schools as well?
10. What resources, spaces, events, etc. are designed specifically for graduate students on campus? Which ones do you use, if any?
11. Does [UCSB/SHBU] have diversity and inclusion efforts specifically for graduate students?

12. In general, when you hear or read things about diversity and inclusion in academia, do you feel like graduate students are considered? Do you see your experiences represented in what people are saying or debating?

Part VI: Making changes

1. While you've been in grad school here, have you or other graduate students advocated for changes for graduate students on campus? If yes, what were people advocating for or trying to get changed?
2. What is the role/function of the graduate student association/union (GSA/GSU) on campus?
3. If applicable: What is the function of identity-based graduate student groups on campus? How do they offer that the GSA/GSU doesn't?
4. If a member of an identity-based group: Why did you join? What have you gained/do you hope to gain from being a member? Do you think your graduate experience would be different if you weren't a member of this group?
6. Do you feel like graduate student input, or student input in general, is valued when it comes to making changes on campus?
7. Would you feel comfortable sharing a complaint about your graduate student experience directly with a faculty member or someone else on campus? Do you think there would be any form of retaliation? Do you think your complaint would be taken seriously?
8. In general, what are your biggest pet peeves about academia? (your department, discipline, university, and/or academia in general)

9. *“Magic wand” question*: If there were no structural, financial, or cultural barriers to you getting any resources you wanted/needed as a grad students, what would help you to be as successful as possible?

11. What one positive change would you like to see most at your university?

Part VI: Talking about diversity and inclusion in higher education

1. When you want to talk about issues related to diversity or inclusion in academia, who do you turn to?

Part VII: Wrap up

1. In your own words, how would you summarize why diversity and inclusion matter in higher education?

2. Any final comments or thoughts? Anything that I should have asked about that I didn’t?

Appendix D. Interview questions for faculty, administrators, and staff

Part I: Education and career background

1. Where and when did you complete your undergraduate degree? What did you study?
2. Where and when did you complete your advances degree(s)? What was your area of study?
3. How did you decide on each of the universities you attended?
4. What were the biggest differences between your undergraduate and graduate school experiences?
5. What did you like most about graduate school? What did you like least?
6. How did you get from graduate school to your current position?

Part II: Diversity and inclusion in academia

1. Would you describe the universities you attended as diverse? What made each one (not) diverse?
2. Would you describe your discipline/area of higher education as diverse?
3. In your time in academia, have you noticed a shift in the way diversity and inclusion are addressed? How would you describe the changes you've noticed?
4. How have these changes affected your experiences as faculty/staff/administrator?
5. What do you think academia (at large) is doing well in regard to diversity and inclusion?
6. What could be improved?

7. Do you think that power dynamics within academia (e.g., differences in power between graduate students and faculty) affect diversity and inclusion efforts?

Part III: Diversity and inclusion at your institution

Note: For the following questions, you can answer about your insitution as a whole as well as your home department or academic unit

1. Would you describe [UCSB/SHBU] as diverse? What makes it (not) diverse? Is there diversity among the students? Faculty? Staff? Administrators?
2. Would you describe [UCSB/SHBU] as inclusive? What makes it (not) inclusive (or not)?
3. Is 'diversity and inclusion' a central part of [UCSB/SHBU]'s mission? Is it central to integral parts of the university's functioning, such as faculty hiring, curriculum development, and student life?
4. What social and/or identity characteristics are most common in discussions of diversity and inclusion at [UCSB/SHBU]? Are there others you think are overlooked?
5. Can a university be either diverse OR inclusive without the other?
6. What do you think [UCSB/SHBU] does well with regards to diversity and inclusion?
7. What do you think it could improve?
8. UCSB: In your opinion, how does UCSB's history as a historically white institution in "liberal California" that is now an HSI influence its approach to diversity and inclusion?
9. SHBU: In your opinion, how does SHBU's history and current status as an HBCU in the South (and Virginia specifically) influence its approach to diversity and inclusion?

10. Is there a university-level diversity statement or diversity initiative(s) in place? Who/what does it focus on? What is the ultimate goal? Has there been any pushback or criticism from members of the campus community?

10. Can you describe the process of getting that initiative (or a similar type of institutional change) in place?

11. Has your office or department received any funding for diversity and inclusion efforts? What was the initiative that was funded? What was/is the goal of the initiative? What was the process like, from conceptualization to final approval and funding? Who was responsible for putting the initiative together?

12. As far as you can tell, how do understandings of being a 'diverse and inclusive campus' compare among people at different levels of the university (administrators, faculty, staff, students)? [For example, do faculty and graduate students in your department seem to have the same understanding of 'diversity'?]

13. Are members of your department/academic unit required to complete diversity and inclusion training? What types of trainings do you do? Who organizes them?

Part IV: Graduate students

1. How do graduate students fit into campus culture at [UCSB/SHBU]? Are they integrated into campus life?

2. How do the demographics of graduate students compare to the demographics of undergraduate students?

3. Do you think the demographics of undergraduate students affects graduate students' experiences?
4. How do the demographics of faculty and administrators affect graduate students' experiences?
5. What needs do graduate students have that are different from undergraduates at [UCSB/SHBU]?
6. Do you think these differences are more specific to graduate students at [UCSB/SHBU] or applicable to graduate students at other schools as well?
7. What resources, buildings, events, etc. are designed specifically for graduate students at [UCSB/SHBU]?
8. Are there diversity and inclusion efforts here that are specific to graduate students?
9. In general, when people talk about 'students' or 'the student body' at [UCSB/SHBU], do you think graduate students are included in that group?
10. In general, when you hear or read things about diversity and inclusion in academia, do you feel like graduate students are considered?

Part V: Making changes

1. Have graduate students advocated for change on campus and/or in your department? Who have been the most vocal about wanting change? What are some of the things they've advocated for?
2. Does [UCSB/SHBU] have a graduate student association or union? What is its role/function on campus?

3. When changes are going to be made at [UCSB/SHBU] that will directly affect students (at all levels), who is generally part of the conversation/process? If there are student representatives, are graduate students included?

4. In your experience in academia (at any institution), what have been the most successful efforts at institutional change that you've seen?

5. What are some examples of unpredictable barriers or challenges that you've faced or seen other face in the process of trying to make institutional change? Predictable barriers?

6. If there were no structural, financial, or cultural barriers, what immediate changes would you make in your department/academic unit/university? Changes in academia?

7. Given the realities of your academic context, what do you think are the most tangible positive changes that could happen for students – graduate and undergraduate – relatively quickly? Changes that could happen over a longer period of time?

8. What one positive change would you like to see most at your university?

Part VI UCSB. Additional questions for GradDiv staff and administrators

1. What is your role within Graduate Division? What tasks and people are you responsible for in your day-to-day activities?

2. What is the *goal* for your position within Graduate Division? Is there a specific, tangible outcome that you are working toward?

3. What qualifications are required to hold it? What type of training or preparation did you go through before starting this job or in the beginning stages of this job?

4. What made you want this position? (Did you want this position?)

5. How often do you interact with graduate students? What are the circumstances or contexts in which you typically interact with them?
6. Broadly speaking, how are ‘diversity and inclusion’ operationalized for Graduate Division’s purposes? What does ‘diversity’ mean for the purposes of things like ‘graduate diversity initiatives’ or ‘diversity programs’?
7. What diversity initiatives does Graduate Division currently have in place? What are the goals of these initiatives? How long have they been in place?
8. Do Graduate Division diversity and inclusion initiatives work in tandem with department-internal initiatives, or do they function separately from the requirements of each department and/or school?
9. Is graduate student input a consistent part of the planning process for the diversity-related programming and/or initiatives through Graduate Division? How much of the graduate diversity programming that Graduate Division is involved in (either as an organizer or sponsor) is graduate student-developed/led?
10. Have you received any complaints, compliments, or general feedback about Graduate Division diversity initiatives from grad students? If yes, what have people liked or disliked and why?

Part VI SHBU. Additional questions for Graduate College administrators and staff

1. What is your role within the College? What tasks and people are you responsible for in your day-to-day activities?

2. What is the goal for your position within the College? Is there a specific, tangible outcome that you are working toward?
3. What qualifications are required to hold it? What type of training or preparation did you go through before starting this job or in the beginning stages of this job?
4. What made you want this position? (Did you want this position?)
5. How often do you interact with graduate students? What are the circumstances or contexts in which you typically interact with them?
6. What diversity or inclusion initiatives does the College currently have in place? What are the goals of these initiatives? How long have they been in place?
7. With regard to diversity and inclusion efforts, does the College work in tandem with individual departments or does it function independently?
8. Is graduate student input a consistent part of the planning process for graduate level programming and/or initiatives (diversity-related or otherwise)? How much of the graduate programming that the College is involved in (either as an organizer or sponsor) is graduate student-developed/led?
9. Have you received any complaints, compliments, or general feedback about the College's initiatives from grad students? If yes, what have people liked or disliked and why?

Part VII: Wrap up

1. In your own words, how would you summarize why diversity and inclusion matter in higher education?
2. What should I have asked you that I didn't? What else do you think I should know?
3. Any final comments or thoughts?

APPENDIX E. Prompts for website focus group interviews

Open discussion questions

1. What do you see as the purpose of a university website?
    a. What is it intended to do? Who is it for?
2. What do you see as the purpose of a diversity page, specifically?
    a. What is it intended to do? Who is it for?
3. When applying to graduate programs, did you look at each institutions’ diversity page, if it had one?
4. Generally speaking, do you think that the information on diversity pages informs students’ graduate school decisions in meaningful ways?
5. How did you use websites in your process of applying to graduate school?
6. When you picture a typical diversity website, what’s on it?
    a. What types of images? What topics are covered? What information is given?
7. How do you think diversity is represented on websites on non-diversity pages?
8. What types of institutions have the most need/use for a diversity website?
9. Do you think diversity texts and images looks similar or different at institutions that are NOT predominantly White (compared to those that are)?

Website text examples

University A

At ____, diversity isn’t a buzzword. It’s crucial to our educational mission. […] We believe numbers alone do not indicate success in achieving a dynamically diverse community.

University B

It's important to understand that we envision IDEAL (Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access in a Learning Environment) as much more than counting numbers and checking boxes. If we're successful, it will result in significant cultural and institutional change for _____.

University C

We commit ourselves to a vision of leadership in diversity and equity, not out of a reluctant sense of obligation but because only by enriching ourselves and embracing diversity can we become the leading institution we aspire to be.

University D

The campus community…strives to create an environment that is welcoming for all sectors of our state's diverse population. […] ____ particularly acknowledges the acute need to remove barriers to the recruitment, retention, and advancement of talented students, faculty, and staff from historically excluded populations who are currently underrepresented.

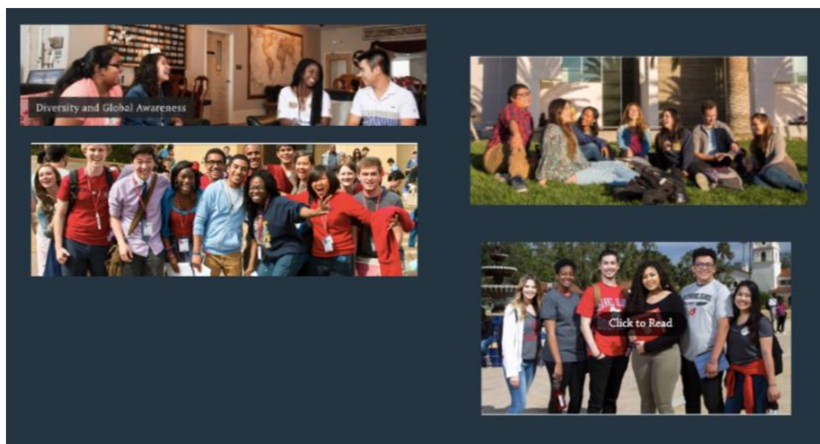
University E

The commission is responsible for: assessment, services, and programs for diversity groups, including an evaluation of the effectiveness of those services and programs; recruitment, enrollment, retention in and graduation of students who are members of diversity groups.

University F

Diversity – Fostering a community that identifies, values, and respects differences of all people by creating a positive experience for students, faculty, staff, and the community.

Website image examples[20]



[20] Focus group participants were shown an image from SHBU's website, which I have removed here.

APPENDIX F. Transcription conventions

Block quotes

[ ]	Added or modified speech
[…]	Omitted speech
(.)	Short pause (other than natural break)
…	Extended pause
:	Lengthening
–	Truncated word or clause
@	Single laugh token
@but	Laughing while speaking
(LAUGHTER)	Extended laughter
Italics	Emphatic (prosodic stress)
<SLOW> </>	Speech quality
<VOX>	Imitating another person's speech

Line-by-line transcriptions (for two or more speakers)

[ ]	Overlapping speech
:	Lengthening
.	Final intonation
,	Continuing intonation
?	Rising/question intonation
–	Truncated word or clause
=	Connected speech

@	Single laugh token
@but	Laughing while speaking
(LAUGHTER)	Extended laughter
Italics	Emphatic (prosodic stress)
<SLOW> </>	Speech quality
<VOX>	Imitating another person’s speech
(.)	Pause
(1.0)	Extended pause (time)
[…]	Omitted speech
#	Unintelligible speech
(H)	Inhale
(Hx)	Exhale