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## The Cultural Construction of Diverse Other(s): A Discourse Analysis of Institutional Policy

Item Type	Dissertation (Open Access)
Authors	Friedensen, Rachel E.
DOI	<a href="https://doi.org/10.7275/10410362.0">10.7275/10410362.0</a>
Download date	2025-07-04 00:19:40
Link to Item	<a href="https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14394/17212">https://hdl.handle.net/20.500.14394/17212</a>

The Cultural Construction of Diverse Other(s): A Discourse Analysis of Institutional  
Policy

A Dissertation Presented

By

RACHEL E. FRIEDENSEN

Submitted to the Graduate School of the  
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

September 2017

College of Education



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Policy

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## DEDICATION

To the person who will talk Foucault with me at all times of the day and night: my best friend, my intellectual muse, my wife, my partner in all things, Anastasia.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This dissertation is about the importance and centrality of language. Ironically, words fail me when I attempt to articulate how many, many people have supported me as I've journeyed to this point in my scholarly career. Just know that whatever I write here only scratches the surface of my deep love and gratitude.

I have wanted to be a scholar for as long as I can remember. While the fields and disciplines in which I wanted to work have changed, my love for learning and research has been fostered all along the way by several amazing teachers. My deep fascination with poststructuralism began in Sharon Ullman and Bethany Schneider's classrooms at Bryn Mawr College—those initial Foucault encounters set me on my current path, mostly because I have never been able to stop thinking about them. Sharon also helped me become the writer I am, and for that I will be forever grateful. I am also indebted to the many faculty members I have had the opportunity to work with at the University of Massachusetts Amherst. Ryan Wells, Chrystal George Mwangi, and Alexandra Lauterbach all showed me the ins-and-outs—and the joys!—of collaboration. Liz Williams also taught me so much about research design and even more about higher education.

My dissertation committee has been a rock to me through this process. In many ways, Svati Shah brought me back to Foucault, for it was in her feminist theory class that I was able to first formulate the possibilities of poststructuralist higher education research. She also provided some key insights for ways to get poststructuralism and culture to play nicely together. Kate Hudson has simply been the best since before I even arrived at UMass Amherst. She helped me navigate bewilderingly new disciplinary

waters and shepherded me through my doctoral career with grace and wit and empathy. She provided me with more opportunities than I can count, including inviting me to co-teach our intro master's seminar. Kate has been a tireless cheerleader, mentor, and friend.

And where would I be without Zeke Kimball, my advisor? When I first emailed Zeke to see if he wanted a co-instructor for the history of higher education course, I did not realize that I was contacting a future mentor and collaborator. Zeke has given me so many opportunities to broaden my horizons, gain skills, and expand my research interests. He has been unfailingly supportive, even in the face of my anxiety or indecision, and even when I told him that I wanted to write my dissertation from the opposite side of the country. In short, Zeke is everything that a mentor and advisor should be. This dissertation would have never been possible without his guidance, support, and willingness to let me “Foucault the heck out of things.” Whenever I say this, he responds that this is what he's supposed to be doing, but I'll say it again: thank you, thank you, thank you.

A scholar is nothing without her community. I can't possibly put into words how amazing my community is. I am greatly indebted to all the students in the higher ed programs at UMass Amherst who let me take a part in their educational experience. A special shout-out goes to the master's cohort of 2014—y'all showed me the true joys of teaching and will always be my very favorite students. I am also especially thankful to my own cohort members, especially Juan Manuel Ruiz Hau, Shelley Nicholson, Ben Ostiguy, and Renee Fall, who have been with me since the beginning. I'm also totally unsure of where I would be without the guidance offered by Dan Saunders, Ethan Kolek, and Gerardo Blanco Ramirez—I can't wait to follow in your footsteps!

I am also incredibly blessed by my many supportive friends, who have been especially patient with my complaints about grad school for the last 5+ years. Stephanie Olen, Jess Pastore, Elhanna Porter, and Raphaele Monty have kept my spirits up with our yearly reunions and emails, chats, and letters—here’s to many more new year’s eves in Buffalo and sleepovers in Philadelphia. Nathan Gold has also been essential to me for all these years and I’m so glad we’re friends. Angel Wolfe, you are my oldest friend and I am grateful for how well you know me and bring me back to myself; you will always be my PB. Alysha Dockum, Genie Bettancourt, and Victoria Malaney have all also contributed materially to my stock of delight throughout my doctoral career. Josh Marland, I am always happy to debate things with you at any volume. Matt Wheeler and Garrett Gowen, I honestly don’t know what my life would be like without you two wonderful humans in it—it would certainly have a little less Kylie Minogue and truly excellent sweaters in it. Finally, my best men: Sean Boyle and Chase Milam. What can I say? Sean, you are the brother I never knew I wanted and I love you very much. Chase, you have selflessly given me so much over the past 5 years—friendship, support, cooking advice (even when unsolicited), and a home. I’m so glad—and incalculably lucky—you didn’t give up on me.

My family has always offered unfailing support of my educational pursuits, even when they take me across the country and back. I am lucky to have a large family, and am grateful for all the unconditional support I receive from my aunts, uncles, and cousins, as well as my amazing step-sisters, Rachel, Anna, Abby, Amber, and Kiera. I am especially grateful to David and Sarah Polda, who graciously allowed me to live in their beautiful house in Mount Vernon for the past year—I couldn’t have ever found a lovelier

spot to write my dissertation. Annie is a paragon of sisters. She prods me forward when I stumble, corrects my posture when I slump, and cheers from the sidelines, whether I'm running a marathon or writing a dissertation. I love her more than anything in this world. Finally, I am lucky enough to have 3 sets of the most amazing parents in this universe: my in-laws, Rick and Kris Bulcroft; my father and step-mother, Robert Friedensen and Robin Braithwaite; and my mother and step-father, Victoria and John Andrews. Rick and Kris remind me to not take academic life too seriously and to cultivate my garden (and my wine collection). Dad and Robin remind me to pay attention to the music of life and remember to sing when I'm happy. Mom and John remind me to look at the stars and remember that I'm not alone. Mom, I'm especially indebted to you—you never once doubted that I would go to grad school and get my Ph.D. and have helped me fan a little spark of academic ability into scholarly flames for all these long years.

Finally, Anastasia. I can actually not find the words to describe what you mean to me or how integral you are to me. And these past 5 years have been long and tumultuous, and our lives are finally taking shape. So I'll leave it at this: all that I do, I do for you. I love you.

ABSTRACT

THE CULTURAL CONSTRUCTION OF DIVERSE OTHER(S): A DISCOURSE

ANALYSIS OF INSTITUTIONAL POLICY

SEPTEMBER 2017

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Institutions of higher education are tasked with grappling with their long histories of exclusion and inequality. As more members of historically marginalized groups gain access to higher education, colleges and universities strive to create more equitable environments within their walls and to produce equity-minded democratic citizens. These institutions turn to policy to help them achieve these ends. These policies often emphasize diversity—a multivalent concept that often simply means difference, but also serves as a stand-in for the policy performances produced by institutions as they attempt create equitable and just campuses. Diversity’s multivocality inspires the main question that this study answers: What are we talking about when we talk about diversity?

In answering this question, this study grapples with the tension between the perceived inefficacy and insufficiency of diversity and equity policy and its continued use and importance by focusing on language. Using policy discourse analysis, a poststructuralism-inspired research methodology, this dissertation explores discourses about diversity and their place in the institutional culture at one public, research university in the northeastern United States. Documents analyzed include institutional

policies, strategic plans, and other official documents, such as union contracts. This study found that certain images, problems, and solutions related to diversity function discursively to create a Diverse Other. This study also identified the following discourses that shape diversity rhetoric, diversity work, and perceptions of the Diverse Other: a) the discourse of access; b) the discourse of institutional citizenship; c) the discourse of appropriation; and d) the discourse of bureaucracy.

Taken together, these findings suggest that diversity work is widespread, but superficially embedded, in the institutional culture of the institution in question. This study also suggests that the institution engages in complex non-performative gestures that display a commitment to diversity, but ultimately undermine the concept's transformative possibilities. Additionally, implications for research, policy, and practice are discussed.

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## CHAPTER I

### DISCOURSE AND DIVERSITY

For the first several hundred years of its existence, higher education institutions almost exclusively enrolled relatively affluent white men. While the nineteenth century saw the diversification of institutional types that began to expand access for women, people of color, and the working classes, it was not until the middle of the twentieth century that individuals who were not white, male, or socio-economically advantaged started to arrive at the nation's colleges and universities in any considerable numbers (Karabel, 2005; Thelin, 2011). Since the beginnings of mass higher education after World War II (Trow, 1973), leaders of colleges and universities have conducted on-going efforts to make their institutions more inclusive and representative of the nation's different demographic groups (Cohen & Kisker, 2010; Thelin, 2011). Higher education institutions often use the word *diversity* to refer to both this drive for inclusion and the state of being inclusive of many different peoples. Diversity has multiple foci: it is not something that only affects undergraduate students, although the largest portion of diversity studies in higher education research focus on them. Diversity can also refer to faculty, leadership, and staff. Indeed, diversity is an expansive concept—it also often refers to initiatives undertaken to address concerns about equity and social justice on college campuses. In response to calls for expanded access, higher satisfaction rates, and better outcomes, many diversity efforts focus on campus climate—or how it feels to be on a college or university campus for students, staff, and faculty—as the arena in which diversity can be found (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado, Alvarez, Guillermo-Wan, Cuellar, & Arellano, 2012).

Diversity and equity policies can take many forms. They can also emanate from and take effect on local, state, and national levels of the higher education enterprise. For example, Titles VII and IX are important diversity-related policies that were produced at the national level but affect individual institutions. Another important group of diversity-related policies are affirmative action policies, which vary from state to state. Diversity also appears embedded in policies related to diversity and equity in code of conduct policies, admissions policies, hiring, tenure, and promotion policies, and other institutional statements such as mission statements and institution values. Other ways that institutions attempt to address disparities in access and experience are through the crafting of strategic plans (Iverson, 2012), women's and/or minority commissions (Allan, 2003, 2008), and programming and events that address issues related to diversity, equity, and social justice (Bowman, 2010, 2011).

Despite the efforts made through these policies, plans, and programs, students and their families, faculty, and funding and governing bodies are still not satisfied when it comes to the state of diversity in the nation's colleges and universities (Park, 2009). Students and faculty of color are still underrepresented, as are individuals from lower socio-economic backgrounds and students with disabilities (NCES, 2012; NCES, 2015). Furthermore, a stratification of higher education has emerged, with the majority of students from underserved or historically marginalized populations at institutions with the fewest resources and lowest prestige (NCES, 2015). Finally, higher education researchers have thoroughly established the ways that underrepresented groups still experience negative campus climates. Even demographic groups that are no longer underrepresented,

such as women or Asian Americans, experience harassment, prejudice and bigotry, and other products of poor campus climates for diversity (Allan, 2011; Chung, 2014).

Even though the American system of higher education achieved mass levels of educational enrollments starting in the 1970s (Trow, 1973), there has been continual pressure on institutions to provide more and better access to higher education, especially considering evidence that shows inequitable outcomes and experiences for some students and faculty (Gelber, 2015; Hurtado et al., 2012). One answer to this call is compositional diversity, which refers to representation in specific demographic categories (Gurin et al., 2002; Milem, 2003). While individual institutions may vary in their data-gathering and terminology, these categories often refer to race/ethnicity, gender, sexual orientation, socio-economic class, ability, and citizenship status. Compositional diversity essentially captures how many different types of people one might encounter on campus, as well as how many of each type; the degree of homogeneity or heterogeneity has an important impact on experiences with campus climate, especially the psychological dimension (Gurin et al., 2002; Hurtado et al., 2012).

The psychological dimension of campus climate can almost be seen as the core of the concept—it addresses the way that it feels to be on a campus and the impact of daily experiences with the physical, intellectual, and social environments, including the behavioral dimension of the campus climate (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado, et al., 2012; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Yosso, Smith, Ceja, & Solórzano, 2009). Each individual experiences this dimension differently. Therefore, one student may experience the climate as positive, welcoming, and supportive, while another may experience it as hostile and unsafe; social identities, such as race, gender, and class,

predict the ways that the climate is experienced (Rankin & Reason, 2005). Compositional diversity makes an impact on this dimension—the higher the number of different people there are, the more likely it is that more students and faculty will see themselves in the campus (Griffin, Pérez, Holmes, & Mayo, 2010; Gurin et al., 2002; Hurtado, 2005). However, the psychological dimension of campus climate also relies on the institution's ability to create positive, structured, and productive interactions between individuals from diverse backgrounds (Hurtado et al., 2012). The psychological dimension is tied to several measures of satisfaction with higher education institutions for students and faculty as well as to several benefits and outcomes that stem from undergraduate student experiences with diverse peers.

That many of these diversity efforts have failed is clear to many people concerned about equity and social justice in higher education. The long tradition of studying diversity in higher education shows persistent scholarly interest and concern about the issue. Dissatisfaction is also obvious in the most recent crop of student protests on American college campuses (Jaschik, 2015a; Jaschik, 2015b). While student protests have been a part of the landscape of American higher education since the colonial colleges (Thelin, 2011), the most recent occurrences show the deep dissatisfaction and disillusionment that students feel about administrative and institutional attempts to improve the campus climate for diversity and diverse students (Jaschik, 2015a; Jaschik, 2015b; Woodhouse, 2015). Students have been willing to engage with administrators and campus leaders to make their demands and concerns known, but they have also made it clear that they believe that the current policies are neither moving fast enough nor doing enough to protect historically marginalized students and faculty on campus (for example,

the Concerned Student, 1950 protests at the University of Missouri in 2015). However, there is a paradoxical nature to these demands: many of these demands are policy-based, such as increasing the representation of people of color in the professoriate. Thus, even while critiquing their utility, these student protestors reinforce the belief that policy, flawed as it is, holds the key to remedying issues of disparity and inequity in higher education.

Policy, therefore, is clearly considered a key component of efforts to improve diversity at American colleges and universities, even though many question its efficacy (Boyd, 1991; Chang, 2002; Clayton-Pederson, Parker, Smith, Moreno, & Teraguchi, 2007). Policy occupies such an outsized role in diversity efforts because it provides the language with which these issues are discussed. While policy inevitably reflects trends in language currently in use (for instance, the shift from multiculturalism to diversity), policy also exerts a powerful effect on language at individual, institutional, and even national levels (Allan, 2008). Policy provides a vocabulary—what one can and cannot say on a given topic—and how complex ideas like representation, campus climate, or marginalization get expressed in official communications (Bacchi, 1999; Cochran & Malone, 2005). Furthermore, the postmodern turn has made it abundantly clear that language matters. Language structures reality in fundamental and totalizing ways and creates subjectivities that we all inhabit (Allan, 2008; Weedon, 1987). Language is also always changing; thus the construction of discourse and subjectivity is always in process and in flux. Official language conveyed by policy thus creates certain subjectivities available in the specific context in which they operate (Allan, 2008).

However, it is not simply that policy language creates and reflects subjectivities; it reifies and reinforces these subjectivities through the production of alterity. Alterity, or the state of being other, is the result of a discursive process that constructs who or what the dominant or normative is not by defining it, but by defining what it is not (Said, 1978). For example, Edward Said's (1978) concept of Orientalism shows the discursive process by which Europeans 'othered' the Orient and, in so doing, defined themselves as colonial powers. By discursively designating colonized peoples as exotic savages, Europeans produced their own subjectivity as civilized (Said, 1978). Gender is another realm where alterity is at work. Patriarchal domination of women is supported by a discursive system that constructs masculinity as everything that is not culturally understood to be feminine, thus casting women as the 'Other' (Butler, 1990; de Beauvoir, 1952/1989). In short, alterity essentially describes the process by which dominant subjectivity is produced through the designation of the 'Other' and can only exist through that designation, thus producing its own object (Said, 1978).

While these examples of alterity are very broad, language in higher education diversity and equity policy also involves this very process of 'othering.' These types of policies focus on diversity and equity; in order to do the work they envision, policy-makers both consciously and subconsciously construct two categories: those for whom this policy is needed and everybody else. In order to outline the 'everybody else'—groups for whom no special effort is required, who experience the campus climate 'normally'—these policies construct what I terms the 'Diverse Other' in this dissertation. It is this 'Diverse Other' that, in fact, defines who the non-diverse majority is. The key to unlocking diversity policies' lack of success may be found in this process of othering the

populations in whose benefit it is supposed to be working. In other words, even though these policies may be formulated with altruistic goals in mind, they may fall short of those goals because they reinforce inequitable and unjust discourses about the marginalized populations they wish to help (Allan, 2008; Allan, Iverson, & Ropers-Huilman, 2010; Iverson, 2010, 2012, 2016).

### **Statement of the Problem**

Institutions of higher education are microcosms of the larger world. As an imagined community that is often housed on a brick-and-mortar campus but extends beyond those confines, the world of a higher education institution is populated by students, staff, faculty, and administrators as well as other extra-mural stakeholders, such as funders, legislators, families, and potential employers. These inhabitants live and work, teach and learn, perform research and public outreach, and delicately coexist with each other. Each individual inhabits certain discursively constructed subjectivities that bring with them differing amounts of capital, privilege, dominance, and marginalization. Sometimes thought of as intersectional identities (Anzaldúa & Moraga, 2002; Collins, 1998; Crenshaw, 1991), these identities come into contact, and sometimes conflict, as people participate in the world of higher education.

The worlds of college campuses, however much their critics would like to think, do not exist in isolation. They are part of the world at large and reflect many aspects of modern society, including discourse about race, gender, and other social identity categories. Particularly, higher education institutions share in the same systemic hierarchies of social identities that uphold white supremacy and privilege, male privilege, heteronormativity, and other unjust systems of thought and action. Moreover, higher

education is implicated in Western imperialism, colonization, and the systematic disenfranchisement of people of color, women, and people with different sexualities, gender orientations, and abilities (for example: Ladson-Billings, 1998; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Yosso, Villalpando, Delgado Bernal, & Solórzano, 2001). This systemic inequality infects all aspects of the university, virtually guaranteeing that historically marginalized groups have differential experiences of the higher education environment. This systemic inequality also limits the number of heterogeneous experiences, ideas, and approaches that are introduced into the academic endeavor.

In recognition of this systemic inequality, institutions of higher education strive to create more equitable environments within their walls. These worlds endeavor to lessen the effects of systemic inequality for individuals and institutions—they profess to be interested in fighting, rather than being permeated by, racist, classist, patriarchal, and heterosexist systems. To a certain extent, institutions strive for more equity in order to maintain positive reputations and a foothold in a very lucrative market. That being said, many individuals within institutions (including campus leaders) act out of a very real concern for issues of equity and their students, and from a real belief that what they are doing is not only helpful, but part of a long march towards justice. In terms of institutional responses, many higher education institutions look to the concept of *diversity* to combat systemic inequality and create a more just and inclusive campus.

Diversity in higher education is an ill-defined term. Much of the time, diversity is meant to mean difference (Baez, 2004). Some organizations, such as the Association of American Colleges & Universities (2016), confirm this use in official communications defining diversity: “Individual differences (e.g., personality, learning styles, and life

experiences) and group/social differences (e.g., race/ethnicity, class, gender, sexual orientation, country of origin, and ability as well as cultural, political, religious, or other affiliations)” (n.p.). Researchers often use diversity interchangeably with racial/ethnic diversity (for example, Gurin et al., 2002; Hurtado, Griffin, Arellano, & Cuellar, 2008), thus maintaining its basic idea of difference but specifying in which difference they are really interested. However, Baez (2004) argued that social science research that focuses on diversity as difference unintentionally “reduces individuals to biological differences for the purposes of study” and takes biological difference as natural, thereby creating the very difference that it wishes to describe (p. 286). Definitions of diversity that rest on difference fail to take into account how and why those differences are created and thus always reinforce and continually (re)create them (Baez, 2004).

Higher education also uses diversity as a strange sort of modifier. On one hand, it describes people—those who are different, or other, than the norm that, in turn, needs the other in order to construct itself. On the other hand, the term ‘diversity’ also describes a set of actions, practices, or values to which institutions and groups lay claim. In other words, diversity is something that a person *is* and something that an institution *does*. Ahmed (2012) situated diversity, especially in policy and law, as a set of performatives—that the writing or speaking of diversity-related policies simultaneously achieves the intended action of them, although that reality may never actually come to fruition. The language of diversity, which shapes its practice as well, is a discourse of “benign variation [which] bypasses power as well as history to suggest a harmonious empty pluralism” (Mohanty, 2003, p. 193). The practices of diversity as performed in policy often celebrate difference by calling attention to the difference inherent in everyone’s background while neither

interrogating nor naming the all-too-real oppressive systems that structure institutional and social experiences (Ahmed, 2012); researchers replicate this in their research on diversity (Harper, 2012). In other words, difference is read as positive and value-free (i.e., phrases such as “each person is unique in their own special way”); researchers and policymakers alike ignore the ways that systemic inequalities and oppressions mark some differences as less valuable or desirable (e.g., Blackness, gender non-conformity) than others (Ahmed, 2012; Harper, 2012). Additionally, this type of diversity rhetoric renders all forms of difference as equally important, which can lead to advocacy for inclusion for differences that are already included, such as whiteness or masculinity. Ignoring these effects of diversity rhetoric means that diversity policies, no matter how well-meaning or cross-cutting, will ultimately fail to make meaningful change in the lives and experiences of historically marginalized groups.

Diversity thus signifies many things: difference (and the bodies that are marked by difference), performance, elision. At the institution at the heart of this dissertation, Northeastern Flagship University (pseudonym), campus leaders and policy makers invoke diversity in a variety of different ways: it serves to describe a target population of students or efforts to improve campus climate, as well as to indicate adherence to a set of beliefs such as inclusion, equality, excellence, and justice. Across all these invocations, diversity is placed squarely within Northeastern Flagship University’s mission as a land-grant public research university by constructing it as a public good—good diversity means benefits for the students, institution, and the state in which it is located (Gurin et al., 2002; Milem, 2003; Milem & Hakuta, 2000). Diversity is also a signifier of a larger discourse and, as such, it is a network of language and rhetoric that simultaneously

reflects, creates, and shapes the way that the institution understands it. It has not simply become a touchstone or a buzzword (although, in many ways, it has); discourses about diversity have come to signify a complex of language, policies, rhetorical invocations, theories, and bodies that reifies certain categories in this institutional context and makes them knowable.

There is no doubt that diversity is an important concept to both higher education institutions and the people working within them. Diversity discourse has multiple, multivalent, polyvocal, and, importantly, *unexamined* meanings. Furthermore, previous multi-institutional research shows that discourses about diversity construct images of the diverse individual as an economic actor, economic commodity, and an outsider (Iverson, 2008; Iverson, 2012). This dissertation is not arguing that everyone within the university has to agree on one, unified definition of diversity, nor is it interested in delving into individual definitions. Rather, this dissertation wants to know what we are talking about when we talk about diversity on an institutional level—specifically (though, perhaps, not limited to), who and what diversity-as-discourse reifies, makes knowable, and in whose benefit it works.

### **Purpose of the Study**

This dissertation attempts to grapple with the tension between the perceived inefficacy and insufficiency of diversity and equity policy and its continued use and importance by focusing on language. Using policy discourse analysis, a poststructuralism-inspired research methodology developed by Elizabeth Allan (2003; 2008; 2010), this study explores discourses about diversity at one public, research university in the northeastern United States. This project uses a variety of different texts

from Northeastern Flagship University that, when taken in concert, provide an institutional ‘snapshot’ in order to place the cultural aspects of the institution, such as its history, climate, procedures, and customs, in juxtaposition with discursive formations that operate on macro-levels. This approach allows deep investigation of a single institution in order to understand how larger discourses and cultural specifics contribute to the discursive formation(s) of diversity. By focusing on policy—texts that codify, if not reify, discourses in circulation at the time of creation and reflect them for interpretation—this approach allows us to understand how those formation(s) are being translated into practice and, ultimately, how they may be subverting or upholding an inequitable status quo. Finally, this approach allows for reflection and meditation on the utility of the concept of diversity.

Diversity is a term that is used regularly as an invocation of progress or as a panacea for social ills both in the larger world and within higher education institutions. The lack of clarity around its meaning results in the instrumental use of diversity, wherein people and institutions utilize it in discourse for their own purposes. Investigating the discursive construction of diversity enables me to hazard an answer to the over-arching question that structures this study: “What is meant by diversity when it is invoked in institutional policies and strategic plans at a research university?” In other words, what are we talking about when we talk about diversity? In order to answer this larger question using the model presented by policy discourse analysis (Allan, 2008), this study answers the following four sub-questions:

- What are the predominant images of diversity that emerge from these texts?

- What do these texts describe as problems and solutions for diversity at this institution?
- What discourses are employed to shape these problems, solutions, and images of diversity?
- What subject positions are re/produced through these discourses?

By addressing these questions, this dissertation produces insights not only into the process by which institutions construct diversity, but also as what those constructions may look like.

### **Significance**

This dissertation makes contributions in two main arenas: institutional efficacy in promoting diversity and supporting efforts to bring about a more equitable higher education. This study focuses on several documentary aspects of campus culture that contribute to the discursive formation of diversity at a single institution. Thus, this study will serve as a blueprint for researchers who may wish to perform similar analyses at other institutions. Acknowledging that discourse is context-specific, local in meaning, and constitutive of the way that individuals and groups make sense of the concept of diversity, it is important to look at it on the local scale. This study has a real capability to be helpful to administrators and practitioners as it analyzes diversity discourses currently in use by virtue of the fact that the policies and plans that make up its primary data sources are currently in use. Furthermore, in its focus on one local context, this dissertation offers a way for higher education researchers to bridge the oft-noted gap between researchers and practitioners/policy-makers (e.g., Bensimon, 2007; Terenzini, 1996). While other scholars have suggested the need to better align research and policy

agendas (Johnsrud, 2008) and to incorporate practitioner knowledge into the research process (Bensimon, 2007), this dissertation produces knowledge directly applicable to a specific institution while also modeling a method that other researchers/institutions can employ in an effort to understand diversity discourses in their own contexts.

This dissertation also contributes to supporting efforts to bring about a more equitable higher education system. Understanding the discursive formation of diversity in higher education is vitally important for several reasons. While acknowledging that it is a multivalent discourse that is invoked for a variety of reasons, issues that fall under the rubric of diversity have very real consequences for students, faculty, and staff from historically marginalized groups. This study assays a critique of the idea of diversity as a remedy for exclusionary campus climates, but does not wish to deny, refute, or necessarily even replace that idea. Indeed, this analysis has the potential to strengthen the way that higher education administrators and practitioners understand diversity and, more particularly, the possible effects of diversity policies. More to the point, this analysis will uncover the covert injustices that may be written into policy, procedure, and plans by looking at the ways that the ‘Diverse Other’ is constructed. Only by making the implicit explicit can policy-makers take steps to remedy these injustices.

### **Key Terms**

As a study that looks in-depth at language in use and the ramifications of that language, it is necessary to outline some important concepts going forward. Though some of these terms will be expanded in later chapters, I offer brief descriptions of each of these concepts in the interests of clarity and precision.

**Alterity/Othering:** Alterity refers to otherness—the state of being an other in relation to a norm. Alterity is the result of a discursive process that constructs normative identities primarily by defining what they are not (Said, 1978). This ‘othering’ process produces two subjectivities. The first is the dominant, the one that is identified by what is not (for example, and drawing from Said (1978) and de Beauvoir (1952/1989), not-Oriental or not-feminine). The second subjectivity is that of the ‘othered’—those by whom the dominant define themselves (e.g., colonized populations or women). Oftentimes these subjectivities, especially that of the ‘othered,’ become justifications for oppressive systems that (re)inscribe inequalities of access and opportunity. Alterity essentially describes the process by which dominant subjectivity is produced through the designation of the ‘Other’ and can only exist through that designation, thus producing its own object (Said, 1978). This dissertation posits that diversity and equity policies and plans construct a ‘Diverse Other’ in their texts and that this process of alterity may ultimately subvert the socially just goals of the policy makers.

**Discourse & Subjectivity:** In this dissertation, I adhere to a poststructuralist conception of discourse. Discourses are linguistic unities that have the following characteristics: they are governed by their own rules, are socially situated in specific contexts, are dynamic, and are both self-referential and intertextual (Allan, 2008; Green & Troup, 1999). Discourse both reflects and produces the social world; furthermore, discourses give individuals the vocabulary with which to think and talk about themselves, their social groupings, and society at large (Weedon, 1987). That vocabulary can also be thought of as subjectivity—a way of for an individual (or group) to situate themselves in the context of the social world. Subjectivity is neither fixed nor essential (Weedon, 1987).

In other words, subjectivity, which can also be thought of as identity, is always changing as discourses change; it is never inherent to a person or group—it is a product of language, not a product of the person (Allan, 2008; Weedon, 1987).

**Diversity:** Diversity clearly occupies an important place in this dissertation. As reviewed above, diversity is a tricky term that can refer to individual difference (Baez, 2004) and institutional acts, practices, and policies (Ahmed, 2012). It is not my goal to articulate a new definition of diversity nor to suggest a replacement; rather, I analyze in depth how the term is used in a single institutional context. However, it is impossible to talk about diversity without using the actual word. Therefore, I endeavor to use diversity in ways that echoes or mirrors its use in the data I am analyzing while also drawing attention to that use. For example, when diversity is invoked to mean diverse bodies, I will indicate that use. I acknowledge that it is the nature of language to construct new meaning in use, and it is inevitable that I produce some concept of diversity as I move forward. By keeping that language closely tied to its use in institutional policies and plans, that concept should bear some resemblance to the discursive formation that I outline in these pages.

**Historically Marginalized Groups:** One of the main contentions of this study is that ‘diversity’ and ‘diverse’ are terms that are invoked in a variety of ways and for a variety of reasons. Diversity, at any given moment, can refer to initiatives, representation, and intersectional identities. Indeed, the very degree of multivalence means that extreme care must be taken with the use of the terms in this very text. Furthermore, this study is emergent and I do not intend to either delineate my own definition of diversity nor to produce one from the data from this study. However, diversity—as a concept as well as a

practice—has very real impact on the experiences of students, faculty, and staff at higher education institutions, and a majority of the invocations are made with the goal of remedying generations of inequitable relations. Acknowledging this reality, I needed to find a way to reference individuals who are directly affected by diversity-talk without using a tautology that invokes the very discourse that I am deconstructing. I chose ‘historically marginalized groups’ because it provides an umbrella term for the multiple intersecting identities that have traditionally been denied access to higher education realms or relegated to the margins once they enter. This term may refer to groups that are currently underrepresented—such as African/Black Americans, First Nations individuals, and individuals with disabilities (NCES, 2015)—as well as refer to groups that are no longer underrepresented but still suffer the results of negative campus climates, such as women (Glazer-Raymo, 2008; Solomon, 1986). This term is flexible enough to serve as an umbrella for the multiple and intersecting social identities that have been marginalized on college and university campuses, allowing it to move beyond the traditional triumvirate of race, class, and binary gender. Finally, ‘historically marginalized’ also moves beyond mere marginalization and invokes the historical and on-going exclusion of these groups from access to economic, cultural, and political capital, power, and influence.

**Policy:** Policies often get created in reaction to a perceived problem; they serve as remedies either in the form of crisis management or as interventions into practice in order to improve it (Bacchi, 1999; Blackmore, 1999). Traditional policy studies usually view this process as political, rational, and informed by public choice as well as personal interest (Bacchi, 1999). Other approaches include acknowledging the contingency,

compromise, and negotiation that goes into the process, viewing policies as “textual interventions into practice” (Ball, 1994, p. 18). Taking the policy process as an inherently political one, these approaches also view policy as posing a “restructuring, redistribution and disruption of power relations” through their positions as both texts and discourses (Ball, 1994, p. 20). While traditional and critical approaches to policy differ in several ways, they are able to come to some agreement about what defines a policy. A policy is a written text, often developed through negotiation and with the input of several people or groups of people, that is agreed upon and issues some sort of dictate about action, procedure, or behavior (Bacchi, 1999; Cochran & Malone, 2005; Hawkesworth, 1988; Stone, 2002). This definition provides the criteria for inclusion in this study; thus, I analyze more traditional policies, such as hiring, tenure, and promotion policies, as well as strategic institutional plans because both categories serve as policies according to definition offered.

### **Overview of Dissertation**

This dissertation explores one research university’s discourses about diversity in order to understand the ways that it constructs a diverse other as well as the ways those constructions may inhibit the institution from instantiating a set of more equitable relations. The next two chapters review the major literature bases that provide the foundation of this study. In Chapter Two, I review the general argument for higher education’s focus on diversity by looking at the arguments put forth by the research. Higher education researchers have created a solid base of empirical evidence that show the educational benefits of diversity for students as well as the negative effects of a lack of diversity for faculty members. Then, in Chapter Three, I review the philosophical and

theoretical foundations of this dissertation, including poststructuralism and culture.

Chapter Four of this dissertation discusses this study's method, policy discourse analysis.

Chapters Five and Six describe the problems, solutions, and images related to diversity in

the official documents from NFU, and Chapter Seven lays out the discourses and subject

positions in circulation. Finally, Chapter Eight—the conclusion—summarizes this

dissertation's arguments and offers both implications for research, policy, and practice

and thoughts on the future of diversity work in higher education.

## **CHAPTER 2**

### **LITERATURE REVIEW**

Diversity is not simply a common research topic in higher education research, but a central one that structures many different strands of research. Indeed, exploring the various aspects of diversity, including access, equity, and equality of experience, is one of the predominant concerns of higher education researchers today. This research is wide-ranging and numerous, and this literature review does not claim to cover the full depth and breadth. Rather, this review seeks to give a brief overview of the most prominent threads in the research to date. It begins with an attempt to define diversity and its benefits as the research literature currently understands them. For all its popularity, diversity is an ill-defined concept in higher education research, even though researchers have clearly identified its benefits for students, institutional actors, the economy, and the nation at large. The next section focuses on research about students, campus climate, and diversity. This research on students focuses on their experiences and on measuring outcomes from diversity and their determinants. The third section looks at research about diverse faculty members, which focuses on their experiences, especially the instrumental and affective aspects thereof. The final section offers a critique of this research. I contend that the body of research on diversity in higher education reviewed here is reductive and lacks intersectionality; centers white students; and lacks both an over-all critique of a capitalist and neoliberal system and the benefits offered by context-driven research.

#### **What is Diversity?**

As institutions grapple with issues of representation and climate for historically marginalized populations, higher education researchers have also grappled with diversity

in their studies. Numerous studies have explored the experiences of diverse students and faculty members in higher education contexts (e.g., Bowman 2010, 2011; Denson, 2009; Fries-Britt, Rowan-Kenyon, Perna, Milem, & Howard, 2011; Turner, 2003). Researchers and practitioners often engage diversity in conversations about equality, equity, and justice (e.g., Chase, 2010; Smith, 2009; Stulberg & Weinberg, 2011; Trent et al., 2003), thus implicating the concept with an avowedly progressive agenda that is not inherent in the word itself. 'Diversity' is a word weighted with multiple meanings that shift depending on context. It is no wonder, then, that researchers have not yet produced a common definition for diversity, even though attempts have been made (e.g., the definition offered by the American Association of Colleges and Universities, 2016). Rather, diversity serves, both in turn and often simultaneously, as a touch-stone, a buzzword, and as an umbrella term for a variety of things, such as race, class, and gender, the successful integration of students with different backgrounds, the remedy for identity-based hostility or issues on campuses, or merely a multiplicity of different viewpoints.

Given the simultaneous ill-definition and high importance of diversity, one must attend to the specifics of studies in order to understand what is meant by diversity. Hurtado et al. (2008) noted that the term diversity is often used as a stand-in for race/ethnicity. Indeed, many of the recent studies on diversity in higher education reduce the concept to one or two identities from a relatively wide range of possibilities: race/ethnicity, gender (especially with respect to women in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics fields), sexuality, or socioeconomic class. This reduction makes sense from the point of view of research design as it is difficult to measure or capture the whole swath of human difference that higher education rhetoric often means

by 'diversity'. The closest researchers seem to come to a non-reductive conceptualization of diversity are holistic models, such as the Multidimensional Model for Diverse Learning Environments (DLE; Hurtado et al., 2012), that place identity—in all its variation—at the core. Thus, these models can describe the experiences of many different types of people, but do not provide a clear definition of what diversity exactly is.

It is not necessary, or perhaps even wise, to have a single, consistent definition of diversity, especially because meaning is a contextual, local, and socially constructed phenomena. Additionally, having a single definition would not mean that diversity would then be outside the realm of discourse—discourse is totalizing in its effects and diversity would thusly still play a role in constructing subjectivities and potentially participating in processes that 'other' a group of people. However, the continued invocation of 'diversity' in research, practice, and rhetoric without attention to its conceptual underpinnings perhaps points to a collective assumption that 'diversity' has a static definition.

Determining either the truth of that assumption or the definitions of diversity across the whole of the American higher education enterprise is likely impossible. What is possible is examining the formation of diversity discourses within a community of practice embedded in a particular institutional culture. Therefore, this dissertation is interested in determining the definition(s) of diversity in a single context, positing that even one institution has this same multiplicity of definitions for diversity. The goal of this study is not to produce a single definition of my own. Rather, this analysis reflects the discursive dimensions of the concept of diversity, including what it means in different parts of the institutional culture and who the “Diverse Other” is that is brought to life by these discourses.

## **Why Does Diversity Matter?**

That U.S. colleges and universities should be concerned about diversity is an understatement. In 2009-2010, only 10.3% of all bachelor's degrees were awarded to Black students, 8.8% to Hispanic students, and 7.3% to Asian/Pacific Islander students (NCES, 2012). In that same time period, about half of all bachelor's degrees were conferred to women (NCES, 2012). Additionally, as of 2013, fully 79% of the professoriate as a whole (including full- and part-time faculty members) were white; of that number, 43% were white men (NCES, 2015). Only six percent of the professoriate were Black, five percent were Hispanic, and ten percent were Asian or Pacific Islander (NCES, 2015). First Nation faculty members and mixed race faculty members made up less than one percent each (NCES, 2015). The disparities are even starker at different levels of the professoriate. Over half of full professors are white men, while only four percent of full professors are Black (NCES, 2015). In fact, the highest percentage that Black faculty members ever attain is eight percent, at the instructor level (NCES, 2015). These statistics capture what is often characterized as a pipeline that gets increasingly leaky at each level of education (secondary, postsecondary, graduate and beyond) for women and people of color (Alper, 1993; Blickenstaff, 2005; Hanson, 2004; Miller & Wai, 2015). Clearly, these statistics only report percentages based on race/ethnicity and binary gender; other identity categories, such as sexual orientation, non-binary gender expressions, or religion, are not captured by many large-scale datasets but likely experience equally serious disparities in representation.

Studies have shown that diversity in higher education institutions imparts many benefits. This research has not only provided a justification for future research about

diversity, but it also played a significant role in Supreme Court decisions on affirmative action. On a broad level, diversity provides benefits to four main recipients: individual students, higher education institutions, the nation's economy, and society at large (Milem, 2003; Milem & Hakuta, 2000). For students, experiences with diversity can lead to benefits that range from the personal to the professional, including academic experiences and enrichment, greater satisfaction with campus climate, and greater access to material benefits from college education, such as higher salaries (Milem, 2003). Institutions benefit from diversity because it enhances the teaching and learning activities that take place on campus (Milem, 2003).

According to Milem (2003), economic benefits include cultivating a workforce with greater levels of cross-cultural competence, drawn from the best available talent pool, with better problem-solving skills. Diversity benefits include gains in democratic and pluralistic thinking, which can impact work environments, which may experience less discrimination, harassment, segregation, and greater productivity for organizations (Milem, 2003). Innovative thinkers, regardless of their socio-cultural identities, would be able to contribute to the economy rather than facing exclusion. Exposure to diverse environments also leads to considerable societal benefits. Individuals who engage positively with diverse peers are more likely to be socially engaged and interested in breaking down oppressive social structures, and are less likely to stereotype and to think ethnocentrically (Milem, 2003). Likewise, they are more likely to engage in global and political issues, perform community or civic service, and support the cause of equity in society (Milem, 2003).

Other studies have expanded on the idea of educational benefits stemming from diverse student experiences on college campuses. Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, and Gurin (2002) showed that classroom diversity, including diverse curricular options as well as interactions between diverse students, and informal interactional diversity promote several educational outcomes including increased active thinking skills, intellectual engagement, and motivation. They hypothesized that both compositional and interactional diversity offered students, especially those from segregated backgrounds, unfamiliarity that would stimulate active thinking as well as personal development (Gurin et al., 2002). Other benefits include enhanced critical thinking skills, openness to diversity and improved racial/cultural awareness, more satisfaction with college experiences, and higher levels of persistence (Milem & Hakuta, 2000; Milem, 2003). Institutions also benefit from more diverse curricular offerings, more student-centered teaching approaches, and a larger pool of diverse individuals involved in the community inside and out of higher education (Milem & Hakuta, 2000; Milem, 2003).

Scholars also noted that exposing students to diverse experiences creates many positive democratic outcomes (Milem & Hakuta, 2000; Milem, 2003). Gurin et al. (2002) identified “perspective-taking, citizenship engagement, racial and cultural understanding, and judgment of the compatibility among different groups in a democracy” (p. 334). Hurtado (2005) found that students who had negative interactions with diverse peers scored lower on many democratic outcomes, including cultural awareness, concern for the public good, tolerance for race-based initiatives and diverse individuals. Conversely, students who had positive interactions with diverse peers had more positive outcomes,

such as being “less likely to accept that some degree of social inequality is acceptable in our society” (Hurtado, 2005, p. 602).

A key aspect of college diversity, especially in the curriculum, is having diverse faculty members present in the classrooms. The presence of historically marginalized faculty can help patch the leaky pipeline into many disciplines, as well as the professoriate itself, for students from historically marginalized backgrounds. Researchers have established that diverse faculty members do important work by providing support and positive role models for their diverse students, including advising, mentoring, and providing undergraduate research opportunities (Bettinger & Long, 2005; Griffin et al., 2010; Harris, Rhoads, Walden, Murphy, Meissler, & Reynolds, 2004; Sonnert, Fox, & Adkins, 2007; Stage & Hubbard, 2008). Faculty from historically marginalized backgrounds are also more likely to employ active teaching methods, teach interdisciplinary classes, and place more emphasis on affective, moral, and civic student development, thereby contributing to students’ achievement of the democratic benefits described above (Antonio, 2002). Other benefits to a diverse professoriate include higher levels of job satisfaction and persistence for faculty from historically marginalized groups as well as more equitable divisions of labor within departments (Carrigan, Quinn, & Riskin, 2011; Lawrence, Celis, Kim, Lipson, & Tong, 2014).

A particularly important aspect of the majority of these studies is their emphasis on institutions having *enough* diversity to produce these outcomes. Gurin et al. (2002) emphasized the fact the institutions must move beyond simply compositional diversity (i.e., diversity by numbers). Rather, just having diverse students on campus is the necessary, but not sufficient, condition for these benefits to occur: there need to be both

intentional curricular diversity in addition to well-structured and also thoughtful out-of-class interactions for these benefits to come to fruition (Gurin et al., 2002; Hurtado, 2005). It is especially important to have a high level of compositional diversity in order to avoid tokenizing and further stereotyping students from diverse backgrounds (Gurin et al., 2002). Additionally, studies have shown that these benefits differ between groups with white students receiving more of the benefits, especially in terms of democratic citizenship, than students of color (Gurin, Nagda, & Lopez, 2004; Hurtado, 2005). Gurin, Nagda, and Lopez (2004) hypothesized that this occurs because “experience with White students is less novel for students of color than experience with African American, Latino(a), and Asian American students is for White students” (p. 31).

### **Experiences and Outcomes: Diversity Research about Students**

This section focuses on research that encompasses diversity and the student experience in higher education. Predominantly focusing on undergraduate students due to the literature reviewed, this research often relies on models and heuristic devices to investigate diversity; thus, this section begins with a description of the Multidimensional Model for Diverse Learning Environments (DLE; Hurtado et al., 2012). It then explores student experiences of diverse campus climates and impact of diverse campus climates on student outcomes.

### **The Multidimensional Model for Diverse Learning Environments**

To a certain extent, diversity research on students in the last several decades has been heavily influenced by the development of models and heuristic devices to understand and improve the campus climate for diversity—the most recent of these is the DLE. Indeed, the DLE is an attempt at synthesizing many of the previous instruments

used in climate research (Hurtado et al., 2008). In this way, the DLE incorporates earlier models that focused specifically on race (i.e., Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998) with the argument that diversity is broadly beneficial for education (Gurin et al., 2002). The DLE nests institutions within multiple contexts, including the socio-historical, policy, and community contexts, and conceptualizes diversity as taking place in multiple curricular and co-curricular dimensions and as having several key outcomes, including cognitive and democratic developments (Hurtado et al., 2012; see Figure 1). The framing offered by the DLE and its earlier versions works as a sort of structure for the body of research reviewed in this section. Numerous researchers have focused on the campus climate in order to capture student experiences and perceptions; others have focused on measuring outcomes for students, including what produces various outcomes and for whom.

Figure 1. The Multidimensional Model for Diverse Learning Environments

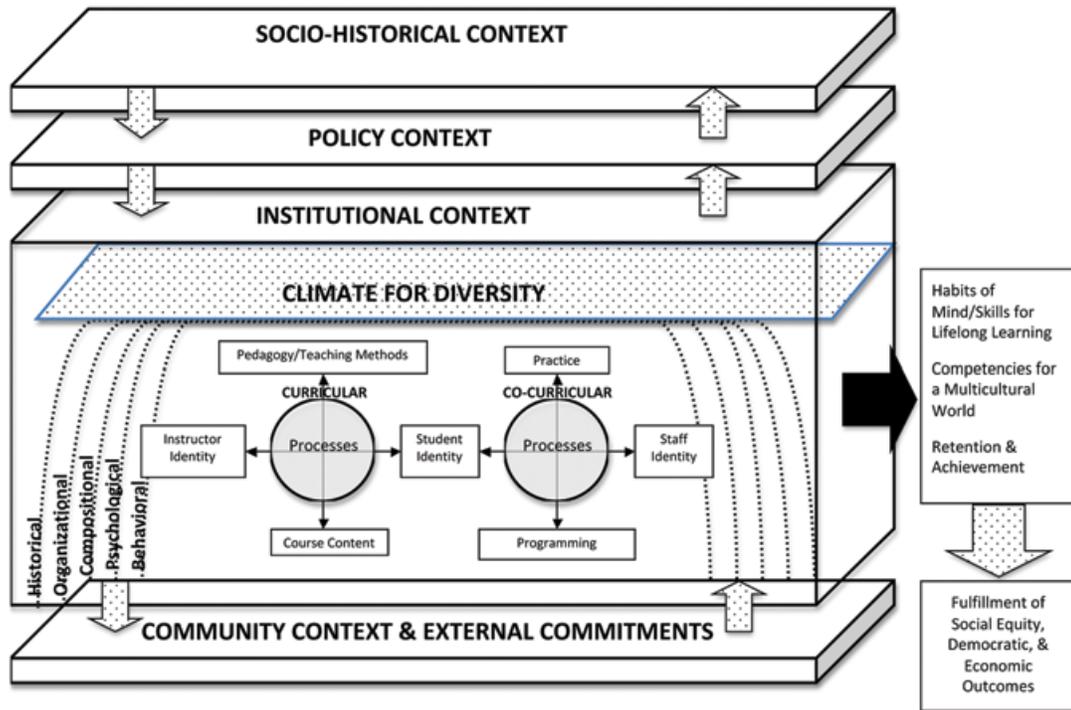


Figure 1. From Hurtado et al., 2012, p. 48.

Campus climate, long a popular topic for higher education researchers, is the institutional context in the DLE model (Hurtado et al., 2012). Influenced by an institution’s socio-historical context, policy context, and community context, campus climate can be conceptualized as having several dimensions that play out in curricular and co-curricular processes: historical, organizational, compositional, psychological, and behavioral (Hurtado et al., 2012). Campus climate represents the environment in which students, faculty, and staff exist on campus. In other words, campus climate is “a multidimensional environmental factor with real effects on educational outcomes... a part of an intricate web of relations, socially constructed by individuals in an environment” (Hurtado et al., 2008, p. 204). Most of the research about climate, especially the climate

for diversity, looks at student perceptions of the climate or tests different aspects of climate to see the effects that they have on recruitment, retention, and student experience and satisfaction. On a general level, research has established that institutional size affects climate perceptions (Harper & Hurtado, 2007) and students across races perceive disconnects between how institutions talk about campus climate and diversity and actual practices (Harper & Hurtado, 2007).

### **Experiencing the Campus Climate**

Researchers understand campus climate in many ways. This review focuses on research that investigates the ways that individuals perceive campus climate; many studies have also explored the ways that these perceptions differ between groups (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Mayhew, Grunwald, & Dey, 2005, 2006; Museus, Nichols, & Lambert, 2008; Park, 2009; Rankin & Reason, 2005). One study found dramatic differences between white students' experiences and those of students of color as well as in perceptions of discrimination and harassment on campus (Rankin & Reason, 2005). Substantially more students of color reported experiencing harassment than white students, and students of color were also more likely to describe the climate as racist, hostile, or unaccepting of historically marginalized groups (Rankin & Reason, 2005). Interestingly, more students of color also believed that educational interventions would produce a more welcoming climate than did white students (Rankin & Reason, 2005). Park (2009) also found that students of color were less likely to be satisfied with student body or faculty diversity than white students; black students were the most likely to be dissatisfied. Furthermore, this study showed that students' perceptions of the campus climate were more affected by the college environment and college experiences than

precollege experiences or backgrounds—institutional context, such as attitudes on affirmative action or rate of prejudicial incidents, plays a major role in perceptions of campus climate (Park, 2009). Mayhew et al. (2005) also found a variety of student characteristics that effect the ways that they perceive the campus climate: older students and students with a high level of high school experiences with diverse peers were more likely to perceive the climate as less positive for diversity, while students less involved on campus were more likely to perceive the climate as more positive. They also found that gender and race played a role, as did amount and quality of faculty interaction (Mayhew et al., 2005).

A major project of research about diversity, students, and campus climate is, unfortunately, documenting how poor higher education climates can be, especially for historically marginalized racial/ethnic groups (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Studies document incidences of both covert microaggressions and overt racism and bigotry inside and out of the classroom on college campuses from other students, faculty, and institutional staff members (Solórzano et al., 2000; Yosso et al., 2009). The students in these studies reported feelings of isolation, self-doubt, and emotional exhaustion due to the difficulty of coping with continual microaggressions and often being the only person of color in a classroom or social space (Solórzano et al., 2000; Yosso et al., 2009). Many students reported creating their own communities with other students of color that offered security and support (Solórzano et al., 2000; Yosso et al., 2009). Other historically marginalized students have also reported hostile and frustrating campus climates, including women (Kelly & Torres, 2006), LGBT students (Rankin, 2004), and students with disabilities (Trammell, 2009; Wessel, Jones, Markle, & Westfall, 2009). There is a

dearth of climate research that encompasses students' intersectional identities, but one can imagine that those with multiple marginalized identities may not perceive their campus climates as positive or supportive (Perdomo, 2014; Nicolazzo, 2016; Tillapaugh & Nicolazzo, 2014).

The experiences produced by negative campus climates for diversity can be deleterious for students, especially those from historically marginalized backgrounds; fortunately, research has also shown that climates with positive campus climates have positive effects for historically marginalized students. In addition to producing feelings of isolation or support depending on the student's social identities, researchers have established very real effects that campus climate can have for retention and degree completion. Museus, Nichols and Lambert (2008) found that campus racial climate indirectly affects persistence and completion via academic involvement, social involvement, and institutional commitment. In other words, students who feel an institution values them and people like them are more likely to be academically and socially involved; as a result, they are more likely to persist to graduation (Museus et al., 2008). Other studies have found that peer and institutional contexts play an important role in persistence (Oseguera & Rhee, 2009), and that an institutional emphasis on diversity and attending a racially diverse institution both led to a higher likelihood of stopping out, but not dropping out or transferring (Rhee, 2009). These studies highlight the importance of the institutional context for diverse students on college campuses: when institutional climates are welcoming and treat historically marginalized students as equals, those students are more likely have positive experiences and to succeed in higher education.

## **Impact of Diverse Campus Climates**

Higher education researchers have identified several aspects of the campus climate as those most likely to have a significant impact on measurable outcomes, including the curriculum, the co-curriculum, and informal interactions (Hurtado et al., 2012). Research about this particular aspect of campus climate most often looks at the ways that diversity is manifest in classes and coursework, in campus programming inside and outside residence halls, and in informal interactions with diverse peers (Mayhew et al., 2005; Nelson Laird, 2005; Nelson Laird et al., 2005; Saenz et al., 2007). The research reviewed here generally agrees on several major points about the effects of these diversity experiences. First, the quality of diversity experiences is paramount to achieving maximal benefits (Hurtado, 2005). Following that, compositional diversity is the foundation for positive diversity experiences, but only the foundation—simply having a diverse population does not guarantee a positive climate (Hurtado, 2005; Engberg, 2007; Saenz et al., 2007). The research also finds that white students benefit more from diversity than other racial/ethnic groups, possibly due to the segregated nature of American high schools (Bowman, 2010; Engberg & Hurtado, 2011). Finally, despite some evidence to the contrary (Park, 2009), pre-college characteristics, such as an interest in or previous experiences with diversity and social justice, play a major role in determining how many benefits students can gain from diversity experiences.

Several researchers have performed meta-analyses that synthesize the many investigations into these benefits and what creates them (Bowman 2010, 2011; Denson, 2009; Engberg, 2004). Among the outcomes explored are cognitive and civic engagement

outcomes (Bowman 2010, 2011; Denson, 2009; Engberg, 2007; Nelson Laird, Engberg, & Hurtado, 2005). While diversity experiences within the classroom are positively related to gains in cognitive skills and tendencies as well as cognitive attitudes and behavioral intentions, Bowman (2010, 2011) found that interpersonal interaction with diverse peers is the most effective intervention in producing positive cognitive outcomes. Bowman (2010) also found that some classroom experiences were only effective in limited amounts—a single course produced significant gains, but there no additional growth in cognitive gains with more than one course. Bowman (2011) found that the link between diversity experiences and civic engagement is stronger than the link between diversity experiences and cognitive outcomes.

Interpersonal interactions between diverse peers and curricular diversity experiences have the strongest effects on cognitive and democratic outcomes, while co-curricular experiences were found to have few direct effects (Engberg, 2007; Zúñiga, Williams, & Berger, 2005). Nelson Laird (2005) found that students who enroll in a diversity course and have positive interactions with diverse peers were more likely to score higher on measures of academic self-confidence, social agency, and critical thinking. Compositional diversity is key in producing positive cross-racial interactions, which in turn have positive direct effects on intergroup learning and pluralistic orientation (Engberg, 2007). Positive outcomes, however, are not the same for all students. Diversity courses have differential effects across disciplines as well as across racial/ethnic groups (Engberg, 2007; Engberg & Hurtado, 2011). These differences speak to the importance of creating intentional and structured experiences in order to address the needs of different groups.

In addition to cognitive and democratic outcomes, researchers have identified another outcome that is affected by curricular and co-curricular diversity interventions: the level of students' bias against historically marginalized groups. Multicultural course interventions, diversity workshops or training sessions, peer-facilitated diversity experiences, and service-learning experiences were found to reduce racial bias (Denson, 2009; Engberg, 2004). As with other outcomes, some interventions are more effective than others: inclusive pedagogies and content-based coursework that expands knowledge about other groups and intentionally structured cross-racial interaction inside and outside of the class were found to be most effective in reducing racial bias (Denson, 2009). Jayakumar (2009) also found that college students become more accepting of lesbian, gay, and bisexual peers over four year of college attendance; this trend was facilitated by inclusive coursework and held across racial/ethnic groups and political orientations. Interestingly, this study found a link between the experiential component of racial diversity and tolerance for diversity in sexual identities, indicating that the more racial diversity a student experiences, the more tolerant they become of difference in general (Jayakumar, 2009).

A contentious point in the research on diversity's outcomes is whether a student's precollege experiences with diversity produce an accentuating effect on the post-baccalaureate outcomes and benefits. Two studies found that diversity experiences tended to accentuate preexisting characteristics in students (Nelson Laird et al., 2005; Saenz, Ngai, & Hurtado, 2007), while at least one instead emphasized the importance of institutional contexts (Park, 2009). Nelson Laird and associates (2005) found that previous participation in diversity experiences positively influenced social action

engagement predominantly because those experiences build on previous experiences. Precollege experiences and predispositions towards social justice and pluralistic thinking significantly influenced the quality of cross-racial interactions across racial/ethnic groups (Saenz et al., 2007). Particularly important is the frequency and extent of interactions with diverse peers in high school (Saenz et al., 2007). Even though those characteristics were accentuated by diversity experiences, there is still a differential in the quality of interactions: white students reported the lowest levels of positive interactions, suggesting that “racial/ethnic boundary lines may be harder for white students to cross in the early college years” (Saenz et al., 2007, p. 19).

Overall, it is clear that cultivating a diverse campus climate is very important for college students’ experiences and outcomes. While positive campus climates benefit all students, negative campus climates for diversity can produce feelings of isolation and perceptions of as well as outright experiences with hostility, which in turn can affect retention and persistence for historically marginalized students. Additionally, there are many possible benefits for students, including increased ability to think critically, cultivate pluralistic habits of mind, and show more interest in decreasing social injustice. However, students’ access to those benefits depends on the compositional diversity of the institution, their own experiences, and the degree to which they have thoughtful and intentional structured diversity experiences inside and outside of the classroom. While this research is sometimes contradictory and always complex, it is vitally important for understanding the effects that diverse higher education environments can have.

## **Instrumental and Affective Experiences: Diversity Research about Faculty**

Students are not the only group on college campuses that influence or are influenced by diversity. Staff—a term that includes student and academic affairs practitioners, high-level administrators, as well as the people who maintain the campus and provide important services—and faculty members, who are all central figures in Hurtado et al.'s (2012) DLE model, also have a hand in shaping the campus climate for diversity and are affected by that same climate themselves. Leaders at higher education institutions are responsible for creating and enacting diversity policies and providing a positive campus climate for diversity; however, the individuals in these positions tend to be predominantly white men (Flowers & Moore, 2008; Jackson, 2003). Thus, there may be a disconnect between those who create diversity policies and those for whom those policies are ostensibly intended. Administrators play a considerable role in the creation of a positive campus climate for diversity and can benefit or suffer from positive or negative diversity climates. However, there is considerable evidence that shows the predominant importance of faculty, especially faculty from historically marginalized groups, in the compositional and psychological climates for diversity (Bettinger & Long, 2005; Griffin et al., 2010; Sonnert, Fox, & Adkins, 2007; Stage & Hubbard, 2008). Therefore, this section narrows in on a focus on historically marginalized faculty members' affective experiences on college and university campuses.

Even though the number of historically marginalized faculty members in academia has been steadily growing since the 1970s (Ivie, 2010; Miller & Wai, 2015; Nelson & Brammer, 2010), women and people of color still report negative experiences in the academic marketplace and in their professional assignments. Women in STEM

perceive that their job prospects for teaching positions are better than for research positions, as opposed to men, who perceive better research prospects (Fox & Stephan, 2001). Indeed, women in the humanities tend to be concentrated in the most teaching-heavy appointments (White, Chu, & Czujko, 2014). Women are also more likely to work part-time as well as receive lower salaries; this trend also follows for faculty of color (Fox & Stephan, 2001; Kaminski & Geisler, 2012; Roos & Gatta, 2009; Snyder, de Brey, & Dillow, 2016).

The disparities in representation for women and faculty of color are considerable, as are those for LGBT faculty, except in what are sometimes seen as ‘niche’ fields, such as women’s studies or African-American studies. Many faculty members from historically marginalized groups face chilly climates, micro- and macroaggressions from students and colleagues, and tokenization (Ford, 2012; Hall & Sandler, 1982, 1984; Turner, Gonzalez, & Wood, 2011). While efforts such as targeted recruitment and mentorship have improved both numbers and climate for faculty from historically marginalized groups, the professoriate continues to be structured in a way that privileges the interests of white men and which is hostile to historically marginalized faculty members (Fries-Britt et al., 2011; Miller & Wai, 2015). As was partly the case for students, researchers have focused on the experiences and perceptions of faculty from historically marginalized backgrounds. These experiences can be categorized as instrumental—how being a historically marginalized faculty member affects professional and working lives—and affective—how these experiences make diverse faculty members feel.

Most of the studies of diverse faculty describe the experiences of white women, men of color, and women of color. While there is some research on LGBT faculty or international faculty (e.g., Bilimoria & Stewart, 2009; Kim, Wolf-Wendel, & Twombly, 2011; Lin, Pearce, & Wang, 2009; Wright, 1993), that research is limited in scope and quantity. Additionally, much of the research is not intersectional (Tillapaugh & Nicolazzo, 2014). Therefore, many of the studies elide the experiences of white women and women of color, even though faculty women of color experience unique difficulties that are not faced by white women. In the same vein, research on faculty of color rarely differentiate between experiences based on gender, thus missing the fine-grain differences for men and women of color.

While conditions at individual institutions vary, the professoriate suffers from systemic problems that both constrains the experience and success of historically marginalized faculty members and constructs their work and contributions as less valuable. Faculty from historically marginalized groups often report receiving less professional support than their dominant-identified colleagues. On a broad level, these faculty members report that they have less access and weaker connections to traditional social networks, both within their institutions and in professional societies (Xu & Martin, 2011). On a departmental level, these faculty members reported marginalizing experiences such as having less access to funds and equipment and facing obstacles in the forms of negative stereotypes about women and work-life balance (Bailyn, 2003; Blackwell, Snyder, & Mavriplis, 2009; Fox, 2010; Jackson, 2004; Kaminski & Geisler, 2012; Minerick, Wasburn, & Young, 2009; Roos & Gatta, 2009; Rosser, 2004; Terosky, Phifer, & Neumann, 2008). Women and faculty of color also report that they lack support

from their departments and colleges, receive less funding, and have fewer mentoring and professional development opportunities (Rosser, 2004; Turner, González, & Wood, 2011).

In addition to isolation, marginalization, low job satisfaction, challenges caused by tokenism, and salary inequities (Turner, González, & Wood, 2011), historically marginalized faculty experience challenges in their interactions with students and other teaching-related arenas of their professional life. Women faculty of color also report more challenges teaching white students as they navigate the complex realities of race and gender (Ford, 2011). Research has also found that students give women faculty and faculty of color significantly lower evaluations than they do male and/or white professors; these evaluations often include critiques about these faculty members' physical appearance and emotional expressions rather than teaching or scholarly expertise (Boring, Ottobani, & Stark, 2016; Huston, 2006). Institutions have the option of creating evaluations that may be less sensitive to unconscious bias; however, they often retain the same evaluations even though they know they may contribute to continued marginalization of women faculty and faculty of color. Overall, historically marginalized faculty report systematic and significant disadvantages on almost all fronts, especially in the academic reward system of tenure and promotion (Allen, Epps, Guillory, Suh, & Bonous-Hammarth, 2000; Burden, Harrison, & Hodge, 2005). For those on the tenure track, research shows that faculty of color carry substantially more service commitments to students and committees—work that is less valued by the academy in the tenure process—publish less and are less productive in their research activities than white faculty (Antonio, 2002).

Women and faculty of color also often report less satisfying affective experiences than other faculty members. Women and faculty of color report chilly climates that are tolerant of diverse faculty but not entirely welcoming (Aguirre, 2000; Blackwell, Snyder, & Mavriplis, 2009; Burden, Harrison, & Hodge, 2005; Hall & Sandler, 1982; Hall & Sandler, 1984; Jackson, 2004; Jayakumar, Howard, Allen, & Han, 2009; Lechuga, 2012; McKendall, 2000; Turner, Myers, & Cresswell, 1999). Women faculty members report feeling pressure to establish their credibility and feeling like they have to meet higher expectations than their male counterparts (Rosser, 2004). Faculty of color, especially women faculty of color, report the same feeling—they felt that they must out-perform both their male counterparts and their white colleagues in order to establish their competency and credentials (Burden, Harrison, & Hodge, 2005; Griffin et al., 2010; Lechuga, 2010; Turner, 2003). Additionally, women and faculty of color often feel that their academic work—their research, heavy service commitments, and teaching—is valued less than that of their majority counterparts; unfortunately, their work often is actually undervalued by their colleagues, departments, and institutions (Burden, Harrison, & Hodge, 2005; Fries-Britt et al., 2011; Jayakumar et al., 2009).

A diverse professoriate is important for a variety of reasons. Beyond the simple reason that it is inherently inequitable and unjust to bar someone from a profession based on their identities, faculty play many important roles on campus. First, diverse faculty bring a wealth of innovative research ideas and pedagogies to their institutions that are simply too valuable to exclude. Second, they act as role models and mentors for students from historically marginalized groups as well as vectors for recruitment. Third, as the research above shows, the pedagogy that faculty use and the opportunities for

interactional diversity they provide in the classroom are key to unlocking the educational benefits for students. Finally, interactions with diverse faculty members themselves are also important for students in preparing them for a diverse world.

### **Centering Whiteness, Destabilizing Diversity: A Critique**

It is abundantly clear that diversity is an important and much-discussed issue in the realm of higher education. The research shows that diverse campus climates, including the presence of diverse students and faculty members, play a role in multiple beneficial outcomes, including increased cognitive skills and democratic tendencies (Gurin et al., 2002; Hurtado et al., 2008; Hurtado et al., 2012; Milem, 2003). However, evidence also shows that the campus climates at colleges and universities can be quite negative for students and faculty from historically marginalized populations; they report experiencing hostility, marginalization, and tokenization and several researchers find that these populations are at risk for lower rates of persistence and retention (Jayakumar et al., 2009; Oseguera & Rhee, 2009; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Yosso et al., 2009). Gaps and silences yet remain in the research surrounding diversity in our higher education institutions. Diversity remains ill-defined, if not reductive, which ultimately calls the efficacy of the research into question, while the centering of whiteness and the absence of a larger critique of oppressive social structures restricts the transformative possibilities of this research.

While a static definition of diversity is both unlikely and inappropriate, researchers' inability to clarify the term's meaning undermines the efficacy of their research. Diversity is an ill-defined and far-ranging concept; its wide applicability forces researchers to explicitly or implicitly reduce it to more manageable components.

Therefore, diversity research usually encompasses only one or two aspects of a campus climate and inhibits its practical and theoretical utility. The larger project of diversity research is ultimately incomplete, especially in its lack of intersectionality. While this research can parse out broad experiences and differences, it is difficult to capture a more nuanced view that encompasses the multiple identities inhabited by students and faculty (e.g., Abes & Jones, 2004; Abes, Jones & McEwen, 2007). This lack of nuance is mirrored in what I see as a lack of coherence in what institutions mean when they discuss diversity. If this research is what institutions base their policy efforts on, what kind of diversity is being worked towards? Furthermore, is that aspect of diversity what the institution believes it is working toward?

An additional critique that can be leveled against this body of research is the way that it centers white students in both the analyses and conclusions. First, much of this research establishes the experience of white (often male) students and faculty members as the norm and, it can be argued, the ideal. Much of the research about experiences and campus climate list the ways that those experiences are different for individuals from historically marginalized backgrounds and the ways that they differ from white-informed expectations. Second, most of the benefits and outcomes are highest for white students. While historically marginalized students and faculty experience hostility, frustration, and isolation, white students who interact with them in class or on campus may be reaping positive benefits while also taking advantage of an institutional structure that basically already caters to their needs. It is possible that this research has gained so much traction because of this very centering, representing a kind of interest convergence (Bell, 1980) in which researchers are welcome to study the experience of diverse populations precisely

because those populations benefit the educational experiences of white students. The majority of the research—though not all—that justifies the importance of diversity by discussing the benefits thereof rarely discusses the importance of providing positive campus climates for diversity in an emancipatory or liberatory context, or one that focuses solely on the needs of historically marginalized peoples.

Following that point, this research rarely offers a critique of the larger structures of inequality and oppression that frame higher education in this country. While numerous economic and professional benefits are cited by researchers, those same researchers rarely question the wisdom of producing students who are essentially trained to maintain the status quo of a capitalist and neoliberal system. Furthermore, much of this research accepts higher education unequivocally as a good without questioning whether an institution that is, in many ways, built on racist, patriarchal, and heteronormative foundations can ever adequately serve students from historically marginalized populations. The carefully planned and constructed diversity experiences analyzed above work more to expose white students to diverse cultures rather than adjusting the institution to be more accommodating to historically marginalized students. While this research certainly depicts the status quo at the nation's institutions of higher education, there is little attempt to consider truly transformative implications.

Finally, one of the major implications of much of this research is that institutional context matters deeply for the ways that historically marginalized students and faculty experience campus climates and for how well diversity interactions work. However, much of this research is undertaken without reference to context. It uses large datasets and normalizing quantitative methods, thus eliminating the ability of researchers and

practitioners to adapt the research to their specific contexts. This dissertation fills in some of these gaps. It seeks to understand the way that diversity is defined and constructed at a single institution. While it is not be generalizable research, this study is attuned to the specific context and its peculiarities. It also looks at the way that policies and other official texts at Northeastern Flagship University construct the “Diverse Other” in an attempt to understand how institutional leaders conceive them, explicitly or not, to be. Finally, this study takes a poststructuralist approach to the issue of diversity, deconstructing the ways that power works within this institution and to whose benefit equity policies ultimately work.

## CHAPTER 3

### PHILOSOPHICAL FOUNDATIONS

This dissertation explores the ways that institutional documents construct a ‘Diverse Other’ at Northeastern Flagship University, a research university in the northeastern United States. In order to carry out this analysis, I employ a method called policy discourse analysis that blends poststructuralist epistemology, discourse theory, and policy studies (Allan, 2008). I introduce the concept of institutional culture as a heuristic device that makes analysis more doable and grounds the relatively unusual approach represented by policy discourse analysis in a more robust scholarly tradition in higher education. Specifically, I use institutional documents to take a “snapshot” of Northeastern Flagship University in order to see the discourses in use in the present moment and gain an understanding that is useful to administrators and practitioners. This chapter provides an overview of this project’s epistemology and conceptual framework.

#### **Poststructuralist Epistemology**

This dissertation draws heavily on poststructuralist thought and analytic methods, specifically using Michel Foucault’s formulation of discourse. Poststructuralism emerged in philosophical circles both in reaction to and building on its structuralist antecedents. Generally included under the rubric of postmodernism, poststructuralism broadly seeks to challenge the Enlightenment vision of the rational human and replace it with context-sensitive understandings of subjectivities.

Poststructuralism, like its structuralist ancestors, takes language as the key constituent of social reality (Weedon, 1987). Rather than maintaining the contention that language reflects reality, structuralists and poststructuralists alike believe that “meaning

is produced within language...and that individual signs do not have intrinsic meaning but acquire meaning through the language chain and their difference within it from other signs” (Weedon, 1987, p. 23). The two schools of thought depart from each other, however, on the question of whether that structure is pre-determined or not (Blackburn, 2008). Structuralists, such as linguist Ferdinand de Saussure, believe that that the structures of social reality are pre-fixed and waiting to be discovered; poststructuralists believe that nothing, even reality, is pre-determined (Blackburn, 2008; Weedon, 1987).

Language is made up of signs and signifiers that have referents in the material world. These signs and signifiers have no meaning of their own; rather, they function together to create meaning. Language utterances cohere into discourses—linguistic unities governed by their own rules (Green & Troup, 1999). Discourse can also be thought of as “dynamic constellations of words and images that are actively reinforced, resisted, and reconstituted” (Allan, 2008, p. 6). Discourses are socially situated in specific contexts, and are interpreted in light of each other—in other words, they are intertextual and “produce versions of reality and particular subject positions that have material effects” (Allan, 2008, p. 15). Discourse is dynamic, bound to historical contexts, and productive.

Poststructuralist theories posit that discourse structures materiality, thereby producing different ways for individuals to situate themselves in the context of the social world. “Taken together, these positionings, the conscious and unconscious ways in which we situate ourselves to the social world, constitute our subjectivity” (Allan, 2008, p. 16). Subjectivity is neither fixed nor essential; rather, it is unstable, since it depends on which discourse(s) one is drawing. An individual’s subjectivity is “shaped through multiple

discourses that mutually reinforce or compete with one another producing subjectivities that are continually revised and reconstituted as discourses are contested and disrupted” (Allan, 2008, p. 17). Discourses can be anywhere on the spectrum between dominant and marginal, and subjectivities produced by those discourses can be more or less privileged, depending on the context.

Discourses and the subjectivities they produce work together to inform social structures and processes, which are often codified and organized through cultural/societal institutions and practices (Weedon, 1987). Examples of these institutions or processes include the family or the educational system. These institutions and processes function thusly because the separate discourses concerning them have coalesced into a particular discursive field. Discursive fields can be quite complex since they are made up of numerous, and often competing, discourses. They function to give “meaning to the world and of organizing social institutions and processes. They offer individuals a range of modes of subjectivity” (Weedon, 1987, p. 35). In other words, discursive fields offer individuals different ways to understand their material reality and to make meaning from it. Since there are several discourses at work in any single discursive field, some can be seen as dominant and more representative of the status quo; at the same time, there are always marginal and resistant discourses that challenge hegemonic meaning (Weedon, 1987). Discursive fields, however, do not sit in isolation from each other. Rather, discursive fields are permeable and often interconnected in complex ways.

### **Conceptual Framework**

In order to analyze diversity discourses, I use discourse theory and culture to uncover the layers and parse those discourses. In order to do so, I consider the ways that

discourse creates subject identities for individuals and that culture works discursively to form institutional identities. Notably, this formulation positions culture as subordinate to the discursive field within which it is produced and replicated. In other words, this study uses policy discourse analysis to uncover the ways that institutional policies construct the ‘Diverse Other’, using culture as a way to understand the dominant discourses Northeastern Flagship University tells about itself and its identity. This framing departs from the way that culture has often been utilized in higher education research but does allow this work on discourse to be incorporated into literature on culture, which is one of the major ways that the communicative exchanges with single institutions have been described previously.

### **Power/Knowledge**

This section describes some of the major foundations of Foucauldian poststructuralism. These include discourse and power, power/knowledge, and biopower. These concepts are key in understanding the ways that institutional policies and plans can construct a ‘Diverse Other’ because they outline the ways that language, through discourse, marks certain bodies as different from the norm. They also show how this process of embodiment renders bodies visible to power and able to be regulated and managed in addition to making questions such as “in whose benefit do diversity policies work?” possible to ask.

**Discourse & Power.** Foucault’s poststructuralism stems from the recognition that discourse and discursive fields actively shape individuals’ experience of the world. Discourses “are ways of constituting knowledge...discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They constitute the ‘nature’ of the body, unconscious

and conscious mind and emotional life of the subjects which they seek to govern” (Weedon, 1987, p. 108). These discourses are always historically specific and both reflect and (re)produce social realities. In other words, discourses create subjectivity—how we know ourselves. Indeed, this body of thought denies the existence of an essential, inherent self; we can only know ourselves through language and discourse.

For Foucault, discourse and subjectivity are inextricable from power. Like many of his concepts, Foucault’s formulation of power is complex, hard to grasp, and operates on many levels. Often, it is easier to describe Foucault’s power by what it is not. Power is not, in this formulation, “a group of institutions and mechanisms that ensure the subservience of the citizens of a given state,” “a mode of subjugation,” nor a “general system of dominance exerted by one group over another” (Foucault, 1976/1990, p. 92). Additionally, power “is not something that is acquired, seized, or shared” nor is it “in a position of exteriority with respect to other types of relationships” (Foucault, 1976/1990, p. 94). Power affects every person; it is not just domination or subjugation. Power is a productive, rather than repressive, concept in Foucault’s theorizing: it circulates between and among people and social institutions, producing identities, characteristics, and discourses (Foucault, 1976/1990). As Foucault wrote in *The History of Sexuality* (1976/1990):

power must be understood in the first instance as the multiplicity of force relations immanent in the sphere in which they operate and which constitute their own organization; as the process which, through ceaseless struggles and confrontations, transforms, strengthens, or reverses them; as the support which these force relations find in one another, this forming a chain or a system, or on

the contrary, the disjunctions and contradictions which isolate them from one another; and lastly, as the strategies in which they take effect, whose general design or institutional crystallization is embodied in the state apparatus, in the formulation of the law, in the various social hegemonies. (pp. 92-93)

In other words, what we often mistake for power—the apparatus of governments, laws, or oppressive regimes—is only one of its instantiations. Power is all of those things as well as the discourses that circulate between individuals and groups and the small resistances that occur.

Furthermore, power is “exercised within discourses in the ways in which they constitute and govern individual subjects” (Weedon, 1987, p. 113). Since power is so diffuse and circulatory, it is only by looking at discourses within their specific contexts that we can see what they mean and whose interests are served (Weedon, 1987). One way that power functions through discourse is in the process of producing an ‘other’ in order to not only define the norm but also to justify dominance over and belligerence toward the constructed ‘other’ (Foucault, 1976/1990; Said, 1978). Othering occurs during a discursive process that works to help one subjectivity, such as heterosexuality or Western-ness, to construct itself by constructing an image of what it is *not* while simultaneously asserting the value or lack thereof of either side of the binary (Foucault, 1976/1990; Said, 1978). The norm cannot exist without an other; it is only by constructing what it is not that the norm can establish what it, in fact, is. This construction is also often accompanied by stereotyping, disenfranchisement, subjugation, and marginalization of the other (Foucault, 1976/1990; Said, 1978). Institutional diversity policies and plans are essentially discourses weighted with institutional authority which

circulate throughout the imagined space of a campus and construct several subjectivities for diverse and non-diverse peoples that ultimately render them more visible to the institution.

**Power/Knowledge.** Power and discourse also work together to produce knowledge and truth, making those concepts local and contextual rather than transcendental or universal (Allan, 2008). “Together, power/knowledge and discourse provide conditions of possibility—the conditions necessary to think of ourselves, and our world, in particular ways and not in other ways” (Allan, 2008, p. 25). It is relatively easy to understand this conceptualization of power in the context of higher education, an institution with long historical traditions of shared governance and communal decision-making. This specific project makes use of the Foucauldian conceptualization of power by looking at the ways productive power and discourses about diversity construct the subject positions inhabited by the ‘Diverse Other.’

One of the myriad ways that power functions within and between individuals is in disciplining the body. It is integral to constrain and control the body because “the body becomes a useful force only if it is both a productive body and a subjected body” (Foucault, 1975/1995, p. 26). Knowledge works as a disciplinary practice: it works with power to know how to (re)produce and utilize bodies. In Foucault’s theorizing, surveillance is key to discipline. Using Bentham’s Panopticon (1787/1995) as a metaphor, Foucault understood surveillance as a constant visibility to authority that is itself visible yet unverifiable; this formation ensures that the individual will obey rules, laws, or accepted modes of behavior (Foucault, 1975/1995). Furthermore, surveillance depends on the participation and the integration of each individual, thereby increasing the

effects of the surveillance—everyone watches each other as well as themselves. The disciplined subject must be watched, know they are being watched, watch themselves, and participate in the observation of others. Surveillance is, in fact, a very economical mechanism of discipline and power; it only requires “a gaze which each individual under its weight will end by interiorizing to the point that he is his own overseer, each individual thus exercising this surveillance over, and against, himself. A superb formula: power exercised continuously and for what turns out to be a minimal cost” (Foucault, 1980b, p. 155).

**Biopower.** During the course of his work in the latter half of the 1970s, Foucault started to formulate new conceptions of the ways that power relations work. He did not abandon the concept of discipline or restrict it solely to the eighteenth century; rather, he posited the existence of a parallel set of mechanisms that developed during the nineteenth century. He called this set of mechanisms biopower. Biopower, he theorized, supported the new right of the state to “make live and to let die” (Foucault, 2003, p. 241). In “Body/Power,” Foucault contended that “the phenomenon of the social body is the effect not of a consensus but of the materiality of power operating on the very bodies of individuals” (Foucault, 1980a, p. 55). It is easy to detect the “materiality of power” when looking at closed disciplinary systems, such as a prison. But is it possible to see the “materiality of power” at work in large populations? Biopower—“what brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of the explicit calculations and made knowledge-power an agent of transformation of human life” (Foucault, 1976/1990, p. 143)—makes it possible, through regulatory mechanisms rather than disciplinary ones.

If discipline focuses on the individual, biopower focuses on populations. Large numbers of people require management in order to ensure the survival, health, and happiness of those individuals—and ultimately of the state, which will avoid being rocked by revolt or discontent. Therefore, biopower focuses on the things that effect people on a very large scale, such as birth rates and mortality rates, life expectancy, the control of epidemics and other social ills. Foucault called these things “aleatory” or left to chance, and positioned biopower as the mechanism that could “establish an equilibrium, maintain an average, establish a sort of homeostasis, and compensate for variations within this general population...” (Foucault, 2003, 246). Biopower can accomplish this task of establishing homeostasis not by controlling individuals but by regulating populations. Disciplining every individual in a large society is nigh impossible, but using regulations, such as public health initiatives intended to protect the safety of drinking water or limit the spread of disease, instantiates state apparatuses of power onto the population as a whole. Like surveillance, this regulation is continuous and corrective, but it seeks only to maintain, not to change individual behavior (though individuals are ultimately changed). Both disciplinary and regulatory techniques focus on the body, but from different levels—one from very close to the body (disciplinary) and one from a height so as to encompass many bodies (regulatory). In fact, the disciplinary and regulatory levels work together “along an orthogonal articulation...[power] has, thanks to the play of technologies of discipline on the one hand and technologies of regulation on the other, succeeded in covering the whole surface that lies between the organic and the biological, between body and population” (Foucault, 2003, pp. 252-253). Thus, biopower and discipline are technologies that are integrated with and dovetailed to one another in

their workings between individuals and populations. Both discipline and biopower are at work in the university context; they help maintain discourses about identity, mission, and values and beliefs as well as doing the work of categorization and normalization of bodies and populations within the institution.

### **Culture in Higher Education Research.**

Cultural analysis of higher education institutions has been a set piece in higher education research since the 1980s (e.g., Dill, 1982; Kuh & Whitt, 1988; Tierney, 1988). Drawing from diverse disciplines such as anthropology and business, higher education researchers have used cultural perspectives because they “offer powerful ways to understand deep-level, partly non-conscious sets of meanings, ideas, and symbols” (Smerek, 2010, p. 381). Cultural-based analyses take into account higher education’s complex institutions, with their specific histories, leadership, and subcultures (Smerek, 2010). These approaches often, but not always, view higher education institutions as organizations and seek to understand their working lives.

Treating culture as an inherent attribute of an institution belies the way that culture functions as a way to construct, diagnose, and discuss institutional identity. Tierney (1988) wrote that the organizational culture of an institution is an “internal dynamic” that “is reflected in what is done, how it is done, and who is involved in doing it” (p. 3). Culture is observable in the stories that people and institutions tell about themselves, the assumptions they share with others within the organization, and the attitudes and behaviors that emerge (Tierney, 1988). In other words, organizational culture is a way that institutions and the individuals who work within them come to know and talk about themselves—it is a way of talking about identity.

In addition to constructing institutional identity, many of the cultural frameworks in use in higher education break down that identity into easily understandable components. Kuh & Whitt (1988) identified the component parts of an institutional identity that can be seen if one focuses on culture: “beliefs, guiding premises and assumptions, norms, rituals, and customs and practices that influence the actions of individuals and groups and the meanings that people give to events in a particular setting” (p. iii). Dill (1982) made this idea even more explicit when he writes that “academic institutions possess distinctive cultures which are developed and sustained by identifiable actions of the community members” (p. 304). Culture, in a way, is the discourse that institutions utilize in order to construct a coherent sense out of a welter of competing demands, duties, and beliefs about issues that range from institutional mission to financial practices.

Higher education researchers have formulated a variety of ways to talk about institutional identity—and the quality of that identity’s construction—through talking about culture. In a synthesis of the literature on organizational culture, Smerek (2010) classified previous studies according to three categories: integration, differentiation, and fragmentation. Studies from an integration perspective—often drawing on approaches from higher education research, such as Burton Clark’s (1972) organizational sagas, or from other fields, such as Schein’s (1992) Three Levels of Culture—“focus on what makes an organization distinct from others and considers culture as the shared meanings and assumptions at the organization level-of-analysis” (Smerek, 2010, p. 385). Differentiation studies focus on subgroups and subcultures that come together to link disparate parts of an organization together (Smerek, 2010). Both of these approaches

emphasize culture's ability to create a united front for an institution. While studies that emphasize fragmentation obviously do not mean to invoke the idea of a coherent institutional identity, they uncover this particular ability of culture to construct such an identity in their insistence that there is ambiguity and organized anarchy rather than coherence (Smerek, 2010). Magolda's (2003) cultural study of commencement is an example of a fragmentation study. Using the lens of the commencement ritual, Magolda parsed out the institutional identity at play and then critiqued that very same presentation of identity by commenting on the disconnects that he perceived in the university's outward displays and inward workings.

**Culture as a Discourse.** The idea of culture depends on shared language as the medium that conveys shared assumptions, values, and stories in order to operate (Kuh & Whitt, 1988). Indeed, culture is, at the heart of the matter, a discourse: it is a narrative or set of narratives that are continually constructed by a social grouping and also the product of that construction (Kuh & Whitt, 1988). Furthermore, as Barnett (2001) adroitly pointed out, culture works as a disciplinary mechanism. Culture both conveys expectations for behavior and beliefs and is the product of those behaviors and beliefs—it tells individuals how to function in a society and is reinforced or adapted by those same individuals' conformity or resistance (Barnett, 2001). In other words, culture is also discursive community. In many ways, the concept of culture is used as a heuristic device in higher education research—it gives higher education researchers a mechanism through which they can discuss institutional identity and easily segment a large and unwieldy organization into analyzable parts. Ultimately, institutional or organizational culture is itself a discursive formation: a disciplinary and productive regime that transmits values,

beliefs, and behavioral expectations as it works to produce institutional citizens as well as institutional identities.

Clifford Geertz's (1973) theory of culture also rests on the centrality of language and semiotics. In *The Interpretation of Cultures*, Geertz argued for a "narrowed, specialized, and...theoretically more powerful concept of culture" (1973, p. 4). Arguing against structuralist and functionalist notions of culture, Geertz proposed a semiotic concept of culture: "Believing, with Max Weber, that man is an animal suspended in webs of significance he himself has spun, I take culture to be those webs, and the analysis of it to be therefore not an experimental science in search of law by an interpretive one in search of meaning" (1973, p. 5). Similar to Foucault's discourses, Geertz's definition of culture is dynamic, rooted in the complex between meaning, symbol, and language, and takes people and their interaction with their worlds into account. Indeed, the parallels between Foucault and Geertz are relatively clear—both seek to ground analysis of social behavior in its particularities rather than its generalities and to understand the ways that meaning is produced and created in social groups.

Geertz characterized culture as "public because meaning is" (1973, p. 12) and pervasive. Culture is what brings meaning to human words and actions—and, to a certain extent, human words and actions continually (re)inscribe culture. Humans do not smile or fight or sigh because culture makes them do it; rather, humans smile, fight, and sigh because those actions mean something specific within the context of their culture (Geertz, 1973). Geertz wrote: "...culture is not a power, something to which social events, behaviors, institutions, or processes can be causally attributed; it is a context, something within which they can be intelligibly—that is, thickly—described" (1973, p. 14). Geertz's

conception of culture “exposes [people’s] normalness without reducing their particularity...It renders them accessible: setting them in the frame of their own banalities, it dissolves their opacity” (1973, p. 14). In other words, this idea of culture as webs of significance and meaning enables researchers to understand a specific group holistically, within the historical, social, and material contexts of their lives, and without the need to compare or pass judgement.

Like Foucault, Geertz emphasized the importance of locality, contingency and context, and deconstruction for the purpose of comprehension. Both Geertz and Foucault argued against the idea of essentialism or inherency. Geertz did not believe that there are universals or constants in human culture; rather, culture allows researchers to see the particularities and the myriad variations of human societies as well as to understand what those particularities and variations mean. Nor did Geertz believe that there is a pre-existing cultural template that all cultures work from—in other words, the structures for any given culture are not already in place. Rather, like Foucault’s discourses, Geertz contended that culture is a linguistic creation, that it relies on the existence of societies for its instantiation, and that it is specific to that society. Geertz’s notion of culture allows researchers to understand a group (or institution) *on their terms* rather than on ours. This, however, does not mean that the study of culture is merely an exercise in appreciating the diversity and variability of human life. Geertz wrote that the aim of cultural study is “the analysis of social discourse”—it is the effort to systematically understand the signs, signifiers, and discourses of a given culture.

Returning to higher education research, prominent formulations of institutional culture often present it as something made up of several parts, subcultures, and contexts,

thus offering a relatively simple way to segment a vast and complex institution into analyzable—thus, knowable—parts. The first category includes intangible aspects of culture that are integral parts of higher education institutions, such as symbols, narratives, values, and assumptions (Kuh & Whitt, 1988). These cultural bits are found in artifacts, including documents, rituals, and traditions. While these discursive and cultural threads often come together to form an overarching story about the institution, a cultural lens allows researchers to pick the threads apart and examine them independently, if still in reference to each other.

Additionally, a cultural lens allows researchers to separate various divisions of the higher education institution environment, thus making the parts more accessible to researchers' eyes. Kuh & Whitt (1988) included the external environment, the institution itself, subcultures within the institution and within subcultures, and individual actors and roles in their listing of the disparate layers that make up an institutional culture. They also identified seven features of institutional culture: historical roots, academic programs, core social environments, artefactual manifestations of culture, and core values transmitted by ethos, norms, and saga (Kuh & Whitt, 1988, p. 53). The main point to take away is that these are all ways to reduce a very complex organization to understandable parts—knowable to both researchers and the very individuals who make up the institution. The cultural lens is able to function in this way because of its discursive nature: as a discursive community, culture can be understood by parsing out its discursive components.

Naming culture's discursive functions in no way is meant to undermine the very real impact that culture can have on the functioning of a higher education institution or on

the considerable insights produced by researchers who turn a cultural lens on higher education. Indeed, culture's explanatory power is very useful to understand the way that an institution works. In working to make disparate parts of the university knowable, culture renders them analyzable and verifiable. This dissertation uses the concept of culture to render the layers of discourse more visible, an idea expanded on in this next section.

### **Taking an Institutional 'Snapshot'**

Michel Foucault and Clifford Geertz worked in the same era, but in two different disciplines with different foci. They had similar aims: both men wanted to show that human nature is, in fact, a fallacy and that human societies rely on contextual, local knowledge and language with which to constitute themselves. While they both formulated theories in reaction to the same general epistemological phenomenon—structuralism—each theorist chose different arenas for their conceptualizations of discourse and culture respectively. While Foucault wrote about specific sites—such as specific prisons (Foucault, 1975/1995) or lunatic asylums (Foucault, 1965/1988)—he was only interested in those sites against the backdrop of the aggregate. For example, when Foucault discussed evolutions in prison designs in the eighteenth century, he discussed them to highlight the development of disciplinary apparatus (Foucault, 1975/1995). At the same time, Geertz developed his formulation of culture as webs of meaning in order to counter the idea of culture as a monolith. Geertz narrowed in on the importance of specificity and context when it came to culture. Only by attending to the specific semiotic webs can we understand what an action or a word means to a specific group of people (Geertz, 1973).

This dissertation uses policy discourse analysis to explore the discursive construction of diversity at one public research university in the northeastern United States. In doing so, I bring together Foucault's discourse theory with Geertz's cultural semiotic theory and the ways that higher education researchers conceptualize institutional culture in order to understand how discursive formations occur within a single site. Discourses are often macro-level; for example, the way we understand femininity or masculinity in America is a discursive field in which there are several dominant and resistant discourses circulating at once. Culture, however, attends to a specific site, whether that site is a country, a city, or a single institution, such as a university. Institutional culture is created by the specific customs, behaviors, processes, and language in use at a given institution (Kuh & Whitt, 1988). At the same time, culture is not divorced or separate from discourse. In fact, culture *is* a discourse that constitutes site-specific subjectivities (Barnett, 2001). In the process, institutional culture is where site-specific discourses—the customs, behaviors, processes, and rituals that make institutions unique—come into contact with Foucault's reality-shaping discourses, such as those about gender and sexuality, race, inequity, and diversity.

Universities and colleges welcome millions of students per year to their campuses, and these student bodies are becoming more varied with regards to race, socioeconomic class, gender, sexuality and sexual orientation, religion, ability, and numerous other identities with each passing year. Higher education is not immune to issues of systemic inequality that produce structured access to opportunity and differential access to cultural, social, and economic capital—indeed, many agree that higher education both benefits from and perpetuates those same systems. Be that as it

may, higher education institutions must grapple with the very real results that play out on their campuses. Diversity is the centerpiece of these efforts. Institutions use ‘diverse’ and ‘diversity’ to describe students that depart from a white, patriarchal, and middle-to-upper class norm. They also use ‘diversity’ as a signifier for the remedies they undertake as institutions attempt to produce more equitable conditions and more positive campus climates. Thus, administrations create diversity strategic plans, hold fora and listening sessions with students in order to elicit their concerns and thoughts, and publish diversity statistics to advertise how well they have ostensibly diversified their campuses.

Rather than being just a word, diversity functions discursively to produce subject bodies, behaviors, and rhetoric. Diversity rhetoric also works to produce the ‘Diverse Other’ in order to delineate who experiences institutional culture ‘normally’ and who can be include on either side of a diverse/non-diverse binary. While many campuses perform the same types of diversity actions (influenced, no doubt, by each other), the way that diversity discourses play out in each context is influenced by the conditions at that specific institution: its student body, history, norms and procedures, beliefs, and values—in short, its institutional culture.

Therefore, this project uses a variety of different texts from one institution in order to take an institutional ‘snapshot’. This ‘snapshot’ will work such that the cultural aspects of the institution, including its history, climate, and present processes and customs, can be viewed against the backdrop of discursive formations that operate on macro-levels. While never forgetting that culture is itself a discourse, this approach allows deep investigation of a single institution in order to understand how larger discourses and cultural specifics contribute to the discursive formation(s) of diversity and

the construction of the ‘Diverse Other.’ By focusing on policy—texts that codify, if not reify, the cultural aspects of a university—this approach allows us to understand how those formation(s) are being translated into practice and, ultimately, how they may be subverting or upholding an inequitable status quo. Finally, this approach allows for reflection and meditation on the utility of the concept of diversity.

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **POLICY DISCOURSE ANALYSIS**

The purpose of this dissertation is to study the discursive formation of diversity and the “Diverse Other” at a single public research university using policy discourse analysis. Policy discourse analysis is a hybrid method that incorporates aspects from multiple different approaches. In addition to being epistemologically grounded in poststructuralism, policy discourse analysis takes inspiration from other discourse analysis approaches, especially critical discourse analysis. Additionally, policy discourse analysis is grounded in and builds on alternatives to traditional policy studies. This section describes these various methodological and conceptual traditions, culminating in a detailed description of the method and design of policy discourse analysis studies.

#### **Discourse Analysis**

Research using documents as the main source of data is well-established in the social sciences, including education. Document analysis encompasses several methods. Some of these document analysis methods lend themselves to more quantitative data analysis (e.g., Hsieh & Shannon, 2005; Krippendorff, 2013), while others are more suitable for qualitative researchers (e.g., Bowen, 2009; Hodder, 2000; Prior, 2003). Among these methods for studying documents is discourse analysis, an interdisciplinary method that looks at the intersection of language and society with roots in linguistics, cognition, social theory, and the social sciences. Discourse analysis is the study of “language as social practice determined by social structures” (Fairclough, 1989, p. 17). The main question that discourse analysts answer is “how texts work within sociocultural practice” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 7). Discourse analysts can draw on tools taken from

phonology, linguistics, and rhetoric studies. This section focuses on the major characteristics of discourse analysis methods in general. It then narrows in on critical discourse analysis, the method that most heavily influences policy discourse analysis.

### **Characteristics of Discourse Analysis**

At its core, all methods of discourse analysis are about language and society, and the ways that language shapes and reflects society and individuals (Fairclough, 1989, 1995; Jaworski & Coupland, 1999; Van Dijk, 1997). While discourse analysis began as a strictly linguistic form of analysis, linguistics alone does not help advance an understanding of “discourse as a form of social interaction” (Van Dijk, 1985a, p. 4). Simply understanding the grammar or vocabulary does not lead to understanding the meaning of a text; rather, meaning “is given by the social conditions of production of these texts” (Chalaby, 1996, p. 687). In order to understand the complex interplay of society, language, and discourse, discourse analysis has become an interdisciplinary endeavor that attends to language, culture, and cognition, among other concepts (Van Dijk, 1985a).

With that understanding comes enormous analytical power: discourse analysis shows how discourse serves “a function in the creation, the maintenance, or the change of such contextual constraints as the dominance, the power, the status, or the ethnocentrism of one of the participants” (Van Dijk, 1985b, p. 5). Discourse analysis allows researchers to “pinpoint the everyday manifestations and displays of social problems in communication and interaction” (Van Dijk, 1985b, p. 7). Jaworski and Coupland (1999) went further when they wrote that “the motivation for doing discourse analysis is very often a concern about social inequality and the perpetuation of power relationships, either

between individuals or between social groups” (p. 6). This concern certainly motivates policy discourse analysis, since it explicitly seeks to understand how policies that are aimed at remedying unequal social or institutional conditions can actually undermine those very efforts.

One of the main characteristics of discourse analysis is its focus on the local and contextual, even though it traffics in such broad concepts as society and culture. As a methodology, it takes context very much into account in its focus on the sites of production of text (Chalaby, 1996) and on the local nature of discourse. Discourse analysis, in many ways, serves as a bridge between micro- and macro-level social phenomena; it “provides a way of linking up the analysis of local characteristics of communication to the analysis of broader social characteristics” (Jaworski & Coupland, 1999, p. 13).

Finally, another major concern of discourse analysis that is central to this dissertation is the idea of intertextuality. Intertextuality urges discourse analysts to not simply look at a single text, but rather at a network of texts in concert with and in opposition to each other (Fairclough, 1995). Chalaby (1996) posited that intertextuality is exactly what lifts discourse to the level of being able to be analyzed as a thing in and of itself. Discourse is “multitextual [and] intertextual” and, as an “entirety of texts,” is “concrete...an historical and social reality” (Chalaby, 1996, p. 688). Intertextuality gives discourse an aspect of the real, dimensions and shape which can then be analyzed (Chalaby, 1996). Part of intertextuality is acknowledging the multiple voices that can be encompassed by a single discourse, as well as the multiple modalities and audiences (Fairclough, 1995; Jaworski & Coupland, 1999). This concept can be viewed as

Bakhtin's heteroglossia (cited in Jaworski & Coupland, 1999): "all discourse is multi-voiced, as well as words and utterances echo other words and utterances derived from the historical, cultural and generic heritage of the speaker" (Jaworski & Coupland, 1999, p. 9). Intertextuality is key to policy discourse analysis because it undermines claims that poststructuralism has no room for agency by acknowledging the inclusion of multiple, resistant voices in any given discourse. Additionally, it provides a warrant for the inclusion of multiple documentary sources at a single institution to understand discursive formation in one distinctive context.

### **Critical Discourse Analysis**

Because discourse analysis is an interdisciplinary methodology that can be brought to bear on a variety of questions and topics, researchers have formulated a variety of approaches to discourse analysis (c.f., Gee, 2011; Phillips & Hardy, 2002). These methodologies all espouse the basic characteristics of discourse analysis reviewed above: a belief in the important work that language does in society as well as the contextual and intertextual nature of discourse. Individually, they also espouse different ways of framing discourse analysis and different ways of understanding the potentially liberatory possibilities presented by discourse analysis. Critical discourse analysis is one of the more popular methods as well as the one that is most explicit about its liberatory and radical possibilities (Fairclough, 1989, 1995; Van Dijk, 1993, 1995). Policy discourse analysis is heavily influenced by critical discourse analysis, as well as related approaches such as critical feminist policy analysis (Bensimon & Marshall, 1997, 2003; Marshall, 1999, 2000). Specifically, critical discourse analysis offers an openly ideological approach and interest in creating social and political change (Allan, 2008).

Critical discourse analysis is also characterized by a focus on the ways that language is ideologically shaped by relations of power (Fairclough, 1989). In an early work, Fairclough defined critical language study as a methodology that analyzes “social interactions in a way which focused upon their linguistic elements, and which sets out to show their generally hidden determinants in the system of social relations, as well as hidden effects they may have upon that system” (1989, p. 5). Fairclough formulated critical discourse analysis as a tool of demystification that would show the way that language is “the primary domain of ideology” and thus constitutes a site of power struggles (Fairclough, 1989, pp. 14-15).

Fairclough (1995) conceptualized critical discourse analysis to be a three-dimensional framework with three different forms of analysis: the analysis of spoken or written language, the analysis of the production, distribution and consumption of texts, and the analysis of sociocultural practices through discursive events (p. 23). The goal of these analyses was to uncover the ways that oppressive, capitalist ideology is implicated in even the most every-day and taken-for-granted speech or text and produced, along the lines of Foucauldian subjectivities, oppressed populations and restrictive, oppressive social realities. Fairclough emphasized the ability of critical discourse analysis to highlight possible alternatives or avenues for change, especially through the “technologization of discourse” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 87). Similar to Foucault’s governmentality (Foucault, 2003), Fairclough defined technologization of discourse as “a specifically contemporary form of top-down intervention to change discursive practices and restructure hegemonies within orders of discursive...as one element within wider struggle to reconstruct hegemonies in institutional practices” (Fairclough, 1995, p. 87).

Thus, critical discourse analysis's inherent conceptual framework holds an understanding that changing discourse can bring about social change, and that change in discourse originates from the top levels of power.

While policy discourse analysis draws considerably on critical discourse analysis (see below), this is a very different conceptualization of power than that of policy discourse analysis. According to the framework provided by critical discourse analysis, power is held by the few over the many. Conversely, power in policy discourse analysis follows Foucault's formulation: it is a productive and present at all levels of society. Furthermore, critical discourse analysis does not question the idea of a rational subject, while poststructuralism generally, and policy discourse analysis specifically, does not espouse this concept and instead understands subjectivity to be produced by power/knowledge within discourse.

### **Policy Studies**

Policy studies, originally a branch of political science, now encompass research about medical, political, environmental, and educational policy. While traditional policy studies espouse a rational, empirical epistemology, the last several decades since the postmodern turn has seen more sophisticated and critical approaches to studying policy. This section reviews both the approaches used by traditional policy studies and the approaches used by the critics as well as alternative methods of policy studies, with a particular focus on critical feminist policy studies.

#### **Traditional Policy Studies**

Traditional approaches to the study of policy have typically been interested in "understanding how the policy process works" and "understand[ing] policy as it is"

(Cochran & Malone, 2005, p. 2). Researchers in this tradition usually take a rational, value-free approach (Cochran & Malone, 2005) to analyzing policies and their creation, placing them in a positivist, objectivist paradigm. Traditional approaches often use scientific methods—making hypotheses, constructing models, and testing the validity and accuracy of those models to explain the social world—to understand both the process of creating policies and policy’s impact (Cochran & Malone, 2005). This type of approach uses rational choice theory to understand how public policy comes to be. Rational choice theory likens the realm of politics to the realm of economics, and posits that individuals will make collective decisions through a rational process to maximize their self-interest (Cochran & Malone, 2005). Other objectivist forms of policy studies are the rational comprehensive, politically rational, and public choice approaches (Bacchi, 1999; Lindblom, 1980). The rational comprehensive approach sees policy making as a process of problem solving (Bacchi, 1999). Public choice approaches rest on the general interest of the public to improve political processes (Bacchi, 1999). Politically rational approaches see policy making as a negotiation process that results in incremental change, because no solution is perfect (Lindblom, 1980).

Stone (2002) characterized the rational policy project as resting on three pillars: “a model of reasoning, a model of society, and a model of policy making” (p. 8). The model of reasoning is rational decision-making, which includes identifying objectives and courses of action to achieve those objectives, predicting and evaluating consequences of each possible course of action, and finally selecting the course of action that will best achieve the identified goals (Stone, 2002). The model of society is a marketplace filled with autonomous and rational decision makers who are attempting to maximize their own

self-interest, and the model of policy making is one of production, “where policy is created in a fairly orderly sequence of stages, almost as it on an assembly line” (Stone, 2002, p. 10). While this conception of policy making is tidy and mirrors that of rational governance, it also rests on objectivist assumptions of rationality, neutrality, and decontextualization—the three main critiques of traditional approaches to policy studies.

Scholars have articulated these critiques in variety of ways. Ball (1990) contended that policy analysts focus on “commentary and critique” rather than research, and that they depended too heavily on generalizations that “fail to capture the messy realities of influence, pressure, dogma, expediency, conflict, compromise, intransigence, resistance, error, opposition and pragmatism” (p. 9). Additionally, policy researchers often fail to interrogate the concept of policy, instead relying on taken-for-granted assumptions (Ball, 1994). The rationality and objectivism that undergirds these approaches take several aspects of the process as unproblematic including what makes a policy ‘good’ or not, the writing and editing process, and the final written policy (Blackmore, 1999). At the root of many of the critiques is an interest in questioning the basis of rationality and neutral objectivism in the public policy process. Hawkesworth (1988) argued that these tenets of empiricism—neutrality, rationality, and the ability of people to be value-free—are, in fact, myths that are built into the foundations of policy studies. Abandoning positivist approaches to both the policy process and the study of those processes will offer “a form of analysis that is more human and less heroic, more sophisticated and less deceived, more critical and less covetous of control, more tolerant of democracy and less committed to technocracy” (Hawkesworth, 1988, p. 194).

### **Alternatives to traditional policy studies**

Critical policy analysts have proposed a number of alternative methods with which to study policy. One alternative contends that generally anti-objectivist and/or critical approaches are necessary. For example, Ball (1990, 1994) espoused a generally Foucauldian approach and urged policy analysts to attend to the technologies and practices of policy as well as the importance of local settings. This attention includes understanding policies as texts and accepting that “policy is both contested and changing, always in a state of ‘becoming’, of ‘was’ and ‘never was’ and ‘not quite’” (Ball, 1994, p. 16). In short, it is important to see policy as a discursively formed text, rather than a discrete, stable, and static entity.

Similar to Ball’s approach, Stone (2002) argued that the policy-making process is messy, opaque, and difficult to fully comprehend. She argued that the three pillars outlined above need to be replaced by different conceptualizations: rather than rational decision making, the process needs to be understood as political reasoning, resting on metaphor- and category-making (Stone, 2002). Instead of understanding society as a marketplace, Stone (re)envisioned society as a political community, which produces both policy and thinking about policy (2002). Finally, in place of the production model of policy making, she saw that process as a struggle over ideas:

Ideas are a medium of exchange and a mode of influence even more powerful than money and votes and guns. Shared meanings motivate people to action and meld individual striving into collective action...Policy making, in turn, is a constant struggle over the criteria for classification, the boundaries of categories, and the definition of ideal that guide the way people behave. (Stone, 2002, p. 11)

If policy is one way that ideas and causes gain traction and become codified in society, then the policy-making process is a site of struggle in which ideas, causes, and solutions get attention.

Other alternatives include Bacchi's (1999) "what's the problem approach" and Scheurich's (1994) policy archaeology. A "what's the problem approach" reframes the focus of policy studies—instead of conceiving policy as a solution to a problem, this approach looks at how problems are represented in policy proposals (Bacchi, 1999). This approach rests on understanding policies as "constituting competing interpretations or representations of political issues" (Bacchi, 1999). Additionally, this approach not only looks at how problems are represented and constructed by policy, but also provides a "framework for examining gaps and silences in policy debates by asking what remained unproblematized" (Bacchi, 1999, p. 12).

Similarly, Scheurich (1994) also looked at policy's role in socially constructing certain problems. Calling the approach policy archaeology, Scheurich (1994) used it to question the ways that policy studies functions in the larger social order. Drawing from Foucault's formulation of the archaeology of ideas, policy archaeology's focus is to investigate "how a social problem becomes visible as a social problem" (Scheurich, 1994, p. 300). Furthermore, this approach exposes the ways that policy is implicated in the production of social identities by mobilizing disciplinary and normalizing discourses. In this way, "policy studies is itself a production of the grid of social regularities, and it carries out critically important reproductive work of that order" (Scheurich, 1994, p. 312).

**Feminist critical policy analysis.** While policy discourse analysis draws on all the alternative methods of policy studies described above, it leans most heavily on feminist critical policy analysis (Bensimon & Marshall, 1997, 2003; Bryson & de Castell 1997; Marshall, 1999; Pillow, 2003). One of the main tenets of feminist critical policy analysis is the centering of women and gender in the analysis with a focus on making power asymmetries explicit (Bensimon & Marshall, 1997, 2003; Marshall, 1999). Its major project is to uncover gender biases (as well as other biases) in policies as well as in the theories and methodologies used to study those policies (Bensimon & Marshall, 1997). With this deconstructive agenda in place, feminist critical policy studies can offer a better understanding of “the academy as a patriarchal organization; the constrained assumptions in equity policy in the academy; the academic processes that reproduce gender inequities between men and women professors and students; [and] the gendered consequences of neutral practices” (Bensimon & Marshall, 1997, p. 11). Critical feminist policy analysis has been especially useful in pointing out the ways that equity policies can actually undermine equity efforts by “reifying and nominally solidifying categories with a shaky, partial, contingent, and positioned ontology...and by obscuring the vastly unequal power relations within which such discursive turf is contested” (Bryson & de Castell, 1997, p. 85). In this way, critical feminist analysis brings attention to the ways that policies can take unstable and mutable categories such as gender and tries to make them static and stable, thus ensuring that exclusion will always occur (Bryson & de Castell, 1997). Critical feminist policy analysis exposes power imbalances, flawed policymaking arenas and discourses, and exclusionary practices embedded in policies (Bensimon & Marshall, 2003).

In summary, policy discourse analysis draws on the foundations offered by many of these critiques of traditional policy studies and alternatives to objectivist analyses described here, especially critical feminist policy studies. Policy discourse analysis focuses on the ways that problems are represented (Bacchi, 1999), while also drawing on policy archaeology (Scheurich, 1994) and feminist policy genealogy (Pillow, 2003). Critical feminist policy analysis is a significant influence as well, especially in the ways that it explores power imbalances and exclusionary practices embedded in policies that are often intended to redress issues of exclusion and inequality.

### **Policy Discourse Analysis**

Policy discourse analysis is a hybrid methodology developed by social scientists interested in poststructuralism, critical theory, feminist theory, and policy studies. Rather than understanding policy-making as a rational, neutral process, policy discourse analysis seeks to understand the contexts and unexamined assumptions that go into policy-making. Understanding policies as discursive bodies of texts that both reflect and produce culture “serves to disrupt and displace traditional approaches to policy analysis by highlighting how policy actively produces subjects, knowledge, and perceived truths” (Allan, 2010, p. 26). The method’s goals include enabling researchers “to describe subject positions produced through policy problems and solutions,” to “highlight assumptions embedded in the framing of policy problems and solutions, and to be able disrupt the traditional idea of policy providing rational remedies for social (or educational) ills” (Allan, 2010, p. 26). This approach is especially important and useful in analyzing equity policies because it can uncover the ways that policies can unintentionally reinforce an inequitable status quo.

Allan (2008) characterized policy discourse analysis as encompassing three frames of inquiry: interpretive, critical, and poststructural. The interpretive frame looks to understand the policy in question, the critical frame looks to the liberatory possibilities of the analysis, and the poststructural attends to destabilizing what we think we know about the policy (Allan, 2008, p. 39). Interpretive influences include textual analysis and constructivist approaches to qualitative data analysis, especially with respect to policy discourse analysis's inductive and deductive coding scheme (see below). Critical influences include critical discourse analysis's openly ideological approach for the sake of social and political change as well as feminist critical analysis and critical race analysis.

Above all, policy discourse analysis draws heavily on poststructuralist thought, especially that of Michel Foucault. Poststructural concepts that come into play in policy discourse analysis include discourse and discursivity, subjectivity and subject positions, and the productive nature of power. Allan (2008) defined discourse as "dynamic constellations of words and images that actively reinforced, resisted, and reconstituted" (p. 6). Discourses are socially situated in specific contexts and are intertextual (Allan, 2008). Focusing on the textuality of policies allows analysts to situate policies as discursive; as discourses, policies "produce versions of reality and particular subject positions that have material effects" (Allan, 2008, p. 15). Discourse is dynamic, bound to historical contexts, and productive.

Poststructuralist theory posits that discourse structures materiality, thereby producing different ways for individuals to situate themselves in the context of the social world. "Taken together, these positionings, the conscious and unconscious ways in which

we situate ourselves to the social world, constitute our subjectivity” (Allan, 2008, p. 16). Subjectivity is neither fixed nor essential; rather, it is unstable, since it depends on which discourse(s) one is drawing. An individual’s subjectivity is “shaped through multiple discourses that mutually reinforce or compete with one another producing subjectivities that are continually revised and reconstituted as discourses are contested and disrupted” (Allan, 2008, p. 17). Discourses can be anywhere on the spectrum between dominant and marginal, and subjectivities produced by those discourses can be more or less privileged, depending on the context. Policy discourse analysis contends that policy-as-discourse produces subject positions and subjectivities that can work against or reinforce the status quo.

Policy discourse analysis also relies heavily on Foucault’s reconceptualization of power as productive rather than repressive. This conceptualization of power has it operating at microlevels of society, rather than from the top down; power “operates through discourse to produce certain forms of conduct”, which are maintained and reinforced by techniques of surveillance and discipline (Allan, 2008, p. 25). Power and discourse also work together to produce knowledge and truth, making those concepts local and contextual rather than transcendental or universal (Allan, 2008). “Together, power/knowledge and discourse provide conditions of possibility—the conditions necessary to think of ourselves, and our world, in particular ways and not in other ways” (Allan, 2008, p. 25). This conceptualization of power changes the way that researchers and analysts can think about policy. Rather than policy being a repressive mechanism, policy-as-discourse means that policy is a productive force; it is a “means by which subjectivities, hierarchies, and taxonomies for understanding the social world are

produced” (Allan, 2008, p. 31). Viewing policies in this light means that it is possible to examine the ways that policy can subvert or shore up dominant discourses.

Policy discourse analysis has been used by a relatively small cohort of researchers in higher education research. Allan (2003, 2008) showed the ways that women’s commission reports at four research universities construct women-as-subjects in a variety of ways: as outsiders and victims, but also as leaders. These images are constructed by three discursive strands in a discourse of inclusion: *entrée*, representation, and affirmation. Iverson (2008, 2010, 2012) explored the diversity action plans at twenty-one land grant universities to understand how they construct images of diversity, diversity problems, and diverse individuals. She identified a dominant discourse of access as well as a marketplace discourse and a discourse of democracy (Iverson, 2010). Diverse subjectivity was presented as at-risk as well as an outsider (Iverson, 2012). Iverson (2016) also used policy discourse analysis to understand sexual assault policies on college and university campuses, finding that a discourse of risk in these policies produced subjectivities of being at-risk and a risk manager. Additionally, a discourse of dependency produces the dependent victim, but none of the policies analyzed constructed a subjectivity for the individual who perpetrated sexual violence (Iverson, 2016). Other researchers have used policy discourse analysis to frame research pedagogy for doctoral education students (Hyatt, 2013) and to study gender equity policies in Australia (Marshall, 2000).

### **Study Design**

Policy discourse analysis is a rigorous, methodical approach to analyzing policy documents. In general, it consists of clearly defined steps. Policy discourse analysis starts

with careful planning, including the identification of research questions, site, and primary and secondary data sources. After data collection, the researcher performs several rounds of intensive, iterative analysis, detailed below. Throughout the process, researchers adhere to standards of trustworthiness in order to enhance the study's standing. This section details this method, including the particulars related to this specific project.

### **Research Questions**

Policy discourse analysis rests on carefully crafted research questions. Using her own work with women's commission reports, Allan (2008) suggested the following structure for research questions: questions about problems and solutions, questions about predominant images, questions about the discourses used to shape problems, solutions, and images, and questions about the subject positions re/produced through discourse.

As discussed in Chapter 1, the overarching interest of this dissertation is the question "What is meant by diversity when it is invoked in institutional policies and strategic plans at a research university?" In order to answer that larger question, and following the methodology described in policy discourse analysis, this dissertation answers the following sub-research questions:

- What do these texts describe as problems and solutions for diversity at this institution?
- What are the predominant images of diversity that emerge from these texts?
- What discourses are employed to shape these problems, solutions, and images of diversity?
- What subject positions are re/produced through these discourses?

The first two questions establish the problems, solutions, and images of diversity that dominate the texts and the institutional culture at NFU and also show the ways that people from historically marginalized groups are ‘othered’. The second set of questions show how this institutional othering results in the privileging of certain discourses and subject positions for the Diverse Other, which also sets the stage for a critique of diversity rhetoric at NFU.

### **Site Selection**

As discussed in Chapter Three, this dissertation is interested in taking an “institutional snapshot” of a single research university, Northeastern Flagship University, in order to understand the discursive formation of the concept of diversity. While other policy discourse analyses have focused on a lengthy period of time at a few institutions or a large number of institutions in a compressed period of time (Allan, 2008), this analysis seeks to understand what is happening right now in an institution as it grapples with current issues of diversity, equity, inclusion, and oppression. This dissertation takes the institution as its unit of analysis because it is a site ripe for intervention when it comes to concerns about equity and social justice—transformation is, after all, possible on an institutional level.

The institution selected, Northeastern Flagship University, is a public research university in the northeastern United States. This university is also the main land-grant university in its state. NFU is the designated flagship of the state’s public research university system; three other research universities as well as a law school complete the system. NFU is located in the more rural, western side of the state, while the other three institutions are located in urban or suburban locations in the more heavily-populated

eastern side. These institutions have separate chancellors and share a president and the board of trustees; there are additional committees involving faculty and staff from each campus that keep the separate institutions informed of each other's, and the system's, activities. The policy environment in this university system is uneven. Some policies, such as the Intolerance Policy, are system-wide, while others are institution-specific. For example, each campus negotiates their own union contracts; strategic planning documents are likewise unique to NFU.

Northeastern Flagship University is a predominantly white institution (PWI), despite recent efforts to increase enrollments for domestic students from historically marginalized races and ethnicities as well for international students. In the past three years, Northeastern Flagship University has been engaged in a strategic planning process. Administrators, faculty, and students attempted to seriously grapple with issues of diversity, resulting in the creation of a university-wide diversity strategic plan. Additionally, Northeastern Flagship University has had several recent incidents of racist or anti-Semitic hate speech graffitied on residential and academic building walls, tension between students of color and white students, faculty, and administration, and organized protests and marches in solidarity with marginalized students on campus, the Black Lives Matter movement, and students protesting at other campuses (e.g., University of Missouri in the fall of 2015).

### **Source Selection**

Policy discourse analysis, as a methodology, does not prescribe sampling criteria; rather, that criteria emerges from the goals of the research (Allan, 2008). Policy discourse analysts must be sure that sampling decisions and criteria are consistent with the research

questions and goals of the analysis (Allan, 2008). There is, however, a distinction between primary data sources and secondary, or supplementary, data sources. In Allan's example, her primary data sources were official reports from women's commissions at four research universities that were produced in the 1970s through the 1990s. Secondary data sources included newspaper clippings, other reports, letters, memos, and articles, among other media. Secondary data was not used for coding purposes, but did provide necessary contextual information (Allan, 2008). This contextual information makes it possible for the researchers to be "immersed" in their primary data sources and the world in which they were produced and continue to exist (Allan, 2008, p. 57).

In order to produce a discursive map of the institutional terrain surrounding diversity at Northeastern Flagship University, I analyzed policies and plans that pertain to diversity, student life, and faculty life. I chose the documents to be analyzed because they showed some dimension of the institution's culture. I identified five categories of institutional documents, which were then analyzed (see Appendix A for the full list of documents):

- Strategic plans and related documents
  - These documents reflect the future that the institution is interested in creating for itself. They not only show the present of the university by projecting the changes that campus leaders wish to see made, but they also exhibit an idealized image that exerts power to shape the discourses for the institution moving forward. These documents include university-, college-, and department-level diversity plans as well as early phase reports of the strategic planning process that took place in 2014-2015.

- Mission Statements
  - Institutional mission statements are another way for institutions to project reified images for themselves. While it is up for debate whether mission statements really reflect institutional climate, they are an idealized distillation of the institution's culture. They provide clues about the predominant norms and values of Northeastern Flagship University as well as the institution's beliefs about itself.
- Personnel Policies and related documents
  - This set of texts, including search and hiring guidelines, union contracts, tenure and promotion policies, and misconduct policies, represent the norms and procedures that structure faculty and staff life at this institution. These include explicit statements about diversity issues as well as language that is unrelated to diversity yet may still participate in the construction of the 'Diverse Other'.
- Student Policies and Resources
  - These documents include the student code of conduct and the wide variety of resources that the institution makes available to students, especially those from historically marginalized groups. These documents both show the expectations the institutions hold for students and the way that they should interact with their diverse peers as well as the ways that diverse student subjectivities are constructed.
- Institution-Wide Policies

- These documents include policies, such as affirmative action policies, that cover the entire institution. Many of these policies involve the treatment of historically marginalized groups and thus have a role in the construction of diversity.

These documents were chosen to ensure that the full breadth of the institution was represented, especially the various sub-cultures within it: faculty, staff, and students. Thus, I was able to theorize about the organizational culture within NFU and the place that diversity work may have within it (Ahmed, 2012; Kuh & Whitt, 1988).

Secondary sources were not as necessary in this study as they may be in other policy discourses analyses, as I had both an insider's perspective and the documents all pertained to the same institution, giving me a broad understanding of its history and context. However, following Allan's formulation of primary and secondary source documents, I identified the following secondary source documents as pertaining useful information about the institution in question:

- Reports to the Board of Trustees
- Minutes of Diversity-related Councils & Committees
- 2012-2013 Campus Climate Survey
- Reports, publications, or communications produced by campus affinity groups
- IPEDs and affirmative action data

### **Analysis Plan**

I followed the analytical steps laid out by Allan (2008) for policy discourse analysis. The process of data collection served as the first layer of data analysis (Allan, 2008). I collected primary source data and reviewed it in a "brief but intensive reading"

that offered initial insight into the patterns and exceptions across source documents (Allan, 2008, p. 57). Secondary data was collected at the same time, utilizing institutional resources such as university archives (Allan, 2008). All data was uploaded to NVivo qualitative analysis software. NVivo was useful in the coding process as it allowed me to freely create codes in an organized manner. Additionally, the ability to create node-based reports in NVivo proved especially helpful throughout the analysis process (Bazelay & Jackson, 2013).

In policy discourse analysis, data analysis is a complex inductive and deductive process with several stages: data-sorting; noting patterns and irregularities; first-phase deductive coding according to research questions; second-phase inductive coding; inductive and deductive coding of computer-generated reports to determine sub-codes; analytic note-taking regarding patterns, irregularities, and (in)visibilities; and coding for discursive patterns and linkages (Allan, 2008). With specific reference to my study, I performed the analysis using the following steps:

1. I read and reread primary and secondary data in order to begin the coding process.

There is potential for playful analysis during this stage: Allan (2008)

recommended sorting files according to different categorizations in order to see

initial patterns emerge—I categories I settled on were: Behaviors, Processes,

Practices, & Norms; Narratives & Guiding Premises; and Symbols, Values, &

Beliefs. I also read the secondary data during this stage in order to be as informed

as possible about the institutional context and recent diversity work that took

place therein.

2. Concurrent with the first step, I made notes and wrote analytical memos about patterns and irregularities to inform subsequent analyses. These notes were the first steps in determining inductive categories that were present in the data. They also provide initial clues in identifying the areas that are marked by silence or invisibilities and would need additional coding and analysis. All analytical writings and information were stored in an NVIVO database for convenience and in a private research log; these tools provide evidence of a logical, orderly analytic process to support the project's credibility (Bazeley & Jackson, 2013; Allan, 2008).
3. For the first phase of coding, I followed a deductive approach according to my research questions. Policy discourse analysis recommends starting with *a priori* codes (Allan, 2008). Specifically, I coded the primary documents for answers to the first two sub-questions: what are the problems and solutions to diversity? and what are the predominant images of diversity? Therefore, the first set of codes were *problems*, *solutions*, and *images*. I also coded for inductive themes that emerged as I analyzed the texts or that I noted in my previous memos.
4. This next step involved the development of sub-codes. I generated reports using NVIVO and performed another round of coding using both inductive and deductive approaches with the aim of producing more focused sub-codes, especially within the *problem*, *solutions*, and *images* codes (See Appendix B for a sample code table). This step helped answer the third sub-question (What discourses are employed to shape these problems, solutions, and images of diversity?).

5. Again, this step involved generating reports for the codes and sub-codes. From these reports and using my previous notes and memos, I noted patterns and regularities as well as complications and irregularities. Additionally, I took note of what is rendered visible in the texts as well as what is invisible because a strength of policy discourse analysis is uncovering what is absent or silent.
6. Finally, much like the final thematic phase of the constant comparative method (Charmaz, 2006), the last phase involved constructing conceptual patterns that follow the outlines of discourses circulating within these policies. This final step helped complete the analytical work for the third question as well as answer the fourth sub-question of what subject positions are re/produced in these discourses.

Ultimately, the goal of this complex data analysis process was to trace key concepts in the documents in question to “make connections among them...develop constellations of meaning...and identify subject positions discursively constituted by the reports” (Allan, 2008, p. 63).

### **Researcher Attributes**

Like many qualitative methodologies, the researcher plays a key role in policy discourse analysis. In policy discourse analysis, researchers need to be reflexive about their own attributes, including the experiences, biases, and investments they bring to the study and their own social identities. It is particularly important to recognize one’s own positionality and markers of privilege because it shapes what one does and does not notice—researchers must work hard to “be conscious of the material effect experienced by those whose subjectivity does not carry such markers of privilege” (Allan, 2008, p.

54). My privilege and positionality is informed by my social identities, my academic background, and my personal epistemological predilections.

I am a white, cis-gendered and cis-sexed woman who identifies as a lesbian. Therefore, there are ways in which I am very privileged (white, cis-gendered and -sexed) and ways in which my subjectivities can be constructed as outside the mainstream (lesbian woman). I am particularly attuned to issues of sexism and heterosexism, but must work harder to be as attuned to issues of racism, for example. Policy discourse analysis is a way for me to enter equity and justice conversations in the field of higher education research without using my (majority, academic) voice as a stand-in for historically marginalized voices. My academic background is in history, which means that I understand the ways that institutions seem to change both incredibly slowly and quite rapidly. Finally, I strongly identify with poststructuralism as a system of thought that accurately describes the ways that I understand and experience the social world. While this identification means that I am particularly prone to critique systems, processes, and policies from a deconstructivist perspective (one of the goals of policy discourse analysis), it also means that I can be prone to or sympathize with inaction in the face of overarching discursive systems since poststructuralism does not place much emphasis on individual agency. Thus, I must keep the critical and liberatory possibilities presented by equity policies and plans in mind even as I discursively analyze them so that my analysis may serve as a springboard for more inclusive, transformative policies and processes rather than a capitulation to an oppressive status quo.

### **Validity and Credibility of Policy Discourse Analysis**

Policy discourse analysis, stemming as it does from avowedly poststructuralist roots, does not seek objective, non-biased views of the world; indeed, it explicitly seeks to undermine and expose ‘value-free’ as discursively produced constructions. Therefore, traditional conceptualizations of validity do not apply. Additionally, policy discourse analysis emphasizes contextuality and locality, thus limiting its ability to be universally applicable or valid. That is not to say, however, that policy discourse analysis cannot be carried out in a rigorous and trustworthy manner. Allan (2008) described ways with which to enhance the credibility of policy discourse analysis studies.

The credibility of policy discourse analysis is built on three pillars: the study design and researcher reflexivity; a clear explanation of the conceptual frameworks that underpin policy discourse analysis; and evidence of a systematic and thorough approach to data collection and analysis (Allan, 2008, p. 67). Policy discourse analysis already has triangulating mechanisms built into it in its emphasis on the multiple perspectives of interpretive, critical, and poststructural frames of inquiry (Allan, 2008). I worked to achieve credibility through the following strategies. First, I have established the theoretical and epistemological framework for this project, and have made my own epistemological and social positionality clear. Second, I established systematic and orderly “sorting, filing, and coding, analytic notes, summaries, and records of the process” (Allan, 2008, p. 65). This included the maintenance of a detailed research log, in which I recorded notes about the entire research process, thus functioning as an audit trail for the dissertation. Third, I practiced research reflexivity through continual memoing and debriefing with members of the committee as well as with peers. Finally, I ensured

that data collection and analysis processes are not only well-documented but also described in detail in this chapter.

Drawing from Lather (1993), Allan also sought to trouble the concept of validity in the context of policy discourse analysis by calling for transgressive validity: “the extent to which the research promotes interruption, heterogeneity, and dispersion” (p. 66). In her own work, she sought to achieve this kind of validity “through efforts to open discursive space by unsettling conventional modes of thinking which inhibit acceptance of difference, multiplicity, paradox, and complexity” (Allan, 2008, p. 66). Credibility and validity can also be further measured by how much an analysis has presented new ways of thinking about policy and policy problems (Allan, 2008). I aspire to transgressive validity and have produced a study that, rather than producing results which are decontextualized and general, disrupts the business of policy-making as usual in hopes that institutions may be able to understand the discursive shaping of diversity problems in policy and, perhaps, think of new ways of framing equity policies that will function to disrupt and undermine the inequitable status quo.

### **Limitations**

Policy discourse analysis has several important limitations to keep in mind. First, this method (and most methods of discourse analysis) emphasizes context, locality, and contingency, which means that it patently cannot be generalized to other locations or contexts (Jaworski & Coupland, 1999). The conclusions that I draw from analyzing policy documents at one research institution in the northeast cannot be applied to any other institution, as their policies will undoubtedly be different. The process, however, can be generalized and put to use by individual institutions to assess the discursive

formations at work in their own organizational cultures. Second, this study is informed by multiple, deconstructive perspectives and supported by a poststructural belief in multiplicity and contingency, rather than universality and the existence of a single truth. Indeed, the conclusions that I present here do not even represent a single truth; these findings certainly “serve to re/produce particular perspectives and interpretations while excluding others” (Allan, 2008, p. 165). Rather than representing a single truth about an institution, these findings serve as an incitement to different ways of thinking about policy which may lead to different ways of formulating policy issues and solutions. Finally, this study only analyzes written texts. Thus, we it is necessarily missing certain perspectives, namely those of the individuals involved in the policy making process, including their thought processes that went into and their feelings about the final policy products.

## CHAPTER 5

### IMAGES OF THE DIVERSE OTHER

Higher education institutions use diversity work as a mechanism to grapple with the systemic inequalities that structure opportunity in the United States. Paradoxically, higher education institutions both benefit from these systems and attempt to mitigate their effects on their own campuses. The term ‘diversity’ has come to be a kind of signifier that refers to the various activities, initiatives, and work that higher education institutions use to create more equitable conditions. However, diversity is not just a signifier: it also acts as a discursive field wherein subject positions, behaviors, and rhetoric are produced that are singular to the specific institutional culture. As discussed in previous chapters, this dissertation’s goal is to take an institutional ‘snapshot’ in order to understand both the discursive formations at work within the organizational culture as well as the specific mechanisms by which these discourses are circulated.

Consistent with the tenets of policy discourse analysis, this chapter and the ones that follow seek to understand what gets said in policy, the language that is used to say it, and the subject positions created by these utterances. To do so, these chapters examine the images, problems, and solutions used in diversity work as a way to start untangling the skeins of discursive threads that are both shaped by these categories and shapes them in turn. The images, problems, and solutions identified are the result of both the first several phases of coding as well as the critical analysis of the codes produced. These images, problems, and solutions are the linguistic material by which historically marginalized individuals on NFU’s campus are made into the Diverse Other. In other words, these categories are the mechanisms by which characterizations of the Diverse

Other are circulated throughout NFU's organizational culture. This chapter answers the first of my research questions: What are the predominant images of diversity that emerge from these texts?

Each of the policies, procedures, and plans analyzed in this project contain many different images, problems, and solutions related to diversity. While not every document referenced diversity, most of them did—and even those that did not often impacted or contributed to the creation of the Diverse Other. These images, problems, and solutions encompass wide-ranging categories, but can be remarkably well-summarized by the following sentiment taken from Northeastern Flagship University's Diversity Strategic Plan:

The Diversity Strategic Planning Steering Committee broadly defines diversity as the presence of various and different characteristics, experiences, identities, and ideas within the community; equity as the opportunity and access for all individuals to achieve full potential; and inclusiveness as the opportunity for all individuals to join and participate fully within the community.

Indeed, the predominant images of diversity in these texts lean heavily on visible difference, if not outright fetishization. Other predominant images include that of the Diverse Other as victim as well as a vision of the concept of diversity as communitarian property.

### **Images**

The strategic plans, policies, and other official documents from Northeastern Flagship University hold numerous images of diversity that function to create alterity. In other words, these linguistic images play a role in the discursive process of othering.

Alterity is achieved through discursive processes that build binary oppositions and produce dominant subjectivity by outlining what is not dominant. The dominant subjectivity cannot, in fact, exist without defining what is not normative. These texts, leaning on diversity as difference, construct the definition of normality at Northeastern Flagship University by constructing images of the Diversity Other.

The predominant image is that of the Diverse Other as non-normative. In other words, these texts mark the Diverse Other as not-white, not-male, not-heterosexual, and not-abled. This demarcation relies on embodiment, visibility, and essentialist conceptualizations of identity. A second major image of the Diverse Other is that of victim—someone who needs to be protected from harassment, discrimination, and other inequities. This discursive production is achieved through the language of affirmative action and non-discrimination as well as rhetorics of protection, harassment, and deficiency. Additionally, these texts produce images of the Diverse Other that emphasize both their potentiality to be different—and thus, non-normative—and their quantifiability, which contributes to later discursive constructions of diversity as a commodity. Finally, these texts also construct images of diversity in the abstract—one that, when unconnected to actual bodies, celebrates difference and diversity as key to the institution's future success, but does not take the actual experiences of historically marginalized individuals into account.

### **The Diverse Other As Non-Normative**

NFU's Diversity Plan stated that there are:

multiple aspects to diversity including race, color, religion, national origin, sex, age, disability, veteran status, sexual orientation, political affiliation, gender

identity and expression, marital status and economic condition. Each of us contributes to the diversity of [NFU] by who we are, and each of us has a role in building the diversity of our campus community.

This statement indicates that the institution views diversity as difference with which everyone is endowed. The rest of the texts, however, belie that sentiment. NFU may wish to welcome each individual's unique backstory and characteristics, but these documents actually use some forms of difference—described below—to categorize who is most likely to experience the institution normatively. By explicitly defining who is different—as opposed to general invocations of everyone's difference—NFU also constructs the norm, and this norm's individualities recede from view. Only a few of the categories listed above receive sustained attention in the documents analyzed here: race/ethnicity, gender, disability, and, in a limited way, sexual orientation.

In this section, I argue that the most prevalent image of the Diverse Other is a picture of non-normativity. Across all categories and in almost every text analyzed, the Diverse Other is constructed as a corporeal body which transgresses the normative expectation prefigured by institutional discourses. Indeed, these texts construct an image of Northeastern Flagship University's campus as one with periodic interruptions of the norm in the guise of bodies of those who are not white, male, and able-bodied, made explicit in the ways that policymakers and other authors of these documents listed and defined particular characteristics. For each identity category—race/ethnicity, gender, disability, and sexual orientation—these documents focus on the less privileged side of a binary (i.e., white/not-white) and indicate the ways that individuals who hold that identity may experience the institution differently or problematically. The experiences of the

norm or the majority remain unspecified; rather, alterity is used to reinforce normality. By only discussing experiences that the institution judges to be abnormal, these texts demarcate those who belong as well as those who do not. Thus, these documents reinscribe alterity rather than deconstruct it—they discursively recreate the Diverse Other as they reinforce the identity and experience of the majority.

**Race/Ethnicity.** Like most, if not all, institutions of higher education, NFU deploys census data about the races and ethnicities of the people who live, work, and study on its campus. The language that is used to introduce and describe this quantitative categorization of people situates groups that are perceived as not-white as “minorities” and sets them apart from the category white, thus discursively setting each category up in binary opposition to each other. Indeed there are several oppositions being created by this language: white/not-white, majority/not majority, diverse/not diverse. In other words, white, as a racial category, is set up as the norm, while all other races and ethnicities are described by their positionality in relation to whiteness—they are non-majority, non-white, and often elided with others kinds of diversity under the umbrella of “minority”.

Race and ethnicity are omnipresent throughout most the documents analyzed here. Documents such as the Strategic Plan, the Diversity Strategic Plan, and the Affirmative Action Plan obviously mention race and ethnicity, especially in connection to diversity, several times. Additionally, race and ethnicity are usually paired up as if they describe the same thing, belying the institution’s claim to want to acknowledge the rich complexity of each individual’s identity. But race and ethnicity also serve as a marker of diversity in other documents as well, especially through the repetition of the affirmative action and non-discrimination statements throughout workplace policies and union

contracts. It is interesting to note, however, that many of the policies pertaining to student and academic life—even in the clauses that request tolerance for diversity—do not include mentions of race or ethnicity. This discursive move both elides the presence of students and faculty of color on campus and also assimilates them into the body of the campus as a whole.

The language used to report the percentages of each racial or ethnic category is one of the ways that non-normativity is used to construct whiteness as a normative backdrop. The percentage of white employees, faculty, or students is rarely, if ever, mentioned. In tables presented in the Affirmative Action Plan, only the “total minority” percentage and the break-out by category is listed—in addition to the percentages of women, people with disabilities, and veterans on the campus. This calling forward of minority populations is echoed in the language used to describe the results of the tables. For example, the Affirmative Action Plan describes the participation of Asians, Hispanic/Latinos, Black/African Americans, American Indians/Other Pacific Islanders, and individuals who identify as two or more races. On one hand, this seems like a moment when whiteness has receded to the background and attention to being focused on people of color. However, whiteness has not so much receded as formed a majority backdrop, for the numbers reported in such tables and descriptions are being placed apart from the majority—these numbers describe those who are not of the norm and therefore are not assumed to have a normative experience of the institution. Put explicitly, the institution does not need to talk about whiteness because the institution is ‘white-normed.’ An individual is considered white until marked differently.

**Gender.** Like race/ethnicity, masculinity is the normative backdrop at NFU. It is only when an individual departs from the male norm—by identifying as a woman, trans, or genderqueer individual—that they are discursively called into being. Women are more often called out, while trans and genderqueer people are more often erased in the documents, except in the Bathroom Policy. Additionally, while being not-male automatically puts an individual into the category of the Diverse Other, the texts also construct moments in which a woman, trans, or genderqueer person is more othered than usual, such as pregnancy or the moments in a day when an individual needs to use a restroom.

Gender—more specifically, the discussion of women—is one of the most common occurrences of the Diverse Other in these texts. Several instances mention the concept of “increasing” or “improving” diversity in the same breath as increasing women’s participation at all levels of the campus, as well as the participation of other minorities. For instance, the Search Procedures for Faculty & Professional Staff reiterated the “University’s commitment to hire, retain, and promote women and minorities.” The Affirmative Action Plan, in its recounting of the diversity of workforce, delineated how many women work on campus and how many were hired within the given time period, as well as the degree to which women (and other minorities) are utilized in each college and reporting division. Reports from individual schools and colleges within NFU show how often the institution attributes diversity to women. For example, the College of Natural Sciences cited increasing diversity as a top priority since its formation in 2009: “The College and its departments continue to make substantial effort to recruit and retain minorities and women faculty and students.” It is interesting to note that, despite the

institution's making a clear connection between gender and diversity, this connection is mainly made for faculty, staff, and graduate students; there are very few references with respect to undergraduate students.

In addition to building an explicit connection between diversity and women, many references in these texts emphasize the physical aspects of womanhood—in other words, when the Diverse Other is conceived of as a woman, she has a body that has specific needs that set her apart from the norm. The Affirmative Action Plan specifically mentioned pregnancy and childbirth as physical experiences which set women apart—ignoring the fact that one may be pregnant yet not identify as a woman. In addition to providing benefits for pregnant women and parents, the union contracts also included clauses that speak directly to women's essentialized bodies: “The Employer shall endeavor to keep each women's restroom equipped with a sanitary napkin dispensing machine which shall be kept supplied and in working order.” It is particularly interesting to note that this clause only pertains to women's restrooms; it has not been updated to reflect the more recent gender-neutral bathroom policy, nor does it acknowledge that an individual may need gendered hygiene supplies without identifying as a particular gender. While these texts generally tie diversity to embodiment (see below), nowhere else is that connection made so physical as it is with reference to women's bodies.

Additionally, these documents invoke gender broadly as well as women specifically. Gender is included in all of the non-discrimination and affirmative action statements, and the idea of gender-blindness is expressed in several documents. Gender-blindness—when the policies attempt to be gender-neutral and inclusive, but do not take inequities of power and privilege in a genderist environment into account (Nicolazzo,

2016)—is almost always mentioned with respect to bathroom use, invoking, as above, a specifically embodied frame of reference. The Bathroom Policy, one of the first of its kind in the nation, “enables trans and gender-nonconforming people to use the gendered bathrooms in which they feel safer and more comfortable” by affirming that “students, staff, faculty, and campus guests should use the bathroom facilities that correspond to their sex and gender identity, or utilize bathrooms that are designated gender-neutral or gender-inclusive.” Elsewhere, the graduate student union contract emphasized the need for gender-neutral and gender-inclusive bathrooms. This framing places the burden of choice on the Diverse Other and signals that their experiences are both not normative and in need of accommodation. Finally, it is particularly telling that, although several policies and plans mention gender, men, as a category, are explicitly mentioned but rarely throughout these texts. Rather, men and maleness is the normative backdrop against which women, trans, and genderqueer individuals stand out.

**Disability.** Following the model described above, disability plays a considerable role in the creation of able-bodiedness at NFU. As with whiteness and masculinity, the binary opposition here is able-bodied/disabled bodies—the majority’s ability defined by constructing the minority’s disability. People with disabilities are mentioned in the affirmative action and diversity plans, work policies and union contracts, and student conduct policies. These designations range from well-meaning condescension—such as when the Student Code of Conduct defined students with disabilities as those who “have unique abilities and limitations”—to the more clinical. The Affirmative Action Plan—the most plentiful source of text about disability—offered three conditions that must be met to be categorized as a person with a disability: “A person who (1) has a physical or

mental impairment which substantially limits one or more of such person's major life activities, (2) has a record of such an impairment, or (3) is regarded as having such an impairment." It goes on to enumerate major life activities as well as the spectrum of diagnoses belonging to the 2,000 individuals registered with the Disability Services Office, which included "learning disabilities, attention deficit/hyperactivity disorder, psychological disabilities, Autism spectrum disorders, traumatic brain injuries, medical conditions (e.g., Crohn's disease), mobility challenges (e.g., quadriplegia), and sensory disabilities (e.g., blind, deaf)." That same document also included pregnancy and childbirth as temporarily disabling conditions, thus intersecting with the depictions of women as Diverse Others.

The textual specification of disability and those who possess it works to locate disability in the bodies of some, using medical diagnosis to mark them as different, rather than identifying the environment as the thing which is disabling. After using designation and categorization to demarcate the bodies of those with disabilities, NFU then identifies people with disabilities as part of the Diverse Other. This rhetorical identification is achieved through echoes of the popular discourse about the educational and social benefits of diversity. The Affirmative Action Plan "recognizes that the employment of individuals with disabilities is in the University's best interests, by utilizing employment skills possessed by such individuals as well as in meeting an important social and educational responsibility." The document then went on to explain that people with disabilities will be protected under the institution's affirmative action efforts and the non-discrimination policies. This text additionally elided apparent and non-apparent disabilities by locating material difference in the body: the bodies and/or brains of

individuals with disabilities are the things that are different, instead of understanding “normalcy” as a social construction or the ways that the built environment plays a role in constructing disability. In other words, the difference presented by those with disabilities will either show itself in actual physical differences and/or variations in ability as well as in differences in the products or work produced by the individual in question.

**Sexual Orientation.** Though sexual orientation receives considerably less attention than other identity categories (and considerably more than some), the binary presented in these texts is heterosexual/not-heterosexual. This image of the Diverse Other as not-normative presented in these texts is that of the gay or lesbian body—other orientations are not addressed, thus constructing a very narrow official view of sexual orientation. Sexual orientation is included in all the non-discrimination statements produced by the institution and receives several mentions in the union contracts. The very fact that sexual orientation is so often defined marks it as abnormal—there is no parallel definition or description of heterosexual relationships anywhere in these policies. Definitions of sexual orientation in these texts are also marked by genderist assumptions and do not acknowledge the difference between biological sex and gender identity. For example, one of the union contracts defines a domestic partner as “a person of the same sex with whom the unit member has a committed relationship, which involves a personal and economic bond.”

Additionally, the institution saw fit to further other lesbian and gay individuals in its justification of including sexual orientation in the non-discrimination statement in the Affirmative Action Plan by noting that it “does not endorse a particular lifestyle, nor does it require preferential treatment or affirmative action for those with a particular sexual

orientation.” This statement positions homosexual relationships as entities that may necessitate endorsement while simultaneously distancing the institution from being in a position to offer that endorsement. The same denial is not offered with respect to heterosexual relationships, thus giving the impression that those relationships are already accepted as the norm. Indeed, by withholding full institutional acceptance, these texts use lesbian and gay relationships to outline normative heterosexual relationships and to reify monogamous relationships as an institutional norm. Reading the silences shows the ways that, in reinscribing lesbian and gay alterity, these documents further other sexualities such as bisexuality, pansexuality, or asexuality as relationships or ways of being about which the texts cannot even speak. These sexualities are silenced and delegitimized in official documents, discursively erasing these individuals from NFU’s campus.

### **Fetishization of the Diverse Other**

Northeastern Flagship University’s plans, policies, and procedures have established the characteristics of the Diverse Other through textual silences, presences, and connections to diversity and expressed them as images, problems, and solutions. Women, people of color, people with disabilities, and gays and lesbians are mentioned, as shown above, in a variety of explicit ways. The texts make clear that these are the people who a) need policy’s attention and b) contribute to diversity, thus demarcating them from the unspoken norm. These people are the Other; individuals about whom the texts are silent make up the normative population. However, by focusing on these specific identity categories, these texts also fetishize the Diverse Other. That is, the image of the Diverse Other as non-normative is predominantly achieved in these texts through denoting who is visible and who is not—on paper, on campus, and in discourse.

By further exploring presences and silences, it is possible to hypothesize that what sets these categories apart is their *visibility*. As I mentioned several times above, many of the references to the Diverse Other also tie into the embodiment of diversity. Those who make up the normative backdrop do so by being invisible in these documents—by being the group against which, on campus, the Diverse Other literally stands out. This speaks to a deep current of embodiment that runs through these texts. This embodiment is the foundation of the creation of the Diverse Other in NFU’s official documents.

It is perhaps easier to see the embodiment and fetishization at work in what is not embodied—and thus, less represented in these documents. For example, class often completes the classic diversity triumvirate along with race and gender. As we have seen, race and gender are more than represented throughout these documents. However, social-economic class is often conspicuously absent. In other words, there are no bodies that can be easily attached to class as there is for race or gender. References to class instead reference what these individuals may have—such as a Pell Grant or an affordability gap. When added to that the fact that class is simply mentioned fewer times than other categories, it is possible to conclude that class is less visible—less embodied and thus less able to be fetishized—in these texts. For example, the Financial Aid Mission Statement stated the department’s mission “to utilize all available resources to fill the gap that exists between family resources and the cost of a quality education.” While this text acknowledges the possibility of a gap, it does not acknowledge the idea of socioeconomic class differences in access to the institution. Other documents mention class in passing, but do not provide the detailed images similar to those of race/ethnicity, gender, disability, and sexual orientation. The OEOD’s Diversity Plan references “people of

differing socioeconomic status” in its description of the recipients of money from the institution’s charitable giving campaign. Another reference, this time to a program aimed at underrepresented undergraduate students, describes the students who were invited to join as those “who identified with at least one of the following categories: first-generation colleges students, students of color, and students who receive a Pell grant (as a proxy for income).”

While these texts emphasize and build on the visibility of the Diverse Other, the construction that they build depends on essentialism and lacks intersectionality. The fetishization of visible difference not only assumes that individuals who look a certain way have a certain background; it also leads to a situation in which people cannot simultaneously be many things. Some of the texts, at least, are aware that an intersectional analysis is missing. The Diversity Strategic Plan acknowledged that its “focus on racial and ethnic diversity additionally failed to articulate the fact that many individuals on campus belong to multiple diverse groups. For many, diversity is not singular, but intersecting.” It goes on to advise that “any and all of these groups may intersect in ways that must be considered during all steps of planning and implementation.”

Beyond this acknowledgement, most of the texts treat the Diverse Other in a very one-dimensional manner. For example, the Affirmative Action Plan listed the percentages of different groups in the campus workforce in the following formula: “Women represented 50.1% of the total workforce; minority group members represented 17.5%; protected veterans, 2.4%; and individuals with disabilities, 1.3%.” In another text, the College of Engineering reported that its undergraduate enrollment “had 1,871

undergraduates, of which 16.4% were female. Of the undergraduates (U.S. citizens) who reported race/ethnicity, 19.7% were minority students (7.4% identified as under-represented minority and 12.3% identified as “Other ALANA”).” To a certain extent, these follow the pattern set in the Affirmative Action Statement and repeated in union contracts and other NFU documents: “Affirmative action in employment is required for women; racial and ethnic minorities; disabled veterans, recently separated veterans, active duty wartime or campaign badge veterans, and Armed Forces service medal veterans; and individual with disabilities in order to address under-representation in the workforce.” In most of the documents analyzed, the Diverse Other is presented as diverse in only one way—either a woman *or* a person *or* color *or* a person with a disability. Additionally, the numbers quoted in the passage from the College of Engineering point to the ways that even fetishized difference has a limit to its inclusion—some Diverse Others have a more intrinsic value than others. In other words, even though the institution categorizes each individual of color as the Diverse Other by virtue of their phenotypical race, some Diverse Others are more visible, and more fetishized as valuable, than others.

This one-dimensional conceptualization of the Diverse Other is built on an essentialist foundation. The texts and the policies and plans enacted through them reduce diverse individuals to one or two specific aspects of their identities (as well as seeing all of their experiences through a stereotyped view of those identities). Two negative consequences follow from this fetishization and essentialist vision of diversity. First, it furthers the location of diversity in the body, reinforcing the idea that diversity—especially diversity that contributes to the education of others—is visible. Second, it allows the institution to look more diverse than it is in reality. When NFU parses out the

separate groups from each other without acknowledging the possible intersections, it is able to report higher levels of diversity. Women may represent 50% of the workforce while people of color represent another 17.5%, but that does not mean that 67.5% of the workforce is made up of historically marginalized individuals. Indeed, the workforce is more white and dominated by men than these numbers indicate, since undoubtedly some of those counted are women of color. Thus, the image of the Diverse other that these texts create—that of a non-normative, non-intersectional individual—not only does a disservice to the diverse individuals at this institution but also allows the institution to misrepresent its heterogeneity to itself and the outside world.

### **The Diverse Other as Victim**

In addition to the image of the Diverse Other as non-normative, these policies and plans offer images of the Diverse Other as a victim. The facets that make up this image involve the protection offered by affirmative action and non-discrimination statements as well as the image offered by the text of the Diverse Other as perpetually harassed. Notably, this framing may well be accurate but also prefigures the way in which the institution will respond to the Diverse Other—not as a fully autonomous human being but as a victim. Finally, the imagery in the texts also situates the Diverse Other as a victim by using deficit language and emphasizing the ways in which they are under-represented, under-utilized, and under-supported. This line of thinking is not to say that minoritized populations are not sometimes in need of institutional protections or remedies. It *does* posit, however, that by reinscribing the Diverse Other as victim, these documents reduce their identities to their victimhood. Additionally, these constructions center the institution

as the change-agent, denying the Diverse Other the possibility of using their own agency to help themselves.

**Affirmative Action & Non-Discrimination.** Affirmative action is a vitally important tool for promoting increased access to higher education for underrepresented and underserved populations. Likewise, non-discrimination statements are incredibly important as the legal underpinnings for positive campus climates for diversity. As texts produced and circulated within a discursive community of practice, they are also productive of the Diverse Other. This dissertation explores the things under the surface or taken for granted in campus policies in order to work towards a more just higher education landscape, which necessarily entails looking at ways to avoid reinscribing victimhood for the Diverse Other.

Several different texts repeat variations of the affirmative action and non-discrimination statements—indeed, they are some of the most broadly disseminated policies at NFU. The non-discrimination statements

Prohibit[s] discrimination on the basis of race, color, creed, sex, age, marital status, national origin, mental or physical disability, political belief or affiliation, veteran status, sexual orientation, gender identity and expression, genetic information and any other class of individuals protected from discrimination under state or federal law in any aspect of the access to, admission, or treatment of students in its programs and activities, or in employment and application for employment.

The Affirmative Action Plan reiterated a commitment to equal opportunity for individuals in the same categories listed above. Most versions of the affirmative action

statement include statements of non-discrimination in addition to the something similar to the following, drawn from the union contracts:

The parties agree that when the effects of employment practices, regardless of their intent, discriminate against any group of people on the basis of race, religion, age, sex, national origin, mental or physical handicap, or veteran status specific positive and aggressive measures must be taken to redress the effects of past discrimination, to eliminate present and future discrimination, and to ensure equal opportunity... Therefore, the parties acknowledge the need for positive and aggressive affirmative action.

Other versions of the affirmative action statement are more direct:

Affirmative action in employment is required for women; racial and ethnic minorities; disabled veterans, recently separated veterans, active duty wartime or campaign badge veterans, and Armed Forces service medal veterans; and individuals with disabilities in order to address under-representation in the workforce.

While these policies are necessary for redressing past wrongs and present injustices, they also create a specific image and subject position for the Diverse Other. People of color, women, people with disabilities, already being marked in official documentation as non-normative, arrive on campus always already in need of protection—and receiving it. This not only allows other people to operate under the regrettably popular assumption that the Diverse Other is only granted access because of affirmative action policies, but also creates a dynamic that seems to expect that the Diverse Other will be thankful to the institution, even though the institution discursively

singles them out and others them. By reinforcing the Diverse Other's need for protection, these documents bring that need into discursive being. Official documents, such as the affirmative action statement, situate the Diverse Other as someone who requires the institution's beneficent protection and thereby restrict their agency; they are always already victims in the eyes of policy. Additionally, through its use of these policies, NFU positions itself as the entity that will change the Diverse Other's situation for the better, rather than allowing the Diverse Other to claim any of that agency.

**The Harassed Diverse Other.** Another prominent image of the Diverse Other produced in these official texts and documents is that of an individual plagued by harassment and even violence. The Code of Student Conduct stated that NFU

has special concern for incidents in which individuals or groups are subject to physical assault, harassment, threats, intimidation, or coercion because of membership or perceived membership in a particular racial, religious, gender, gender identity, gender expression, or sexual orientation group, color, national origin, disability or veteran status. Such incidents damage not only individuals, but also the free and open academic environment of the University.

This text draws attention to the victimhood of the Diverse Other, rather than the iniquity of the perpetrator. The institution does not even name these acts hate speech or hate crimes. Additionally, this positions the institution as a co-victim, both decentering the focus on the Diverse Other and begging the question of which hurt does the institution take the most issue with—that of an actual person or that of the institution itself?

Union contracts have special articles that outline and prohibit sexual harassment. Sexual harassment is defined broadly as “unwelcome sexual advances, requests for

sexual favors, and other verbal or physical conduct of a sexual nature.” Other documents, especially those that address issues related to graduate students, such as the graduate student union contract, discuss sexual harassment, pointing to specific concerns about that population’s safety and bodily autonomy. Other types of harassment discussed in these official documents include racist harassments. The Diversity Strategic Plan referenced concerns about a racially chilly campus climate, including “reports of racial insensitivity and micro-aggressions by some members of the faculty towards students and colleagues.” Finally, the Diversity Values statement affirmed the institution’s commitment to freedom of expression and its commitment to breaking down “historical and structural biases based on race, ethnicity, gender, age, disability, sexual orientation, gender identity, and religion” while also reiterating the sentiment expressed in the Student Code of Conduct, from above.

Again, these policies and official expressions of belief and commitment are both valuable and necessary. They draw a connection between the Diverse Other and their victimization and bring it to the forefront of the discourse surrounding diversity. The institution is deeply invested in protecting diverse individuals on campus, including students, faculty, and staff. However, the language used in policies and statements like those recounted above instantiate an image of the Diverse Other as the victim of harassment, discrimination, and violence. Furthermore, they depict the Diverse Other as a victim with little ability or agency to protect themselves. Since the policies that establish the protection offered by the institution are repeated in several different documents, this image of the Diverse Other as victim is spread far throughout the organizational culture of the university.

**The Diverse Other from the Deficit.** The final thread that contributes to the image of the Diverse Other as a victim is the use of deficit-based language in many of the texts analyzed in this dissertation. This language emphasizes the potential problems, obstacles, or barriers that the Diverse Other may have faced in the past or face at NFU, rather than the possible successes and achievements. Overall, it creates an image of the Diverse Other that situates them as struggling to overcome deficits related to their diversity and in need of the institution's assistance and protection to succeed.

Deficit language comes in many forms and shows up in many of the texts and official documents at NFU. Much of it involves references to the ways that diverse individuals are under-represented, under-supported, under-utilized, or under-served. For example, the Diversity Strategic Plan pointed out that "overall minority representation [in the professoriate] increased campus-wide by three percentage points...yet if we disaggregate the data, as previously noted, URM faculty have not made as much headway in any college or school." Elsewhere, this same text reported that, although more graduate students of color are obtaining more tenure-track employment than white students, the proportion of under-represented minority students who obtain their doctoral degrees is 8.4%. The text concluded that "non-completion, a significant problem for all doctoral students, is particularly acute for URM students." Other texts, such as the Affirmative Action Plan, reported both representation (emphasizing that many of the individuals the university depicts as diverse are also under-represented) and utilization, determined by comparing the number of a specific population, e.g., women, to how many are in the workforce. This language reinforces an image of the Diverse Other as both a thing to be used and a population that is underused.

Finally, another way that the language in NFU's documents depict the Diverse Other as coming from a deficit is the ways that the institution emphasizes the need for support, especially in the form of mentorship, services, and outreach. While previous research has established the critical importance of mentorship and support for historically marginalized populations, the repetition of this language in these official documents create an image of the Diverse Other as always already in need of the support offered—as well as a concurrent image of majority students and faculty who are able to navigate the academic waters without additional supports. The cumulative effect of this construction is that it deflects responsibility for these issues away from the institution. Instead of examining NFU for systemic racism, sexism, or ableism that contributes to the creation of these issues, this discourse suggests extra work of other types—such as mentoring or financial support—can make up for this systemic problems. This language also emphasizes the obstacles the Diverse Other has potentially faced while not acknowledging the qualities, skills, and strengths they may bring with them.

### **Diversity as Communitarian Property**

While the texts presented numerous, often contradictory, images of the Diverse Other, those of non-normativity and victim stood out as predominant constructions. However, there is also a great deal of imagery of diversity as an abstract concept or ideal. This imagery emphasizes diversity as both a commitment and as a key component of the institution's success and very survival. Indeed, both of these images—commitment and key component—rely on a conceptualization of diversity not only as a thing that exists independent from people but also as a commodity, an idea that is further elaborated in a later chapter.

NFU's claiming of diversity as often occurs in recitations of institutional history. The institution dates its investment in inclusion back to its founding, projecting a historical image of a diverse and open campus that is tinged with anachronism:

Born of a radical vision that any deserving citizen of [the Commonwealth], regardless of wealth or social status, should have access to higher education, inclusive excellence has defined [NFU] from its origin. Women found an open door at [NFU] as early as the 1870s and achieved or exceeded parity with the enrollment of men by the 1980s. In 1898, shortly after the Supreme Court legalized the exclusion of African Americans from most colleges in the country, [NFU] accepted its first African American student...

The institution lays claim to diversity as its property, something that it can use to make itself attractive to the present-day Diverse Other.

Most of the images of diversity as communitarian property are found in texts that set forth the university's aspirational plans and mission statements. Many of these texts lay out the image of diversity as a commitment made by the institution. For example, the Diversity Strategic Plan reiterated NFU's "long-standing commitment to social progress and social justice. We value diversity and equity and strive for inclusive excellence in our classrooms, research labs, dorms, and beyond." Another text, the Residential Life Statement on Multiculturalism, stated that "it is our understanding that multiculturalism transcends celebrating differences and should go beyond the recognition of any specific identities. We envision multiculturalism as an individual, group, professional and organizational commitment." The Pluralism Policy stated that the "Board of Trustees affirms its commitment to maintaining an academic environment in which all individuals

benefit from each other's experiences through pluralism, mutual respect, appreciation of divergent views, and awareness of the importance of individual rights." These passages, as well as others in the more aspirational documents from NFU, assert the idea that diversity is a commitment that the institution has made to students, faculty, and staff, as well as parents, funders, and state investors.

Another major image of diversity as an important commodity divorced from the body of the Diverse Other is that it is integral to a well-balanced education, the institution's success and survival, and to the general well-being of society. The Diversity Plan from the institution's Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity acknowledged that "while work of this nature is likely to be frustrating at times, the rewards include actualizing the full potential of students, faculty and staff, and of fully engaging this institution with the surrounding communities in a relationship free from boundaries and misconception." The Community Standards stated that "connecting with people with difference cultures, beliefs, and values is an integral part of the educational experience." The Diversity Strategic Plan acknowledged that the

future viability of higher education will hinge on reckoning openly with the challenges and opportunities of accessibility, diversity, and inclusion. Cultural competency—the ability to interact fluently with people of diverse backgrounds and perspectives—is an integral component of higher education in the 21<sup>st</sup> century... Discoveries about commonalities and differences that are the result of working in diverse environments provide layers of intellectual and personal growth beyond the outcomes of typical classroom experiences.

These statements from Northeastern Flagship University all share a common claim: they position diversity as a commodity, as a form of property. In other words, diversity is something that a person has and can communicate or give to other people. The texts from NFU takes this commodification one step further and, in many ways, lay claim to the diverse components of student, faculty, and staff identity. If diversity is a commodity open to the institution, then the institution can use it as it sees fit, especially to better its own position on the higher education market as an inclusive institution. This construction of diversity works with the images explained above to convey the sense that, discursively, diversity and diversity efforts are the purview of the institution, even while diversity is located in the bodies of the Diverse Other—thus, the institution is discursively laying claims to the bodies of the Diverse Other as its property, a theme that will be expanded upon in Chapter Seven. Meanwhile, NFU also positions itself as the benefactor for the Diverse Other—the entity that will not only accept the Diverse Other, but will also create an equitable and inclusive campus. This goal, as we will see in the next chapter, is one that is fraught with problems.

## CHAPTER 6

### DIVERSITY PROBLEMS AND SOLUTIONS

In addition to constructing images of diversity and the Diverse Other, the texts analyzed in this dissertation also presented problems and solutions related to diversity. Like the images described in the previous chapter, these problems and solutions are part of the alterity process. They are distillations of the experiences that the Diverse Other may have at NFU that the institution considers not-normative. In other words, it is possible to parse out the normative experience of NFU by understanding the problems that the institution perceives for the Diverse Other as well as the solutions that it advances.

#### Problems

Hurtado et al.'s (2012) Diverse Learning Environments model indicated that campus climates for diversity encompass several contexts, including: the community/external context, the institutional context, the policy contexts, and the socio-historical context. In this chapter, I am taking the socio-historical context to be the larger discourses of inequity and inequality—such as white supremacy, misogyny, and homophobia, among others—that structure our culture. These societal level issues in the socio-historical context influence the problems related to diversity I found at Northeastern Flagship University.

This chapter, however, takes the institutional context as its main focus. As reviewed in Chapter Two, the institutional context as understood by the DLE encompasses the historical, compositional, organizational, psychological, and behavioral components of campus climate (Hurtado et al., 2012). This study focuses primarily on the

organizational component as represented in policies and procedures, though these also impact the compositional, psychological, and behavioral aspects. Organizational parts of campus climate can impact individuals on the micro-level as well as the institution on the meso-level. Generally, the problems presented in these texts map onto both the micro- and meso-levels as well. The micro-level problems are most often constructed as interpersonal issues between people, such as discrimination and harassment, or as problems experienced by the Diverse Other due to systemic issues. Meso-level problems, on the other hand, are found in the institution's practices and processes or stem from the things that the institution currently lacks, such as equitable representation

### **Micro-Level Problems**

Many of the problems related to diversity in these documents take place on a micro-level, usually between individuals. Many of these micro-level issues can, rather innocuously, be described loosely as interpersonal problems, and they include discrimination, harassment, and other negative behaviors. On the other hand, these texts also describe micro-level issues that result from an individual's position in the university as the Diverse Other. These issues include coping with intersecting oppressions, success pathways that are inadequately resourced and supported by the institution, and historically marginalized individuals carrying the brunt of the diversity burden.

**Interpersonal Problems.** These texts presented several kinds of interpersonal problems that could be encountered by the Diverse Other, including being the victim of discrimination, harassment, and violent acts such as bullying. A recent campus climate survey at NFU reported that, while a majority of respondents reported that they perceived a positive campus climate, at least 20 percent of each major social identity category

experienced unfair treatment. While discrimination was mentioned in the Diversity Strategic Plan, most of the other references to discrimination were found in institutional policy texts. For example, the Civil Rights Grievance Policy defined discrimination as “actions that deprive other members of the community of educational or employment access, benefits or opportunities on the basis of their actual or perceived membership in a protected class.” This text also drew a distinction between discrimination based on disparate treatment—“defined as treating less favorable than others”—and discrimination based on disparate impact, which “involves practices that fall more harshly on one group than another and cannot be justified by business necessity.” This distinction means that the institution is attempting to protect both historically marginalized individuals and itself: it protects the Diverse Other from all forms of discrimination while also protecting itself from legal action.

Another problem between individuals that received a lot of attention in these texts was harassment. The Grievance Policy identified harassment as a distinct form of discrimination, emphasizing harassment’s role in creating a hostile environment for the Diverse Other. According to this document, harassment can be “oral, written, graphic, or physical conduct that is sufficiently severe, persistent/pervasive and objective offensive that it interferes with, limits or denies the ability of an individual to participate in or benefit from educational programs or activities or employment access, benefits or opportunities.” This policy also acknowledged that harassment does not have to take place in a solely physical space—it can take place online. However, the policy cannot protect individuals against digital harassment as well: “any postings or other electronic communication by students...occurring completely outside of the University’s

control...will only be subject to this policy when those online behaviors can be shown to cause a substantial on-campus disruption.” Union contracts also name harassment as an issue that affects their diverse employees. For example, the graduate student union contract repeats the non-discrimination policy’s prohibition against harassment of students and employees, and asserts that “graduate student employees should be fully covered by this policy, as well as protected from harassment for union activities.”

The texts also discussed several other problems experienced by the Diverse Other at NFU. These problems range from general concerns to very specific incidents. General problems discussed in these documents include invocations of racism and intolerance—always in the context of disavowing or denouncing such negative behaviors. The Diversity Strategic Plan listed several general concerns, including a lack of concern for women’s issues, bullying, and “a chilly professional and campus climate produced by a racially homogenous faculty.” The more specific incidents mentioned involve several occurrences of racist and threatening graffiti found in various areas of campus, including a residential area, the graduate student union offices, and the fine arts building. This graffiti included several swastikas and hateful language aimed toward African Americans, Muslims and Muslim Americans, and the LGBTQAI community.

Additionally, these texts identified issues in the classroom that were diversity related. The Diversity Strategic Plan mentioned that students “noted both insensitivity among some instructors towards concepts relation to institutionalized racism and white privilege, and the lack of expertise of some instructors to address sensitive race and gender discussions as they arise in the classroom.” Ironically, the institution did little to acknowledge its own implication in systemic inequalities and macro-level discourses

such as racism and white supremacy. Instead it fell back on either asserting its commitment to tolerance or outlining the disciplinary procedures for individuals who transgress that commitment. Finally, another major category of interpersonal problems related to the Diverse Other describes actual acts of violence. Violence in these texts is grouped into two categories: sexual violence and non-sexual violence. Sexual violence included sexual assault, sexual exploitation, and other non-consensual forms of sexual activity. Non-sexual violence included stalking, threats of violence, assault, intimidation, and hazing. Each text roundly condemned such actions, but also, through their identification of violence's victims as Diverse Others, connects them to diversity.

**Diverse Other's Problems.** Several problems in the documents analyzed in this study are still micro-level, but are not necessarily perpetrated by another person. Rather, these problems are largely born by the Diverse Other because of the way that the institution attaches diversity to them. These problems include disparities, experiences that are mediated by their social identity and intersecting oppressions, inadequate success pathways, and the fact that the Diverse Other often carries more than their fair share of the diversity burden. It is important to note that, while many of these problems present themselves in the personal lives of the Diverse Other and are sometimes construed as their fault, these issues are created by the effects of social realities such as racism, misogyny, homophobia, and ableism as they are carried out at Northeastern Flagship University.

In addition to being consistently othered both on campus and in official texts, the Diverse Other's experiences are impacted by a variety of problems. Some of these problems stem from the very real disparities that exist on NFU's campus. As discussed

above, this campus is predominantly white; while women are well-represented at the undergraduate level, there are gender imbalances at the graduate, staff, and faculty levels. Additionally, there are attainment disparities at this institution, which inordinately affect diverse individuals. To a certain extent, these disparities are both produced and increased by inadequately maintained pathways to success for the Diverse Other. The university acknowledged that, due to leaks in the pipeline, “progress in diversifying the tenure-track faculty—especially in the STEM disciplines—has been slow. This represents a lost opportunity with implications for both the research enterprise and society as a whole.” What this quote declines to mention is that diverse individuals—women, people of color, people with disabilities, and others—are excluded from lucrative careers and face chilly campus climates when they do arrive at institutions like NFU.

In addition to the problems created by disparities and inadequate pathways, the Diverse Other’s experience is mediated by the intersections of their social identities as well as multiple oppressions. For example, a climate survey conducted in 2013 and reported in the Diversity Strategic Plan found that “White students perceive [NFU] to be more committed to and appreciative of diversity than students of color” and that “32% of students of color somewhat or strongly agree that there is ‘a lot of racial tension at [NFU],’ compared to only 9% of White students.” The Diversity Strategic Plan also reported that, for underrepresented minority students, the institution is “startlingly less diverse than the communities from which they come, potentially leading some students to feel additionally marginalized” and concludes that “campus climate...may seem radically different for different students, and those differences in perception may not be appreciated or even comprehended across groups and individuals.” These different

perceptions are tied to their social identities and the range of microaggressions these individuals encounter on a regular basis. While these problems may take the forms mentioned above—discrimination, harassment, or even violence—they remain the particular experience of the Diverse Other simply because they are diverse.

Compounding all of these potentially negative issues, these texts explicitly note that the Diverse Other also carries a disproportionate portion of the burden of diversity work. The Diversity Strategic Plan reported that data

shows that men and women associate faculty work similar hours per week; however, women spend more time on service work than men do...Although the sample size is too small to make conclusive statements about minority faculty, it is often the case that these faculty members are disproportionately burdened with expectations such as mentoring students and colleagues of color and being asked to serve on committees to alleviate diversity representation concerns.

This concern was even brought forward by students who noted both the work being put in by minority faculty and students and the lack of reward for that very same work. This trend also shows up in recent hiring trends at Northeastern Flagship University. Many of the university's schools and colleges have hired diversity officers, as has the upper levels of the institution's administration. Many of these positions are filled by people of color or women (including many women of color), thus perpetuating the image of who is best-suited to shoulder this burden. Altogether, these problems—the obvious disparities, the differentiated experiences that are mediated by social identity, and shouldering the majority of the burden of diversity work—are experienced by the Diverse Other on a personal level.

## **Institutional Problems**

Strategic plans, policies, and official documents from NFU also recount numerous problems related to diversity that, while they sometimes take place between individuals, largely emanate from the institutional level. In other words, these are problems created by institutional practices and processes that either directly impact or have lasting repercussions for the Diverse Other. Additional institution-level problems are also created by what the institution lacks, such as equitable representation, accessibility, services, and consistent leadership. As we will see in the sections on solutions to diversity problems, although these problems are located with the institutions, the unit of intervention is the individual—leaving the institutional culture that contributed to the problem intact.

**Institutional Opacity.** Many of the practices and processes laid out in NFU’s policy documents are, at face-value, aimed at creating an equal environment and equal protections for everyone at the university. However, these practices and policies are also problematic when read intentionally with diversity and the Diverse Other in mind. While they are interested in creating a level playing field, these policies and practices do not account for systemic inequality and thus often reproduce those same inequalities. In other words, these policies produce problems for the Diverse Other, usually through their neutral, value-free approach.

The policies at NFU lean heavily on bureaucratic processes and opacity. Their internal logic dictates that opaque processes offer the best protection—equal protection—for all members of the university. For example, the Academic Honesty Policy laid out the ideal membership of the hearing panels: “five *disinterested* members of the Academic

Honesty Board” (emphasis mine). Typically, these members are made up of faculty and students of the same status as the accused, but the policy lays out various permutations that are permissible. The important word here is “disinterested”: in addition to trusting to the efficacy of bureaucratic practices to affect human behavior, this policy believes that individuals can be neutral. Discourse, however, means that no one can escape implication in the ways that power circulates and produces effects. In other words, no one can stand outside of the discourses that structure power and oppression in American society; no one can be entirely unbiased or neutral. What the Academic Honesty Policy, and other policies at NFU like it, did not account for is how individuals are chosen for specific cases. That process is opaque in the written policies, which, in turn, do not account for the different experiences that the Diverse Other can have in the institution.

Other policies also lean heavily on opaque processes that are not transparent to outsiders. The Faculty Union contract lays out the disciplinary policy for faculty members and librarians. Again, at face value, this policy is very fair: it laid out a system of “progressive discipline” and protects foundational tenets, such as academic freedom and other legally obligated rights. The policy stated that

just cause for dismissal will be related to the fitness of the faculty member or librarian in his or her professional capacity, and may include, but not be limited to, demonstrated substantial and manifest neglect of duty or failure to perform one’s duty, severely adequate performance, or egregious misconduct that substantially impairs the individual’s fulfillment of his or her institutional responsibilities.

However, the policy masks how a faculty member or librarian's fitness for duty is measured or assessed, as well as who makes that assessment. Again, when looked at in conjunction with diversity, this opacity is deeply problematic—both in terms of the union or other disciplinary bodies not listening to the concerns of diverse students about faculty members and in terms of diverse faculty members being held to different standards than majority faculty members.

This opacity and textual neutrality also occurs in policies that are not focused on discipline. While all of NFU's policies are similarly opaque, particular policies in which it stands out is the Salary Anomaly Policy and NFU's promotion and tenure processes. The Salary Anomaly Policy laid out the process by which inequitable salaries can be redressed—beginning at the departmental level and working its way up to the Provost—but it did not include an explanation of why someone may have an inequitable salary. Historically, women and people of color have been paid less than their majority counterparts—a trend that continues to this day—but the policy itself did not acknowledge the possibility that discrimination against the Diverse Other may play a role in salary inequities. The promotion and tenure policies are similarly neutral in terms of social issues. In addition to opacity in terms of how one's fitness for tenure or promotion is assessed, the policies include very little attention for the ways that the world can intrude on such considerations. There are no checks or balances put into place to guard against biased or prejudiced assessments of diverse faculty members, although the union provides an avenue of redress through its grievance procedures should such discrimination occur.

**Implementation Problems.** In addition to their inherent opacity, policies at NFU have problems in implementation, especially when it comes to issues that center on diversity. Many of these issues result from a lack of sufficient funding, which is often largely outside the university's control. This public institution has faced several years of flat or decreased funding from the state, leading to budget shortfalls. While the institution has attempted to implement strategic financial planning and has maintained that supporting and increasing diversity is a major priority, the texts, especially the strategic plans, indicate that there is simply not enough money to provide all the support needed for effective diversity interventions and initiatives.

Aside from a perennial lack of funding, these texts speak to other diversity-related implementation problems. For example, NFU has clearly stated policies concerning confidentiality, mandated reporting, and the legal obligations thereof in harassment or discrimination patterns: "All university employees have a duty to report, unless they fall under the 'Confidential Reporting' section above." However, this policy is difficult to implement for a variety of reasons. First, there are few ways to ensure that employees are, indeed, reporting incidents. Second, as we will see below, the university has a persistent communication problem that makes reporting difficult. Finally, this policy, even when properly implemented, may, in fact, inhibit the Diverse Other from voicing concerns, especially if they are unsure that they want to involve authorities or are unsure of the possible reception. While these policies are very well-intentioned, the actual implementation presents some diversity-related problems.

Several of these documents noted that there are serious communication problems when it comes to diversity issues. One root of these problems is the sheer number of units

that are involved in diversity work on campus. This proliferation creates two separate problems: 1) students, faculty, and staff may not know who to talk to, and 2) there are less-than-optimal avenues of communication between the different units. As the Diversity Strategic plan read:

The place of diversity with the University's community engagement goals is clear, but as a campus [NFU] lacks a clear vision unifying community engagement and diversity with the ongoing work taking place within and in partnership with the University. While there are number of overarching units on campus with engagement missions...much of the outreach work on campus is happening within individual departments and with little or no communication with other engagement programs.

Even though the institution ultimately decided to maintain "multiple spaces where students can report incidents and receive support," it acknowledged that it "received several reports of confusion over where and to whom specific student populations can make reports." Additionally, there is little evidence that diversity efforts are coordinated across platforms and units. While separate organizations can pursue diversity goals relevant to different diverse groups, the university's effort as whole ends up looking fractured, piece-meal, and out of touch with each other.

**Restrictive Policies & Practices.** Many of the institutional practices at NFU also create problems when looked at through the lens of diversity. Many of these practices are part of employment policies and create a restrictive work environment that, in many cases, ultimately may exclude the Diverse Other. Many of these practices rest on the principle of seniority, pointing to the institution's—and the unions'—interest in

maintaining a long-term and loyal workforce. However, numbers provided by the Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity indicate that the more senior an employee is, the more likely they are to be white men, especially in the subsets of university employees that are protected by union contracts with serious emphasis on seniority. These restrictive policies work to provide for stability for senior—and less-diverse—employees, even at the expense of younger, more diverse workers.

The posting, hiring, bumping, and voluntary transfer policies are illustrative examples of this type of restrictive policy, as well as another example of the lack of attention to diversity issues that many of these policies display. The university has set rules not only about which jobs get advertised locally, regionally, and nationally but also about when positions in certain bargaining units can be advertised. From a demographic lens, national searches are likely to result in the recruitment of someone from a historically marginalized background, given the predominantly white population in the area surrounding NFU. Certain positions, especially in the more menial job categories, are posted as internal job postings for at least five days before they can be advertised externally. Additionally, professional staff union contracts allow for “applications submitted on-line by internal (on-campus) applicants and received during the internal campus job posting period by the hiring department will be considered prior to interviewing any external applicants for the position.” Even though a position could bring in a diverse individual from the wider region, this policy allows individuals—who may or may not be a Diverse Other—to stake a claim. Seniority also plays a role in hiring between equally qualified candidates (as far as that subjective claim can be made). The PSU union contract stated that “if...there are two or more candidates who are

approximately equally best qualified, then among such candidates, preference shall be granted to the employee in the bargaining unit who has the most seniority at the University.” Similarly, the USA union contract states that “campus seniority will govern where, upon review by the appointing authority, the ability, experience, training, and education of the applicants are equal.”

The bumping policy laid out in several union contracts goes into effect if lay-offs occur: “...the employee may bump into a position held by the least senior employee at the University in an equal or lower-graded classification for which management has determined the employee meets qualifications.” Similarly, the voluntary transfer policy allows employees to voluntarily transfer to a different work location under their same title. These transfer requests “shall be considered prior to the posting of vacancies...[and] shall be considered in order of campus seniority. Where practicable, the employee with greater seniority shall be assigned to the position.” Taking the predominantly white demographic of this institution’s immediate community as well as its historically white workforce into account, these employment policies can act as a safeguard against increasing NFU’s diversity—clearly, a diversity-related problem.

There are other restrictive policies at NFU that can affect the Diverse Other or have an adverse impact on diversity initiatives. Specifically, certain academic policies allow restricted majors that can inhibit the academic experiences of both the Diverse Other and students who would also benefit from diversity in their classrooms. Several majors—such as the engineering programs, business majors, and nursing—on campus have restrictive entrance policies and stringent requirements to remain in the major. The Diversity Strategic Plan noted that these “so-called ‘restricted’ majors, such as the BBAs

[Bachelor of Business Administration], Engineering, and Nursing, have among the lowest [under-represented minority] student populations on campus.” This restrictive environment may contribute to prospective diverse students looking elsewhere for their postsecondary education because their major is unavailable to them at NFU as well as discouraging diverse students who may have been undecided upon commencing college from pursuing majors in which there are already existing disparities that may also help those same students pursue lucrative careers in the future. The policies, plans, and other official texts lay out the processes and practices by which NFU functions. However, these practices and processes, through their opacity, neutrality, and restrictions, create problems for the Diverse Other; additional problems are created by the lack of certain aspects of NFU’s climate and organizational culture.

**Problems Created by Absence.** As shown above, the presence of certain policies, practices, and processes create problems at the institutional level that center on diversity. Other problems occur because there are things that are missing in the organizational culture that would benefit both the institution’s diversity initiatives and the Diverse Others’ experiences on campus. These things include representation, accessibility, services/programs/training opportunities, and consistent leadership.

Northeastern Flagship University has long been concerned about representation on its campus, especially for racial/ethnic minorities, women, and other under-represented minorities. As a predominantly and historically white institution in a predominantly white northern state, NFU has been consumed with finding ways to superficially increase diversity in all aspects of its campus—undergraduate and graduate students, faculty, and staff. The demographics of the institution are, however, not out of

the ordinary for similar public research universities. The Diversity Strategic Plan pointed out that

nearly all leading public universities have URM representation below that of their states... On average, the difference between institutional URM representation and that of their respective states for these fifty institutions was more than twelve percentage points. In the national context, then, [NFU], at 7.5%, has one of the lower URM representational differences.

While the campus made certain strides in improving representation on campus, the Diverse Other still faces a majority environment, which research often shows creates a negative campus climate for diversity. Furthermore, growth in diversity has stalled. For example, the Diversity Strategic Plan stated that “the URM portion of the graduate student population has plateaued around 10.5% for the past five years. Over that same period, the fraction of URM students in the doctoral entering cohort has averaged 9.4%, a number that has not improved the University’s performance in URM enrollment.” There have been continual calls on campus to increase the diversity of its professoriate, citing the fact that historically marginalized faculty members carry outsized service burdens compared to their white peers and the need for positive role models for diverse students. Additionally, the lack of representation in the staff received recent attention in the Diversity Strategic Plan: “particularly among clinical staff of University Health Services, the Center for Counseling and Psychological Health, and the [NFU] Police Department.” These concerns have been particularly predominant in the minds of students of color and genderqueer students, on whom the lack of healthcare and law enforcement professionals of color or with genderqueer identities have a significant impact.

Problems created by a lack of accessibility are both created by, and build from, the problems created by a lack of equitable representation. This deficiency takes place in an array of locations (physical or otherwise) at NFU. First, there is the question of access to the institution. As indicated by the lack of equal representation—or even representation that is proportional to the state in which NFU resides—diverse students have difficulty gaining access to the institution. Second, the physical campus represents one of the more obvious accessibility problems—the texts mention, at several points, the ways in which the physical layout of the campus presents challenges for individuals with physical disabilities. Likewise, the problems described in this chapter, such as discrimination or the lack of institutional support, may also make the campus feel inaccessible to several different historically marginalized groups. The third, and perhaps subtler, accessibility issue involves access to resources. In addition to the lack of funds discussed above, the Diversity Strategic Plan reported the issues people had accessing other, less tangible resources, such as “support services, data and statistics on bias-related incidents, and means for incident reporting.” All of these accessibility issues create a climate in which the Diverse Other is always already excluded—either physically from the campus and institution as a whole or from the positive campus climate that majority individuals enjoy.

NFU has institutional-level problems created by the lack of services, programs, and training—although, as we will see in the next section, the institution presents training programs as a key solution to solving its diversity problems. The Diversity Strategic Plan reported that several faculty members and students discussed the need for “activities and programs that celebrate and destigmatize ability differences” as well as other dimensions

of diversity and that they noticed “an erosion of programs serving students of color.” Additionally, they mentioned that the institution lacked “funds and workshop facilitators needed to formalize and regularize cross-cultural training at the department level.” While these comments point to a desire for diversity training and programs at the university, there are, in fact, a myriad of options for students, faculty, and staff to become more familiar with diversity options. What these words give voice to is a need for *effective* programming that not only furthers the institution’s diversity mission, but also reaches a broad swath of institutional citizens and creates real and lasting change. Furthermore, there is evidence that, while the institution touts diversity programs and training as key components, that commitment is in word only. The Affirmative Action Plan indicated that “while campus leadership had reinforced the expectation that promoting employee development is an essential supervisory responsibility, it is still the case that employees, particularly classified employees, have difficulty obtaining release time to take job-related classes of attend training.”

Like the lack of funding creating many of the policy implementation issues discussed above, many of the problems described in this section stem from a history of poor, inconsistent leadership on diversity at NFU. Although many of the more aspirational documents cite NFU’s history of inclusivity and diversity advocacy, they also note that there has not been sustained effort and leadership to promote that cause in a consistent manner. For example, the Diversity Strategic Plan mentioned that “the campus has lacked consistent leadership infrastructures and logistical support for working with communities of color to promote early identification of qualified applicants and bring them successfully through all stages of the admissions process.” This lack of sustained

leadership, felt elsewhere besides admissions, has not necessarily created a poor campus climate by itself, but it has contributed to the limited successes that the institution has experienced in the realm of diversity and has had wide-ranging effects.

### **Solutions**

As I showed above, the policy and planning documents from Northeastern Flagship University contain images of the Diverse Other and problems related to diversity. They also depict many solutions aimed at fixing the very problems laid out in the text. It is particularly interesting—and telling of the institution's deeply felt, if perhaps flawed, commitment to creating a more inclusive campus—to note that, while the problems related to diversity were rarely explicitly stated, the solutions were both explicit and numerous. Indeed, the images and problems related to the Diverse Other and diversity interact to produce this particular constellation of strategies at the institution. These strategies include providing accommodations, improving access, increasing visibility, and providing prevention and protection as well as support and remediation.

### **Accommodations**

In many ways, the accommodating language used in these documents reflect—and create—the image of the Diverse Other as non-normative. These accommodations attempt to address some of the problems created by absence by trying to provide services that the environment itself does not already offer. Indeed, this strategy further others the Diverse Other by discursively singling them out as individuals who need something extra in order to function similarly to the majority norm.

While the language of accommodations is mostly used in disability studies and practices, it is particularly useful to consider in the larger context of diversity and equity

issues. In many ways, the solutions offered by NFU are attempts at achieving what accommodations are intended to do: create a more level playing field. These accommodations are widespread throughout the texts and address numerous aspects of Diverse Otherness. For example, in response to concerns about family care, union contracts ensure that the institution provides child care assistance and facilities. Another example of the use of accommodations as solutions to diversity-related problems in the institution's bathroom policy, which "enables trans and gender-nonconforming people to use the gendered bathrooms in which they feel safer and more comfortable... One aspect of creating a supportive environment is providing safe, accessible, and convenient bathroom facilities." Accommodative solutions to diversity issues also include actual accommodations for students with disabilities. These accommodations include adjustments to the physical environment of the campus as well as academic and residential accommodations.

### **Improving Access**

Improving access for the Diverse Other to the institution is one of the main solutions that NFU tries to implement. The institution utilizes three main strategies to increase access: hiring, recruitment, and the use of financial resources. This focus on increasing access is really an attempt to improve compositional diversity—the number and types of Diverse Others present on campus. Working from the image of the Diverse Other as fetishized non-normative, the institution attempts to make diversity visible in hopes that the majority will absorb the benefits of being in community with diverse peers, improve the campus climate, and decrease interpersonal issues like discrimination, prejudice, and violence. As we shall see in the next chapter, increasing access is part of a

broader discourse of access circulating in these documents that rests on *entrée*, representation, and recognition.

**Hiring.** In an attempt to improve its compositional diversity—and thus improve the campus climate—NFU has been working steadily to improve access and representation of the Diverse Other at all levels. One of the main strategies that NFU uses to improve access for diverse individuals is through their hiring policies. The Diversity Strategic Plan reported that search processes for faculty member have been reviewed “in order to strengthen the diversity language of faculty position announcements as well as the search process.” The Affirmative Action Report, produced yearly, provides a textual archive of that progress or lack thereof in its published numbers of student and employee demographics. These numbers show slow, but steady, progress in diversifying the campus. This progress has come about, in part, due to the auspices of a variety of programs and initiatives. One example is the High Impact Program, described in the Diversity Strategic Plan, designed to hire faculty (and help pay for) faculty who “possess remarkable records or promise of advancing inclusion and diversity at a research intensive public university through their research, teaching, service, and/or community engagement.” As of 2015, this program enabled the institution to hire 12 faculty members from underrepresented groups. Other programs, such as the mission of the Center for Multicultural Awareness, are aimed at “fostering collaboration with other departments and campus constituents to continuously invest in acknowledging and building a diverse campus.” This mission statement continued, writing that one of the organization’s goals is “building relationships with community partners and surrounding schools to increase

their awareness of [the Center for Multicultural Awareness] while attracting more ALANA, multiracial and/or first-generation students to attend [NFU].”

Another solution that NFU has instituted to increase access and equitable representation for the Diverse Other is the hiring of diversity officers. For example, the College of Natural Science recently hired a director of student success and diversity; similar positions have been created and filled in other schools and colleges as well as positions that focus on diversity for faculty. As reported in the Affirmative Action Plan, the director of student success and diversity

is available to students as an intensive academic advisor and to faculty as a resource for providing support to diverse students in CNS, and has led CNS’s efforts in increasing the recruitment and enrollment of diverse students by managing out participation in Community College Day and by developing a partnership with area community college’s STEM Starter Academy Programs among numerous other activities. Similarly, the School of Public Health and Health Sciences hired a “diversity liaison,” whose responsibilities include “outreach, mentoring, and diversity building activities for students.”

**Admissions.** This institution has also reviewed and modified its recruitment policies to bring in a more diverse pool of undergraduates and graduate students. Undergraduate admissions policies are being reviewed to make sure that they take diverse backgrounds into account, as the Policy on Undergraduate Admissions stated:

Applications for admission by traditional freshmen will primarily be based on high school grade point average, rank in class, and standardized test scores (SAT, ACT, TOEFL, etc.), but will also take into account evidence of student growth

and maturation over time, the nature of courses taken in high school, the academic rigor and reputation of the high school, recommendations, extracurricular activities, leadership and service, and special circumstances in a student's life.

This same policy, however, went on to “employ different admissions criteria to accommodate students who follow different routes to college (e.g., traditional freshmen, older freshmen, transfer students, or students admitted through alternative admission programs or collaborative agreements with other institutions).” The institution hopes that these adjustments will help attract and hire more diverse faculty. Additionally, the institution has attempted to improve recruitment of the Diverse Other through a variety of different programs. These programs range from recruiting low-income or students of color from area community colleges through a partnership with the honors college to a STEM Diversity Institute that recruits and supports women and women of color into STEM graduate programs. Other schools and colleges are exploring similar initiatives by identifying prospective students from subject-related camps or workshops aimed at high school students. Similarly, NFU is attempting to improve graduate admissions, predominantly by offering funds to off-set costs for diverse graduate students and encourage departments to accept these students.

**Financial Resources.** Finally, money is another solution that NFU persistently employs to positively influence the Diverse Other's access and representation at the institution. In addition to money for graduate student recruitment, NFU offers several funds for faculty and students. For example, in the Search Procedures, the institution set up a “Special Opportunity Fund” for faculty members: these appointments are “coordinated through the Office of the Provost upon application from a dean to increase

diversity in the faculty and in the academic offerings of a particular department or academic program.” As described above, NFU has created several grants and scholarships to support diverse graduate students, especially in STEM fields. The university has also expressed in the Diversity Plan a desire to adjust the current reward system in order to “recognize and reward diversity efforts on campus.” This effort includes building up funds to “reward teaching, research and service that advances equity and equal opportunity; structurally build mechanisms that would fundraise for diversity initiatives...; create a criterion to reward diversity practice for staff and for students.” It is interesting to note that this goal requires money to make more money for diversity. Another money-related solution that NFU has indicated it will undertake is strategic investigation of its financial aid policies in order to ensure that diverse students are able to afford admission to the university.

### **Increase Visibility**

NFU also uses a bundle of strategies to increase the visibility of the Diverse Other as it attempts to solve diversity-related problems. These strategies attempt to both give evidence that the Diverse Other is present—and, ideally, valued—on NFU’s campus and to center the Diverse Other and diversity in campus discourse. Strategies for increasing visibility come about in response to problems related to under-representation and under-resourcing of the Diverse Other as well as in response to images of the Diverse Other that emphasize their non-normativity. Rather than attempt to discursively integrate the Diverse Other with the perceived majority on campus, the institution increases their visibility, thereby increasing the opportunities for the Diverse Other to be fetishized. Like

the strategies associated with increasing access, these strategies are also reflected in a discourse that emphasizes *entrée*, representation, and affirmation.

**Reporting Numbers.** Many of the solutions described above attempt to tackle the problem of inequitable representation by addressing the problem of access. Northeastern Flagship University has also proposed several solutions for representation problems as well, in hopes that, by increasing both representation and visibility of the Diverse Other, personal bias, discrimination, and other interpersonal issues will decrease. In addition to trying to increase the real and proportional number of diverse individuals in the student body, professoriate, and workforce through recruitment and admissions, the institution strives to publish the demographics of various groups on campus. In part, this effort attempts to shore up claims that diversity is improving, but it also serves to show everyone—the Diverse Other and the majority—that individuals from diverse backgrounds are actually present.

The Affirmative Action Plan does much of the heavy-lifting in this strategy, although other texts, such as the Strategic Plan and the Diversity Strategic Plan, publish demographic numbers or other numbers related to diversity. These reports usually display both the real amount and the percentage of representation. For example, in the Affirmative Action Plan's table of Workforce Representation by Protected Category reports the numbers of women, racial/ethnic minorities, veterans, and people with disabilities, separated out by workforce sector (e.g., administration, faculty, secretarial/clerical, etc.). Each workforce sector has even more specific delineations listed, such as "tenure system" vs. "other" faculty members. Furthermore, the racial/ethnic minorities groups are also delineated: Black/African American, Asian,

American Indian/Alaskan Native, Hispanic/Latino, Native Hawaiian/Other Pacific Islander, and two or more races. While these numbers serve an important informational function—they do describe the demographics of the institution—they also act as an advertisement. Reporting the demographics of the Diverse Other is a strategy that allows NFU to display its incremental improvements in diversity. This strategy enables the administration to acclaim its progress and construct an image of the university as a progressive, forward-looking institution. To a critical eye, however, these reports also show how very poor representation for certain protected categories is at NFU.

**Diversifying the Curriculum.** The institution also attempts to ensure that diverse groups and individuals are visible—represented—across campus in a pedagogical sense. One strategy used is persistent attempts to diversify the curriculum in all academic fields on campus. Indeed, the Diversity Strategic Plan included curriculum as paramount in the goal to establish the institution as a “destination of choice for students of color and other underrepresented groups” by increasing the “effectiveness of curriculum and educational program with regard to diversity and inclusion.” This strategy seeks to be broadly inclusive in its effort to, tautologically, include multiple voices in the institution’s educational offerings. However, this strategy only means including a larger number of voices, not centering the myriad experiences of the Diverse Other at the core of the educational mission. Furthermore, this strategy, with its broad sense of diversity and its lack of specificity, conflates all the various experiences of the Diverse Other(s) with each other and turns them into teachable, consumable units.

These efforts have taken place on a campus-wide level, such as the recent broad revisions to the general education requirements that apply to all undergraduates, and on a

department or program level, as different academic units attempt to be more representative and inclusive. On the broader side of things, the institution wants a curriculum which “fosters cultural competencies” and incorporates “universal design and universal instructional design concepts.” This curriculum also aims to “increase accountability for the achievement of diversity objectives.” Likewise, NFU wants to “expand the curriculum to create more opportunities in the classroom for scholarly discussion on issues of diversity.” The way these goals and this strategy plays out is in specific colleges, departments, and units. For example, the Honors College instituted its own general education focus on global issues. STEM disciplines, such as kinesiology, have started to include diversity-related issues in their general education offerings—in this instance, they introduced issues relating to health, exercise disparities, and socioeconomic class. Finally, the institution is also attempting to make sure that diversity-related themes are included in graduate education in all fields, even those that do not traditionally discuss the issue. This strategy hopes to achieve a more equitable campus climate by exposing students to both the concept of diversity as well as the Diverse Other and hoping that that exposure creates more empathy, understanding, and knowledge. As we will see in the next chapter, this focus on learning—consuming—diversity commodifies the Diverse Other and contributes to a transactional discourse running throughout these texts.

**Diversity Dissemination.** The focus of this strategy is NFU’s prioritization of efforts that gather data about the diverse experience at the institution and disseminating that information to stakeholders. One of the major priorities established in the strategic plans is the creation and implementation of a campus-wide climate survey that would

“measure the atmosphere on campus as it pertains to diversity, inclusion, and equity.”

Additionally, the need for exit interviews for faculty and staff is repeated throughout the documents as an important part of NFU’s attempts to improve their retention of the Diverse Other in the workforce. Even smaller divisions and units, such as the Athletics Program, expressed their interest in knowing more information about the Diverse Other on NFU’s campus. This “will to know” (Foucault, 1976/1990) indicates that the institution is concerned that it simply does not know enough about the Diverse Other as well as an institutional anxiety about diversity. Furthermore, it also indicates that the institution believes that any climate problems can be solved as long as there is sufficient information to inform future initiatives. Like I have noted above, this strategy locates the problems to the campus, rather than viewing them as an extension of macro-level issues such as oppression, power, and privilege.

Similar to this is the urge to record and report interpersonal, diversity-related problems. Although much of this reporting is done in compliance with federal regulations, such as reporting incidents of sexual assault under the Clery Act, some of it is done to keep the upper levels of administration apprised of any discrimination, harassment, or violence that occurs. Indeed, some of the reporting is quite benign. Such benign instances take shape as systems like the “Professional Applicant Tracking System” that “enables the EO&D Office to retrieve and analyze information about recruitment and hiring practices for faculty and professional staff, including whether or not there is adverse impact on women and minorities in the hiring process.” Likewise, the Office of Disability Services and Residential Life use case management systems that log

interactions with students, joining the ranks of recording technologies that preserve diversity information.

Finally, a key part of this already labor-intensive strategy is disseminating the information gathered. This part of the strategy includes disseminating policy as well, such as including the affirmative action policy in recruitment materials and hosting training sessions about harassment prevention or the work of the equal opportunity office. A mainstay of this part of the strategy is the creation and advertisement of a diversity website. This website was created as an answer to concerns that diversity information—policies, the mission statement, initiatives, and resources—was spread too far throughout the institution. In many ways, the dissemination of both the data about diversity and the diversity policies and procedures makes up a considerable amount of diversity work at NFU. The result of that labor is being able to point to their avenues of dissemination as evidence of their diversity efforts—indeed, NFU can say that they are working on diversity while not actually engaging with either the Diverse Other or the problems that the Diverse Other confront.

**Events.** The final strategy that NFU uses to increase the representation of the Diverse Other is plan and promote events about diversity and the Diverse Other. Similar to the data gathering and dissemination strategy, the university actively publicizes the wide variety of events and programs that are diversity-related or geared toward cultivating a better understanding of diverse backgrounds and viewpoints. The reports from each unit on campus published in the Affirmative Action Report and the Diversity Plan are rife with descriptions of diversity-related events. These range from large-scale programs, such as the Campus Reads program or the diversity components of New

Student Orientation, to campus-wide recognitions of time periods like Black History Month or Native American Week to smaller events sponsored by colleges, departments, or programs. These events also include the activities of the numerous centers, institutes, and affinity groups on NFU's campus. These entities, especially affinity groups such as the Black Student Union or the Muslim Student Association, are actively publicized by the institution as a way of both bringing diverse students to campus and representing them once they arrive. Like the diversity website, this strategy also serves as a stand-in for diversity work for the institution. Indeed, this strategy enables the institution to utilize the labor of students, faculty, staff, and off-campus entities to do some of the representation-increasing diversity labor supposedly prioritized by NFU.

### **Prevention & Protection**

As we saw in the previous section, one of the Diverse Other's major problems at NFU is negative interpersonal behaviors aimed at them. Numerous examples of harassment, discrimination, bias, and outright violence pepper the institution's official documents. These problems—which are very real and have myriad negative effects on the retention, persistence, and experience of the Diverse Other—also discursively come together to construct the image of the Diverse Other as a victim. Indeed, these problems and their solutions discursively reproduce the Diverse Other as always already in need of protection. Thus, NFU deploys three main strategies—regulation and policy, education and training, and protection—to prevent discrimination and harassment as well as to protect the Diverse Other.

**Regulation & Policy.** NFU relies on regulation, policy, and bureaucratic process to prevent discrimination, harassment, and violence against the Diverse Other.

Regulations and policies emanate from both the institution itself and federal law. For example, the institution professes to abide by Title IX and the Clery Act in order to prevent discrimination on the basis of sex, including sexual harassment and assault, or the report it if/when it does happen. Likewise, the institution abides by federal laws that prohibit discrimination on the basis of ability or veteran status. Additionally, NFU has its own tolerance and anti-discrimination policies. The intolerance policy stated that “the Board of Trustees denounces intolerance which interferes with those rights guaranteed by law or policy, and insists that such conduct has no place in a community of learning.” Likewise, though in a more positive tone, the pluralism policy states the NFU “affirms its commitment to maintaining an academic environment in which all individuals benefit from each other's experiences through pluralism, mutual respect, appreciation of divergent views, and awareness of the importance of individual rights.” The institution relies on these policies to help prevent negative actions and words against the Diverse Other. If such an event occurs, the institution’s police force investigates and punishes hate crimes. The Diversity Strategic Plan describes the ways that community members have a variety of outlets at which to report “hateful behavior,” such as choosing to “file a grievance with OEOD (which can be investigated formally or informally), or file an incident report through Student Affairs or the Dean of Students website.”

This strategy rests heavily on an institutional belief in the goodness of neutrality. NFU has crafted its policies and grievance procedures to assume that everyone approaches the institution in the same way. In other words, these policies and regulations are not written in a way that takes into account individual backgrounds, experiences, or previous encounters with the institution. These policies and regulations also assume that

those in power—those who assess whether an incident is grievable or who preside over procedural hearings—are completely unbiased and neutral in their assessments and beliefs about other people. Recent research has shown that even the most fair-minded of individuals may have latent or implicit biases against those of different genders, races, or abilities—in short, against the Diverse Other. NFU has invested a considerable amount of trust in the fiction of neutrality—the assumption that fairness is a metric that is the same for everyone—in its attempt to prevent diversity problems and protect the Diverse Other. This line of thinking is picked back up in the next chapter. It is sufficient to say here that the protection and prevention strategies that utilize regulation and policy are inextricable from an institution-wide belief in the taken-for-granted goodness of neutrality.

**Education & Training.** In a less punitive vein, the institution, not surprisingly, uses education to prevent negative or discriminatory behavior against the Diverse Other. As described above, the university has attempted to infuse diversity and social justice topics throughout the curriculum, including those of fields that have traditionally resisted such ideas. While some STEM fields have met with limited success, others have expanded course offerings to incorporate diversity issues. NFU also leans heavily on the possibilities presented by training sessions and workshops, especially for faculty and staff. Indeed, judging from the number of trainings reported on as well as the emphasis they receive in planning documents, it is clear that this is a prominent solution that NFU has hit on to solve its diversity problems. Several units on campus hold training sessions about various issues. The Office of Equal Opportunity and Diversity has several offerings, including diversity issues, sexual harassment training, and affirmative action training. There are workshops led by the Women’s Center and the LGBTQ Center.

Workplace Learning and Development’s trainings “include programs featuring diversity, inclusion and respectful workplace issues.” Workplace Learning and Development also works closely with faculty and practitioners within NFU and the higher education consortium of which it is a part to support an intergroup dialogue initiative for staff and faculty. Additionally, there was a recent campus-wide set of trainings to address workplace bullying. Finally, the university provides diversity and equity training to students as well as faculty and staff. Students attend diversity education sessions during their orientations; teaching assistants also receive extra training, although many stakeholders on campus believe that it still not sufficient to address diversity problems in the classroom.

**Protective Action.** Even though the policies and educational opportunities described above are aimed at preventing discriminatory behavior, there are still incidents of negative behavior towards the Diverse Other. Therefore, there are several policies and procedures that are designed to protect the Diverse Other. While these can be seen as preventative as well, the language used in these make it clear that their subject is the Diverse Other rather than a possible perpetrator. The affirmative action and non-discrimination statements provide an excellent example of this directionality. The affirmative action and non-discrimination statements outlined who is to be protected—the Diverse Other who may have differences in “race, color, religion, gender, gender identity or expression, age, sexual orientation, national origin, ancestry, disability, military status, or genetic information”—as well as how: executing “a policy of equal opportunity...in employment, admission to and participation in academic programs, activities, and services, and the selection of vendors” as well committing to a “program of affirmative

action to eliminate or mitigate artificial barriers and to increase opportunities.” While practicing non-discrimination necessarily entails preventing discrimination, these statements are more concerned with providing protections. Likewise, policies like the sexual harassment policy seek to protect the Diverse Other by educating the possible victim about what the negative behavior is, how to identify it, and where to go and what to do if it has occurred. Grievance policies, outlined in all of the union contracts, also work to protect the individual in the event of discriminatory (and other) behavior. Working in concert with the prevention policies described above, these solutions to diversity problems also conspire to create an image of the Diverse Other as a victim.

### **Support & Remediation**

In addition to the solutions already discussed, Northeastern Flagship University tries to solve diversity-related problems by trying to support the Diverse Other and remedy their situation. These strategies treat the problems experienced by the Diverse Other either as obstacles which can be overcome with the institution’s help or as illnesses that need remedies—in both scenarios, the institution is the primary change agent. The support strategies offered usually take the form of specific programs, career development, funding, and services for the Diverse Other, while remedying strategies often address the environment around them by mediating conflicts and making adjustments to specific aspects. Both of these efforts lean heavily on the work that committees—especially diversity committees—do for the university.

**Resource Centers & Affinity Groups.** As mentioned several times above, NFU employs several focused programs whose aims contribute to the larger diversity missions of the university. These programs also provide much-needed support for the Diverse

Other in more direct ways. For example, the STEM Diversity Institute, mentioned above, provides mentorship activities—both with faculty and peer groups--research support, and career development assistance. Likewise, the honors college worked in conjunction with the Student Veteran Resource Center to implement a Veteran Emerging Scholars Program that provides academic support for veterans. Almost every school and college in the university has similar programs. Similarly, the university provides focused support through various services, including health services, career preparation, and professional development. Finally, the institution also hosts advocacy groups that are both funded and staffed by the university but can operate somewhat independently. For example, the Women’s Center is part of the institutional organizational chart, but its employees are not mandated reporters, unlike faculty members. In this way, these centers can protect the Diverse Other while also performing important diversity work for NFU.

Additional support is offered through the university’s multicultural center and student-run affinity groups. These affinity groups function as both part of the official fabric of the institution and as examples of Diverse Other-run organizations created to advocate and celebrate their diversity. Some of these groups, including organizations such as the African American Cultural Center, the Native American Cultural Center, the Latin American Cultural Center, and Asian American Cultural Center, fall under the purview of an umbrella multicultural center, which works as a “student-centered learning resource center that aims to create collaborative partnerships and provide resources and institutional advocacy for underrepresented minority students to ensure academic success and personal growth.” However, there are a number of other student-run organizations that do not fall under the purview of the umbrella center, but are vibrant and supportive

organizations nonetheless. These organizations fill dual roles. On the one hand, they provide much-needed support and advocacy for the Diverse Other, especially those who are students and navigating a hostile campus climate for, perhaps, the first time. On the other hand, these groups and the events they plan and sponsor provide excellent promotional material for NFU. Indeed, the work of these groups enables NFU to make the case that the institution as a whole is working on solving diversity problems and supporting the Diverse Other—even as it substitutes language for action.

**Committee Work.** The university also attempts to solve or remedy problems for the Diverse Other in addition to providing general support. All of these represent official intervention, due to the nature of the data, though one imagines that there are other, informal ways that people may help the Diverse Other solve problems. Some of these remedies focused on solving specific issues for the Diverse Other. For example, the institution reserves the right to alter work or housing situations during civil rights infraction investigations. The university can take even more drastic steps such as implementing contact limitations or police protection. NFU also has conflict resolution procedures if the Diverse Other is interested in pursuing that avenue of redress. As a final resort, there are also disciplinary measures, including dismissal of either a student or employee, that the institution can take in order to improve a bad situation for the Diverse Other.

What both of these attempts to provide support and remediation—and most of the solutions in general—rely on is the work of various committees at NFU. Indeed, committees are one of the most commonly mentioned solutions to diversity problems in these documents. In addition to the Faculty Senate-sponsored Diversity Committee, there

are several other committees whose aim is to solve diversity-related problems. The Graduate Student Union, for a small-scale example, made an agreement with the university to create a committee to

complete an audit of all buildings where graduate student employees work, identifying for each building the number and location of any restrooms which may be re-designated as all-gender consistent with applicable building codes and without more than incidental cost to the University, and 2) prepare an estimate of the cost of providing an all-gender restroom in each building where graduate student employees, if redesignation of existing facilities is not practicable.

On a broader scale, the chancellor created the Chancellor's Diversity Advisory Council that "brings together offices, programs and individuals who do important work to advance the campus's commitment to diversity and equity." This Council was charged to "review campus policies and procedures related to diversity; help to develop new coordinated initiatives to advance diversity and equity in campus; and contribute to the development of a comprehensive diversity and equity plan." Even small units, such as Student Life or the athletics department, has diversity committees to oversee their individual efforts to improve conditions for the Diverse Other.

### **Conclusion**

This and the previous chapter recount the images, problems, and solutions related to diversity in the official documents that structure life at Northeastern Flagship University. These images, problems, and solutions all contribute to the discursive alterity process, or the way that the Diverse Other is produced. These components construct the Diverse Other and the experiences that the institution ascribes to them. At the same time,

this construction also produces the characteristics and experiences that NFU assumes are normative, which then re-inscribes the otherness of historically marginalized individuals.

Predominant images of diversity construct a non-normative Diverse Other, an individual who, more often than not by virtue of their physical appearance, stands apart from the majority of individuals on campus. Wrapped up in this image is the fetishization of the Diverse Other—this aspect leans heavily on both the visibility of the Diverse Other’s body and an essentialist view of what those bodies mean. An additional image of diversity is that of communitarian property of the institution. These documents also hold clues about the problems related to diversity at NFU. They chronicle problems that exist primarily on the micro- and meso-level, although they are deeply informed by macro-level, societal issues. These problems include more overt issues, such as microaggressions, discrimination, and violence, and more subtle concerns, such as policy opacity and implementation challenges. Finally, these documents present numerous and detailed solutions to various diversity problems. Solutions include strategies aimed at providing accommodations, increasing access and representation for the Diverse Other, protect the Diverse Other and prevent diversity problems, and to support the Diverse Other. In many ways, the act of talking about these solutions—and of consolidating the talk about the solutions—becomes a stand-in for the actual actions involved in solving diversity problems.

In the course of this study, I reviewed many different policies, plans, and official language from NFU. While not all of them volubly referenced diversity and some of them have the lion’s share of diversity speech, almost all of them referenced these images, problems, and solutions. Furthermore, these documents clearly indicate how

central diversity is to its mission and future plans. The fact that the images, problems, and solutions are so deeply intertwined into every-day policy speaks to preoccupation not only with the Diverse Other but also with diversity work—or, at least, the appearance of doing diversity work in writing the policy. This diversity talk combined with the institution's opportunistic ability to suborn diversity activities to serve its own ends will be taken up again in the next chapter.

These images, problems, and solutions do not simply speak to the prevalence of diversity initiatives and diversity talk in NFU's official documents. They are also the discursive mechanisms around which different discourses about diversity coalesce to construct subject positions for the Diverse Other at NFU. These discourses and subject positions, which are both created by official policy and have a hand in policy's (re)creation at this institution, are the subject of the next chapter.

## CHAPTER 7

### DISCOURSES AND SUBJECT POSITIONS FOR DIVERSE OTHERS

Thus far, I have shown the ways that images, problems, and solutions related to diversity and the Diverse Other are spread throughout official documents produced by Northeastern Flagship University. These images, problems, and solutions produce the Diverse Other. This chapter builds off of this construction of alterity to consider the discourses and subject positions constructed in these texts for the Diverse Other. Recall that discourses are “dynamic constellations of words and images that are actively reinforced, resisted, reconstituted” (Allan, 2008, p. 6). Discourses are contextual and productive—specifically, they produce particular subject positions that have material effects (Allan, 2008). These subject positions are different ways for individuals to situate themselves in the social world—these ways are unstable and unfixed and they can change depending on what discursive formations are circulating. Additionally, there are always multiple and competing discourses in any social environment that interact with each to produce both dominant and marginalized subjectivities.

This chapter focuses on those discourses, discursive formations, and the subject positions produced by them at Northeastern Flagship University. These discourses and subject positions are produced through language—they circulate both through the official documents and, by following the trail left behind by the documents are they circulate throughout the university (Ahmed, 2012), through the institution itself. Ultimately, these discourses and subject positions come into contact, so to speak, with others constituted by the different cultures of the institution (e.g., student, faculty, and staff) as well as those from outside the institution, such as discourses of gender and race. While there are a

number of discourses present in the policies, plans, and other official documents, I choose to focus on four in this chapter: a discourse of access, a discourse of institutional citizenship, a discourse of appropriation, and a discourse of bureaucracy. These discourses are the most central to diversity as well as the most over-arching of the discourses identified.

These discourses do not exist in a power-free vacuum. In other words, the subject positions are not simply benign ways of existing in the world. Discourses and their subsequent subject positions are deeply implicated in the ways that power/knowledge operate (Foucault, 1976/1990). Indeed, it is only by looking at discourses in their specific contexts that one can see the ways in which they benefit some and disadvantage others (Weedon, 1987). In many ways, the discourses described here circumscribe the subjectivity of the Diverse Other and, ultimately, contribute to the ‘othering’ of diverse individuals at NFU. This circumscription and othering work as ways to categorize and surveil all bodies and normalize only some.

### **Discourse of Access**

Northeastern Flagship University’s policies and plans show an institution concerned with increasing the representation, participation, and inclusion of the Diverse Other on its campus. Discursively, however, these concerns construct very specific subject positions for the Diverse Other: that of Outsider and Outsider Within (Allan, 2008; Collins, 1986; Iverson, 2012). This subject position is created through a discourse of access, echoing both Allan’s (2008) and Iverson’s (2012) findings. Their studies on women’s commission reports and diversity action plans both found that the discourse of access was a dominant one. I found the discourse to be more diffuse, likely due to the fact

that I analyzed a number of disparate texts from one context. Although diffuse, this discourse was certainly present, circulating through different policies and procedures—even those that do not directly interface with admissions and recruitment efforts.

The discourse of access is made up of three distinct discursive strands: *entrée*, representation, and affirmation. First identified by Allan (1998) and expanded by Iverson (2012), these strands emphasize entrance and representation but create a subject position that is characterized by its position outside of the majority. *Entrée* is “characterized by calls for diverse persons to have a presence at the institution and to be permitted to enter all of its arenas” (Iverson, 2012, p. 159). Representation focuses on increasing the visibility, involvement, and participation of the Diverse Other, while affirmation “called for diverse persons to be valued, welcomed, included, and celebrated by the institutional culture” (Iverson, 2012, p. 159).

### **Entrée**

*Entrée* involves the discursive emphasis on increasing access for the Diverse Other to the institution. Many of the texts involved in this discursive strand, predictably, are policies concerning admissions and recruitment, but other texts involved include the institution’s strategic plans, mission statements, and affirmative action policies. On the other hand, this discourse was less noticeable in documents that are more related to day-to-day life at NFU, such as student conduct or academic honesty policies.

Policies that regulate access to the institution present many examples of the *entrée* discursive thread. This construction of the Diverse Other being outside of the institution—the Outsider, as I will discuss below—in itself narrowly construes diversity. Specifically, this discursive thread locates diversity as a property that it does not already

possess, thus giving the lie to any claims that the university is a ‘diverse’ institution. Additionally, this discourse that ostensibly is about opening the university to these invokes ableist language. This language narrowly constrains the idea of diversity to those who are a) not a member of the institution and b) those who already conform in some degree to NFU’s normative standards.

This discursive thread describes *entrée* in terms of applicants wishing to be included at NFU, as long as they have the proper abilities, thus constructing access along an ableist ideology. The Undergraduate Admissions Policy stated that its goal is to facilitate the admission of students “possessing the motivation, ability, and preparation to be successful at the University” and to “pursue and graduate a student body that reflects the increasing racial and ethnic diversity of the college-eligible population of the [state].” The policy also stated that it will take a “broad range of factors” into account when judging a prospective student’s fitness for access to NFU. While these factors necessarily include test scores and grades, *entrée* for the Diverse Other is furthered by the institution’s inclusion of “special circumstances in a student’s life,” its use of “different admissions criteria to accommodate students who follow different routes to colleges,” and expansion of programs that collaborate with schools in the “urban centers of the [state], as well as community colleges, to enhance the opportunities of underserved students to enter and succeed in college.” However, all of these efforts to widen access for the Diverse Other are slightly undermined by the goal of this policy: “to enroll students in the University who are capable of benefiting from the education provided.” There is little to no explanation of how the institution assesses who may be judged “capable.”

Likewise, the Faculty & Professional Staff Search Procedures contain evidence of the *entrée* discourse. This policy emphasizes the process for achieving a fair and equitable search process, which it does predominantly through numerous references to hiring committees' affirmative action commitments, thus making the *entrée* of the Diverse Other relatively more likely. The committee must "recognize its affirmative action and equal opportunity responsibilities" and appoint "members of protected groups" to serve on the committee "where practicable." Additionally, advertising strategies also speak to the *entrée* thread. For national-scale searches for faculty and upper-level administrators, the Search Procedures specifically state that announcements should be sent to "institutions of higher education known to produce qualified applicants, including historically Black institutions." Once applicants have applied to the position, the Office of Equal Opportunity & Diversity assess the adequacy of the pool based off of availability estimates for subsets of the Diverse Other (typically, in this context, women and people of color, but also veterans and people with disabilities). This point is particularly interesting, especially in light of a later step that holds that applicants' "contribution[s] to workforce diversity will be considered in this stage of the selection procedure when the hiring unit is underutilized by one or more protected groups." Thus, these procedures only benefit the Diverse Other's *entrée* to the institution if the individual belongs to a group that is considered underrepresented by a narrow definition—the Affirmative Action Plan having defined underutilization as "having fewer minorities or women in a particular job group than would reasonably be expected by their availability."

Aside from policies that control *entrée* through admissions or employment, texts that provide shape and direction for the institution's mission also contribute to the *entree*

discursive thread. The Affirmative Action Statement, for example, prohibits discrimination against certain groups in “employment, admission to and participation in academic programs, activities, and services.” This effort includes action to “eliminate or mitigate artificial barriers and to increase opportunities for the recruitment and advancement of qualified minorities, women, persons with disabilities, and covered veterans.” The affirmative action policy is repeated throughout numerous documents, including all of the union contracts, strategic plans, and admissions and recruitment policies. Furthermore, the affirmative action policy is usually discussed first when texts review the institution’s arsenal of diversity initiatives. In many ways, NFU uses the affirmative action policy to both ground its diversity commitment and as an example of that very commitment. If the institution is not diverse, it is, at the very least, rhetorically committed to affirmative action.

The Strategic Plan and the Diversity Strategic Plan also contain language that contributes to a discourse of *entrée*. The Strategic Plan established one of the institution’s main goals: to make NFU a “destination of choice” for the state’s students, as well as other domestic and international students. The Diversity Strategic Plan builds from those, establishing the goal to make the institution a “destination of choice for students of color and other underrepresented groups.” This goal will be achieved through a variety of efforts focusing on the *entrée* of the Diverse Other. These attempts include: strengthening recruitment efforts of under-represented minorities, increasing “efforts to expand the holistic consideration of applicants for admission,” targeted financial aid efforts, streamlining and increasing the effectiveness of the institution’s enrollment management, exploring “new fellowship models for diverse students” at the graduate level, and hiring

new leadership for inclusion and diversity efforts. Of course, these efforts are aimed at making NFU an attractive option for the Diverse Other, hoping that they will choose it and, in making that choice, improve the institution's diversity profile. However, being a "destination of choice" is not the same as guaranteeing access for the Diverse Other. Thus, while the Diverse Other may choose NFU, there are still barriers to actual access and, beyond that, inclusion.

One of the most striking aspects of the *entrée* thread is the juxtaposition of the institution's interest in increasing access for the Diverse Other and its language about quality. Northeastern Flagship University is interested in recruiting a diverse student body and workforce—but only insofar as that student body and workforce is appropriately qualified as judged by the institution. This tension between assessments of diversity and qualification indicates that the *entrée* discourse at NFU does not necessarily see diverse individuals as innately qualified. In other words, the question of qualification is rarely referenced when the texts discuss the majority; as many other scholars have found, the Diverse Other is held to a more stringent standard. For example, the Strategic Plan emphasized that it wishes to be a "destination of choice for talented students of all backgrounds and socio-economic statuses," but also notes that "of particular concern is how to achieve this goal in a way that is consistent with our values of diversity, inclusion, and equity." The Diversity Strategic Plan also stated, quite plainly, that "to the extent that underrepresented populations, on average, have lower profiles on admissions selection criteria, institutional enrollment will tend to be less diverse than the general population." Although the Steering Committee acknowledged that "historical and structural legacies of bias and underrepresentation in education contribute to this context, and it is not merely

the result of low test scores,” the institution does not back down from its intention to have a *qualified* student body, even if it is not as diverse as desired, thus exposing the limits to the institution’s tolerance for the Diverse Other. There is an intersection between these institutional discourses and a macro-level neoliberal discourse of quality occurring here. NFU and the architects of its policies have decided that excellence is more important than equity.

### **Representation**

Another thread in the discourse of access is representation. This thread involves focus on increasing the visibility, involvement, and participation of the Diverse Other. While increasing the access for the Diverse Other necessarily means increasing the numerical representation of the Diverse Other, this thread really focuses more on increasing the majority’s awareness of those Diverse Others on campus. The representation thread at Northeastern Flagship University encompasses institutional numbers and goals, strategic priorities, and the wealth of events designed to raise the Diverse Other to the majority’s notice.

Documents like the Affirmative Action Plan and the Diversity Strategic Plan provided a significant portion of the language that makes up the representation discursive thread. The Affirmative Action Plan deployed a considerable array of statistics, figures, and graphs that track the relative number of women, minorities (broken down in some tables into racial/ethnic categories based on census definitions), veterans, and people with disabilities in the workforce. The Affirmative Action Plan, furthermore, took an instrumental approach to representation, relying both on numbers and language about utilization to provide a picture of representation at NFU—a picture that, according to the

report, should be seen in a rosy light. Many sectors of the the university's workforce are becoming more equitable in their representation for women and minorities. It is important to note, however, that these numbers tell a complicated story: while relative representation has increased, real numbers of the Diverse Other—especially racial and ethnic minorities—remain low.

Additionally, the Affirmative Action Plan relied heavily on language that invokes utilization—literally, how the Diverse Other is used and distributed throughout the institution—to track representation. Defining underutilization as “having fewer minorities or women in a particular job group than would reasonably be expected by their availability,” this report found that 17 out of 38 non-faculty job groups met utilization standards while 20 out of 53 academic departments were underutilizing women and only 13 were underutilizing minority faculty. Most (if not all) academic units were underutilizing people with disabilities. However, as noted in the previous chapter, this document does not track the intersectionality of these two groups, therefore providing perhaps an overly rosy view of representation. Indeed, utilization language is one of many strategies that the institution employs that, on the one hand, allows them to celebrate the progress that they have made in diversifying the institution thus far and, on the other, masks the lack of equitable conditions on campus. Additionally, the standards for utilization are relatively arbitrary. The Affirmative Action Plan acknowledged that there are at least three different ways to define under/utilization. At NFU, “the workforce is checked to see if representation equals or exceeds 80% of the availability estimate...in cases where the 80% rule is not met, the shortfall in persons is calculated. If the shortfall is equal to or greater than one person, then underutilization is said to exist.” Furthermore,

utilization language is a key component in a discourse of commodification, described in detail later in this chapter.

The Diversity Strategic Plan focused more on representation of the Diverse Other from a student- and faculty-focused view. Whereas the Affirmative Action Plan used language related to utilization and numbers, the Diversity Strategic Plan invoked a more affective sense of representation as it seeks to provide a roadmap for the institution to increase the representation of the Diverse Other. For example, two of the document's organizing themes are to "improve the campus climate of inclusion" and "increase focus on recruiting, retention, and promotion of diverse faculty and staff." Many of these efforts involve boosting the visibility of the Diverse Other on campus in addition to improving their entrée, as discussed above. The Diversity Strategic Plan also strongly recommended a more complete integration of diversity into the curriculum across all academic units as well as in the general education curriculum, which increases representation in an intellectual, rather than physical, manner. Additionally, the Diversity Strategic Plan also wanted to increase the representation of the Diverse Other by making civic engagement a larger priority for the institution. NFU wants to "increase outreach and engagement with external communities/schools with large proportions of underrepresented minorities." While these efforts, like the curricular changes, will not always result in more bodies on campus or even more visibility, NFU hopes that they will increase students' exposure to the Diverse Other as well as increase the participation of the external communities' Diverse Others with the institution.

## **Affirmation**

The final discursive strand of the discourse of access is affirmation—the ways in which the institution celebrates and values the Diverse Other and its contribution to the campus. While affirmation is expressed in many of the documents discussed above, such as the strategic plans and the Affirmative Action Plan, this thread can be seen in other institutional mission statements as well as union contracts and events. While some of these texts discussed affirmations that occurred in the past, much of this discursive thread projects into the future. Indeed, the futurity expressed by these documents' goal-setting shows both the ways that affirmation is central to the institution's mission but has not yet been attained.

Northeastern Flagship University has implemented numerous events, programs, and celebrations that affirm the existence of the Diverse Other and celebrate their contributions to both the campus and society. These events are educational even as they celebrate historically marginalized minorities. In addition to events produced by student groups that affirm specific Diverse Others, the institution also has multiple large- and small-scale programs designed to celebrate diversity as an abstract concept. Many of the cross-campus programs take place in orientation programs, like New Student Orientations, and residential life programming. Alternatively, specific units, schools, and colleges hold diversity-affirming programs and events. For example, the Honors College held informal meet-and-greets for faculty and students with diversity themes. The theme of diversity was also reflected in the IT Department's adoption of the concept as one of its core values.

The institution also tried to affirm the existence of the Diverse Other in its employment practices. This data, drawn from the union contracts, shows the ways that the institution truly tried to level the playing field for the Diverse Other; however, these policies are unevenly spread across the different segments of employees at NFU. For example, the institution provides child care to faculty members, especially geared towards women faculty members to ease the double burden of seeking tenure and raising a child. However, the same protections are not offered to employees in other sectors, such as the cafeteria workers. Likewise, the amount of family leave offered varies from union to union. That being said, the institution is invested in affirming and assisting different familial formations; child care leave is offered for biological, adopted, step, or foster children, sick leave can be taken to care for family members, and employees can also take bereavement leave in the event of the death of many different kinds of family members. These employment policies and procedures work to affirm the humanity and unique circumstances that occur in any large workforce.

Even with all of these affirming activities and procedures in place, it is clear from the emphasis placed on increasing the affirmation of the Diverse Other that NFU—or, more accurately, its citizens—remains unsatisfied. The Strategic Plan places diversity and its affirmation at the heart of the institution’s mission. This document cast this goal both forward and backwards into the school’s history: “Born of a radical vision that any deserving citizen of [the Commonwealth], regardless of wealth or social status, should have access to higher education, inclusive excellence has defined [NFU] from its origin.” The text went on to cite the early acceptance of women at the institution (in the 1870s) as well as its history in hiring and admitting African American individuals when most

institutions excluded them. However, even as these texts try to center this mission, the goals, plans, and policies construct a reality in which this mission is far from being achieved. The many, detailed goals of the Diversity Strategic Plan provide an example of this as they stand as evidence that equitable conditions do not yet prevail. Likewise, the mission statement for the multicultural center stated that the center fulfills their values through “promoting activities and programs that are socially just, and supportive of a diverse and multicultural community” as well as “promoting cultural, social, academic and creative expressions where students gain a deeper understanding of their skills, capacities and competencies,” among other goals. This center and the events it promotes serve as continued examples of the need for affirmation—there would not be such a need if the Diverse Other were more fully included and recognized in the institutional culture. In this way, the policies place rhetorical value on affirmation and also construct the conditions which dictate its continued necessity.

### **Subject Positions**

The separate discursive threads of *entrée*, representation, and affirmation running throughout these texts come together to form a larger discourse of access. They show the ways that institutional language moves back and forth between the three threads, sidling from exploring ways to recruit higher numbers of the Diverse Other into the institution to emphasizing the need to give the Diverse Other more than just a seat at the table. While NFU’s goals are admirable, these discourses create specific subject positions for the Diverse Other—those of Outsider and Outsider Within. The presence of these subject positions, whose names are drawn from the work of Patricia Hill Collins (1986), echo both Allan’s (2008) and Iverson’s (2012) findings. Thus, these discourses and subject

formation can be seen as a major discursive mechanism in postsecondary diversity policy in multiple contexts, not just NFU's.

These subject positions are the product of discourse—they are ways that language, text, and power/knowledge come together to produce ways to understand people moving through the world. By this discourse's perpetual interest in access and inclusion, the Diverse Other is always already excluded. In the threads that focus on entrée and representation, the Diverse Other is most often constructed as outside of the institution but wanting in. This construction is literally outside—the diverse students, faculty, and staff are waiting to be allowed onto the campus, while another source of diversity—the external communities within which the institution is embedded but still separate from—is situated as always outside the campus. While institutional actors move into and out from the surrounding communities, only some of the Diverse Others outside of the institution are considered worthy of entrée.

Additionally, once the Diverse Other gains entrée, this institutional discourse still situates them as the Outsider Within. The discourse emphasizes the ways that the institution still needs to become more inclusive, constructing a position in which the Diverse Other is still excluded in some way. All of the efforts NFU makes to bring attention to diversity and to inculcate it as a core value in its students still present the Diverse Other as always already outside and needing to be included. While these inclusivity efforts are necessary and important, they are constructing subject positions for the Diverse Other which emphasize the ways that they are not included. Therefore, even though these policies and plans focus on inclusivity, they will always be constrained by

the ways that the Diverse Other is constructed as continually outside the mainstream of the institution.

### **Discourse of Institutional Citizenship**

The documents, plans, and policies reviewed in this study set forth a surprisingly coherent discourse about institutional citizenship. More specifically, this discourse outlines the ways that citizens of NFU ideally communicate with each other, especially about diversity or issues that affect the Diverse Other. Language about civility and tolerance make up one strand of this discourse, while the other concerns the tension between free speech and respectability politics. The subject positions that are constructed by this discourse include the Ideal Community Member and the Idealized Diverse Other.

### **Civility & Tolerance**

A remarkable number of the policies that govern life at Northeastern Flagship University involve strictures about the ways that members of the institution should comport themselves. These policies range from the very broad, such as the system-wide policies about intolerance and pluralism, to considerably narrower policies, such as those that structure the conduct of students and employees. Across the board, these policies and statements emphasize the importance of civil behavior and tolerance for both diverse ideas and the Diverse Other.

The Intolerance Policy and the Resolution in Support of Pluralism are texts that were approved by the Board of Trustees at the same time and with the intention that they work together to shape inclusivity across the Northeastern system. The Intolerance Policy, predictably, “denounces intolerance which interferes with those rights guaranteed

by law or policy, and insists that such conduct has no place in a community learning.”

#### The Resolution

affirms its commitment to maintaining an academic environment in which all individuals benefit from each other’s experiences through pluralism, mutual respect, appreciation of divergent views, and awareness of the importance of individual rights. To this end, we reassert the importance of civility and the valuable contribution that individuals of all backgrounds bring to the University community.

These policies assert their interest in the maintenance of constitutionally granted rights, such as free speech, as well as a recognition that the institutions’ citizens come from a plurality of backgrounds. Similarly, NFU’s Diversity Values asserted that the institution is “committed to ensuring freedom of expression and dialogue among diverse groups in a community defined by mutual respect.” All of these statements emphasize the importance of civility, respect, and the acknowledgement of differences.

Other, more narrowly, focused policies seek to define what the institution counts as appropriate behavior, especially with respect to diversity and the Diverse Other. The Principles of Employee Conduct outlined the expectation that University employee conduct is “expected to be characterized by integrity and dignity, and they should expect and encourage such conduct by others.” Furthermore, they are “expected to conduct themselves in ways that foster forthright expression of opinion and tolerance for the view of others.” The Student Code of Conduct set forth similar expectations. Emphasizing “honesty, integrity and civility,” the Student Code of Conduct states that students are “expected to demonstrate their respect for all members of our richly diverse community.”

This respect encompasses both that due to individuals as well as their property and the property of the University. These general guides for conduct, like the broader policies that shape them, emphasize civility and respect in appropriate behavior. At the same time, these policies never detail what civility and respect actually entail, thus leaving it up to each individual to judge that for themselves. Indeed, this vagueness is deeply problematic, as individuals will only be able to perceive the border between ‘civil’ and ‘uncivil’ when they trespass it. Civility is often also used as a requirement for being heard, which means that angry voices—including those of the Diverse Other—are not.

NFU also requires civility and tolerance to inform behavior in more specific arenas than the campus broadly. The Guidelines for Classroom Civility & Respect prescribed behavior expected from both students and instructors. They stated that the institution “strives to create an environment of academic freedom that fosters the personal and intellectual development of all community members. In order to do this, the University protects the rights of all students, faculty and staff to explore new ideas and to express their views.” In order to achieve a tolerant classroom, everyone involved needs to accept “the spirit of inquiry and a respect for diverse ideas and viewpoints. For true academic freedom to exist, this acceptance and respect must exist in both the campus environment and in the classroom.” While this framing may seem like a straightforward framing of a core academic value, it presents the idea of open inquiry in a neutral way: in so doing, it fails to differentiate between attack, spirited objection, or defense—ignoring the inherent power differentials that can exist in communicative exchanges. As such, a remarkable range of different actions get incorporated into the institutional definition of ‘disruptive conduct’: “1. Rude or disrespectful behavior. 2. Unwarranted interruptions. 3.

Failure to adhere to instructor's directions. 4. Vulgar or obscene language, slurs or other forms of intimidation. 5. Physically or verbally abusive behavior.”

The net effect of this policy is to cast many different types of interactions as disruptive but only if labelled as such by the institution. Likewise, the Office of Residential Life highlighted civility and tolerance of the Diverse Other in its Community Standards. They counseled students to remember commonalities and respect differences, that “connecting with people with different cultures, beliefs, and values is an integral part of the educational experience,” and that “standing up against bias is an act of personal and community integrity.” They also reminded students that “civility does not mean that we must always agree, but it does require tolerance and courteous communication.” Likewise, the Residential Life Statement on Multiculturalism acknowledged that individual differences and social justice both “must be heard and acted upon to bring about an inclusive organizational culture. Mutual listening, respect, and understanding are required to make a true dialogue possible.”

Northeastern Flagship University has clearly made a serious attempt to regulate the ways in which students, faculty, and staff behave towards each other and towards the Diverse Other. These policies listed here all emphasize broad-minded sensibilities, such as tolerance, civility, and open lines of communication. While these are positive sentiments, they are also aimed at maintaining peace—especially for the normative majority as well as institutional authorities—rather than either protecting the Diverse Other from hate or discrimination or breaking down barriers between the Diverse Other and the majority. Indeed, the Land Use Policy asserted the rights of students and others to hold events and even protests, but emphasizes that “programs, activities, and events must

not interfere with official University functions, or disrupt the peace and quiet of the campus and the community adjacent to the campus.” In this way, even policies designed to allow the exercise of free speech and protest place civility, calm, and the protection of property over that exercise. As we shall see in the next section, the institution not only values civility, but also invokes a discourse of free speech to justify the valuation or devaluation of certain types of expression.

### **Free Speech Tensions**

While many of the policies at NFU emphasize civility and tolerance in interpersonal relationships, these same policies also assert the primacy of freedom of speech (as well as academic freedom). Through this assertion, this discourse also emphasizes that certain types of expression—those that are civil in tone or those that do not threaten rights to free speech—are appropriate. This discourse thus constrains the Diverse Other’s ability to express themselves in ways that may be outside the institution’s sanctioned methods. This discourse also inadvertently provides a safe haven for hate speech, due to the difficulty inherent in defining hate speech and how it differs from protected speech, the discursive emphasis on tone rather than content, and a marked reluctance on the part of NFU to even use the term hate speech.

It is remarkably interesting to note that the discourse of free speech exists quite closely to, though in considerable tension with, assertions of the value of the plurality of diverse backgrounds and the importance of tolerance. Both the Intolerance Policy and the Resolution in Support of Pluralism emphasized these values, but then invoke the importance of free speech. Both of these policies actually give primacy to freedom of

speech—that is the right that will not be compromised—over valuing diversity or denouncing intolerance. For example, the Intolerance Policy stated that

we also recognize the obligation of the University to protect the rights of free inquiry and expression, and nothing in the Resolution in Support of Pluralism or Policy Against Intolerance shall be construed or applied as to abridge the exercise of rights under the Constitution of the United States and other Federal and State laws.

Thus, even in documents meant to build the foundations of an inclusive environment, legalistic free speech concerns take precedent over both civility and a more radical expression of respect and inclusion for the Diverse Other.

The Guidelines for Classroom Civility & Respect showed this same tension between the urge to dictate appropriate behavior and respect freedom of expression. In this document, however, free speech is subordinated to the maintenance of an undisturbed classroom environment: “While the principle of academic freedom protects the expression and exploration of new ideas, it does not protect conduct that is unlawful and disruptive.” This document continued to police expression in the classroom:

When students and faculty come together, the expectation is always that mutual respect and civility will prevail to ensure that every student has the optimum opportunity to learn and that each faculty member has the best opportunity to teach. Disruptions of any kind affect the atmosphere of civility that is expected and interfere with the opportunity for learning and growth to which both faculty and students are entitled.

The assumption within this statement is that respect and civility are sufficient conditions to create optimum conditions for learning, even though respect and civility may protect hate speech just as often as they may protect the Diverse Other from intolerance. These three documents and the discourse produced in them work together in such a way to not only provide a defense of free speech but also constrain the expression of both the majority and the Diverse Other.

Disruptions can run both ways—either someone who wishes to disrespect or discriminate against the Diverse Other or the expression of the Diverse Other mounted in their own defense. The guidelines state specifically that “differences of opinions or concerns related to the class should be welcomed if presented in a mutually respectful manner.” Additionally, speech that is prejudiced or discriminatory—speech that has been found to be deeply damaging to the Diverse Other (c.f., Ceci & Williams, 2009; Rose, 2009)—can be acceptable in the eyes of policies like this as long as it is expressed in an appropriate way. This tension is especially problematic in light of the fact that the targets of hate speech, the Diverse Other, may respond in inflammatory, defensive, or otherwise disruptive manners. This discourse can thus displace the problem onto the Diverse Other, rather than on actual discriminatory or hateful speech. This situation is compounded when such speech is made anonymously, as NFU does not have clear procedures in place to address those incidents. This discourse that emphasizes civility, tolerance, and bourgeois notions of respect thus additionally only conceives of the moments for problematic speech taking place in one-on-one, face-to-face situations.

This same discourse is present in the Land Use Policy. Again, this text simultaneously upheld a discourse of free speech but also constrains freedom of

expression. For instance, the Land Use Policy upheld the rights of individuals to gather and express political opinions. However, “outdoor speeches and rallies during class hours may be held only on the west side (main entrance) of the Student Union Building, and shall be limited to one (1) hour in length, from noon to 1:00 P.M. Such events must not obstruct the free flow of traffic in and out of the building.” Furthermore, these events “for the purposes of speech and advocacy must not interrupt or interfere with individuals who are engaged in the daily conduct of University business (e.g., students in labs, classrooms, or libraries and University personnel while engaged in their employment).” The institution ostensibly creates a space that is welcoming for free speech and advocacy, but that space is actually quite circumscribed—such speech can only take place in certain places, at certain times, and in a certain manner. In this way, a policy that seems to ensure free speech actually restricts it, subordinating it to the institution’s sense of equilibrium.

This discursive thread, in conjunction with the thread concerning civility and tolerance, works to constrain forms of expression on the subject of diversity. While this constraint can work to protect the Diverse Other from discrimination, hateful speech, or disturbances to their educational experience, it can also work to circumscribe the ways that the Diverse Other can either object to such speech or speak about social justice and equity issues. These discursive strands that assert the taken-for-granted goodness of free speech language also provide a convenient defense for anyone who does not embrace social justice or equity in the whole-hearted manner desired by the institution. First, as long as the tone is civil, superficially tolerant, or not disruptive, then an individual does not need to believe in social justice or equity. Second, that same individual is afforded the protection of freedom of expression—a foundational concept for American democracy,

but one that also covers a multitude of sins. This discourse ultimately serves to benefit the non-diverse majority most, as it provides as ready-made method for policing the tone of the Diverse Other. Additionally, while the discourse allows NFU to assert its belief in pluralism and tolerance, those values do not get any teeth, so to speak. In other words, comfort, civility, and silence—if disruption is disallowed and there are no other options—are discursively better supported than diverse opinions and passionate support for equality and equity.

### **Subject Positions**

This discourse—ironically, one focused on language itself—constructs two specific subject positions: the Ideal Community Member and the Idealized Diverse Other. While these two subject positions do not exist in binary opposition to each other, they do function along a continuum of institutional citizenship with each other. While the Ideal Community Member subject position establishes what can be seen as the baseline requirements for appropriate institutional citizenship, the Idealized Diverse Other subject position shows the additional effort that the Diverse Other is expected to exert in order to maintain that baseline.

The Ideal Community Member subject position is constructed through the discourse of institutional citizenship as someone who behaves appropriately at all times. These standards of appropriateness are also constructed through this discourse, as described above, and emphasize bourgeoisie principles of tolerance and civility in interpersonal interactions. While tolerance, civility, and open-mindedness are not bad in and of themselves, the emphasis that this discourse places on these characteristics construct the Ideal Community Member as one who conforms to standards of

communication through specific channels and in specific ways. The Ideal Community Member is constrained by the discourses created in these policies to always be respectful and open-minded and never be disruptive. Disagreements between Ideal Community Members are resolved through calm discussion and by working within the specific bureaucratic and policy-created pathways that may be more invested in keeping the peace between individuals than in creating a campus climate that will be ever more inclusive and equitable in its treatment of the Diverse Other. Indeed, this discourse displaces the problem from existing structures that create an exclusionary campus to communicative forms—rather than examining the institution to understand the ways in which its rhetoric others and marginalizes diverse individuals, NFU opts instead to regulate the forms through which inclusions and exclusion can be discussed.

The other subject position produced by the discourse of institutional citizenship is that of the Idealized Diverse Other. This discourse constructs specific standards of conduct for the Diverse Other that include those laid out for the Ideal Community Member but also include additional burdens in the expectations of civility in the face of discrimination *and* an expectation to contribute materially to the maintenance of everyone's First Amendment Rights. In other words, the Diverse Other is expected to be civil, tolerant, open-minded, non-disruptive, and be sure that any resistance they might display towards uncivil or intolerant speech on the behalf of others must not only be expressed in the correct manner but also in such a way that respects others' right. In a way, the Idealized Diverse Other accepts transgressions against their selfhood while maintaining the foundation for other's selves to remain intact and unharmed. This

discourse is similar to recent trends in which people locate the problem in accusing individuals (or institutions) of racism rather than in the racism itself.

Indeed, the subject position for the Diverse Other produced by this discourse presents them in a decidedly idealized manner—one who is calm and welcoming of a diversity of opinions, even those that may be discriminatory or prejudicial. This discourse structures a specific way for the Diverse Other to behave and to interact with the majority. As individuals rarely behave in the ways that are set out for them in texts, this discourse thus further others the Diverse Other. Not only are they set apart in these texts by virtue of their difference, but they are also set apart by the ways they may—or may not—depart from the standards set out in this discourse.

### **Discourse of Appropriation**

Northeastern Flagship University's policies, plans, and official documents often invoke a common theme in the literature about the role of diversity in higher education: that of diversity's benefits. Often deployed in defense of affirmative action, this line of thinking emphasizes the ways that having a diverse campus benefits everyone, but especially students who are part of the majority. In other words, having the Diverse Other on campus has been shown to produce significant educational benefits for non-diverse students. The documents in this study that invoke this body of research also construct a discourse of appropriation—specifically of the Diverse Other and their experiences. Through discursive strands that describe the commodification of the Diverse Other's experience and a pattern of transactionalism that runs throughout these texts, this discourse of appropriation produces subject positions that construct the Diverse Other not only as a Commodity, but also as a Colonized Body.

## **Commodification of Experience**

Several of these documents discuss the importance of experience—specifically, the importance of acknowledging the experiences of the Diverse Other. However, during the course of these acknowledgements, these texts actually turn experience into a commodity. In other words, the experiences of the Diverse Other are turned into an almost tangible *thing*—a thing that, furthermore, can be given or taken either by the institution or other individuals.

Marx (1867/1990) argued that commodification occurs in the intersection of material goods and labor. At its simplest level, a commodity is an object that is bought and sold on a market. Commodities have value, which is connected to the human labor used to make them (Marx, 1867/1990). Commodities are also endowed with cultural meanings—while almost all commodities have a use, which is implicated in its value, some commodities are prized over others, with concomitant valuation of the labor involved. People and bodies can also be commodified; the most obvious example of this is slavery, in which human bodies are bought and sold precisely for their labor (c.f., Berlin, 1998; Wilder, 2013). However, commodification of bodies can take considerably less dramatic forms, such as organ donation (Sharp, 2000). In the case of this dissertation, it is not necessarily tangible objects that are being commodified in these texts—though, at times, research products are. Instead, diversity must be understood as existing in a market that traffics in institutional legitimacy and prestige. As diversity is entangled more and more with discourses of excellence (Iverson, 2008), a diverse individual becomes an object that has a value for institutions. Sometimes this value is related to the diverse body, but sometimes it becomes attached to the products, labor, or contributions of the

Diverse Other. Nicolazzo (2016) tapped into this idea when describing the ways that trans students are expected to educate other students: “the commodification of diverse genders and sexualities as something to be discussed, dissected, distributed, and understood, suggests that one’s very identity was imbued with the potential to be traded, sold, or purchased like any other good or service” (p. 549).

Several documents recite a litany of events related to diversity that take place at NFU—these lists are one place that the commodification process is particularly clear. For example, texts such as the Affirmative Action Plan describe the various diversity-related events that took place at NFU in the previous academic year. In this case, it is the experiences and labors of Diverse Others on and off campus that are commodified. Although it is not only appropriate but laudatory that the institution make an effort to showcase the Diverse Other’s talents, works of scholarship, and advocacy as well as artistic and literary achievements, these same works are transformed into something that is consumable by the general (and often majority) public. These events that showcase the Diverse Other objectify their experiences, render them discrete and understandable, and then display them for an audience who can then do with them as they choose—ideally, they leave the event with a heightened understanding of the Diverse Other, but may simply just leave, replete with the Diverse Other’s commodified experience added to their own fund of knowledge.

A similar commodification of diversity occurs with the invocations of diversity training in these texts. Several university units host diversity trainings, including the Office of Equal Opportunity & Diversity, the Disability Services Office, the Women’s Center, the LGBTQ Center, and Residential Life. These trainings are typically

educational sessions about general diversity and sensitivity issues, but can also have more specific topics, such as sexual harassment, disability awareness, intergroup dialogues, and workplace bullying. These trainings conveniently package complex diversity issues into forms that can be easily consumed in a limited amount of time by busy students, faculty, and staff. In these trainings, it is not even the body or experience of the Diverse Other that is commodified—it is the idea of diversity itself. As in diversity courses, these trainings aim to convince learners and trainees of diversity's inherent value as well as the institution's commitment to diversity. Additionally, reciting the number of trainings offered allows the institution to offer evidence that it is taking some action for diversity. However, there are no metrics of effectiveness by which to judge their outcomes.

The commodification of the Diverse Other's experience often appears in broad statements issued by the university or its units about the values of diversity, pluralism, or multiculturalism. For example, the Residential Life Statement on Multiculturalism “contends multiculturalism as recognizing, acknowledging, and valuing the many cultural perspectives as represented by our residential students, staff, and campus communities. It is our understanding that multiculturalism transcends celebrating differences and should go beyond the recognition of any specific identities.” It went on to state that residential life staff strive “to serve all students with compassion, honesty, and commitment to the best of our abilities and capacities regardless of their individual and/or group origins and belief systems.” This statement is particularly interesting in the way that it both commodifies the Diverse Other's experience and it attempts to discard that commodity after it has been made. The experience of the Diverse Other is something that can be consumed—something that can be recognized, acknowledged, and, most tellingly,

assigned a value. Although this can and should be done, the commodified experience should then be transcended or even ignored in future relations.

The discourse of commodification is also constructed in statements that lay out the university's commitment to diversity. The Pluralism Policy emphasized maintaining an academic environment in which all individuals benefit from each other's experiences through pluralism, mutual respect, appreciation of divergent views, and awareness of the importance of individual rights. To the end, we reassert the importance of civility and the valuable contribution that individuals of all backgrounds bring to the University community.

Likewise, the Diversity Mission Statement and Values states that "the university recognizes and values the wide range of voices and perspectives in all spheres of the academic enterprise." In this statement, the varied and various experiences of the Diverse Other—since the term covers broad swaths of otherness—are reduced to two articulable objects: voice and perspective. Even though they are not tangible, voice and perspective are treated as objects that can be recognized and made to work for one's own or another's benefit. Most importantly, this discourse running through these documents constructs the Diverse Other's experience—either in the past or the present—as something that can be shared, given, or contributed in some way.

This discourse of appropriation does not simply commodify the Diverse Other's past; it also performs the same process with the Diverse Other's present experiences, including their labor. A hint of this aspect of the discourse can be seen in the utilization language, mentioned above, in the Affirmative Action Plan. Focusing on women and racial/ethnic minorities, the language of utilization distills their existence inside and

outside of the institution down to their labor. Even their labor is not given much life—there is very little acknowledgement in any of the documents analyzed in this study of the different types of work that the Diverse Other performs or what forms that labor may take. Instead, their diversity and their labor are both narrowed down to whether or not they are present; they are turned into commodities that are either there or absent. As we will see in the next section, this process of commodification works with a pattern of transactionalism to create a discourse that focuses on appropriating diversity to benefit the majority and the institution.

### **Transactionalism**

Indeed, these discursive threads—commodification and transactionalism—act almost as processual steps in creating the discourse of appropriation. In other words, in broad statements of diversity values and utilization language, NFU has commodified the experience of the Diverse Other and made it into something that can be given or taken. However, by itself, this commodification does not amount to appropriation. The other strand, transactionalism, completes this discourse; it is characterized by language that emphasizes the contribution that the Diverse Other makes—often by simply being present—to the vitality, inclusivity, and general well-being of the campus. This same language also conveys a sense of passivity on the part of the Diverse Other. By locating diversity in bodies, as I showed in the previous chapter, the transaction takes place by virtue of the Diverse Other simply being present on campus. In short, their diversity is taken from them.

This transactional thread begins in the language of the strategic plans and finds a home in texts like the search and hiring procedures as well as in the events advertised by

the institution. NFU's Strategic Plan often frames individual engagement with the institution as contributions. For example, in discussing faculty and staff activities, the Strategic Plan states that "the contributions of each individual should clearly be valued by the institution, and be reflected in a rewarding work experience and clear paths to personal and professional growth." This document also framed work that transcends the campus borders as contributions, be they to the local community, the state, or the nation. For example, faculty research activity is conceived of in terms of what contributions they may make and how they might be valued.

Indeed, the Strategic Plan emphasized that the "contributions and impact of our research can be more broadly communicated and our value understood by improved publicity of faculty research news and achievements to citizens of the Commonwealth, legislators, and potential funders." Even student activities are considered contributions: "...the direct contributions of students through internships, community service learning, and other activities make a tangible difference in the life of the Commonwealth." This language emphasizes the fact that the institution views research, teaching, outreach, and other activities that students, faculty, and staff do as contributions—intangible objects—that they make to the university. Furthermore, it sets the stage for the institution assuming that individuals' contributions are made in exchange for being on campus. The Strategic Plan is the foundation of the institution's efforts to move forward, with the emphasis on what each stakeholder can contribute enshrined throughout its texts.

The Diversity Strategic Plan departs from the explicit language of contribution but still maintains the sense of transaction in its language about the Diverse Other. To be blunt, the institution expects the Diverse Other to make some contribution in exchange

for their presence at the university. For example, the Diversity Strategic Plan discussed the success that their graduate students of color have found on the academic job market, noting with pride that more graduate students of color have found academic positions than White students. This document puts this fact forward as evidence of its effectiveness in preparing future faculty of color, although it is the diverse students themselves who put in most of the work. In other words, the graduate students contributed their commodified experience, labor, and research to the institution and the institution appropriates their success as its own—treating it, to a certain extent, as the price those students pay for being accepted into the university.

This sense of transactionalism is strong in texts dealing with search procedures as well as tenure and promotion standards. It is in documents like these that the sense of the Diverse Other owing contributions to the institution is at its clearest. Furthermore, these documents emphasize a kind of passivity in these contributions. While other texts imply that the contributions from the Diverse Other come in the form of their labor and the products thereof, the hiring and promotion procedures, affirmative action statement, and the Affirmative Action Plan seem to consider the Diverse Other's inherent difference *as* the contribution that they make. For example, the Faculty & Professional Staff Search Procedures required that the first step in a search is to create an “applicant evaluation system” to use for candidates. This rating system will describe “how contribution to diversity will be considered for each applicant.” Likewise, when the interview pool is being created, “the applicant’s contribution to workforce diversity will be considered in this stage of the selection procedure when the hiring unit is underutilized by one or more protected groups.” While this is relatively vague, the fact that the “contribution to

workforce diversity” is tied to utilization language, which emphasizes representation, gives one the feeling that the contribution expected from the Diverse Other may be their simple presence. While this avoids exploitation of the products of their labor, it does not sidestep the sense that the institution is exerting some form of ownership over the Diverse Other—indeed, a type of colonization.

### **Subject Positions**

Two discursive strands make up this discourse of appropriation. These documents discursively commodify the past and present experiences of the Diverse Other as well as the fruits of their labor in whatever form they might come. This commodification is compounded by a theme of transactionalism that runs through discussions of the contributions made by the Diverse Other—it becomes clear that part of the discourse of appropriation rests on an institutional expectation that the Diverse Other *will* contribute as the price of inclusion. In short, the Diverse Other and its experience is commodified and then appropriated by the institution. This discourse of appropriation thus creates two closely connected subject positions for the Diverse Other: a Commodity and a Colonized Body.

The step from the commodification of the Diverse Other’s experience to commodification of the Diverse Other is but a short one. In this discourse, the Diverse Other is conflated with their past experiences as well as their work. To a certain extent, those objects become an extension of their identity in the eyes of the institution—thus, when experience, background, or work products are commodified, so is the Diverse Other in general. Furthermore, there is a considerable amount of language throughout these texts that distill the Diverse Other to a number—how many are present in the

workforce, how many are counted in an academic department or unit, how many apply for admission, how many are accepted, and how many actually attend the university. When the issue of finding and admitting the Diverse Other to campus is viewed as a marketplace, with an emphasis on how many there are and how the numbers at NFU compare with peer institutions, then the Diverse Other themselves are turned into commodities. They can be traded and used to benefit the institution (or members of the institution). This subject position as Commodity thus calls into question the more fulsome statements made in these documents about the right of the (qualified) Diverse Other to an NFU education. In other words, the institution is caught between two discourses—one that emphasizes access and equal representation even while reinscribing the Diverse Other as an Outsider or Outsider Within (Collins, 1986) and another that rests on objectifying the Diverse Other so that the institution can pursue a variety of ends, including benefiting their other students and members of the campus as well as displaying itself competitively in the lucrative higher education marketplace as an institution that is inclusive and equity-minded.

In addition to creating the Diverse Other as Commodity, this discourse of appropriation creates the subject position of Colonized Body for the Diverse Other. Indeed, this subject position approaches the heart of this discourse. Colonization, at its most basic, consists of one group not only establishing legal dominance over another, but also in the appropriation of resources and products that belong the subordinated group. These resources and products of labor are then used for the benefit of the dominant group. It is clear from the texts reviewed above that NFU views the Diverse Other, to a certain extent, as a resource: they provide labor in the form of teaching and research,

administrative work, and student work; their diverse bodies and backgrounds bring general educational benefits to those around them; and they increase the institution's reputation as an inclusive enterprise in a competitive market place. By turning both diversity and the Diverse Other's experience into a consumable commodity and then engineering events, trainings, and procedures to facilitate that consumption, the institution actually colonizes the Diverse Other.

Significantly, this process of colonization and this subject position of the Colonized is intertwined with the very process of othering that produces the Diverse Other. As I showed above, these texts fetishize the physical bodies of the Diverse Other, using their supposed "differentness" to separate them from an ostensibly homogenous majority. This fetishization intersects with the commodification of diversity in official documents and the prioritization of diversity initiatives. These processes, once set in motion, make it possible for the institution to simultaneously present the fetishized body of the Diverse Other as the product of its initiatives to support access and representation *and* lay claim to the scholarly and labor products made by the Diverse Other. At its simplest, this subject position indicates that the Diverse Other does not even need to produce anything—their very presence is enough to make a contribution and benefit others, according to the documents' emphasis on the educational benefits of diversity. At its most complex, this subject position shows the ways that the institution expects some form of remuneration for allowing the Diverse Other access. Unlike other students, faculty, and staff, the Diverse Other is expected to make a contribution to diversity and to provide educational benefits for the community as a whole. In this way, the diverse body

becomes a Colonized Body and demarcate a particular place in the institution for the Diverse Other.

The discourse of appropriation leans on commodifying and appropriating processes and produces the subject positions of Commodity and Colonized Body. These subject positions emphasize the ways that the Diverse Other are not perceived in these documents as a whole person—they are often reduced to their experiences, their voice, or just their physical presence. This discourse substantially benefits the institution—it becomes not only a place that receives credit for being inclusive, but it benefits considerably from the formal and informal labor that the Diverse Other performs. At a time when there is considerable attention being paid in the scholarly community to the ways that higher education must be “decolonized,” it is particularly important for the authors of institutional policy and plans to consider the ways that their specific institution may colonize the Diverse Other and strive to avoid inscribing that colonization into official documents.

### **Discourse of Bureaucracy**

The final discourse reviewed in this dissertation is that of the institution’s reliance on bureaucracy to provide remedies for diversity-related issues at Northeastern Flagship University. This discourse does not simply indicate reliance—it makes bureaucracy the only structure at NFU through which the Diverse Other can achieve parity and equity. In turn, this discourse reveals the ways in which bureaucracy governs bodies. This discourse is made up of two major discursive strands: one that shows the taken-for-granted goodness of bureaucratic policies and procedures and one that focuses on the non-performatives at the heart of the bureaucratic structures. This bureaucratic discourse

produces two subject positions—one that describes the Diverse Other as a Supplicant and one that shows the Diverse Other's positions as a Disciplined Subject of the institution.

### **Bureaucratic Taken-for-Granted Goodness**

The discourse of bureaucracy is really the backbone of Northeastern Flagship University's diversity initiatives. Indeed, the taken-for-granted goodness of bureaucratic procedures as well as their appropriateness in remedying diversity issues holds the key to why major strides in inclusivity and equity continue to elude NFU. Essentially, this reliance on bureaucratic procedure and bureaucratic structures upholds an inequitable hierarchy that rarely includes the Diverse Other while also closing off possible alternative avenues of action.

Across all the documents in question, neutrality is one of the main mechanisms through which this discursive strand operates. Indeed, a significant amount of the trust placed in the taken-for-granted goodness of bureaucratic procedure and policy is an offshoot of the taken-for-granted good of neutrality. These policies and procedures at NFU assume that equity and fairness are roughly the same thing. This assumption leads them to write systems into existence that assume that everyone is equal in the eyes of procedure—that all students, faculty, and staff are given the same benefit of the doubt. However, there is considerable research that shows that everyone has implicit biases and these biases often play out in micro- and macro-aggressions in classroom environments, hiring committees, and workplaces. These documents rely heavily on neutrality to mediate the interactions between students, faculty, and staff and the administration—they position everyone's relationship to the apparent power structure as equal, rather than recognizing that subjectivity and positionality within in the institution can be a powerful

determinant in these interactions. This neutrality with relation to power and subjectivity runs through many of these documents and ultimately limits the ability of bureaucratic procedures to achieve real equity and inclusion.

Bureaucratic procedures and structures run deep, though decentralized, at NFU, with its numerous policies, committees, and slow-moving processes by which action can be taken and change, supposedly, can be made. Administratively speaking, the structures that deal with diversity and the Diverse Other are numerous, varied, and spread out across the campus. There are three separate governing bodies (the Student Government Association, the Graduate Student Senate, and the Faculty Senate) that each have one or more committees that discuss diversity among themselves, though not necessarily with each other. There is also the university-wide diversity commission that includes upper-level administration and a few faculty members and students. Additionally, there are other bodies that concern themselves with diversity: smaller committees or working groups within schools and colleges, the unions, the multicultural center, and student affinity and advocacy groups. On the one hand, this widespread concern with diversity and the Diverse Other is heartening—people all over NFU's campus are clearly trying to do the work to make the institution more inclusive. On the other, this widespread concern is disheartening. The lines of communication are blurry, if they exist at all, and there are very few coherent or coordinated efforts occurring. Additionally, these diversity-minded units are the garbage cans into which diversity problems are thrown (Birnbaum, 1988; Cohen, March, & Olsen, 1972). Some committees and groups are created in response to concerns, but others come to the fore in times of crisis or concern. The creation of so many committees, offices, and positions that deal with diversity also allows the

institution to shunt the work of diversity to those locations, often under-resourced, while carrying on with the general status quo in the majority of the campus.

In addition to encouraging the proliferation of bureaucratic bodies to cope with diversity and the Diverse Other, NFU relies on bureaucratic policies and procedures for two types of diversity-related work: work aimed at creating a more inclusive or equitable campus and work aimed at redressing or remedying unfair conditions or discrimination aimed at the Diverse Other. These policies reveal the institution's implicit reliance on traditional, hierarchical solutions to diversity-related problems, even though those methods may not only be able unable to provide adequate solutions but may also take part in the very creation of those problems. For example, Affirmative Action statements and procedures have been put into place that govern the search and hiring procedures across the campus. These ideally create a more representative candidate pool for competitive positions, which increases the chances that a Diverse Other would be hired. However, these procedures rest on the assumption that the hiring committee is a neutral, non-biased body, which, as critical and postmodern theories show us, we know to be impossible. Interestingly, this interest in representation harkens back to the commodification thread discussed above. It takes a person's complex background and experience and distills it to a few, usually physical, characteristics, and then uses that distillation to represent everyone who might share those characteristics. It additionally assumes that neutrality will be maintained—that the hiring committee will be neutrally fair to both the representative members and prospective hires. Therefore, even when a search committee is “representative” and the candidate pool diverse, the procedure is still relying on a misplaced bureaucratic neutrality to achieve parity and inclusion. At the

same time, the value-neutral language in these policies works to further other the Diverse Other and construct them, as we saw above, as always already an Outsider.

Workers at all levels, including undergraduate resident assistants and postdoctoral fellows as well as faculty, staff, and graduate students, have successfully unionized at NFU. In light of the institution's long history of unionized labor, the union contracts function similarly to more explicit diversity policy. Although they protect their members and ostensibly work to improve working conditions for all works, including the Diverse Other, union contracts only work through accepted bureaucratic processes to achieve this protection and change. These processes not only include relying on slow and contentious contract negotiations but also on reinscribing the institutional hierarchy into the text of the contracts—one that places the ultimate power with the upper levels of the administration and relies on the good will and neutrality of multiple layers of bureaucratic functionaries. Additionally, the union contracts work to bureaucratically separate different groups from each other, which limits the possibilities of coalition-building (a possible alternative to the procedure-heavy practices in place). All in all, the bureaucratic functionings of the unions make it possible for individuals to be visible to the institution in very specific ways as subordinated subjects, a point to which I will return below.

The other type of diversity work that is conducted bureaucratically is redressing or remedying inequitable conditions or discrimination. These processes include policies such as the Salary Anomaly Policy, the Misconduct Policy, and Grievance Policies, especially those relating to civil rights infractions. All of these policies rely on established and severely bureaucratic methods, including the making of formal

complaints, assessments about the validity of those complaints made by high-ranking administrators, hearings, and final decisions and/or sanctions being handed down by a supposedly bias-free committee. Indeed, the Salary Anomaly Policy, which is NFU's method of redressing pay inequity for whatever reason it may occur (the policy itself is remarkably silent on two common reasons for pay inequity—the well-established pay gaps for women and racial/ethnic minorities), is structured so that the process does not originate with the individual on the receiving end of a pay inequity. Rather, the process starts with the department or unit chair making the decision to remedy the problem, thus taking agency away from the affected individual and investing it in those further up in the institutional hierarchy and relying on those same individuals to acknowledge that a program exists.

Policies such as the Misconduct Policy and the Civil Rights Grievance Policy seek only to remedy individual wrongs rather than affect radical, institution-wide change. Furthermore, these policies institute a particularly narrow path or method to fixing diversity-related issues—a path that also relies on the established hierarchy and bureaucratic functioning in the university. In many ways, these methods, paths, and established chains of decision-making have already proved inefficient, if not actually ineffective. Evidence for this ineffectiveness can be seen in the widespread concern about the state of diversity at NFU as well as a continuous emphasis in plans and policies on the ways that NFU will create a more inclusive campus. An explanation may lie in the ways that these policies discursively express an implicit, taken-for-granted belief that bureaucratic policy is an effective method of remedying diversity issues. By relying heavily on bureaucratic practice, this discourse relies on processes and methods that

ultimately uphold the current campus hierarchy and the status quo. Additionally, as we'll see below, this discourse situates the Diverse Other as a subordinate to that over-arching hierarchy, emphasizing their positionality as an individual that comes as a Supplicant to the larger body of the campus, their difference standing out against a backdrop of homogeneity. At their hearts, these policies reinforce established ways of “doing things” at NFU and also make unimaginable alternative methods of action, change, and remedy.

### **Bureaucratic Non-Performatives**

A hallmark of the bureaucratic procedures at Northeastern Flagship University is that they are full of non-performatives. Citing Judith Butler (1993), Sara Ahmed (2012) wrote that non-performatives “describes the ‘reiterative and citational practice by which discourse’ does not produce ‘the effects that it names’” (p. 117). Non-performatives are performative speech acts that are basically intentional failures: “the failure of a speech act to do what it says is not a failure of intent or even circumstance, but is actually what the speech act is doing” (Ahmed, 2012, p. 117). Furthermore, Ahmed wrote that “such speech acts are taken up *as if* they are performatives (as if they have brought about the effects they name), such that the names come to stand in for the effects. As a result, naming can be a way of not bringing something into effect” (Ahmed, 2012, p. 117). At NFU, the utterances that function as non-performatives become a stand in for actual action, enabling the institution to have proof that they are ‘doing’ something and to have an excuse for why they not doing more.

The discourse of bureaucracy running through the texts analyzed in this study holds several non-performatives. One of the most prominent examples is also a subject of a fair amount of self-congratulation on the part of institutional actors: the bathroom

policy. The bathroom policy began with the statement that “[NFU] is one of the few colleges in the country to have a formal policy on the rights of trans people in campus bathrooms. This policy enables trans and gender-nonconforming people to use the gendered bathrooms in which they feel safer and more comfortable.” It goes on to read:

[NFU] strives to create and sustain a campus environment that supports and values all members of community. One aspect of creating a supportive environment is providing safe, accessible, and convenient bathroom facilities. Students, staff, faculty, and campus guests should use the bathroom facilities that correspond to their sex or gender identity, or utilize bathrooms that are designated gender-neutral or gender-inclusive.

At first glance, the institution is right to be proud of itself. This policy was released only a few months before North Carolina’s contentious bathroom bill that attempted to legislate individual bathroom use based on biological sex. Additionally, it was introduced in the context of a higher education market that is only just now starting to attend to the needs of its trans students, staff, and faculty. NFU was, indeed, more forward-thinking than many of its peer institutions. However, a closer reading of the policy reveals the lack of action inherent in the utterance. It decrees that individuals should use the bathrooms that correspond to their identities—essentially giving them permission to perform actions that they most likely had already been taking. Additionally, this bathroom policy does not commit the institution to any substantive action. It neither guarantees that there will be a surfeit of gender-neutral or gender-inclusive bathrooms nor does it guarantee protection for those individuals who do opt to use a bathroom that is in line with their personal gender identity but not with the perceptions of those around them.

Thus, the Bathroom Policy acts as a way for the institution to tout their own forward-thinking policies but actually changes very little for trans\* and gender non-conforming individual on NFU's campus.

Likewise, the several diversity-related statements and mission statements act as non-performatives. The Diversity Mission Statement stated that the institution “has a responsibility to provide access and opportunities for all people, while demonstrating our commitment to inclusion of historically underrepresented groups,” while never stating how access and opportunities will be provided or how that commitment will be carried out. Likewise, the Diversity Mission Statement said that the institution is “committed to policies that promote inclusiveness, social justice, and respect for all.” Ahmed (2012) categorized statements of commitment as non-performatives: “they do not bring into effect that which they name. A commitment might even be named not to bring it into effect.” (p. 119). The non-performative rests on actions expressed in other documents and in other policies—however, many of those same policies are similarly devoid of action.

In a similar way, the considerable number of trainings and the institution's belief that these training sessions contribute materially to the creation of a positive campus climate for the Diverse Other also work as non-performatives. While individuals—especially employees of the university—attend these diversity trainings and ostensibly learn information about the Diverse Other and how to make an inclusive campus climate, there is little to no evidence that the effect of this education is assessed. Additionally, there is no accountability that staff, students, and faculty are actually using what they learn in these trainings. What is particularly interesting about trainings as non-performatives is that they are a form of action—people actually take time from their day,

usually move to a different location, and engage in an educational experience. But these actions indeed take the place of more concrete actions that the institution could be taking to correct discrimination, improve the campus climate, increase access and retention of the Diverse Other, and creating a more equitable overall environment. Furthermore, these trainings have a discursively important position in documents such as the Affirmative Action Plan and the Diversity Strategic Plan. The authors mention them in an attempt to show just how much the university is taking action on the behalf of the Diverse Other, while real action remains lacking.

Non-performatives are embedded in bureaucratic structures and the documents that support them. Indeed, they are at bureaucracy's heart as utterances which are both taken for granted as inherently good and result from the institution's insistence of value-free neutrality. Neutrality is what makes the non-performatives what they are—instead of addressing the very real power imbalances in and outside the institution or addressing the effects of oppression and injustice, NFU's non-performatives guarantee equal opportunities for everyone, even those who are not discriminated against. In turn, non-performatives effect bureaucratic functions by creating ways for the institution to speak, but not act. Non-performatives and the taken-for-granted goodness of bureaucracy interact to produce two subject positions: Suppliant and Disciplined Subject.

### **Subject Positions**

The discourse of bureaucracy emanates throughout the policies, procedures, and plans at Northeastern Flagship University. To a certain extent, this is true because this study's focus is the institution's official utterances, which are dominated by bureaucratic practices and decision-making. However, the scope of this study encompasses texts that

make up the backbone of the institution, including foundational texts like the mission statements, strategic plans that forecast the institution's future, and the policies and procedures that structure every-day life at NFU. All of these texts function within what can be considered a bureaucratic paradigm. The work of diversity also functions within this discourse—in other words, diversity work is part of the work of bureaucracy. Thus, the discourse of bureaucracy both encompasses diversity at the institution and creates subject positions for the Diverse Other—one as Supplicant to the institution and another as Disciplined Subject.

The first subject position, that of Supplicant, is discursively created through the emphasis on using bureaucratic procedures to solve diversity issues. The Diverse Other is then always in the position of approaching the institution for help—asking the institution to intercede on their behalf or to right some wrong, whether in salary or discriminatory behavior. Similar to the overarching image of the Diverse Other as Victim, this subject position makes the institution the change agent and the Diverse Other the beneficiary of that change—and usually only when they have asked for it. The Diverse Other is always already requesting things—disciplinary efforts, better working or living conditions, tolerance, etc.—from the institution, precisely because the institution is organized in the way that it is. In other words, the institution's bureaucratic discourse structures action within the institution to such an extent that action is not taken if not through bureaucratic channels—indeed, another way of doing things is almost unimaginable. Even grass-roots efforts from the students or faculty often results in appeals to the bureaucratic practices of the institution. For example, desires for a more diverse professoriate or student body are translated into efforts to improve the hiring process for the Diverse Other.

The non-performative discursive thread also helps create the Supplicant subject position. As discussed above, the institution often makes utterances that voice its support for diversity and the Diverse Other but are lacking real action. This discourse casts the Diverse Other as a Supplicant precisely because the institution took—and continues to take—no substantive action, thus creating the demand for intercession. The Diverse Other is thus positioned as a Supplicant because they need actions to be taken, whether they are small, like salary adjustments, or serious, such as disciplining discriminatory faculty members or bringing about a sea change in the way the campus as a whole thinks about gender identity. Thus, the discourse of bureaucracy makes real the subject position of Supplicant for the Diverse Other.

Likewise, the discourse of bureaucracy also creates a subject position of Disciplined Subject for the Diverse Other. Through the emphasis on following policy and procedure to address the Diverse Other's concerns, this discourse renders the Diverse Other legible to the institution. As Foucault theorized in *Discipline and Punish* (1975/1995), organizations such as prisons and schools organize individuals in both real and discursive space to make them more visible to authority. Briefly, enclosure, regularized, individual, and hierarchical distribution throughout a space allow institutions to enact discipline, power, and its effects on individuals (Foucault, 1975/1995). While no single document does each of these tasks, many of the bureaucratic processes do indeed dictate correct behavior for specific settings. For example, the Code of Student Conduct prescribed appropriate behavior for students on campus and especially in residence halls; other policies describe appropriate behavior and actions for bodies in classrooms; and other procedures, such as the Academic Honesty policy, lay out the expected actions for a

bureaucratic body to take while disciplining a student. For texts that are focused on diversity, this organization, categorization, and correspondence between time and activity are ways that the institution produces a Disciplined Subject for the Diverse Other.

Surveillance also plays a considerable role in the creation of the Disciplined Subject position. Indeed, many of the previous threads of this dissertation come together at this juncture: fetishization of diverse bodies and commodification of diverse experiences meet bureaucracy to create a complex system of surveillance of the Diverse Other. The Diverse Other's visibility is already emphasized throughout these texts. This visibility combined with assessments of the value of the Diverse Other's experience creates an awareness of the Diverse Other and where they may physically be on campus—in residence halls, in classrooms or labs, on search committees, and represented virtually in institutional materials. NFU is always on the lookout for the Diverse Other. Bureaucracy joins this effort and provides some direction to it as it surveys the Diverse Other as its manager. Bureaucratic processes such as committee work, hearings, and data gathering become processes of surveillance—both the surveillance of the Diverse Other and the Diverse Other's surveillance of the institution. On the one hand, the institution uses data, hearings, and committee work to categorize, understand, and direct the Diverse Other's presence on campus—all hallmarks of Foucauldian discipline (1975/1995). On the other hand, this bureaucracy, which is ostensibly transparent and invites the participation of the Diverse Other, is rendered visible to power's effects as well, not least as the Diverse Other assesses the non-performatives produced by the institution. Thus, NFU's bureaucratic tendencies are avenues through which power can work on individual bodies, and ultimately produce a Disciplined Subject position for the Diverse Other.

Finally, the discourse of bureaucracy produces the Disciplined Subject by creating bureaucratic bodies. These bodies can be seen as both individual bodies (i.e., the othered Diverse body) and as bodies of people working together, such as committees. I have already shown how bodies are signified and othered in these texts, especially those of the Diverse Other. These textual bodies are produced through bureaucratic processes—these texts do not just spring into being. The majority—if not all—of them are co-created by several individuals through iterative, bureaucratic processes—living examples of the very production of subjectivity with which this dissertation is concerned. But the Disciplined Subject is also inscribed onto bodies through this very work. People working in committees are doing bureaucratic work—they become extensions of the institution’s bureaucratic bodies. Furthermore, people do committee work in a specific way—indeed, the work, structured as it is, demands that people do it in the ways that committees usually perform work. Committee work organizes those who do it in specific ways, both in spaces and in discourses. By doing this work, they become Disciplined Subjects of the institution. Interestingly, considering the commitment and effort people bring to this committee work, they can be considered performative bodies engaged in the production of non-performatives.

### **Conclusion**

This chapter outlines the discourses and subject positions related to diversity and the Diverse Other at Northeastern Flagship University. While there are multiple discourses in circulation in the official documents at NFU, these four—the discourse of access, the discourse of institutional citizenship, the discourse of appropriation, and the discourse of bureaucracy—are the ones that are most closely connected to diversity and

have the most impact on the Diverse Other. These discourses produce multiple subject positions, which distill the complex humanity of historically marginalized individuals down to one or two aspects that are valuable to the specific discourse in question.

Taken together, the subject positions produced by these discourses can be used as a kind of litmus test for the state of equity and social justice on NFU's campus. All told, these subject positions point to constraint, commodification, and exploitation of the Diverse Other, as well as a perpetual outsider positionality (Collins, 1986). Thus, even though the policies and procedures within which these discourses and subject positions circulate are intended to promote diversity and equity, a critical analysis shows that harmful and inequitable subjectivities abound at NFU with problematic ramifications for diversity work on campus.

The discourses described here all show the complex ways that diversity is a work-in-progress at NFU. Some strands of the discourses are positive—they show the institution's interest in expanding access or fending off intolerance towards to Diverse Other. However, the combined effects of these discourses are ultimately problematic. Indeed, they highlight the ways that even well-intentioned diversity policies can unintentionally contribute to the maintenance of an inequitable status quo. The fact that many of these discourses emphasize how the Diverse Other contributes to the campus and the majority—as well as their discursive interest in disciplining the Diverse Other, in a Foucauldian sense—highlights the possibilities for transformation and intervention in equity policies in higher education contexts.

## CHAPTER 8

### CONCLUSION AND IMPLICATIONS

Diversity is a common—almost too common—word on American college and university campuses. This commonness is reflected in the subject’s long-lived popularity as a research topic, the primacy of questions about diversity in hiring processes, websites and courses on campuses devoted to its exploration, and the myriad rhetorical moments that invoke it. Diversity is also a multivalent concept. It can be used to mean difference, but it also often works as a stand-in for social justice and equity, the benefits accrued to a campus by having a heterogeneous population, or the work that diversity practitioners perform. These many meanings ultimately result in a certain muddiness of the term and a certain ineffectiveness of diversity initiatives. Underlying that, however, is the genuine concern on the part of individual actors within administrations to do the right thing. Their good intentions form the backbone of many diversity efforts and initiatives, but good intentions do not social change make. Therefore, my goal in this dissertation was to focus on one institution in order to make an attempt to answer the question: What are we talking about when we talk about diversity?

I chose policy discourse analysis—a critical, poststructuralist method of deconstructing policy—to investigate this question because its emphasis on deconstruction allowed me to see beneath smooth bureaucratic surfaces to see the constellations of meaning within policy. This method seeks to understand the discourses that circulate in written policy texts; it also seeks to unearth the subject positions that these discourses create. Rather than extend this study to encompass a broad swath, I sought a narrow, focused emphasis on the ways that these discourses and subject

positions may exist within a single environment. In this way, I can discern the full extent of the ways that diversity work and rhetoric can permeate an institution. In this specific case, I focused on Northeastern Flagship University. This institution is a large, land-grant, public research university in the northeastern United States with a history of both diversity initiatives and campus activism. Furthermore, NFU has recently undergone a lengthy strategic planning process and is looking to the future with new intent and purpose. Part of this process was specifically about diversity, thus making the institution a viable location for this study.

As I showed in the previous chapters, the discourses and subject positions in circulation at Northeastern Flagship University work not only to create the Diverse Other, but also to relegate them to the margins of the university, reduce their identity to their diversity, and to circumscribe their agency. In this concluding chapter, I will revisit the original research questions by offering a summary of their answers. After that, I consider the degree to which diversity is enfolded and reflected in NFU's organizational culture by looking at where the discourses and subject positions discursively reside and the degree to which diversity is embedded in the official documents. Then I offer some thoughts on the utility of diversity language when considering ways to create a more equitable, socially just higher education. Finally, I offer implications drawn from this study for research, policy, and practice.

### **Research Questions Revisited**

Policy discourse analysis focuses on parsing out the discourses that circulate in codified texts, such as policies, strategic plans, and official documents. This approach allows us to understand how discursive formations pass from text to practice, as well as

how these same formations may support or subvert an already inequitable status quo on a single university campus. Using policy discourse analysis, I formulated the following research questions:

- What do these texts describe as problems and solutions for diversity at this institution?
- What are the predominant images of diversity that emerge from these texts?
- What discourses are employed to shape these problems, solutions, and images of diversity?
- What subject positions are re/produced through these discourses?

The first analytical process in policy discourse analysis was to code the texts for problems and solutions related to diversity and for images of both diversity and the Diverse Other (Allan, 2008). The problems, solutions, and images are, in fact, the building blocks—at the textual level—that “other” diverse individuals in official documents at NFU. In other words, these problems, solutions, and images are the indicators of the Diverse Other’s status—they construct the Diverse Other’s very otherness.

The problems recounted in these documents take place mostly on the micro- and meso-levels of interaction. In the category micro-level, many of the issues fell under the rubric of interpersonal problems, which include discrimination, harassment, and violence, and issues experienced by the Diverse Other particularly because they are diverse. The problems echo findings from previous research that show that historically marginalized students and faculty experience discrimination and harassment and perceive generally hostile climates on college campuses (e.g., Ford, 2012; Park, 2009; Mayhew et al., 2005;

Rankin & Reason, 2005; Solórzano et al., 2000; Turner, Gonzalez, & Wood, 2011; Yosso et al., 2009). Meso-level problems include disparities, experiences mediated by identity and intersecting oppressions, inadequate success pathways, and the burden that the Diverse Other carries as they navigate the university. On the other hand, there are several macro-level institutional problems in the texts as well. These problems are created by institutional practices and processes that have repercussions particularly for the Diverse Other, such as institutional opacity, implementation problems, and restrictive practices and policies. Other institution-level problems are caused by what the institution lacks, including equitable representation, accessibility, services, and consistent leadership for diversity. These institution-level issues echo the importance of a positive climate for diversity, as these meso-level factors have an impact on student retention and satisfaction (Museus et al., 2008; Oseguera & Rhee, 2009; Rhee, 2009) and faculty performance and satisfaction (Allen et al., 2000; Burden, Harrison, & Hodge, 2005; Fries-Britt et al., 2011; Turner, Gonzalez, & Wood, 2011).

Although a majority of the problems listed in NFU's official documents operate on the institutional level, most of the solutions are aimed at individuals—a reason, perhaps, for many of these strategies' ultimate lack of results. Even so, these documents relayed several strategies in use at NFU to solve diversity-related problems, including providing accommodations, improving access and increasing visibility for the Diverse Other, and providing prevent, protection, support, and remediation. To increase access, NFU pursues hiring, recruitment and admissions, and the use of financial resources to benefit the Diverse Other. Likewise, NFU uses strategies that emphasize the Diverse Other's representation, such as reporting the numbers of the Diverse Others on campus,

diversifying the curriculum, disseminating information about diversity, and hosting events. Finally, NFU also leans heavily on regulation, policy, training, and protection to prevent discrimination and harassment. Many of these solutions echo the possibilities presented by the Diverse Learning Environments model (Hurtado et al., 2012) as well as previous research on improving diversity at colleges and universities (e.g., Bailyn, 2003; Clayton-Pedersen et al., 2007; Mayhew et al., 2005, 2006; Smith, 2009).

The othering process is most visible in the predominant images of the Diverse Other and diversity in NFU's official texts. Indeed, the predominant image of the Diverse Other is that they are, in some way, non-normative. In other words, they are non-white, non-male, non-heterosexual, and non-able. This marking of the Diverse Other as non-normative is based on embodiment, visibility, and essentialist conceptualizations of identity. Echoing Allan's (2008) findings, another predominant image is that of victim—an individual who needs the institution's protection from harassment, discrimination, and the other inequities and issues described by the problems. Other major images emphasize the potential of difference as well as quantifiability. Finally, the texts offer an image of the rhetoric of diversity. In this image, diversity is communitarian property that not only benefits the institution but should also be celebrated as the institution's future. Indeed, this image both invokes and supports the idea that diversity is a fundamental good that contributes to democratic society (Gurin et al., 2002; Gurin, Nagda, & Lopez, 2004; Milem, 2003; Milem & Hakuta, 2000).

The next research question asked what discourses are circulating within the texts that shape the problems, solutions, and images. These documents, as heterogeneous and far-reaching as they are, offered several discourses for examination. I chose four

discourses that were most closely related to diversity and the Diverse Other: the discourse of access, discourse of institutional citizenship, discourse of appropriation, and discourse of bureaucracy. Each of these discourses have separate discursive threads that make them up, as well as subject positions that are created through their circulation.

The discourse of access, originally articulated by Allan (2008) and Iverson (2012) and supported here, has three discursive threads: *entrée*, representation, and affirmation. This discourse creates two subject positions: Outsider and Outsider Within (Collins, 1986), emphasizing the ways that these texts, even while discussing increasing access and representation for the Diverse Other, construct the Diverse Other as always already outside of the institution. The discourse of institutional citizenship constructs the ways that citizens ideally communicate with each other, especially around diversity and the Diverse Other. This discourse emphasizes civility and tolerance in interpersonal interactions as well as the tension between free speech and respectability politics. This discourse's subject positions are the Ideal Community Member and the Idealized Diverse Other. While the Ideal Community Member is expected to communicate correctly and through the correct channels, the Idealized Diverse Other finds themselves under an increased burden to not only manage their own expressions, but also to tolerate transgressions against themselves from others. In this way, this discourse expects the Diverse Other to be an Ideal Community Member while also grappling with hostile institutional structures that undermine their selfhood.

The discourse of appropriation describes the way that NFU commodifies both the bodies and experiences of the Diverse Other. At the same time, the Diverse Other is expected to contribute that commodified experience to benefit the institution and their

non-diverse peers. This discourse creates two subject positions: Commodity and Colonized Body. This discourse also rests on the visibility and fetishization of diversity—the Diverse Other contributes just by being present and their contribution is exacted whether they want to contribute or not. Finally, the discourse of bureaucracy operates through the taken-for-granted goodness of NFU’s bureaucratic policies and procedures and the non-performatives (Ahmed, 2012) that are at the heart of these bureaucratic structures. This discourse creates a Supplicant subjectivity for the Diverse Other as well as a Disciplined Subject of the institution.

These discourses and the subject positions that they create help us understand the way that diversity work functions at NFU. These discourses and subjectivities reflect the meanings that underlie the language used in official texts that are present, but are not always explicit. In the next section, I will explain how we can use these discourses and subjectivities to understand NFU’s organizational culture. Additionally, these discourses offer a valuable critique of the concept of diversity as a tool for achieving equity in higher education.

### **Diversity, Climate, and Organizational Culture**

In addition to parsing out the problem, images, solutions, discourses, and subject positions related to diversity in circulation in the official documents at Northeastern Flagship University, one of the goals of this dissertation was to consider the ways that diversity is implicated in campus climate and organizational culture. Indeed, this study took an ‘institutional snapshot’ in its focus on a single research university. This approach to policy discourse analysis allowed me to not only see the places where institutional discourses and larger societal discourses intersect at NFU, but also to discover the extent

to which diversity rhetoric is or is not embedded in the organizational culture. The discourses and subject positions identified in this study show the limitations of NFU's climate for diversity as well as the degree to which diversity only superficially embedded in NFU's culture. This section reintroduces the concepts of climate and organizational culture before commenting on the status of diversity at NFU.

### **Climate**

Researchers have attempted to develop models to understand and improve campus climate for the past several years. This dissertation used Hurtado et al.'s (2012) multidimensional model for diverse learning environments (DLE) to provide structure for the literature review, but it is also useful for seeing the results of some of these discursive formations. The DLE conceptualizes campus climate as having several dimensions, including the socio-historical, policy, and community contexts, as well as the historical, organizational, compositional, psychological, and behavioral dimensions of curricular and co-curricular processes. This study offers insights into the organizational dimensions of NFU's campus climate, which, of course, impacts the other dimensions as well and is, in turn, impacted by the institution's socio-historical, community, and broader policy contexts.

The discourses and subject positions circulating among NFU's documents show a climate that is striving for inclusivity and equity, but continually falling short. This perpetual failure is due, in part, to the fact that the discourses about the Diverse Other do just that—they 'other' diverse students, faculty, and staff in organizational discourse. Even as the documents invoke rhetorics of inclusion, they are creating subject positions that always already excluded (Allan 2008; Collins, 1986; Iverson, 2012). This discursive

othering leads to practices and procedures that operate from that same foundation. Therefore, disciplinary procedures, hiring processes, and other practices operate from an exclusionary place with respect to diversity. Exclusion thus ripples through the campus climate through the emanations of discourse.

Likewise, the Ideal Community Member and Idealized Diverse Other subject positions show the ways that the campus climate, in general, favors majority comfort over discourses of social justice or equity. Put another way, the campus climate can be perceived as hostile or, at best, uncaring for diversity in the interest of maintaining a comfortable climate for the majority (Kelly & Torres, 2006; Rankin & Reason, 2005). This preference for comfort over the difficult discussions about equality and equity means that the campus climate for diversity cannot move forward except with great difficulty or when there are inevitable conflicts between the majority and the Diverse Other. At the same time, these discourses and subject positions show the ways that forward progress is constructed as mainly the responsibility of the Diverse Other. It is through their labor, contributions, and speech that equity comes about at NFU. Even the language that the documents use—invoking diversity rather than equity (Stewart, 2017)—shows that equity and equality are not central in this campus climate. Rather, valuing difference, instead of creating a more just climate, is NFU's main priority, thus impeding progress and upholding an inequitable status quo (Stewart, 2017).

### **Organizational Culture**

As discussed, one of the aims of this dissertation is to understand, through policy, how much diversity becomes embedded in the culture of an institution. In other words, policy discourse analysis allows us to see the extent to which policy language can

become part of an institution's fabric or whether it remains simply words. This analysis becomes possible through my modification of policy discourse analysis to attend to a single institutional environment—bringing culture into contact with discourse. Based on Geertz's (1973) formulation of culture, I view culture as something that is public and based in meaning. Culture is neither essential or inherent; rather, it is contextual and created by the individuals living it—in this way as well as its didactic and disciplinary characteristics, culture is much like a discourse (Barnett, 2001; Geertz, 1973). Following Geertz (1973), cultural analysis is aimed at understanding the signs, signifiers, and discourses that make up cultural webs of meaning.

Policy discourse analysis is especially useful for understanding organizational culture. Kuh & Whitt (1988) described organizational culture in higher education as the medium that conveys shared assumptions, values, and stories in order to operate—policy, strategic plans, and official documents do some of this work as vehicles of official stories and language. These stories, procedures, and processes tell individuals what they can expect and what is expected of them—indeed, it is this disciplinary mechanism that creates the bridge from macro-level discourses to micro-level institutional culture (Barnett, 2001). Tierney (1988) also described organizational culture as an “internal dynamic” that reflects the past, present, and future of the institution in the stories they tell and the attitudes and behaviors they enact (p. 3). In other words, organizational culture is a form of identity for an institution.

Researchers have identified several components of institutional culture. Kuh & Whitt (1988) listed “belief, guiding premises and assumptions, norms, ritual, and customs and practices” as particularly important components of organizational culture (p.

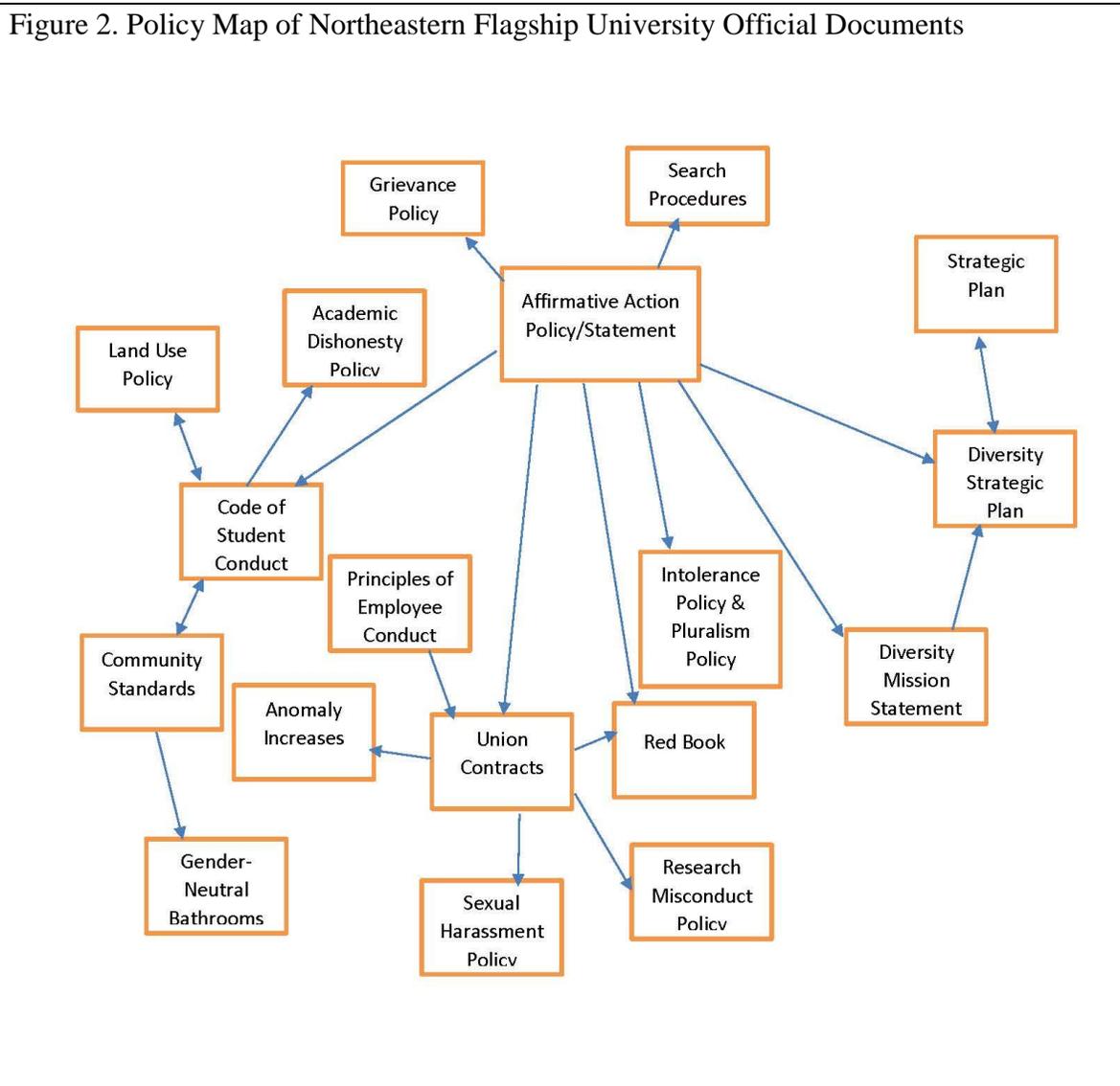
iii), while Dill (1982) included subcultures as well. This impulse to subdivide makes the layers of organizational culture more accessible for analysis by researchers. Likewise, it becomes easier to find data sources for investigations of organizational culture.

Institutional culture has several features, including historical roots, academic programs, social environments, artefactual manifestations, and core values, which all have different, yet identifiable and interconnected, sources to mine for data (Kuh & Whitt, 1988).

Policies, plans, and official documents offer data that hit on many of these components, although not all, and their language offers hints about how deeply diversity has become embedded in NFU's organizational cultures.

Specifically, NFU's official texts tell a story about the institutional culture by creating the rituals, processes, customs, practices, and guiding premises and ensuring that these components will be followed throughout the institution. While these documents tell many stories about NFU, the discourses and subject positions outlined in this dissertation show a specific narrative about diversity: as NFU attempts to construct diversity as a foundational belief of the institution, diversity is widespread yet superficial. In other words, many official documents, policies, and procedures mention diversity, but only a few grapple with the issue in any depth. Furthermore, the documents recycle similar sentiments about diversity—the affirmative action statement, for example, appears multiple times across the institutional documents. This repetition inscribes diversity discourses and subject positions across the institution as well. The repetition of the affirmative action statement, though beneficial and required by law, means that the Diverse Other is instantiated as an Outsider over and over again in employment, admissions, and strategic planning language.

This superficial repetition is best represented visually. Similar to sociograms and Clarke's (2003) situational analysis that maps human and non-human participants involved in a social issue, I developed a policy map that shows the connections between different texts as well as the way that diversity work and language is, more or less, siloed into specific texts and areas where diversity work happens.



While several of the policies mention diversity or diversity-related documents, not all do. Additionally, the directionality of references, indicated by the arrows in Figure 2, show the nature of the connection between the documents. While some texts explicitly reference diversity, in other cases, the connection is more because the documents with the majority of the diversity language mentions the other documents. For example, the Diversity Strategic Plan invokes the Code of Student Conduct, not the other way around.

Indeed, the policy map shown above allows us to see diversity discourse in formation. By looking at the intertextual nature of the policies and procedures at NFU, we can see the ways that certain documents and sentiments are central to diversity discourses, certain others are marginal, and how new documents become entwined with the existing ones. Although the image above crystallizes these formations for the purposes of study, it also offers an insight into the way new language can be inserted into discourse. While some policies are currently peripheral, such as the strategic plans and the recent gender-neutral bathroom policy, they will undoubtedly become more incorporated into the institutional culture with time, like the Tenure & Promotion Handbook (which dates from the 1970s) or the affirmative action texts. Diversity discourse is always changing, and official documents offer us a valuable source of data to track its formation.

This analysis also shows the ways that committees become the catch-all for diversity work. As is typical at institutions of higher education, NFU has a firm system of shared governance, which means much of their policies and plans are the products of committees of administrators, faculty, and students. Additionally, committees are the bodies that ensure maintenance of many of the policies and procedures described here as

well as their execution. Thus, committees act as the garbage can for diversity problems at NFU (Birnbaum, 1988; Cohen, March, & Olsen, 1972). Diversity issues arise and often get directed towards an existing committee—sometimes a new one is formed. Indeed, some committees essentially lie dormant until a problem is found with which they can grapple. In this way, the institution displays a lack of intentionality with regards to diversity policy and shunts the responsibility away from the campus a whole to one or two committees.

These policies, plans, and official documents also indicate the unit of intervention favored at NFU: the individual. This preference plays itself out in a variety of ways. For example, the images of the Diverse Other rarely offer collective imagery—usually the Diverse Other is imagined as a diverse individual. Likewise, both the solutions identified in this study focus predominantly on the individual or rely on the Diverse Other to enact them. These documents indicate that the responsibility for making NFU a more inclusive, equitable place lies in individual actions and opinions. However, this individual focus belies the fact that most of the problems identified exist, in fact, on the meso, institutional level. Many of the issues related to diversity involve the obstacles and barriers created by institutional policies, even though many of these are mediated by individual involvement. The combination of institutional-level problems and individual-focused solutions suggest not only a disconnect about diversity and equity, but also, perhaps, inertia on the part of the institution. It is considerably easier for the institution to police individuals than it is to transform itself. Similarly, several of these solutions rely on the Diverse Other to educate or contribute to the campus or on the relatively few diversity officers to perform the brunt of diversity work. As these individuals are often historically marginalized themselves,

this reliance thus places the responsibility for improving the climate on those who both have the most to gain from those improvements and struggle the most under negative conditions. Therefore, the institutional culture at NFU emphasizes the individual role in diversity work, but does not extend far enough to consider the ways that the culture itself is implicated in diversity problems.

The fact that many of the major documents that drive discourse at NFU forward discuss diversity is a positive sign. The institution is, at least, cognizant of the need for discourse about diversity and that the Diverse Other is present on campus. However, the combination of the diversity discourses, the subject positions produced, and the connections between the official documents indicate that, although diversity-talk is widespread, it only goes skin deep, so to speak. This superficial involvement with diversity and focus on the individual rather than the institution means that even the most well-intentioned plans, policies, and initiatives may not result in any real, positive change. Indeed, these official texts seem to act more to uphold the status quo, rather than to create a more equitable campus. Indeed, the fact that the overriding concern in these texts is diversity, rather than equity, equality, or social justice, indicates an institutional concern with difference rather than progress.

### **The Discursive Framing of Diversity and the Limitation of Change**

The overarching question that this dissertation aimed to answer was, “What is meant by diversity when it is invoked in institutional policies and strategic plans at a research university?” In other words, what are we talking about when we talk about diversity? This question is especially pertinent in light of both the centrality that diversity takes in official and promotional rhetoric and the on-going agitation on college campuses

that call for more equitable and just educational environments. Policy discourse analysis is one way to answer this question—it uncovered the discourses and subject positions produced about both diversity and the Diverse Other. This method and its results allow researchers to uncover the hidden meanings under seemingly equitable language—to uncover what really goes on beneath diversity words and through diversity work. Ultimately, it allows us to assess the value of diversity rhetoric in light of the discourses and subjectivities circulating within it. Before I offer implications for research, policy, and practice, I want to offer some conclusions on the utility of diversity language and the discourses therein. Specifically, I discuss the emphasis on talk over action and the ways that diversity discourses (re)inscribe inequity in the institution to suggest that diversity is not higher education’s path to equality, equity, or social justice.

### **Language & Action**

This dissertation focuses on the intimacies of language and what it can bring about in the every-day life of an institution. I found that the language at Northeastern Flagship University concerning diversity indicates that there is lack of clarity about what diversity means. This lack of specificity may, indeed, be tied to diversity’s discursive functioning within the institution: “this mobility of the word ‘diversity’ means that it is unclear what diversity is doing...diversity might be more easily incorporated into official speech because it can be used as a description or affirmation of anything” (Ahmed, 2012, p. 58). At times, diversity is situated to mean difference—for example, the Intolerance Policy asked that students, faculty, and staff respect and tolerate everyone’s differences. At other times, these documents seem to indicate that there is a hierarchy of sorts when it comes to diversity. The Affirmative Action statement assured NFU’s constituents that the

institution will not discriminate against individuals in the basis of their membership in several different social identity categories; the declination to identify which of each binary (i.e., LGBT vs. heterosexual) is in need of protection does not belie that some differences are in need of more protection than others. Additionally, as I showed in the images of diversity, the Diverse Other is also narrowly constructed as someone who is visibly different—a case that Ahmed (2012) would describe as “how certain words stick to certain bodies, such that bodies in turn can become stuck” (p. 62). Thus, at any given time, diversity simply means difference or identifiable difference or membership in a group that needs assistance to gain access or equitable representation in the institution.

Running throughout this multiplication of meanings, however, is an absence: there is no explicit acknowledgement of the social justice dimensions of diversity. While this is hinted at in the rhetoric—the Diversity Strategic Plan certainly links the two thoughts together in its explicit plans to, for example, increase opportunities for first-generation students of color—the explicit connection is never made. Diversity talk becomes a stand-in for justice talk; difference becomes a priority over equity. Ahmed (2012) linked the change in language from equity or antiracism to diversity to the corporatizing trend in higher education as institutions mirror the language of managerial discourse.

What this lack of clarity over the meaning of diversity in these documents reveals is how language gets in the way of action (acknowledging that language is also, following Foucauldian poststructuralism, constitutive of action). As we saw with the discourse of non-performatives, many of the bureaucratic policies and procedures become utterances that bring nothing—rather than something—into effect (Ahmed,

2012). This explanation of the way that utterances—or policies, procedures, and plans—can be non-performative can also describe the way that the entire bureaucratic structure supporting diversity and diversity work functions. These are mechanisms of the university that rely on language to function—they rely on the written word to codify them as well as spoken utterances to invoke their discursive power and to make use of them. However, this emphasis on diversity language and the work committees and task forces do shows how that very language folds back in on itself and becomes the work itself. Talking about diversity becomes the diversity work (Ahmed, 2012). Language—writing the policies down, discussing what the plans should say—becomes the substitution for real work that could bring about equitable progress at NFU. In many ways, these discourses create a stasis chamber for diversity conversations; they become discursive places where diversity is contained by discussion, while those discussions can be shown as evidence that the institution cares about diversity and is taking action to address diversity-related issues. Thus, concerns about equity at NFU persist, even in the face of data that shows the incremental inclusion of difference and language that encompasses a concern for diversity. As that language involves discourses that emphasize diversity's otherness and visibility, that constrain the Diverse Other's agency and self-expression, and that seeks to benefit from the Diverse Other's labor and bodies, it is difficult to perceive the ways that the institutional focus on diversity is an effective method of creating a just and equitable campus climate.

Much of this conclusion mirrors Ahmed's (2012) work with diversity workers in British and Australian universities. Indeed, my findings provide another venue through which her theorization of the wall of institutional will against diversity can come through.

NFU is yet another environment that has adopted the language of diversity rather than equity or equality. Ahmed (2012) wrote that

diversity is more easily incorporated by the institution than other words such as ‘equality,’ which seem to evoke some sort of politics critique or complaint about institutions and those who are already employed by them. Diversity becomes identified as a more inclusive language because it does not have a necessary relation to changing organizational values (p. 65).

Thus, NFU can employ the language of diversity without attending to the discursive issues that language is creating, because the institution is not interested in creating actual change. Instead, this diversity language allows the institution to receive and exude good PR without doing the painful work of rectifying inequities—it can “allow organizations to retain their good idea of themselves” (Ahmed, 2012, p. 71). The institution has documents it “can point to” when diversity issues are brought up (Ahmed, 2012, p. 90). It can also point to the documents’ circulation through the institution as evidence of diversity work getting done (Ahmed, 2012). Most importantly, the institution has these documents to mobilize when there is a problem (Ahmed, 2012). The Diversity Strategic Plan, for example, can be used to show students agitating for more race-sensitive counselors in the Health Center that the conversations have and are taking place—that there is a plan that will, ideally, be put into effect at some point. What all this really amounts to is change at a glacial pace, while inequitable structures, discourses, and subject positions are continually (re)inscribed in NFU’s institutional fabric.

## **(Re)inscribing Inequitable Structures**

One of policy discourse analysis's major contributions is the ability to uncover what lies beneath innocuous or banal language. In short, this method can expose the ways that language that is supposed to be moving the institution forward can, in fact, work to support an inequitable status quo. By parsing out the discourses and subject positions within a set of texts, analysts can spell out the exact ways that inequity and inequality are reinforced by official language.

If it has shown anything, this dissertation has shown that the discursive field surrounding diversity at NFU is not entirely flattering to the institution. The discourses reveal the ways that the Diverse Other is constructed by subject positions that emphasize their outsider qualities (Allen, 2008; Collins, 1986; Iverson, 2012), structure their institutional citizenship in ways that align with bourgeois, white norms of communications, colonize their bodies and presence on campus, and make them disciplined/surveilled subjects of the institution. These discourses and subject positions do not present the Diverse Other in a positive light, nor do they mitigate the othering tendencies in NFU's diversity language. Analyzing official language in this way allows us to see how inequity and inequality becomes anchored and instantiated within language. In other words, the Diverse Other is always already perceived in these ways at NFU, because the official documents and texts that provide the discursive structure for the institution offer no other way for them to be perceived. Even while diverse students, faculty, and staff argue that they should be seen as full institutional stakeholders on par with their majority peers, the institution discursively creates subject positions that both

limit the Diverse Other and inherently structure the ways through which they can interact with the institution.

Therefore, discursively speaking, the Diverse Other is stuck in their othered subjectivity (Ahmed, 2012; Said, 1977). Similarly, NFU is stuck in inequitable structures. As discussed above, diversity language becomes a stasis chamber that limits diversity action—rather, the talk becomes the action that results in few further actions (Ahmed, 2012). Language coalesces into discourse, and discourse becomes the structure within which inequitable conditions appear. Therefore, when NFU’s diversity discourses circulate inequitable subject positions, they also continually (re)inscribe the inequitable structures of the institution at the same time. In other words, these discourses are actually creating many of the inequitable conditions at NFU and continue to do so as long as the language that supports them continues to circulate. Thus, while the diversity language speaks to some change that NFU is looking to, the status quo of the institution does not actually shift (Allan, 2008; Iverson, 2012). Even as the documents speak of fairness, tolerance, and inclusion, the institution continues to exclude certain individuals.

In addition to upholding an inequitable and unequal status quo, the diversity discourses in circulation at NFU also result in an institutional centering of the majority. The most obvious way that this occurs is in the discourse of access and its subsequent subject positions of Outsider/Outsider Within (Allan, 2008; Collins, 1986; Iverson, 2012). Even in texts that discuss admissions and retention policies designed to retain the Diverse Other, they are always already excluded by those very texts. In other words, the individual that is already expected to be present within the institution is one who is a member of social categories that we perceive to be non-minoritized: men, white people,

people without disabilities, or domestic citizens, for example. The documents specifically mark out those who may not belong, thus discursively creating their non-belonging. Noting an individual's difference allows that majority to become a backdrop that receded from view, but is centered in text by its very normality. In many ways, the language around diversity protects the majority by turning it into that faceless, homogenous backdrop, because then the dominant categories cannot be marked and disciplined in the ways that the Diverse Other is. The diversity discourses bring this backdrop into being, following Ahmed (2012) when she wrote, "I have suggested that diversity pride becomes a technology for reproducing whiteness: adding color to the white face of the organizations confirms the whiteness of that face" (p. 151). Thus, the majority, already the recipient of social privilege and capital, is once again structured as the uncomplicated norm as well as the beneficiary of the contributions that the Diverse Other makes to the campus.

The final way that these diversity discourses and subject positions (re)inscribe inequity is through the valuing of difference over the more complex issues surrounding equity and equality. In other words, these texts affirm in institution's belief in the value of difference instead of engaging in frank discussions about the ways that power, privilege, and subjectivity play out both in the world and in higher education. Baez (2004) theorized that diversity research that rests on difference reifies biological differences as natural and inherent, thus producing the very difference that it wishes to study. Thus, differences that are perceived—such as racial differences or gendered differences—are continually reinforced and recreated (Baez, 2004). Likewise, Harper (2012) saw this interest in difference over inequality as a way that policymakers and

researchers alike replicate oppressive systems in their institutions and studies. Focusing on difference means that NFU does not need to grapple with the all too real effects of our society's structuring of identity, power, privilege, and opportunity. By focusing on difference, the institution can find a number of ways to actively disengage from those issues (Ahmed, 2012). Stewart (2017) called this focus on—and celebration of—difference a “politics of appeasement” (n.p.). This appeasement aims to calm dissent and smooth over PR issues by both instantiating diversity as difference as part of the institution's rhetoric and making difference the important quality of a person, rather than acknowledging the systemic ways that the institution itself values certain types of difference over others. NFU's focus on difference follows quite closely Stewart's (2017) formulation of what separates diversity from social justice/equity: while NFU is closely focused on numbers, value-free neutrality, and disseminating the contributions given by the presence of different bodies to the campus, it should, perhaps, be asking questions about what systemic harm or disparate impacts these policies, plans, and procedures may have.

### **Implications for Research, Policy, and Practice**

I approached this dissertation with a concern that diversity utterances were not at all what they seemed. Therefore, the critique that I offered above is a product of that concern as well as a suspicion that people may talk diversity while not taking the necessary steps to *enact* diversity. This study offers several intriguing implications that will help researchers, policy-makers, and practitioners take those necessary steps. This study shows the ways that one institution of higher education strives for, but falls short

of, equity and transformation; therefore, these implications are intended to act as suggestions for other institutions who may find themselves in similar predicaments.

## **Research**

This dissertation employs policy discourse analysis, an innovative method for analyzing the effects of policy and the ways that policy constructs problems and vice versa. Indeed, one of the primary methodological contributions of this study is that it shows the intriguing and illuminating possibilities presented by policy discourse analysis in higher education settings. While many previous studies utilizing this method have focused on issues related to social justice and equity, policy discourse analysis could be used to analyze the effects of numerous types of policies and texts in a higher education context. Additional methodological contributions include using policy discourse analysis in a single-institution setting. Previous policy discourses analyses have typically focused on a subset of institutions (Allan, 2008; Dirks, 2016; Iverson, 2012). This dissertation adapted policy discourse analysis to focus on a single institution's culture and was thus able to not only examine diversity discourses in formation but also to theorize about how embedded diversity language and work was at NFU. Both of these methodological implications open up avenues for future research on higher education in general and diversity, social justice, and equity specifically.

This study suggests that future research should be undertaken along at least two different avenues. The first avenue is concerned with policy discourse analysis and its possibilities for higher education research. More research is needed to understand the diversity discourses at different institutions, especially in different institutional types. The majority of diversity-related policy research analysis has taken as their contexts land-

grant and/or research universities, which may explain the congruency of some of the findings. Policy discourses analysts should consider turning their eye to other types of institutions, including community colleges, private institutions, liberal arts colleges, and comprehensive institutions. Analyzing the diversity-related policies and plans at minority-serving institutions would be especially interesting in a comparative context. Likewise, more topics of interest should be explored via policy discourse analysis as well as the inclusion of different types of policy. Studies utilizing policy discourse analysis to explore state- and national-level higher education policies would undoubtedly offer timely and important findings.

The other avenue of research suggested by this study concerns both the creation and reception of institutional policies. This dissertation focuses on policies as texts weighted down with social meaning; it cannot, however, offer concrete evidence of what policy makers were thinking or of how the policies are received or understood. Therefore, I believe that studies that combine policy discourse analysis with data gathered about the policy creation process and the thoughts of those charged with creating those policies should be undertaken. Such research would shed even more light on discourse in action. Similarly, research into the ways that historically marginalized individuals on college campuses interpret institutional policies, plans, and statements would be certainly complement both the present research and future research on diversity policies. It would be especially interesting if such research could shed light on any possible congruencies or lack of congruency between creators' intentions and readers' interpretations, and how each intersect with a discourse analysis.

## **Policy & Practice**

As a dissertation that is primarily interested in explicating the intricacies of institutional policies, the implications for policy and practice necessarily see the two as inextricable. The first, and perhaps most important, implication of this research is the need for more reflexive analysis of the existing policies in an institution and of the policy-writing process. Discourse is totalizing. People and policies—and institutional and organizational culture—cannot be outside of discourse. That being said, institutions and the actors within them can—and should—be more reflexive about both the language they use and the discourses that circulate within their policies. It is unlikely that anyone who participated in writing the Affirmative Action Plan, for example, truly thinks of diverse students as outsiders or victims; however, that discursive creation is still there. Reflexive and intentional policy review and policy writing could help policymakers be aware of what discourses they are invoking and offer alternatives to the most damaging ones. This area is particularly ripe for a researcher/practitioner collaboration or intervention (e.g., Bensimon, 2007). Traditional accounts of the policy formulation process do not take discourse into account, but should in the future (Lindblom, 1980; Stone, 2002). A researcher/practitioner collaboration would also serve to expand the usefulness of policy discourse analysis.

This dissertation is useful to practitioners, especially in student and academic affairs units, because of its ability to illuminate the ways that seemingly fair-minded policies can, in fact, reinforce inequitable representations of diverse individuals as well as inequitable structures in the institutional culture. Even though individuals cannot change the inequitable circumstances that are rife in higher education institutions, they can soften

them for students, colleagues, and others. Being more aware of the inequities written into policies, plans, and official documents can help practitioners theorize where an intervention may be needed or what such an intervention might look like. Even simply being more aware of the discursive underpinnings of institutional policy could help practitioners identify areas where policy needs to be refined or rewritten as well as areas where they may need to advocate for students, faculty, and staff.

A final implication of this study concerns the colonizing impulse of the discourses described in previous chapters. This colonizing discourse invokes a common defense of diversity: that it is beneficial for all students to have diverse individuals with them as peers, faculty, and staff. This discourse displays a process of commodification and utilization of both diverse bodies and the labor of those bodies. Furthermore, at times in the texts, this commodification and colonization of diverse bodies seems to be the price for their admittance to campus—they must contribute something to the campus in order to be allowed to stay. Unearthing this colonizing discourse illuminates one way to participate in the process of decolonizing higher education. As an institution with deep roots in oppressive systems, it is necessary to engage in the on-going, relentless process of disengaging from oppressive systems and replacing them with new discourses that emphasize everyone's innate humanity and wholeness of being. Policy discourse analysis offers a method that can aid liberatory agendas in higher education. Recognizing the colonizing impulses in diversity policy is one step towards a more equitable institution.

### **Making Diversity Transformational Again**

As I have hopefully shown, diversity discourses and the subject positions that they produce give us the opportunity to glimpse what lies beneath the surface of

institutional rhetoric and culture to see what a public research university is really talking about when it talks about diversity. These discourses display the ways that diversity work is only superficially embedded in the institutional fabric as well as the ways that diversity language works to maintain an inequitable status quo. I want to conclude this dissertation with some thoughts about the utility of diversity rhetoric and the ways that higher education institutions might resituate and resignify diversity work to access its transformative potential.

The discourses analyzed here underscore the ways that well-intentioned policies may result in excluding, essentializing, commodifying, and circumscribing historically minoritized individuals in higher education. Much of these discursive occurrences rest on the understanding of diversity as difference as well as diversity's usurpation of more radical or transformative efforts, such as antiracist or equal opportunity initiatives (Ahmed, 2012). A focus on difference that does not account for the systemic allocation of oppression and privilege ultimately recreates those very systems. Higher education researchers and practitioners are no less to blame when it comes to this focus—as Harper (2012) showed, research about race that does not include discussions about racism often results in repeating racist assumptions. When difference is protected without articulating who would truly benefit from that protection, then that protection can be justified for anyone in the name of difference. Similarly, other research has shown that simply having many difference people on campus has little effect on others, despite the oft-invoked claim that diversity is an educational benefit (Gurin et al., 2002; Gurin, Nagda, & Lopez, 2004; Milem, 2003; Milem & Hakuta, 2000). What institutions must engage with is intentional diversity—not difference for difference's sake, but careful, intentional

engagement with the larger structures that circumscribe opportunity and experience in today's world. Colleges and universities would do better to examine the effects of privilege, oppression, and history both in society at large and on their specific campuses. Rather than fetishizing difference and creating exclusive categories, these institutions could then take initiatives that would produce more transformative effects.

Thus, higher education institutions should focus on equity rather than diversity—making their campuses a more equitable and just environment for students, staff, and faculty. One way to achieve this goal is to attend to another reality that these discourses revealed. The texts from NFU overwhelmingly indicate that the individual—either a member of the majority or the Diverse Other—is the preferred unit of intervention. These discourses both prescribe individual subjectivity and locate the responsibility for diversity work with the individual. However, fixing individual behavior or even opinions about historically minoritized groups does not address the larger, systemic issues facing them on a college campus. Rather than legislating on an individual level, colleges and universities need to address the systemic inequality and inequities that structure daily life on their individual campuses. These policies, procedures, and plans locate the problem with individuals, including the Diverse Other. However, making higher education a more equitable and just institution requires that structures be fixed, rather than people.

## **APPENDIX A**

### **NFU POLICIES, PLANS, AND OFFICIAL DOCUMENTS**

#### **Strategic Plans & Related Documents**

- NFU Strategic Plan
- Diversity Strategic Plan
- Diversity Plan

#### **Mission Statements**

- University Mission Statement
- Diversity Mission Statement
- Financial Aid Services Mission Statement
- Center for Multicultural Advancement Mission Statement

#### **Personnel Policies and Related Documents**

- Union Contracts
  - Faculty Union Contract
  - Graduate Student Union Contract
  - Resident Assistant Union Contract
  - Clerical Staff Union Contracts
  - Professional Staff Union Contracts
- Tenure & Promotion Handbook
- Research Misconduct Policy
- Principles of Employee Conduct
- Anomaly Increase Policy
- Search Procedures
- Tenure and Promotion Procedures

#### **Student Policies and Resources**

- Code of Student Conduct
- Community Standards
- Academic Dishonesty Policy

#### **Institution-Wide Policies**

- Intolerance Policy
- Pluralism Policy
- Sexual Harassment Policy
- Civil Rights Grievance Policy

## APPENDIX B

### SAMPLE CODE TABLE: SOLUTIONS

#### *Accommodations*

- Committees
- Compromise
- Family-related Assistance
- Gender-Neutral Bathrooms
- Official Oversight
- Partner Hire Program
- Physical Improvements
- Technology
- Work Accommodations

#### *Communication*

- Committees
- Diversify Curriculum
- Diversity Officers
- Diversity Policy Creation & Dissemination
- Diversity Improvement Goals
- Events
- Information Sessions
- Outreach
- Strategic Planning Process
- Trainings
- Website

#### *Gather Data*

- Assessment
- Climate Survey
- Enrollment DataHiring Data
- Interviews—Exit or otherwise
- Inventory

#### *Prevention*

- Anti-Discrimination Policies
- Diversify Curriculum
- Laws
- Trainings

#### *Protection*

- Affirmative Action
- Diversity Maintenance in Workforce
- Diversity Officers
- Grievance Procedures

Harassment-free environments  
Laws  
Non-Discrimination Statement  
Not Condoning Bad Behavior  
Official Oversight  
Paid Leave  
Salary Equity Procedures  
Trainings

***Recording & Reporting***

Audit System  
Clery Act  
Committees  
Disclosing Disability  
Diversity Officers  
Documenting & Reporting Harassment  
Grievance Procedures  
Hiring Logs

***Remediation***

Affirmative Action  
Change to Situation  
Committees  
Conflict Resolution  
Disciplinary Measures  
Dismissal  
Grievance Procedures  
Investigation  
Official Intervention  
Salary Adjustment—to redress anomalous salary issues  
Trainings

***Representation***

Accessibility  
Affinity Groups  
Alumni Boards & Panels  
Award Winners  
Committees  
Diversify Curriculum  
Events  
Faculty & New Hire Demographics  
Hearing Board Members  
Institutional Communications  
International Engagement  
Intersectional  
Non-Discrimination Statement

Representative Search Procedures  
Scholarship Programs  
Workforce Recruiting & Demographics

***Support***

Academic Leadership Fellows Program  
Accessibility  
Affinity Groups  
Alternate Search Procedures  
Career Development  
Committees  
Diversity Officers  
Events  
Faculty Development  
Financial Aid  
Funding  
Health Services  
Mentorship  
Official Intervention  
Performance Evaluations  
Professional Development Scholarship Programs  
Services Delivery  
STEM Diversity Institute  
Technology  
Universal Design  
Veteran Programs

***Improve Climate***

Academic Freedom & Freedom of Opinion  
Accountability  
Affirmative Action  
Alternate Search Procedures  
Assessment  
Childcare  
Committees  
Community Engagement  
Conduct & Discipline  
Denouncing Injustice  
Diversify Curriculum  
Diversity Officers  
Events  
Faculty Development  
Funding  
Gender-Neutral Bathrooms  
Increase Retention  
Mentorship

Provide Support  
Recognition/Reward  
Services Delivery  
Share Responsibility  
Strategic-Planning Process  
Technology  
Trainings  
Universal Design  
Website

***Increase Access***

Affirmative Action  
Alternate Search Procedures  
Apprenticeship Program  
Community Engagement  
Diversity Officers  
Funding  
Gender-Neutral Bathrooms  
Holistic Admissions Processes  
Mentorship  
Non-Discrimination Statement  
Partner Hire  
Recruit URM  
Representative Search Procedures  
Strategic Planning Process  
Trainings

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