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Finding a Place for Women of Color: An Examination of Definitions of Inclusion, Neoliberalism, and Their Effects on Women of Color in Higher Education

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Finding a Place for Women of Color:

An Examination of Definitions of Inclusion, Neoliberalism, and Their Effects on Women of Color

in Higher Education

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in partial fulfillment of a Bachelor of Arts Degree in Political Studies

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Chapter 1:

Introduction

In this current historical moment, in which there is a heightened awareness of identity, universities and colleges across the nation have adopted the language of diversity, equity, and inclusion. It is common to see colleges advertise themselves as inclusive institutions which strive to incorporate many identities and backgrounds into campus culture. This phenomenon is occurring because identity politics is rapidly changing the modern political terrain. How individuals identify themselves has become a political and academic focal point, is often subject to intensive political debate, and has resulted in authoritative action. Because of this phenomenon, universities across the nation propagate themselves as diverse and inclusive institutions.

One university in particular, Cactus College, a small, predominantly white, private, liberal arts institution, is known for the emphasis it places on social justice within its values and curriculum. The Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion page on Cactus College's website indicates that "equity" and "inclusion" are fostered by "collaborating with all facets of the college", "cultivating the conditions for all to thrive while at the same time mediating social determinants of educational outcomes", and through "accountability and action while practicing mindfulness, compassion, and interconnectedness". Concepts of equity and inclusion are said to be embedded within the college's educational objectives and values, which both include intercultural understanding, social justice and responsibility, and interdisciplinary learning. These values are intended to be the reference point for all institutional operations and help to build the image of diversity and inclusion that the college wishes to uphold. Curriculum often highlights issues of oppression, institutional and interpersonal racism, sexism, classism and the like, which help to

promote intercultural understanding and ideas regarding social justice and responsibility. The institution utilizes its stated values, educational objectives, and curriculum to maintain an image as a university which accepts and supports students from various backgrounds who face issues of marginality and to stress that the college centers diversity, equity, and inclusion within its practices.

Regardless of the college's emphasis on social justice, intercultural understanding, diversity, and inclusion, the college is still lacking in its ability to include those it claims to, specifically women of color. Women of color have expressed continued feelings of exclusion on Cactus College's campus, though the college's inclusive policies and practices have yet to be called into question. Continued feelings of uncomfortability, due to racial marginalization, on college campuses can lead students of color to drop out of their institutions of higher education (Harwood et al, 2015). This places women of color on Cactus College's campus at risk for withdrawal and indicates that Cactus College is not attempting to "cultivate the conditions for all to thrive", when women of color continue to face a culture of racism and sexism on campus that could affect their educational outcomes. For this reason, inclusion at Cactus College, and the manner in which it affects the experiences of women of color in higher education, was investigated.

The purpose of this study was to determine how definitions of inclusivity may differ among university actors present within discussion based classroom spaces, including students, and professors, and how these university actors understood their role in establishing an inclusive classroom. The objective was to determine how these various definitions of inclusion, present within the classroom, affected the experiences of women of color at Cactus College, a predominately white, small, private, liberal arts college in Southern California. The driving

research questions for this study included: How do definitions of inclusion differ among classroom actors within discussion based classrooms? How do these various definitions affect the experiences of women of color at Cactus College? I pay special attention to the presence of neoliberalism at Cactus College, and the manner in which neoliberalism voids the democratic values embedded within definitions of inclusion, hindering the realization of inclusive, democratic classroom communities. Overall, my research highlights how the unique positionalities of women of color provide them with an acute awareness that the language of inclusion, as utilized by Cactus College, is disingenuous.

Through my analysis, I will first explore the purpose of the push for inclusion in higher education. I argue that the entanglement of education and politics, as well as the popularization of identity politics in the public sphere, has incentivized the use of diversity and inclusion rhetoric within academic spaces. Moreover, I argue that this rhetoric is used by colleges and universities, who commodify race and identity, for the purposes of attracting capital gains from possible "consumers". Next, I will describe the methodologies used to conduct this study, the nature of my respondents, and the limitations of this study. Chapter 2 will address the democratic values present within definitions of inclusion and the differences among definitions of inclusion. Democracy, as discussed here, will be conceived as a way of life within a community and not as an organizing rubric for a governmental structure. The democratic values present in definitions of inclusion include: participation, engagement, acknowledgement, community, and belonging. These values suggest that my respondents aspired to cultivate a progressive democratic community, realized through democratic commitments and democratic ways of relating to one another, in the classroom and on campus, generally.

However, differences in definitions were present, specifically within definitions provided by women of color. Women of color stressed the importance of narrative, and conceived acknowledgement differently than their white counterparts, as they hoped for acknowledgement of narratives and acknowledgement of wrongdoing. When narratives were left unacknowledged in classroom spaces, women of color were made to feel uncomfortable, had fear of being perceived stereotypically, and ultimately led women of color to withdraw from traditional forms of participation. Differences in definitions of inclusion suggest that definitions of inclusion were influenced by the identities of those who provided them, as women of color were the only demographic to contain differences within their definitions.

Chapter 3 will illuminate that women of color were the demographic of respondents most likely to be aware of the presence of neoliberalism within the push for inclusion. This was exhibited by women of color's awareness of instances of "decoupling" and the prioritization of capital over social justice commitments. Women of color's unique positionalities contributed to their acute awareness of neoliberalism at the college, because of their encounters with racism and sexism on campus. Though, two white male respondents did point to the neoliberal nature of inclusion at the college, as they were aware that the college's values were often utilized as "propaganda" and noticed the tokenization of students and faculty of color on behalf of the college. However, white respondents were not aware of their own instances of "decoupling", such that white respondents noted that they thought about inclusion more so at Cactus College than any other academic institution and that they spoke about inclusion in social spaces while simultaneously viewing the segregation of social spaces as "natural" or "normal". This highlighted a gap between their stated values and their actions.

The presence of decoupling in the private lives of respondents suggested that neoliberalism had become hegemonic at the college. This is important, because neoliberalism voids democratic values, hindering the realization of inclusive democratic classroom communities. This may be why women of color had continued to express feelings of exclusion at Cactus College. This analysis will highlight that, although respondent's hoped to foster a democratic community that allows for inclusion realized through democratic commitments and ways of relating to one another, inclusion that is derived from a neoliberal system will continue to be insufficient at including women of color.

Chapter 4 will discuss these findings, as they imply that the use of inclusive rhetoric by Cactus College is disingenuous because of the ways in which women of color continued to experience and express feelings of exclusion. My findings also indicate that inclusion was thought of in different ways in different contexts, which speaks to the fact that inclusion is an ongoing process; a phenomenon that must be remade, over and over again, in different settings in order to be achieved. Recommendations as to how to achieve inclusion, as mentioned by respondents and myself, are provided in Chapter 4 as well. Overall, this research seeks to contribute to a larger scholarship regarding inclusion and the experiences of women of color in higher education.

Literature Review

Why has there been a push for inclusive rhetoric within institutionalized academia and what is the purpose of utilizing this kind of rhetoric within these spaces? The language of inclusion can be found in various political and educational theories, including: the inclusion moderation thesis[1], inclusive democracy[2], inclusion as a function of democracy, liberalism, behaviorism, cognitivism, and constructivism[3], institutionalism, social systems theory, and more. However, the scholarship on this topic suggests that this language did not appear to account for the manner in which academic institutions have marginalized certain demographics of students, like women of color, but instead emerged out of the entanglement of politics and education. This indicates that this language serves a political goal; more specifically, a neoliberal one. The use of inclusive rhetoric allows universities to signal to prospective and attending students, who function as "consumers" or "buyers" within today's model of higher education, that the institution itself aligns with the values of this demographic.

Michel Foucault (1991) illustrates the state's focus on education, as a tool for political indoctrination. He argues that society was invented by the state, and became a political target, because society allowed the state to introduce governmental order into everyday life. This invention allowed the nation state a totalizing form of power over the polity, as it provided an opportunity for the governance of customs and conduct of subjects in their private lives. As the concerns of the state shifted to the private spheres of the public, a new regime of power was able to take hold. Foucault termed this regime: bio-power, as it is "an explosion of numerous and diverse techniques for achieving the subjugation of bodies and the control of populations" (Foucault, 1979, pg.140). Bio-power is conceived on a macro-level, it allows the state to

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[1] Bermeo, 1997.
[2] Fotopoulos, 1997.
[3] Ertmer and Newby, 2013.

subjugate populations as a whole (Newsheiser, 2016). This macro-level form of subjugation was achieved through the meticulous categorization of humanity both on a scientific level, with a focus on species, population, and fertility and through the use of "disciplinary technologies" (Foucault, 1995). Disciplinary technologies allow for the subjugation, transformation, and improvement of the subjects, unbeknownst to the subjects themselves. Disciplinary technologies are conceived on the micro-level, as they deal with the subjugation of the individual (Newsheiser, 2016).

Institutionalized education itself exercises its own disciplinary technologies on subjects of the state, specifically technologies which relate to "knowledge-power" (Foucault, 1979), another Foucaultian concept. In regards to knowledge-power, Foucault asserts that knowledge is an instrument of power and that power, in and of itself, allows for the reproduction of knowledge that serves its purposes (Foucalt, 1979). In sum, the state's fixation with its subjects everyday lives does not exclude the realm of education. The academy, as a center for the production and reproduction of knowledge, instead became integral to the state's goals. The role that academia plays within the categorization and organization of the human species, as well as educational institutions' ability to manipulate and control every new subject of the state, has allowed education to serve the goals of the regime of bio-power.

Other philosophers have also drawn attention to the political implications of education, specifically Hannah Arendt (1968) who discusses this phenomenon in the context of the United States. She explains that education became intertwined with politics, due to the difficulty of unifying the various ethnic groups within the United States and the ability of education to unify these groups as "Americans" (Arendt, 1968). She asserts that there is an assumption that this entanglement, of education and politics, will produce a better world with "progressive models"

of education, but that this assumption has dangerous implications. This is because the expectation that education can shift, or radicalize, the values of every new generation, who are simultaneously undergoing an indoctrination of the state's original, or "Old World", values -- which are themselves embedded within society -- is contradictory (Arendt, 1968). A world, preconstructed to serve the goals of the state already exists. In this case, attempting to utilize a form of "progressive education" that instead aligns itself with the emerging values of the "New World" is unproductive, as it does not deconstruct "Old World" values, but instead allows both "New World" and "Old World" values to coexist with the assumption that these preexisting "Old World" values will be forgotten.

Putting Arendt in conversation with Foucault requires an analysis of Foucault's argument regarding "normalization". Norms are essential to the regime of bio-power because of the manner in which norms seep into one's everyday life (Rainbow, 1984). Norms are not necessarily explicit, but instead become implicit in the structuring and ordering of society, and therefore motivate the distribution of society around norms which are imposed by the state (Rainbow, 1984). Specifically, within education, norms operate from a colonial conception of who should and shouldn't be within academic spaces. Louise Autar (2017) argues that the knowledge produced within academic settings is the residual result of a history of colonization which refuses to recognize certain bodies as human in order to legitimize oppressive structures (Autar, 2017). This type of knowledge is considered universal, due to its incessant reproduction, and seeks to reinforce the norm, which is characterized as white, male, able-bodied, middle-class, heterosexual bodies and is inherently patriarchal, Eurocentric, and colonial (Autar, 2017).

Bodies that are outside of the norm are marked as other, and disregarded due to this otherization (Autar, 2017). Institutional and classroom dynamics are based and directed towards

the norm, much like society (Foucault, 1979), contributing to the centralization of it. Autar conveys that the norm, "arrests classroom dynamics by centering the accommodation to this norm above the wellbeing of other students" (2017, pg. 312). Otherized bodies are then forced into silence, as to be accepted and to survive in an institutional setting is to believe that the norm is true (Autar, 2017). This leads to the reproduction of Eurocentric and patriarchal hierarchy within educational institutions and classroom spaces.

In this case, women of color do not fit into the gendered and racial aspect of the Eurocentric norm and are otherized by their academic institutions due to residual power structures that are rooted in coloniality (Autar, 2017). These power structures prioritize whiteness, maleness, high socioeconomic statuses, and other identities. However, women of color must comply with these structures of power in order to survive within their institution, as speaking up about their otherization may subject them to institutional rejection.

With attention to Autar (2017), one can see the manner in which norms operate within our educational systems, such that classroom dynamics accommodate them. As the norm is rooted in coloniality, because of the inherent racism that exists within the nation state (Arendt, 1968), the norm centers white, male, able-bodied, middle-class, heterosexual bodies and is patriarchal and Eurocentric (Autar, 2017). Because classroom dynamics are structured around these norms (Rainbow, 1984), the introduction of "New World" values within a progressive educational system, that attempts to incorporate the various ethnic groups found in the US, will continue to be unproductive as long as the norms of the preexisting and continuously reproduced "Old World" are present (Arendt, 1986). In other words, "New World" inclusion is not achievable if women of color continue to be otherized within their educational institutions, because of the continued reproduction of "Old World" norms. For this reason, education will

continue to serve the goals of the state (Foucault, 1991), through its use of knowledge-power (Foucault, 1979) as a disciplinary technology (Foucault, 1995), and will, therefore, continue to reproduce the norms that are essential to the regime of bio-power.

However, diversity, equity, and inclusion rhetoric allows for the diversion of attention away from the maintenance of the norm, which marginalizes women of color, for the purposes of establishing an appearance that aligns with the national political climate. Currently, there is a heightened awareness of identity, and identity related politics, within both public and political spheres. This is evidenced by the growing scholarship on the topic and the national discourses surrounding identity and its influences on our political and social systems. The popularization of identity politics within the current moment can be explained by a quote, from Harmon Zeigler and Wayne Peak (1970). They illustrate that:

> "The survival of the political system is determined by the level of support which it receives, and support-particularly support in democratic polities - is a function of demand satisfaction and socialization. Therefore, it follows that democratic political systems must respond to changes in value demands resulting from environmental change or suffer the consequences of decreased popular support" (Zeigler and Peak, 1970 pg.118).

This indicates that the increased awareness of identity within the public consciousness has thus motivated the emerging discourse surrounding identity politics within the political system and other various fields. Because educational institutions " indoctrinate the oncoming generation with the basic outlooks and values of the political order" (Zeigler and Peak, 1970, pg.115), and are intertwined with the political, the intentional use of diversity and inclusion rhetoric by universities is a reflection of the shifting political order which mirrors the focus of the public.

This conclusion is supported by Jose Ortega in his essay *Mission of the University*. He articulates that perceptions of educational institutions are contingent upon the institution's ability to align with national political climates. He states, "Principle of education: the school, when it is truly a functional organ of the nation, depends far more on the atmosphere of national culture in

which it is immersed than it does on the pedagogical atmosphere created artificially within it. A condition of equilibrium between this inward and outward pressure is essential to produce a good school." (Ortega, 1966, pg.97). Therefore, the appearance of an educational institution is contingent upon the degree to which the institution aligns with the national political climate, further justifying the adoption of diversity and inclusion rhetoric in higher education.

However, further drawing on Arendt's work, the shift towards this type of rhetoric, without a true deconstruction of the norms embedded within educational institutions, allows for a tactic of diversion.

> "Thinking is a dangerous activity, according to Arendt, in that it enables us to call into question fixed values and conventions. But if thinking is dangerous, non-thinking is even more so. Non-thinking leads individuals to accept values and conventions blindly, which means that a radically different code of values or set of conventions can be substituted for the existing ones and no one will complain or even much notice" (Allen, 2002, pg.141).

In this case, this shift towards a centralization of identity politics within higher education reflects the substitution of Old World values for that of New World ones (Arendt, 1986). However, when this is done without intention -- or any real deconstruction of the traditional, Eurocentric, and colonial norms embedded within our institutions -- it simply allows for a distraction from the reproduction of Old World values and Eurocentric, colonial, norms.

With this in mind, Sarah Ahmed (2012) argues that diversification policies are not always written with the purpose of being implemented, but instead serve as an alternative for action. Through interviews with diversity practitioners, a reflection on her own experience as one herself, and by "following diversity documents around" (Ahmed, 2012, pg. 7), Ahmed found that diversification is utilized as a performative tool in institutional settings. "For an institution to perform well is to be seen performing. "Doing well involves generating the right kind of appearance" (Ahmed, 2012, pg. 85). Diversification documents can simply be produced, to maintain a public appearance, but do not necessarily function as a tool to hold institutions

accountable. This appearance can simply be generated by the practice of writing and publishing a diversification policy document, as "The point of the document can be to have a document you can point to" (Ahmed, 2012, pg. 90). Once the document is published, the responsibility of the necessary actions outlined within it is placed on the actors within the institution. In this case, the institution can authorize the document and then refuse responsibility for it (Ahmed, 2012). Because the document simply exists, if the institution is ever accused of a lack of diversity, the document can be cited as a counterargument.

The circulation and knowledge of the document allows for marginalization of "otherized bodies" (Autar, 2017) to go unseen. If the document's existence is known, then the institution's performance is intact. Ahmed maintains, "If the movement becomes the action, or the aim, then moving the document around might be what stops us from seeing what documents are not doing. If the success of the document is presumed to reside in how much it is passed around, this success might "work" by concealing the failure of that document to do anything" (Ahmed, 2012, pg. 97). The document is then used as a measurement for diversity and inclusion and is not evaluated based on it's content, but instead on it's existence because, "The existence of the document is taken as evidence that the institutional world it documents (racism, inequality, injustice) has been overcome" (Ahmed, 2012, pg. 100). The writing of documents then becomes a substitute for working towards diversity and inclusion on an institutional level, as institutions are able to perform racial equality because the document has been established (Ahmed, 2012).

This implies that, although women of color continue to be marginalized, the institutions that these women attend are able to avoid claims of harmful action against groups, like women of color, by creating and circulating "diversification documents" without actually enacting any meaningful policies or action that could support the students they claim to (Ahmed, 2012). In

this case, the adoption of diversity and inclusion rhetoric, that seeks to centralize and commodify identity politics within our educational system because of its growing popularity (Hill and Wilson, 2003) does not necessarily do the work it is assumed to. Education, as an institution, is not required to address the issues that identity politics brings to light, but instead required to align with the national political climate by focusing their attention on the use of inclusive rhetoric (Zeigler and Peak, 1970; Ortega, 1966). This serves as a diversion away from the true problem at hand (Allen, 2002; Ahmed, 2012): the ongoing, covert violence against marginalized groups, such as women of color, within these spaces.

Not only does diversity, equity, and inclusion rhetoric serve as a diversion tactic away from the maintenance of the norm, but it also allows academic institutions to signal to demographics which center identity within their political values, that these values are reciprocated by the institution. This invites the presence of "consumers", and their monetary contributions, into the university. Consumers are considered to be both prospective and attending students. The conceptualization of students in this manner is a result of the privatization of higher education. John Morrissey asserts that, "Universities have effectively been transformed over the last decade into 'powerful consumer-oriented corporate networks'; a trend that has 'very serious implications' for the academy…" (2015, pg.618). Specifically, these trends illustrate that higher education must function within the globalized neoliberal market, whereby, "Education is increasingly dominated by individualistic goals and extrinsic benefits in which students are consumers of an educational product. No longer is education seen as a social good with intrinsic value, but instead it has been reconceptualized as a commodity that a student purchases for his or her own gain" (Saunders, 2007, pg.4). In this case, institutions of higher education are evaluated

with a cost/benefit form of analysis, as students and their families must consider how their investment of capital, into the institution, will benefit them in both the short and long term.

This market based conceptualization of higher education has resulted in the need for universities to advertise themselves to both prospective and attending students. As there is, undeniably, a competitive market within privatized higher education, institutions are required to strategically brand themselves in a manner that both aligns with values of, and presents a variety of benefits to, their prospective buyers. Matthew Hartley and Christopher Morphew (2008) assert that, through the emphasis placed on various aspects of the university, institutions are able to build and project a certain "institutional identity" to prospective and incoming students. This "identity" is dependent on what the institution views as appealing to those it is marketing itself towards. Because identity politics has become so popular within the political and public spheres, the commodification of diversity and inclusion, by universities, is often appealing to buyers and helps to build an attractive institutional identity.

Specifically, Ellen Berrey found that diversity discourse and programs are adopted into the mainstream of the university as a marketing tactic because they produce economic "pay-offs" (2011). For example, student demographics are often used as a metric for calculating national reputation. Because of the competitive higher education market, prospective "consumers" of higher education often factor a university's reputation into their cost/benefit analysis when deciding which school to attend. In this case, if diversity is a means to achieve a national reputation, and if reputation is a means to achieve a higher rate of consumption among buyers, then diversity is seen as a means to a "pay off".

Additionally, Berrey points out that diversity can also be framed as "functional" and is, therefore, a useful marketing tactic. "This was the diversity rationale: all forms of

diversity—including racial diversity—bring institutional benefits such as an enhanced

educational environment, better national leadership, stronger national security, and greater

competitiveness in the global economy." (Berrey, 2011). Institutions themselves recognize the

appeal that working and learning within diverse settings presents to their consumers, as diversity

can facilitate better learning environments and can be used to gauge a student's preparedness for

working in the globalized economy by future employers (Berrey, 2011).

Interestingly, though, Berrey reveals that the commodification of diversity was targeted at

a certain demographic: white students. This was because of the large number of white applicants

and white enrolled students who indicated that racial and ethnic diversity was one of the main

reasons they chose to attend an institution (Berrey, 2011). This type of marketing is often specific

to predominantly white institutions (PWI's), as these institutions must cater to their biggest

consumers. This is illuminated by Lewis and Shah, who performed a study that interrogated how

Black students at PWIs understand and experience diversity and inclusion initiatives at their

universities (2021). Through this study, they found that diversity was often surface level,

inclusion was not felt by Black students on campus, and diversity and inclusion initiatives

centered whiteness as a whole. Specifically,

> "Black students, and students of color more generally, are used as props to sustain the
> practice of marketing diversity (structural/visual) to attract students as consumers (Harris
> et al., 2015). Institutional and administrative leaders, who are usually overwhelming
> White, possess the power to manipulate and construct a diverse student body, which
> serves the needs of the institution while situating Black students as a commodity that
> White students and a broader White public can consume (Iftikar, 2016). This
> commodification allows Black students to be positioned as providers of diversity that
> Whites students, faculty, and staff can both consume in order to perpetuate discourses of
> multiculturalism" (Lewis and Shah, 2021, pg. 198).

In this case, because white students often indicate that multiculturalism is a motivating factor

when deciding where to attend college (Berrey, 2011), and because PWIs often receive high

numbers of white applicants (Berrey, 2011), there is a market incentive for PWIs to advertise

their diversity and inclusion initiatives to these demographics (Lewis and Shah, 2021). This implies that the commodification of identity is centered around whiteness, and does not aim to be equitable or meet the needs of students of color.

Overall, the literature on this topic suggests that the entanglement of education with the political (Arendt 1968; Foucault, 1979) has incentivized diversity and inclusion rhetoric within academic spaces. As there has been a popularization of identity politics in the public sphere, educational institutions must align with this shifted focus (Zeigler and Peak, 1970; Ortega, 2006). This does not require the deconstruction of Old World values (Arendt, 1968) or a deconstruction of the Eurocentric, colonial norm (Autar, 2017), but simply necessitates the substitution of Old World values with that of the new. This is done through the creation and circulation of diversification documents (Ahmed, 2012), which allow for diversion away from the maintenance of the norm.

Moreover, because of the privatization of higher education within a competitive, globalized, neoliberal market, educational institutions are motivated to view both prospective and attending students as "consumers" (Saunders, 2007; Morrissey 2015). In order to attract consumers, institutions need to foster an "institutional identity" that is appealing to these consumers (Hartley and Morphew, 2008). Fostering an "institutional identity" includes the commodification of race and identity for the purposes of attracting capital gains from white demographics, who view diversity as functional in the context of their short and long term goals (Berrey, 2011; Lewis and Shah, 2021) because of the popularization of identity politics within the public sphere.

However, a gap exists in this scholarship. If diversity, equity, and inclusion rhetoric has emerged out of the entanglement of education with the political, and therefore seeks to meet the

needs of a neoliberal agenda, are neoliberal ideologies driving inclusive action within higher education? Research on what ideologies motivate the methods and practice of inclusion within higher education is lacking. My research seeks to understand the driving ideologies of inclusion within these spaces; to ascertain how deep the influences of neoliberalism -- or possibly some other driving ideology that has not been addressed by the current scholarship -- are on our educational system. This research will contribute to a larger discussion regarding the function and origins of inclusion rhetoric within the academy.

Furthermore, research regarding the effects of inclusion, within higher education, on women of color is lacking. Research has focused on how the push for diversity, equity, and inclusion in the current moment affects the experiences of students of color in higher education. Women of color are deserving of research that centers their experiences and narratives, as their positionalities are unique and cannot always be accounted for in the larger demographic of students of color. This research will contribute to a larger conversation regarding the experiences of women of color in higher education, specifically within the context of the push for inclusion.

Methods

This study consisted of semistructured, one-on-one, ethnographic interviews with 12 student and professor respondents, as well as classroom observations within 5 discussion based courses at Cactus College, a small, private, predominantly white, liberal arts college in Southern California. All respondents, and the college studied, will be referred to by pseudonym for the purpose of anonymity. Interviews were mostly conducted and recorded over the online platform Zoom, as this study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic between January of 2021 and March of 2022. Though, 2 interviews were held in person, at the request of the respondents, and recorded through the Voice Memos feature of an Apple i-Phone. Interviews were transcribed using the online platform Sonix.ai, which is protected through encryption.

All 8 student respondents were undergraduate, ranging from 18 to 22 years of age. 2 student respondents identified as women of color, 5 identified as white males, and 1 identified as a white female. Students were either contacted through text or email and were sent a consent form, which contained information about the study, before agreeing to participate. In this case, all respondents were able to exercise informed consent. Student respondents were drawn directly from the research site; the discussion based classrooms which were observed. This was done to allow students to identify which college they attended, providing the researcher insight on which students to contact, as many courses observed contained students from multiple different colleges. Only one of the courses observed did not contain students who were interviewed.

Respondents were only allowed to participate in this study if they attended or were employed by Cactus College. Professor respondents were also drawn directly from the research site, that being the courses observed. Only one professor, of a course observed, was not interviewed. Professor demographics, except for race and gender, were not assessed. Of the 4

professors interviewed, 2 identified as white females, 1 identified as a white male, and 1

identified as a woman of color. Their fields of study ranged from the social sciences, to the

humanities, to STEM fields.

Interviews lasted for about 30 minutes to one hour, and were classified as both

semi-structured and ethnographic. The interview question guide consisted of seven questions,

including:

1. Do you think about inclusion in the classroom?
2. When you think of inclusion, what does it look like to you?
3. How do you define inclusion?
4. Do you have any relevant experiences that you feel have influenced this definition?
5. Do you have any relevant readings you've done, or frameworks, that influence this definition?
6. Where did you read this for the first time?
7. How do you try to emulate inclusion in the classroom?

Due to the semi-structured nature of the interviews had, questions were loosely structured around

the thematic framework of inclusion, however conversations did not strictly abide by the

question guide. The conversation-like style of semi-structured interviews allowed respondents to

express themselves in ways that did not always align with the questions included in the guide.

Professoriate respondents were all contacted through email, and discussion based courses

were chosen using three criteria. Firstly, the discussion based courses studied had to be taught by

a professor on tenure track. In other words, discussion based courses taught by visiting or

contingent faculty were not permitted to be studied, as this could have produced a possible threat

to their viability for tenure. Secondly, the courses studied had to be classified as discussion

based. Discussion based classrooms were defined as courses that encourage, or require, active

and attentive oral participation. Discussion based courses were chosen because of the ways in

which inclusion can be fostered through active and attentive participation, such that all students

must feel like they can participate in course discussions through the employment of inclusive

practices. Thirdly, the courses chosen had to align with the schedule of the researcher. In this case if a discussion based course taught by a professor on tenure track occurred during a time in which the researcher was busy, the researcher did not contact the professor of the course for possible participation in this study. These courses could be from any department of study present at the college. Classroom observations were conducted in order to determine whether the structure of the courses aligned with the definitions of inclusion, provided by both professors and students. During classroom observations, notes and jottings were taken and then later analyzed.

Discussion based courses that permitted the researcher to be present were observed for two sessions, to allow for the researcher to observe various teaching practices employed in the classroom spaces. Two discussion based classes were observed over the platform Zoom and three discussion based classes were observed in-person. Only one of the discussion based courses was observed for more than two sessions, that being the course that both female student respondents if color were enrolled in. This was the only course that was observed over Zoom for the entirety of a 16 week semester, between January 2021 and May 2021.

This course was observed for the entirety of the Spring 2021 semester because the aim of this research project was initially different. Such that, this research study was initially intended to determine whether or not women of color were being marginalized in discussion based classrooms at Cactus College. To determine this professor, peer, and pedagogical behavior was investigated, in a discussion based classroom throughout the entirety of the semester, to analyze how the behavior of classroom actors may marginalize women of color in the classroom. To ascertain the effects of this behavior on women of color, the women of color drawn from this course were interviewed every 3 weeks, during the 16-week semester, to closely examine possible feelings of marginalization. These women were not asked the same questions included

in the question guide provided above. Instead, conversations regarding inclusion arose in discussions about marginalization and the last interview, of the 5 interviews had with these women, focused on inclusion. Additionally, the professor of this course was not interviewed. However, after the findings of the initial study were analyzed, it was determined that tensions between women of color and other classroom actors may be caused by differences in definitions of inclusion. To account for this finding, the research questions and methods of the project were modified in June of 2021, and resemble the questions and methods described here.

Professor and student interviews were coded in three stages. All coding was done manually and only inductive coding was performed. The first stage of coding took place after transcriptions had occurred. During this stage, interviews were separated into three categories: professors, female students and professors of color, and students of other demographics. Interview transcriptions were examined to determine the main themes of each respondent demographic. Main themes included: definitions of inclusion, ways inclusion is thought of, influential experiences or readings, inclusive practices employed, identity, institutional values, and awareness of neoliberalism. These larger themes constituted the first round of coding.

After the main themes of each respondent demographic were established, a second stage of coding was conducted. During the second stage, respondent demographics were combined to detect the larger differences and similarities between groups. The second round of coding split main themes into three categories: inclusion, neoliberalism, and other. These three categories were then analyzed again, to determine the main themes of each category. Inclusion codes included: participation, engagement, access, comfortability, acknowledgement, language, community, belonging, respect, equality, and understanding. Neoliberalism codes included: awareness, identity, institutional values, and performance. Other codes included: exclusion,

stereotypes, uncomfortability, recommendations, and experiences. The third, and final, round of coding was conducted to determine the main themes that were supported by multiple respondents, compared to main themes that may have been the isolated experience of one individual, and how these themes should be organized in the context of this thesis.

Class 1 (Figure 1)

Respondents	2 female students of color
Amount of Interviews had with Respondents	5 interviews, with each female student of color
Amount of Classroom Observations	16

Class 2 (Figure 2)

Respondents	1 white female student	1 female professor of color
Amount of Interviews had with Respondents	1 interview with each respondent	
Amount of Classroom Observations	2	

Class 3 (Figure 3)

Respondents	4 white male students	1 white female professor
Amount of Interviews had with Respondents	1 interview with each respondent	
Amount of Classroom Observations	2	

Class 4 (Figure 4)

Respondents	1 white male student	1 white male professor
Amount of Interviews had with Respondents	1 interview with each respondent	
Amount of Classroom Observations	2	

Class 5 (Figure 5)

Respondents	1 white female professor
Amount of Interviews had with Respondents	1 interview with each respondent
Amount of Classroom Observations	2

Limitations

This study was conducted during the COVID-19 pandemic, which placed limitations on data collection. Classroom observations conducted over the platform Zoom, affected the manner in which classroom dynamics could be observed. Such that, this online platform often decreased levels of participation among students and allowed students to turn their cameras off or mute themselves while in class. This meant that student reactions to classroom dynamics were often not able to be observed, as they could have been in an in-person setting, and limited the classroom observations conducted.

Additionally, the nature of the COVID-19 pandemic made respondent recruiting difficult. Classroom observations conducted in-person likely would have allowed for the researcher to contact more respondents, possibly increasing the sample-size of the study. A limitation of this study is the small nature of the sample size. There were only two female student respondents of color, both of which identified as black women, and one female professor respondent of color whose racial background cannot be conveyed for the purpose of anonymity. If repeated, the study should include women of color from other racial backgrounds. There were only six student respondents from other demographics, including white males and females, all of which identified as cis-gender. If repeated, the study should include respondents of other demographics, including cis-gendered men of color from various racial backgrounds and respondents of other genders. Moreover, women of color respondents were not drawn from each of the courses observed, and

were only present in one of the courses observed. If repeated, the study should include women of color respondents from each of the courses observed.

Lastly, because the project was modified about half-way through data collection, the professor and students of other demographic groups were not interviewed for one of the courses observed. This course was that which was observed for the entirety of the 16-week semester. Moreover, for one of the courses observed after this project was modified, students were not interviewed. These are considered to be limitations of this study.

Chapter 2:

Democratic Values Within Definitions of Inclusion

All students and professors, women of color included, provided definitions of inclusion that were embedded with democratic values. These values include: acknowledgement and rhetoric; participation and engagement; and community, belonging, and understanding. Although definitions of inclusion were conceived with different foci including, but not limited to: physical disability, race, socioeconomic status, or characteristics that fall outside of social constructions of difference, definitions utilized concepts that align with democracy as an ideology. These values suggest that my respondents aspired to cultivate a progressive democratic community, realized through democratic commitments and democratic ways of relating to one another, in the classroom and on campus, generally.

Although all respondents shaped their definitions of inclusion around democratic values, there were differences in the expectations women of color had for inclusion compared to other respondents. Women of color were the only demographic to stress the importance of narrative, within their definitions of inclusion and inclusive practices. Women of color also stressed the importance of acknowledgement in different contexts than other respondents. The importance of acknowledgement, for women of color, was discussed in the context of offering narratives or in the context of recognition of wrongdoing. This contrasted conversations with respondents of other demographics, who often referred to acknowledgement in the context of personal identity, historical relevance, or the crediting of student points. Women of color highlighted the importance of acknowledgement of narrative, as they wished for support or affirmation from others in the space.

The lack of acknowledgement of women of color's narratives may be a symptom of "making space". Respondents of other demographics often felt they should make space for other students to speak, as they acknowledged their identity often influenced their likelihood to take up space in discussion, while women of color often hoped for support after the provision of narratives. This implied that making space, by restricting commentary, was not always the best strategy to foster the inclusion of women of color in the classroom. Regardless, differences in definitions of inclusion, such as unacknowledged narratives, led women of color to feel uncomfortable in the classroom, produced fears of being perceived stereotypically by their peers and professors, and motivated their withdrawal from traditional forms of participation. This indicated that these differences among definitions of inclusion led women of color to feel excluded from the classroom.

This chapter will discuss and analyze these notions of democracy, embedded within these definitions, by drawing on various democratic theorists. This chapter will highlight that, although definitions of inclusion were similar in many ways, women of color's definitions contained key differences that were not accounted for by respondents of other demographics. This illuminates that, although definitions of inclusion were homogeneous in their ideological backing, identity did affect differences in these definitions and these differences ultimately led to feelings of exclusion.

Acknowledgement and Rhetoric

Many respondents, women of color included, described acknowledgement and rhetoric as integral to the creation of an inclusive classroom space. Acknowledgement was thought of as recognition of one's own identity, recognition of the identities of others in the space, or giving

credit to an individual or community who had contributed to one's understanding of a concept which students were either elaborating on, continuing, or critiquing. Rhetoric and language were used to practice acknowledgement, but also to demonstrate allyship with some of the struggles classroom actors faced in their personal lives. Students and professors recognized that the utilization of particular kinds of rhetoric was integral to fostering the comfortability of all present. Acknowledgement, and proper uses of rhetoric and language, were often employed by professors as a model for inclusive behavior in the classroom space and were both revered by and adopted by students, women of color included.

Acknowledgement and rhetoric are described, by theorist Iris Marion Young (2000), as linguistic tools that can further inclusive democratic deliberation between disagreeing or differently situated individuals. Young categorizes these linguistic tools as greeting or public acknowledgment, affirmative uses of rhetoric, and narrative or situated knowledge. Greeting is defined as a facet of everyday communication, "where people acknowledge one another in their particularity" (Young, 2000, pg.57-58). On a deeper level, "The political functions of such moments of greeting are to assert discursive equality and establish or re-establish the trust necessary for discussion to proceed in good faith" (Young, 2000, pg.60). Acknowledgement was utilized as an inclusive practice within the classroom by professors, which was then modeled by students. One white female professor stated:

> "I'll try to bring back different points from different days and keep acknowledging different points or even in that day itself. And I guess that also serves as a model of the students making sure that they're listening to their classmates. And I've seen them now say, "Oh yeah, I really remember that point that so-and-so made". There's a lot more acknowledgement."

Students were aware of this professor's attempts at ensuring student points were credited. A white, male, student respondent, from the class in question, stated in our interview, "Like recognizing when other people had already brought something up. I think that's something, for

instance, that the professor does a lot that I really appreciate." He had also indicated that this was a practice that he had adopted, because of how much he appreciated the white, female, professor's use of this practice.

However, acknowledgement was also thought of as recognition of personal identity or the historical relevance of a topic. White professors who specialized in cultural or racial academic fields that they were not a member of made a point to acknowledge their whiteness at the beginning of their course to indicate, to students who were a part of the topical communities, that they recognized the power dynamics inherent in their positionality. Students also communicated to me that they often factor in their own identities when considering how to conduct themselves in a classroom space. This was not, necessarily, a form of public acknowledgement, but instead a form of acknowledgement that occurred internally. One white, male, student respondent explained to me, "There's also the white guy thing. So, I just feel like I should, in general, put a limit on talking because I may naturally be inclined to take up more space than my peers in the classroom, and so just a thing to be thinking of." In this case, this student recognized how his identity might hinder the inclusion of others in conversation, as white voices are often prioritized in academic spaces and discussions (Ochoa and Pineda, 2008; Harwood, 2015). The practice he employed, of limiting commentary due to an awareness of his identity, was termed "making space".

Moreover, the acknowledgement of the historical relevance and/or context of class content, that may involve or center oppressed individuals or communities that have previously been excluded from mainstream consciousness, was also prioritized by professors. One white, male professor explained, "Acknowledging, and acknowledging the importance of every individual in the space that we're talking about. Acknowledging the historical relevance of each

individual in the classroom, understanding that there are multiple factors, historical factors, that have such a strong influence in what we are today." This was used to demonstrate credit to those who have been denied it in the past and to correct past instances of societal exclusion in the classroom space. Overall, acknowledgement was used to establish discursive equality in the classroom and to establish trust among all those present, aligning with the purposes of acknowledgement illuminated by Young (2000).

Rhetoric, as described by Young, refers to what is said and the manner in which it is said (Young, 2000). Rhetoric has discursive intent; it can be used to either include or exclude individuals and/or communities. Inclusive rhetoric articulates, "the specificity of context and audience, and exhibiting a desire to accommodate to it" (Young, 2000, pg.70). Examples of this employed by professors, in the courses observed, included allowing students to communicate their gender pronouns to the class, in order to validate the various genders present in the space. The white, male, professor discussed above also took time to ask and clarify, with his students, the proper gender neutral term to refer to the Latiné community, as the difference between Latinx versus Latiné has recently become subject to debate. He indicated in our interview, "Using language that demonstrates, at least in a sense, that you're allied with, you know, critical race theory or whatever, that you believe in it, even if you're not the most effective implementer of it that your language clearly indicates that to your students in particular." In this case, his clarifying question was used to demonstrate that he was allied with students who fall outside of the gender binary, and that he recognizes the pitfalls of the gender binary itself.

Women of color, in particular, discussed at length uses of language and rhetoric as a practice of inclusion. This was because rhetoric that was not accommodating (Young, 2000) often made them feel uncomfortable, or excluded, in the classroom. Imani, one of my female

student respondents of color, noted that her level of comfortability in the course was affected by students who utilized rhetoric that made it clear that they did not fully understand the weight of what they were discussing and that the rhetoric used, when referencing unfamiliar situations such as poverty, lacked respect for those who did experience these situations. Serena, my other female respondent of color, noted this as well, drawing on an incident that occurred in class during a student presentation. She recalled the experience and her reaction:

> "I remember in the presentation last class, they read this quote that I think said something about freedom and slavery. And I automatically, when I heard that quote, I also kind of automatically had a reaction of, you know, the way that people will throw that around and it's a weird comparison to make of, 'Oh I have to pay taxes. And I have to respond to the government, which makes me enslaved'. When you know, within the context of what slavery really was…"

This comment made Serena feel as though the term slavery, which for many triggers images of violence, death, torture, oppression and more, was being employed in a manner which negated this historical context. As someone with black lineage, the comparison made between slavery and paying taxes can discount the reality of slavery itself. This signified a disconnect, as those who made this comparison were able to contrast these two experiences because they were far from the reality of slavery. Thus, certain rhetoric used by students indicated to my women of color respondents a lack of understanding which heightened their uncomfortability in the space. Experiences, like that described above, made women of color feel less inclined to participate in discussion. With this in mind, the use of inclusive rhetoric that is accommodating to the classroom audience (Young, 2000) heightens women of color's feelings of comfortability in the classroom, therefore making them feel more included and more inclined to participate in class discussions.

Overall, acknowledgement was used to credit student points and to recognize personal identity or historical relevance of a topic. These uses of acknowledgement allowed for the

establishment of discursive equality (Young, 2000) in the classroom because they helped to

foster respect and provided validity to the contributions of students. Both respect and credit help

to foster the element of trust that Young (2000) describes as crucial to acknowledgement.

Rhetoric was used to recognize the importance of social struggles that university actors may face

and to display allyship with these social struggles. This largely reflects the function of rhetoric

that Young (2000) describes, because these uses of rhetoric pay attention to the specificity of the

audience present, the contexts that this audience is forced to confront, and the desire to

accommodate this audience. When rhetoric, that did accommodate audience or the contexts they

confront, was used, women of color in the space often felt uncomfortable and excluded from

class discussions. In this case, definitions of inclusion which stress the importance of

acknowledgement and rhetoric reflect aspects of an inclusive democracy described by Young

(2000).

Participation and Engagement

Respondents also indicated that participation and engagement were integral to fostering

inclusion in the classroom space. Professor's often prefaced their emphasis on participation as a

function of inclusion by highlighting their attempts to make course content accessible to all

present, in order to allow for all to participate. Participation, as an integral part of democracy, is

best theorized by Carole Pateman (1970). Various 'classical' theorists of democracy have

underscored the role of participation, by the 'average man', within democratic societies. Pateman

notes that classical theories of democracy are often elitist and instead argues that participation in

social spheres allows for the development of an individual's attitudes and psychological

qualities. Thus, the practice of participation in all facets of one's life is educational, and prepares

individuals for participation in democracy itself because it empowers feelings of political efficacy (Pateman, 1970). In essence, participation begets participation. Moreover, within industrial contexts, minor changes to existing structures of authority which allow for the participation of those considered "subordinate" to authority figures also allow for a developed sense of political efficacy (Pateman, 1970). However, Pateman also points out that an inherent necessity of a participatory democracy is equality, in regards to decision-making power. She argues that participation itself helps to deconstruct unequal distributions of decision-making power (Pateman, 1970).

In an attempt to foster participation and engagement, professor's utilized diverse instructional styles to account for the diverse learning styles of students and, overall, to make classroom content accessible. These included: assignments free from negative consequence; collaborative styles of learning like mind mapping or small discussion groups; providing student's autonomy in choosing what type of assignment they want to submit or what topics they wish to cover in assignments; and allowing students to tailor or customize their work based on their capability. Some of the methods of instruction described allowed for the deconstruction of structures of authority in the classroom. For example, providing students the ability to decide what kind of work they want to, or can, produce allowed for a redistribution of decision-making power from the authoritative 'professor' to the students (Pateman, 1970). These diverse instructional styles were meant to foster a space where everyone was, as one professor put it, "comfortable sharing information in different ways".

Additionally, hegemonic notions of authority and decision making power in the classroom were often deconstructed through Freire's (1970) liberatory model of education. My white, female, professor respondent indicated that,"I will often position myself, in the classroom,

not at the head but sitting amongst the students [...]. It sort of signals that more democratic

decentered, collaborative style of learning, which my hope then is that people don't feel like they

have to belong or impress me, but that they're in a space where they can be open about sharing

ideas." This same professor also noted that she intentionally makes it clear to her students that all

those present within the space are simultaneously teachers and learners, herself included. This

concept is central to Freire's liberatory model of education (1970). Some students had also

adopted this pedagogy into their own inclusive action, one noting that *Pedagogy of the*

Oppressed (Freire, 1970) was integral to his conception and definition of inclusion. The

liberatory model of education was thought to foster both increased levels of participation among

students, as well as inclusion in the classroom, and was explicitly valued by female students of

color like Serena.

Imani noted in our interview that she felt that equal levels of participation among students

is more equitable.

> "Everyone's kind of giving in the same amount or talking the same amount. Participating
> the same amount. And that way, I feel like it'll be more comfortable for all students
> because if everyone's talking, you're going to want to talk, you know what I mean? It
> makes a little bit more like less pressure. And then I feel like that would also help, at least
> girls of color like me, because I know if I see another girl of color talking or person of
> color talking, I'm going to want to talk too a little bit."

Imani's awareness of the ability for participation to remove disparity in the classroom largely

reflects Pateman's theory, as Pateman asserts that through the practice of participation,

decision-making power is able to be redistributed (1970). Imani's comment also suggests that the

act of participation, on behalf of all students present in the space, will allow for the

empowerment of female students of color. This, in and of itself, is a redistribution of power,

away from normalized conceptions of who should be participating within an academic setting

(Autar, 2012).

Engagement, another form of participation, was also emphasized by students. I differentiate engagement from participation because engagement can occur unbeknownst to others in the space. For example, one male student respondent explained that one way he attempts to be inclusive in the classroom is through the act of listening. Two students indicated that they felt that inclusive classroom spaces should be free from distraction, noting that they feel excluded from classroom discussions when their peers are texting or browsing the internet because they are unable to focus due to learning differences. In this case, engagement, through the act of listening and paying attention, are distinct from participating in classroom discussion orally. These forms of participation can go unnoticed by others, however indicate engagement in course content. Engagement was thought to assist in the creation of an inclusive classroom.

Pateman's ideology of participation (1970), which asserts that participation in all aspects of social life cultivate political efficacy and help to redistribute power, was reflected in definitions of inclusion provided by students and professors. Participation was fostered through accessibility to class content. Professors and students alike hoped to break down pre-existing structures of power in the classroom through the application of Freire's liberatory model of education (1970), to allow for participation. Participation among all classroom actors was conceived as more equitable by women of color, because it allowed for redistributions of power, and the creation of an engaging classroom space free of distraction was thought of as more equitable to students who manage learning disabilities.

Community, Belonging, and Understanding

Fostering a sense of community and belonging among university actors in the classroom was thought of as integral to inclusion as well. Students and professors noted that cultivating a

mutual understanding among themselves assisted in the cultivation of a community.

Understanding was discussed as an appreciation or recognition of difference as valuable, instead

of as a barrier to community. This suggests that students and professors aspired to cultivate

understandings of difference that did not result in dualistic thinking (Lorde, 1984). Dualistic

thinking assumes that people have been conditioned to view human difference in simplistic

opposition, such as good or bad, dominant or subordinate, etc (Lorde, 1984). Dualistic thinking

can lead to divisions among classroom actors. In order to avoid these divisions, and instead

create a classroom community in which all present felt that they belonged, students and

professors wished to foster an understanding, among themselves, of difference as valuable.

The importance of community, belonging, and understanding to inclusion reflects a

conception of democracy outlined in the writings of Chantal Mouffe (1992). Mouffe asserts that

citizenship and a sense of belonging to a community are not dictated by a singular identity that

overrides all others, as conceived in the ideology of civic republicanism, or an identity among

others, as conceived in the ideology of liberalism. Instead, citizenship is a commonality among

members that does not erase plurality, because it both values individual liberty while recognizing

that all democratic differences are equally opposed to forces or discourses that negate difference

as a whole (Mouffe, 1992). Overall, citizenship is:

> "A common political identity of persons who might be engaged in different communities
> and who have differing conceptions of the good, but who accept submission to certain
> authoritative rules of conduct. Those rules are not instruments for achieving a common
> purpose - since the idea of a substantive common good has been discarded - but
> conditions that individuals must observe in choosing and pursuing purposes of their own"
> (Mouffe, 1992, pg.30-31).

Belonging and understanding are integral to Mouffe's notion of citizenship to a community.

Citizenship both requires an understanding of authoritative rules of conduct, as well as values

commonality that respects diversity. Thus, belonging is not hindered by difference, but instead cultivated through the understanding of a value of difference.

Definitions of inclusion which stressed the importance of community, belonging, and understanding aligned with Mouffe's definition of citizenship (1992). The overarching commonality among classroom actors was described as the desire to learn. Students recognized that, in order to learn, they had to be open to different types of people and perspectives. They also recognized that learning can be achieved by being pushed out of one's comfort zone, through confrontations with difference. One white male student respondent described this as, "Being pushed out of your comfort zone or your perspective with people. You're forced to have these moments of not looking at it through your, or their, perspective, it's like all of a sudden you realize you're both just people. And once you have that kind of moment of understanding, it becomes easier for them to develop belonging."

Both students and professors also noted that, within the classroom, there should be a mutual understanding among classroom actors that everyone may be at different points in their learning process or academic journeys. This understanding was meant to be one that was free of feelings of shame. Professors noted that this understanding could be cultivated by welcoming questions, such as the notion that 'there are no dumb questions', or by facilitating opportunities for students to learn from one another. Professors also asserted that opportunities for students to learn from one another, and to learn together, allowed for humility and required students to withhold judgment. In this case, these opportunities helped prevent feelings of shame among classroom actors who may not fully comprehend the course content. This was because these opportunities obligated students to explain their comprehension of course content, as well as discrepancies in comprehension among one another . This, again, draws on Freire's liberatory

model of education (1970), that conceives all classroom actors as both learners and producers of knowledge.

All students belonged within the classroom community because they all had something to offer or learn. In this case, differences in comprehension of class content did not hinder the construction of a classroom community, but instead were considered crucial to the fostering of the classroom community itself. Overall, definitions of inclusion provided by respondents described the necessity for all actors to recognize commonality in the desire to learn and understood difference as integral to learning itself. Belonging was fostered both through this commonality and through this understanding. This largely reflects the nuances of citizenship described by Mouffe (1992), highlighting that a democratic ideology was embedded within definitions of inclusion that stressed community, belonging, and understanding.

Differences Among Definitions of Inclusion

Although all respondents shaped their definitions of inclusion around democratic values, there were differences in the expectations women of color had for inclusion compared to other respondents. Women of color were the only demographic to stress the importance of narrative, within their definitions of inclusion or inclusive practices. Women of color also stressed the importance of acknowledgement in different contexts than other respondents. The importance of acknowledgement, for women of color, was discussed in the context of offering narratives or in the context of recognition of wrongdoing. This contrasted conversations with respondents of other demographics, who referred to acknowledgement in the context of personal identity, historical relevance, or the crediting of student points. Women of color highlighted the importance of acknowledgement of narrative, as they wished for support or affirmation from

others in the space. When this type of support was not offered, women of color often felt

uncomfortable in the classroom and feared being perceived stereotypically, which resulted in

their withdrawal from traditional forms of participation. Moreover, respondents of other

demographics often felt they should make space for other students to speak, as they

acknowledged their identity often influenced their likelihood to take up space in discussion,

while women of color often hoped for support after the provision of narratives. This implied that

making space, by restricting commentary, was not always the best strategy to foster the inclusion

of women of color in the classroom.

Narrative and the Importance of Acknowledgement

Young (2000) argues that narrative, similar to acknowledgement and rhetoric, is another

crucial aspect of a deliberative democracy, which requires a deeper understanding of inclusion

and political equality in order to promote justice. Narrative helps to foster understanding among

individuals who have different experiences or perceptions of what is important (Young, 2000). In

particular, storytelling -- a form of narrative -- is often the only vehicle to develop an

understanding of the experiences of those situated differently, can provide the social knowledge

required to broaden thought, and can assist in the naming of suffering as injustice (Young, 2000).

In general, narrative is integral to the promotion of an inclusive deliberative democracy (Young,

2000).

Women of color were the only demographic of respondents to raise the importance of

narrative in interviews. Serena expressed:

> "Centering people's voices, not in the way of like, "Oh, you've experienced this, so you
> have to share like, we should all listen to you. You should share." But like, you know,
> really impressing on people that people's actual, individual firsthand experience is way

more important than you could ever get from a book, and you have to understand your position in that. If you're someone who hasn't experienced it."[4]

Serena recognized, much like Young (2000), that narrative can help foster understanding between individuals and groups that are situated differently and can, therefore, help foster a more inclusive space. Similarly, Imani noted, "Lived experiences, in my opinion, should definitely hold more importance". She implied that she felt that narrative does not hold as much importance as it should within classroom spaces at Cactus College. Both respondents noted that, at Cactus College, they had been made to feel as though their personal experiences were not considered academically relevant to discussions in class. This was because, in the event that my female respondents of color did offer narratives, they had often gone unacknowledged by their peers or professor, leading them to believe others perceived their narratives as invalid contributions to discussion.

Serena explained, "I have this other perspective of being very aware that to a lot of people, personal experience is actually the opposite of what I perceive it as. And that it's an invalid form of discussion and that it's not as important as the text." When acknowledgement of personal narratives was not offered, Serena described feeling reluctant to speak in class because she felt that her peers did not engage with the personal experiences she shared. This feeling stemmed from the fact that other students rarely responded or offered support, when she shared personal narratives or opinions in class. Lack of engagement with Serena's commentary was observed during classroom discussions. Overall, Serena indicated that she did not feel

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[4] I recognize the emphasis placed, by my female student respondents of color, on experience and narrative and do not mean to detract from the importance of their narratives by unpacking their experiences with theories or books. What I am attempting to do with this thesis is engage in a critical analysis of theories and books to better understand women of color's experiences. This is not meant to indicate a superiority of books, within a hierarchy of books versus narratives, or to impose theories onto their narratives that do not apply to their experiences as women of color. In our interviews, I have asked questions that indicate that these women of color may not be experiencing what books or theories say they are. The difference, here, is that I have asked. I have not assumed a homogenous experience among all women of color and hold the experiences of these women, that they have chosen to share with me in interviews, in the highest regard.

comfortable participating in class because she felt that other students in the space were not engaged with the narratives she chose to share.

Unacknowledged narratives often felt isolating because these narratives were shared in predominantly white settings. Women of color often expected to be perceived stereotypically when sharing race-related narratives, when they were left unacknowledged. Serena noted, "There's sometimes I would say things that it's like, I really want to say this, but I know there's people that are rolling their eyes at me and saying that I'm dramatic or too sensitive or I'm being aggressive or something like that." The expectation that Serena had of her peers to view her as dramatic, sensitive, or aggressive, stemmed from stereotypes that are often imposed on women and people of Black descent. As Serena identified as a woman and a mixed race Black person, she often felt as though she would be perceived stereotypically when personal narratives, that related to her identity, were left unacknowledged. This was because others in the space often did not share these identities.

Imani experienced the same fears. She described an event in class, in which she had corrected the rhetoric of a white female student who had attempted to describe the institutional class barriers facing black communities. Imani, a black woman, corrected her in the hopes of fostering understanding between herself and the white peer who was situated differently than her (Young, 2000). However, many of the students in the course became silent after this event. Imani commented on this in our interview:

> "Yeah, I was pretty upset after the whole incident with that girl that I called out in class. Because at first I felt like people didn't see the problem. Like I felt like all the white kids were shocked that I had said something and that pissed me off and then I was doubting myself over and over again asking my friend, "Did you think it was stupid that I called her out?" "Do you think I should have done that?" I just kept second guessing myself after that incident and that made me not want to talk a little bit. I was like, I don't, it just felt weird."

The fact that students became quiet and did not validate Imani's commentary made her feel isolated in a space in which she was outnumbered. In the entire class, there were only two other black students and two other women of color. Because of the doubt Imani experienced, caused by the lack of engagement with her commentary, she sought out validity from her friend, one of the only other black students in the room. In this case, Imani was made to feel that she should have just stayed quiet, because she was not met with understanding or acknowledgment from her peers. This was exacerbated by the fact that black students, who she felt would likely recognize the validity in her commentary, were not present in the space. She was forced to seek out support, as it was not provided to her.

This event also caused Imani to feel uncomfortable speaking in class. She was worried about being perceived stereotypically by her classmates, "Because I feel like they get, you know, defensive and like, "oh, angry black person". No, I'm just letting you know, like yes, I'm upset, but I'm letting you know, for the future." This comment made it clear that Imani attempted to use personal narrative to foster understanding among herself and her classmates, by providing the social knowledge necessary to broaden thought (Young, 2000). She had indicated that she was trying to help her classmates understand the reality that members of her community often face. However, because her narrative was left unacknowledged, she felt less inclined to participate in class discussion after the event because she feared being perceived stereotypically, specifically as an "angry black person".

Fear of being perceived stereotypically exacerbated existing feelings of uncomfortability among women of color in the classroom. Feelings of uncomfortability led my female student respondents of color to become indifferent towards traditional forms of participation. My classroom observations indicated that, as the semester progressed, both of these respondents

rarely participated in class discussion. Imani and Serena would also leave class when race related discussions became triggering to them. Moreover, as this class was held on Zoom during the COVID-19 pandemic, it was common to see their cameras off during class, even on the occasions in which they contributed to discussion. In this case, their feelings of uncomfortability resulted in missed class time, minimal vocal participation in the main Zoom room, and disinterest in showing their faces. In essence, they withdrew from participating, in the ways that were often expected of them, because of the feelings of uncomfortability fostered in class.

However, it was clear to me that my female student respondents of color were still present, as our interviews highlighted their engagement with the course. Their silence was still active (Fredericksen, 2000; Housee, 2010), in the sense that they were still paying attention, as is exemplified by the fact that Imani rarely spoke or showed her face but left when topics of discussion became uncomfortable. This indicated she was still engaged with class discussion. On one occasion, she expressed to me, "Oh, I just got tired of the conversation and I was just like, yeah, no, I'm not doing this anymore. It was just the points that I was hearing, and then everyone's opinions and everything, I think I got frustrated." Although Imani indicated that the professor was respectful of the fact that she left class for personal reasons, it is plausible that the active silence of both of my female student respondents of color could have been perceived as disengaged or lazy by classroom actors. Thus, feelings of uncomfortability produce potential harms to the academic standing of female students of color in discussion based courses.

Unacknowledged narratives may have been a symptom of "making space", a practice said to be employed by many of my white, student, respondents[5]. Many white respondents noted

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[5]Unacknowledged narratives may have also been a symptom of white guilt. White guilt regards the shame or remorse that "springs from the knowledge of ill-gotten advantage" (Steele, 1990, pg.499). Guilt is located in the "inevitable gratitude one feels for being white rather than black in America" (Steele, 1990, pg.499) when confronting racial injustice or inequality. White guilt may have motivated silence when race related narratives were shared by women of color. I would like to acknowledge that white guilt is indicative

that they often attempt to make space for others by restricting their own commentary[6], because they recognized that their identities may make them more inclined to take up space in a classroom (Ochoa and Pineda, 2008; Harwood, 2015). However, the negative experiences women of color had with unacknowledged narratives illuminated that women of color often wanted their peers to speak up when they shared personal anecdotes. This was because they often felt isolated from class discussion when their narratives were left unacknowledged, and were then less inclined to participate in discussion generally.

In this case, making space for others, by restricting commentary, may not always be the most effective way to foster an inclusive space. Serena recognized, however, that there was a fine line between offering support and making space for others to share their personal experiences. "You have to know the difference between talking over someone and supporting someone which can get, you know, for some of those people it can be hard for them to not go over that line." In this case, female respondents of color recognized that acknowledgement of their narratives walks a fine line of offering support and taking up space. However, Serena also implied that acknowledgement in the form of support, when employed with the practice of making space, may be the best way to foster feelings of inclusion and comfortability among women of color in the classroom. Overall, acknowledgement of personal narratives was found to be crucial to the cultivation of an inclusive classroom.

Acknowledgement of Wrongdoing

Women of color were also the only demographic of respondents to frame acknowledgment as the recognition of wrongdoing. They indicated that taking accountability for

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of privilege, as the ability to choose not to engage with topics of race and racial inequality is, itself, a privilege.

[6] See Chapter 1, pg. 22.

both past and present exclusionary action, that occurred on behalf of that who is acknowledging, helps to cultivate a more inclusive space, as accountability indicated to my respondents a willingness to change exclusionary behavior. Young indicates that acknowledging one another in particularity can help to establish or reestablish the trust necessary for discussion to proceed in good faith (Young, 2000). Acknowledgement of wrongdoing was considered to accomplish the establishment of trust between women of color and others, both on an individual and institutional level. Serena hoped for acknowledgement, on behalf of her white peers, in the form of education. Specifically, through the act of learning about how they, or their demographic, have committed harm against others.

> "That whole thing of white supremacy is seen as a black issue or a people of color issue and not as a white people issue. And so I feel like whenever there's like liberal white people, they take accountability in the sense of like, 'Oh, I'm learning about this other group' instead of being like, 'I'm learning about my group and how we've hurt people and how I could have possibly hurt people'."

Here, Serena designated learning, that induces personal reflection, as a mechanism for taking accountability of wrongdoing on an individual level. Moreover, learning about the role of one's associated group in wrongdoing against other, marginalized, groups can assist in personal reflection about the ways in which an individual may be perpetuating these same wrongdoings. Oher white respondents stressed the importance of the acknowledgement of historical exclusion of oppressed groups, and the effects of this historical exclusion on contemporary society, to establish discursive equality[7]. However, this differed from the way in which Serena framed acknowledgement of wrongdoing. Instead, this type of acknowledgement was framed as the admission that past wrongdoing had occurred, and had influenced the current structuring of society, without the recognition of one's own role in that wrongdoing. In this case, the acknowledgement of one's individual role in wrongdoing or the current structuring of society

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[7] See Chapter 1, pg. 22.

was missing from this form of acknowledgement. In this case, acknowledgement of individual wrongdoing was missing from the definition of acknowledgment provided by white respondents.

Additionally, white respondents often acknowledged the role of their identity in the power dynamics of the classroom. This was done, externally, by white professors who specialized in cultural or racial academic fields that they were not a member of and, internally, by white students who recognized their identity might make them more inclined to take up space in the classroom. Although women of color often saw this action as beneficial to establishing both trust and discursive equality in the classroom (Young, 2000), this largely differed from acknowledgment of wrongdoing. Again, this difference in acknowledgement is contingent upon personal reflection, as the acknowledgement of identity recognizes the role of power dynamics within the classroom space but not the harm that has been, is, or may be, committed due to the utilization of privileges granted by these power dynamics. In this case, acknowledgement of identity and acknowledgement of wrongdoing differ.

Structural language is often used, by white individuals, to acknowledge the power structures they benefit from. This is evidenced in the examples used above, when white students and professors recognized the power dynamics inherent to their identity. Though they took steps to help deconstruct these power dynamics, by restricting commentary or utilizing the practice of acknowledgement, and although these practices were appreciated by women of color, these tactics did not allow for white respondents to develop a deeper understanding of the ways in which they may employ their privilege in ways that benefit them and harm others.

In this case, the utilization of structural language allowed for white respondents to draw attention away from personal reflection of one's own role within the structures that privilege their identities. Within the Privileged Identity Exploration (PIE) Model, the utilization of

structural language to divert from personal reflection is known as "intellectualization" (Watt, 2007). "An Intellectualization defense can be identified when a person avoids feeling dissonant by focusing on the intellectual aspects associated with the topics of social injustice" (Watt, 2007, pg.121). Although intellectualization is considered a normal, and often natural, reaction to difficult race-related discussions (Watt, 2007), it does not allow for the personal reflection that engenders acknowledgement of wrongdoing. Moving past these reactions and taking accountability for them can help improve conversations surrounding race and assist in the acknowledgement of wrongdoing on an individual level.

My female professor respondent of color also expressed that she hoped for accountability to be taken, specifically, on an institutional level as she had been subject to institutional professional harassment. She noted:

> "That accumulates over time and you get past it, but it creates a kind of baggage, right. That my pathway to Cactus College, at Cactus College, to where I am now, I'm a full professor. I have a lot of clout. I'm also someone who's very capable of speaking my mind but my passage here is not at all what I know other female colleagues, who were treated differently or who were responded to differently, or male colleagues have had. And that had to do with, I think, largely not just my gender, but also my racial identity or perceived racial identity. So I do understand that it had to do with who I am and not just where I was coming from. So, I think that history… I would like some way for the college to deal with that history. That it's not just me, there are several of us."

In this case, the professor needed Cactus College to re-establish trust (Young, 2000) with her by acknowledging the harms they had committed against, not only her, but the entirety of female professors of color who had also endured exclusion. Because this accountability had not yet been taken, on behalf of the college, this professor indicated to me that she did not feel that the adoption of inclusive rhetoric by the college, or the change of inclusive policies, exhibited a push for inclusion. "I'm not going to feel like Cactus College really has included me just because now we've changed our inclusive inclusion policies or something." Inclusion, in her eyes, was dependent on the acknowledgement of the college's history of exclusion against women of color.

Conclusion

Definitions of inclusion provided by respondents were embedded with various notions of democracy. Definitions and practices of inclusion that stressed acknowledgement and rhetoric demonstrated the linguistic tools that Young (2000) has indicated are crucial to the creation of an inclusive deliberative democracy that reflects political equality and promotes justice. Definitions and practices of inclusion that emphasized participation and engagement allowed for the redistribution of decision-making power and helped to deconstruct normalized conceptions of authority in the classroom. This is central to Pateman's (1970) conception of a participatory democracy, as she asserts that participation promotes political efficacy and redistributions of power. Lastly, definitions and practices of inclusion that prioritized community, belonging, and understanding indicated similar definitions of citizenship and political community provided by Mouffe (1992). This was because difference was conceived as central to the classroom community and because all classroom actors understood their commonality: a desire to learn. Thus, belonging in the classroom community was fostered through this commonality.

The democratic values provided within definitions of inclusion among my respondents, align with the progressive vision of democracy, which is defined as public, critical, participatory, and which embodies commitments that can, and should, be enacted in a variety of public and personal domains (Portelli and Konecny, 2013). These democratic commitments dictate that democratic individuals not shy away from difference, but instead engage with difference and disagreement (Portelli and Konecny, 2013). This is because the true democrat recognizes the value in difference and deals with these differences humanely, as this embodies the democratic ideals of cosmopolitanism and pluralism, which center inclusion of members from different

standings within the community (Portelli and Konecny, 2013). These ideals are supported by the democratic values present in definitions of inclusion

Differences in definitions of inclusion were also present among respondents. Women of color were the only demographic of respondents to stress the importance of narrative and the acknowledgement of wrongdoing. Narrative was important to women of color because it was viewed as a tool to foster understanding between themselves and their peers (Young, 2000), who were often situated differently because of the nature of the predominately white institution studied. When the personal narratives of women of color were left unacknowledged, by peers or professors, women of color were led to feel uncomfortable in class, feared being perceived stereotypically, and were less inclined to engage in traditional forms of participation in class. Lack of acknowledgement of personal narratives may have been a symptom of the inclusive practice of "making space". Although this practice was also considered integral to inclusion, by women of color and other respondents, women of color advocated for the employment of making space and offering support, through acknowledgement, to occur in tandem. In this case, recognition of the importance of narrative, and the acknowledgement of narrative, was crucial to fostering an inclusive classroom space for women of color.

Additionally, acknowledgement of wrongdoing was viewed as a necessary inclusive practice, because it allowed for the establishment, or reestablishment of trust (Young, 2000), between women of color and those acknowledging. Women of color wished for acknowledgement of wrongdoing on both an individual and institutional level. This type of acknowledgement was framed differently than acknowledgement of historical relevance or identity, because it required personal reflection and accountability. Overall, differences in definitions of inclusion highlight that identity plays a role in the ways inclusion is conceived by

individuals. Approaching inclusion in a generic manner erases student concerns that arise due to the specificity of their experiences, influenced by the various identities they hold. Women of color were attune to the importance of distinct, democratic ways of relating to one another because of the manner in which their unique positionalities affected their experiences in the classroom. The following chapter will address how women of color's identities influence their awareness of other factors that shape inclusion at Cactus College.

Chapter 3:

An Awareness of the Neoliberal Nature of Inclusion

Women of color were more likely, than other respondents, to recognize the presence of neoliberalism within the push for inclusion at Cactus College. This was evidenced through our interviews, when opportunities to explain feelings of exclusion arose, and within discussions regarding institutional values. I argue that women of color's awareness of neoliberalism is a function of their unique positionality. Their experiences with marginalization, on behalf of their peers, professors, administrators, and their institution of higher education, that resulted due to their racial and gender identities, provided women of color an acute awareness of the contradictions between the college's publicly stated values and action. They were forced to confront both racism and sexism within social and institutional spaces at the college and were, therefore, aware of instances of "decoupling".

Although respondents of different demographics were less likely to recognize or discuss the neoliberal nature of inclusion, some did recognize the individualization of the push for inclusion, and that the college's social justice commitments were used as "propaganda", and the tokenization of students and faculty of color. However, many student respondents did point to the fact that conversations about inclusion were present in social spheres at the college, and that, as students, they were motivated to think about or discuss inclusion at the college more so than any of the other educational institutions they had attended. This suggests that, although neoliberalism was not an explicit ideology embedded within definitions of inclusion provided by respondents, the neoliberal nature of inclusion had seeped into the peripheries of the institution, that being the student body. This highlights the hegemony of neoliberalism at Cactus College. Moreover, the presence of neoliberalism at Cactus College may help to explain the inability of inclusive,

democratic classroom communities to be realized, through democratic ways of relating to one another. This is because neoliberalism voids democratic values through its main tenets. The lack of inclusive, democratic classroom communities at Cactus College is evidenced by women of color's continued feelings of exclusion within the classroom.

Women of Color and Neoliberalism

The institutional values of Cactus College, as stated on their website, include: social responsibility, intercultural understanding, community, diversity, action, and more. These values were often thought of as being "social justice" oriented by respondents of all demographics. Although Cactus College prides itself in its values, and much of the faculty and student body were cognizant of these institutional values, my female respondents of color had observed instances of institutional "decoupling". In other words, these institutional values contradicted the actions of the student body, some faculty, and the institution itself. Instances of decoupling were noticed by women of color, more so than other respondents, because of their unique positionality. The intersection of their racial and gendered identities require women of color to confront both racist and sexist power dynamics embedded within social structures, settings, and institutions. Women of color's awareness of the neoliberal nature of inclusion was evidenced by their references to instances of decoupling. Essentially, they recognized, and experienced, that the institution they attended was not doing what it was saying.

Various scholars have noted that diversity and inclusion initiatives are not meant for students of color (Lewis and Shah, 2021), or for the application of stated institutional values. Recall Ahmed (2012)[8], who argues that diversification policies are not always written with the purpose of being implemented, but instead serve as an alternative for action. Ahmed found that

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[8] Chapter 1, pg.14

diversification documents can simply be produced, to maintain a public appearance, but do not necessarily function as a tool to hold institutions accountable. This is because once the document is published, the responsibility of the necessary actions outlined within it is placed on the actors within the institution. The phenomenon Ahmed is describing is often referred to as "decoupling", wherein institutions build gaps between public commitments and the dominant values present in their core organizational practices (Mampaey, 2017). Decoupling allows institutions to maintain legitimacy while also maintaining internal flexibility (Mampaey, 2017).

Decoupling is made possible through neoliberalism. This is because neoliberalism inspires the commodification of values, as the drive to privatize all aspects of public life motivates the recognition that values can be transformed into market niches. Simultaneously, neoliberalism allows for internal flexibility because the responsibility to remedy social problems or fulfill public commitments is placed on the individual. If, or when, these individuals do not fulfill this responsibility, the institution is able to avoid blame by reducing the issue to the individual actor. The ability of oppressive power dynamics, like racism and sexism, to exist under neoliberalism is best explained by Giroux (2003). He states racism is able to survive under neoliberalism because marketplace ideologies reduce racial issues to private problems, effectively replacing social responsibility with individual responsibility (Giroux, 2003). This is because neoliberalism works to widen the gap between political control and economic power, prioritizing the market over democratic norms and values (Giroux, 2003). At the same time, neoliberalism seeks to privatize all aspects of public life, consequently removing the public sphere in which criticism and collective consciousness could arise. Giroux explains, "Within this market-driven perspective, the exchange of capital takes precedence over social justice, the

making of socially responsible citizens, and the building of democratic communities" (2003, pg.196).

Building off of Giroux's argument, Chandra Mohanty (2013) applies this rationale to intersectional feminist theories. She argues that neoliberal restructuring of education occurred in concurrence with the adoption of post-feminist, post-racist rhetoric within the public sphere. Within this neoliberal discursive landscape, racial and gender identity transformed from issues of equity and power to market niches that could be commodified and sold (Giroux, 2003). In this case, feminist and anti-racist theories became commodities to be consumed, and were no longer valued for their liberatory insight (Mohanty, 2013). Within a university setting:

> "The complex political economy focus (highlighting power and hierarchy) of much feminist, antiracist theory, for instance, is either reduced to a politics of representation/presence/multiculturalism or seen as irrelevant in the context of a so-called postrace/postfeminist society. Thus, race and gender justice commitments, among others, are recoded as a politics of presence (or benign representation of various differences) in neoliberal universities" (Mohanty, 2013, pg.972).

Mohanty recognizes that the neoliberal phenomenon has dire consequences for women of color. These consequences were highlighted in the interviews had with my female respondents of color. Imani described thinking that Cactus College fostered an egalitarian campus culture, when she accepted admission, but that her opinion changed upon arrival to the college because of how quickly she encountered racism and sexism on campus. Encounters with racism included witnessing the use of racial slurs in social settings, exclusionary treatment because of her racial identity, and microaggressions. She expected an egalitarian culture because of the degree to which social justice oriented values, discourses, and rhetoric were utilized by the institution to build an institutional identity (Hartley and Morphew, 2008). Imani explained, "I think they definitely say social justice. I don't know if they actually value social justice. So I mean, I think they do to an extent. I think they do to an extent. I don't know if it's as big of an extent as they

made it seem when I applied here." In this case, Imani recognized that social justice oriented

values were utilized to build an institutional identity to attract prospective consumers, like

herself. However, she also recognized that these social justice values, and the rhetoric used to

construct them, were not necessarily implemented. Instead, the college used these values and

rhetoric to maintain a public appearance, as well as to provide itself internal flexibility

(Mampaey, 2017). In this case, the social justice values of the college reflect a politics of

representation/presence/multiculturalism (Mohanty, 2013).

Serena also recognized the contradictions between institutional values and action (i.e

instances of decoupling), on behalf of the institution, student body, and faculty. However, unlike

Imani, Serena did not expect egalitarianism, but instead anticipated a space that prioritized

marketplace ideologies, and therefore, allowed racism and sexism to go unpunished. She

explained to me:

> "It's not surprising to me. I would never expect there to be an institution like this that's
> like, 'Oh my god, no, we're perfectly social justice here, everyone's accepted, there's no
> problems,' and then I'm looking at demographics and it's like mostly white wealthy
> students. I would never go into that being like, 'Oh my god, I expect this to exactly live
> up to what you're saying it is.' I do think that it is a contradiction, absolutely."

Serena also indicated that she had been warned by upperclassmen, upon her arrival to campus,

that the school was not free from racist incidents. These same upperclassmen had also stated that

Cactus College often pushed these incidents under the rug, without addressing them, to maintain

their institutional identity (Hartley and Morphew, 2008). Although Serena stated she "knew what

to expect" when coming to Cactus College, because of the encounter described and other

indicators, she did describe being disheartened by the campus and institutional climate. She

expressed, "There's an underlying kind of sad thing of being rejected from the rest of campus and

being very separate from the rest of campus and being kind of told you're not supposed to be

here."

In this case, the instances of decoupling (Mampaey, 2017) that Serena discussed highlighted that she was aware of the presence of neoliberalism in the push for inclusion. This was because she was mindful that the college was pushing the rhetoric of inclusion while the student demographics of the college, which were predominately white and upper class, reflected the prioritization of market place ideologies (Giroux, 2003). The institution was able to maintain its legitimacy through the rhetoric of inclusion, which also allowed the internal flexibility to admit students who were financially beneficial to the college. Moreover, Serena pointed to the "politics of presence" within the prioritization of capital by the institution. Serena was not meant to be included by the college, as she was "told you're not supposed to be here", but instead her presence in the student body was used to reflect "social justice commitments through representational politics" (Mohanty, 2013, pg.972).

Although both of my female student respondents of color often discussed witnessing or experiencing instances of institutional decoupling, these contradictions were not confined to the student body but were also present among the professoriate. In my conversations with a female professor of color, she indicated to me that she did not feel included within the professoriate community. In this case, she was wary about the adoption of the rhetoric of inclusion by the college, because she recognized that the institution had not yet addressed its history of exclusion and because inclusion and diversity had become an "industry". She explained, "The supportive structure became its own thing. And that's what I mean by the industry, right? We have, now, personnel who deal with this. We have directors of the office of this or that." This indicated her awareness of the prioritization of capital over social justice commitments (Giroux, 2003). Instead, she wanted the institution to acknowledge its past and present wrongdoings, as this would make her feel like the college intended to change - as this would represent a prioritization

of social justice commitments over capital because admitting to harm would threaten the public image constructed by the college. Additionally, the shift in rhetoric, that this professor witnessed during her career, did not indicate an institutional desire for inclusion because the shift had been bureaucratized. In her words, there were "now personnel who deal with this". This reflected the privatization and commodification of inclusion itself, which is necessary under a neoliberal order (Giroux, 2003), and signaled a contradiction between what the college claimed it valued and what this professor had experienced as a female faculty member of color.

Both student and professor female respondents of color discussed witnessing or experiencing instances of decoupling (Mampaey, 2013) and the prioritization of capital over social justice commitments (Giroux, 2003), because of their experiences with racism and sexism on campus. These discussions reflected women of color's awareness of neoliberalism at Cactus College. Cactus College had, historically, ignored racist and sexist incidents in an attempt to maintain their institutional identity (Hartley and Morpher, 2008). In this case, the social justice commitments of the college were utilized to create a politics of presence, or benign representations of various differences as defined by Mohanty (2013), and not for the benefit of women of color at Cactus College.

How is it, though, that women of color were aware of the neoliberal nature of the push for inclusion, more so than other respondents? Their awareness of neoliberalism is largely due to their unique positionality, as women of color sit at the intersection of both racialized and gendered identities. Women of color directly encountered the contradictions of the institution, in other words the employment of decoupling by the institution, through their experiences with racism and sexism at Cactus College.

Women of color often experience the prioritization of males over females, and white students over students of color, due to the entrenchment of historically instilled power structures within academic institutions. Female students of color are faced with a distinct form of marginalization, as they fall at the intersection of these identities, and are forced to confront and navigate both racial and patriarchal structures within educational settings. In this case, women of color experience marginalization at the hands of their academic institutions, from peers, professors, administrators, and the institution itself (Hall and Sandler, 1982; Fredericksen, 2000; Ochoa and Pineda, 2008; Yosso, 2009; Harwood, 2015). This begins in women of colors' youth (Fredrickson, 2000), and follows these women into higher institutions of learning (Hall and Sandler, 1982). This has negative outcomes, as it produces feelings of uncomfortability among this demographic, and can result in decreased engagement (Gilda and Ochoa, 2008) or motivation to withdraw from these institutions (Harwood, 2015).

This scholarship sheds light on the reason why women of color are often the first to experience the contradictions of Cactus College, as these contradictions occur in their everyday lives. The narratives of my respondents demonstrate their experiences with racial and patriarchal structures at the college they attended. Imani described witnessing the use of racial slurs and experiencing exclusionary treatment due to her racial identity and Serena described feeling like an outsider on her college campus. Both female student respondents had been subject to microaggressions on campus, uncomfortability in their classes, and expressed fear of being perceived stereotypically because of their racial and gendered identities. My female professor respondent of color also described experiencing verbal and physical harassment within faculty settings, due to her identities, and feelings of exclusion from the professoriate community. These experiences highlight that women of color at Cactus College are experiencing marginalization at

the hands of their fellow peers, professors, administrators, and the institution and exhibit the contradictions between the institutional identity Cactus College has built and the actions of the college.

Other Respondents and Neoliberalism

Although it was less likely to be discussed, respondents of other demographics pointed to the neoliberal nature of inclusion during our interviews as well. One white male student respondent noted the individualization of social issues, specifically at Cactus College. He asserted, "There's this weird like corporate move towards this, like very individually anti-racist stuff. And it's all to take blame off of them because the groups themselves are the ones doing the actual harm and perpetuating like the most racist shit." He went on to discuss how inclusion is often surface-level within institutions because they utilize the "politics of presence" (Mohanty, 2013) to tokenize people of color while claiming to be an inclusive space. In this case, he recognized the presence of neoliberalism within the push for inclusion at the college because of his awareness of the individualization of collective problems (Giroux, 2003) and the utilization of the "politics of presence" (Mohanty, 2013).

Additionally, a white male professor discussed, in our interview, the commodification of justice commitments by the college and the removal of critically conscious spheres (Giroux, 2003) within the college. He asserted that much of the content on Cactus College's website was "propaganda", because of the manner in which the college often fails to emulate the institutional values listed on the website. Moreover, he suggested that there is often no oversight of attempts to emulate institutional values, like inclusion in the classroom. Instead, the impetus to point out instances of decoupling often falls on students of color.

"We, as an institution, are committed to creating inclusive communities, not simply in the classroom, but in our offices and our workshops, et cetera. Who's overseeing that to make sure we're doing it well or that we're continuing to strive to do it better? Who's pointing out where we're screwing up big time? And there again, I think we're back to students getting frustrated because it's usually students of color and they have enough on their plate."

In this case, the professor was aware of the use of decoupling by the college, as he recognized the commodification of justice commitments on the college's website that were used to build an institutional identity (Hartley and Morphew, 2008) that is often not fully realized. Additionally, he was aware of the removal of critically conscious spheres (Giroux, 2003), within the neoliberal institution, that could be used to ensure the realization of these values. This suggests that he was aware of the presence of neoliberalism in the college's push for inclusion. Although these respondents did not fit into the demographic of women of color, as they were both white males, they did still recognize the neoliberal nature of push for inclusion.

Neoliberalism in Student Conversation

Although respondents, who did not fit into the demographic of women of color, were less likely to point to the neoliberal nature of the push for inclusion, many white student respondents did acknowledge that they were more likely to think about inclusion at Cactus College and that inclusion was often discussed with other students. One white male student respondent noted he was pushed to consider inclusion, "more analytically and intellectually" at the college than in other academic spaces. Others noted they thought about inclusion more so at Cactus College than any other academic institution they had attended. Students were also more inclined to think about inclusion in terms of race and socioeconomic status at the college, whereas in other academic spaces they had often thought about it in terms of physical access. Another white male student respondent mentioned, "We, rightfully so, are reminded constantly about inclusion and in those

ways. I think we're pushed to think about it in a... I don't know if social justice is the right term to use." In this case, the college was successful in its use of disciplinary technologies (Foucault, 1995), as some of the notions surrounding inclusion among the student body had been transformed by the neoliberal agenda, unbeknownst to the students themselves.

Some students also noted that inclusion often comes up in conversations among the student body, both in classes and in other social settings. One white male student respondent revealed, "It (inclusion) comes up. When we're talking, yeah, I feel like it comes up whenever. Like, when people talk about dining hall, it comes up, when people talk about classes, it comes up, when people talk about hanging out, it comes up." This quote illuminates the individualized condition of inclusion (Giroux, 2003), under a neoliberal order, because students had taken the responsibility of inclusion on themselves. So much so, that inclusion was often a topic of discussion among students in their private lives. This, again, highlights the success of disciplinary technologies of subjugating students (Foucault, 1995). Not only were students thinking of inclusion differently at Cactus College, but they were also more inclined to discuss inclusion at the college. Essentially, conversations among the student body had been transformed by the use of disciplinary technologies (Foucault, 1995) by the college.

Although student respondents acknowledged that they were more likely to think about inclusion at Cactus College, than in other academic spaces, and that inclusion often came up in conversation, students still recognized that social spaces on campus were often segregated by race and class. This was often rationalized through notions of the "human condition", such that it is normal for humans to organize themselves around what they are most familiar or comfortable with. One white male student respondent suggested,

> "I think people are obviously most comfortable and like what groups they've grown up with. Yeah. And by and large, unfortunately, the U.S. has been pretty segregated in terms

of race and class. Maybe I have a pretty closed mindset, but I do think that a lot of people here… and not that it's a huge fault of theirs or anything, but just that they're going to fluctuate towards the people who they feel most comfortable to. And those people are, usually within their life, had a similar, you know, childhood experience."

Despite the fact that students were thinking about and discussing inclusion, segregated social spaces were thought of as normal or natural. This highlights the disconnect between their perceived values, those they thought about and discussed, and their actions. In this case, students themselves were decoupling.

Women of color were aware of instances of student decoupling as well. Both of my female, student, respondents of color described witnessing their peers engage in and align with discussions about social justice oriented values in class, while noticing that these same students did not attempt to realize or enact these values outside of the classroom. Imani explained:

"And it's sad because you see it in the classroom, but then when they get out of the classroom, they don't show it, some of those Cactus kids. [...] All their parties be with all their white friends. All white people in the same friend group, no diversity. [...] I see those white kids in the classes who preach all this stuff about, you know, social justice and like "POC don't have blah blah blah" and then they just see their friend say the N-word and go "Oh, shit" and are a bystander."

Imani was describing instances of student decoupling that she had witnessed. She recognized that students were stating their values in public spaces, like the classroom, to showcase a commitment to these values and to gain public legitimacy in these spaces. However, she also recognized a gap between these values, thought of as public commitments, and the actions of the students themselves. In the example provided by Imani, the contradiction between students who "preach about social justice" while also remaining a bystander to racial slurs that perpetuate harm against Black people, demonstrated a clear example of decoupling in the private lives of her white peers.

The Hegemony of Neoliberalism

Instances of student decoupling indicate the hegemony of neoliberalism at Cactus College. The goal of neoliberalism is to produce rational actors and impose a market-based rationale into all domains of public, private, and social life (Brown, 2003). As such, neoliberalism is a constructivist project that tasks itself with the development, dissemination, and institutionalization of this rationale (Brown, 2003). Neoliberalism is able to achieve these goals through the use of disciplinary technologies (Foucault, 1995). Disciplinary technologies are the mechanism through which neoliberalism becomes a regulatory regime that can "manipulate cultural discourses to selectively mould people into certain sorts of economic subjects consistent with the objectives of particular national strategies of accumulation" (Barnett, 2010). The manipulation of cultural discourses is the manner in which neoliberalism becomes hegemonic:

> "For any system of thought to become hegemonic requires the articulation of fundamental concepts that become so deeply embedded in common-sense understandings that they become taken for granted and beyond question. For this to occur not any old concepts will do. A conceptual apparatus has to be constructed that appeals almost 'naturally' to our intuitions and instincts, to our values and our desires, as well as to the possibilities that seem to inhere in the social world we inhabit" (Harvey, 2006, pg.146).

Neoliberalism is legitimated ideologically in this way, as it is able to manipulate one's own understanding of the world (Barnett, 2010). The reframing of concepts, that one is naturally inclined to desire, helps to conceal the corrosion of values and ideals that benefit the collective. All the while, individuals are unaware of the reframing of fundamental concepts that shape their understanding of the world and the ways in which this reframing shapes them into neoliberal subjects.

Students' adoption of decoupling highlights the ways in which neoliberalism has seeped into the peripheries of the institution. The use of decoupling practices by Cactus College, as an institution, demonstrated the presence of neoliberalism within the push for inclusion. The

diffusion of neoliberalism, due to neoliberalism's hegemony, into all domains of the institution indicates that the students themselves have been affected by the diffusion of this ideology. Students' neoliberalization is corresponded by their own employment of decoupling, as they had mirrored the practices of the neoliberal institution. Though this was unclear to certain demographics of students, it was apparent to women of color. This is because women of color were attuned to the contradictions of their peers' values and actions, as they had witnessed and/or experienced these contradictions through encounters with racist and sexist behaviors exacted by, or in proximity to, these peers.

Student decoupling also highlights that the conceptual apparatus of inclusion had seeped into the private lives of the student body, as they expressed the notion was often considered and discussed, and appealed to the natural instincts and values of these individuals. At the same time, without oversight or regulation, inclusion was not occurring in other social spheres at the college, outside of the classroom, as these spaces were considered segregated by students themselves. This was because, under neoliberalism, inclusion had become an individual project. In the student's eyes, it was not the responsibility of any one individual to integrate social spaces, outside of the classroom, because this segregation was a "natural" aspect of the human condition.

Neoliberalism Voids Democratic Values

Women of color's awareness of the presence of neoliberalism in the push for inclusion is significant because it helps to explain why women of color continue to experience feelings of exclusion at Cactus College. Although respondents of all demographics hoped to achieve inclusion within the classroom through the construction of an inclusive democratic classroom community, these inclusive classroom spaces often did not exist in the eyes of women of color.

This is due to the fact that women of color felt as if, and were treated like, they did not belong within the classroom. In other words, they experienced feelings of exclusion. This may have been because the main tenets of neoliberalism void democratic values.

Under neoliberalism, market ideologies are considered the essence of democracy (Giroux, 2003). More specifically, neoliberalism utilizes democratic values, such as freedom, to rationalize qualities like individualism. Foucault (1995) asserts that freedom, under neoliberalism, is itself a disciplinary technology. It is the function through which subjects are governed, as the subject is reduced to their individual capabilities and their market choices, under neoliberalism's notion of freedom. It is persuasive in this way, because the freedom to make choices that benefit oneself and one's self-interests resonates with numerous aspects of public life (Giroux, 2003). This also means, however, that the freedom to choose is no longer understood as a collective effort to make decisions that will assist in the cultivation of a democratic community or society. Instead, freedom, under neoliberalism, is characterized as:

> "An exercise in self-development rather than social responsibility, reducing politics to either the celebration of consumerism or a privileging of a market-based notion of agency and choice that appear quite indifferent to how power, equity, and justice offer the enabling conditions for real individual and collective choices to be both made and acted upon" (Giroux, 2003, pg. 197).

Giroux (2003) asserts that because of this renewed characterization, notions of freedom become abstracted from the ability of individuals, and groups to engage with, and participate in, the shaping of society and are reduced to the ability of the individual to exist free from social constraints. Freedom itself becomes abstract and is disguised to achieve capital accumulation. In other words, the essences of democracy, that have been reconstructed to serve the agenda of neoliberalism, become so detached from their origins that they no longer allow for the realization of democracy itself.

In this case, the democratic values of acknowledgement, participation, engagement, community, belonging, and understanding are voided through neoliberalism's main tenets. Acknowledgement, of difference, historical context, identity, becomes a project of capital accumulation and is no longer a tool to further democratic deliberation (Young, 2000). This is because the public spheres, where criticisms of the social order and the acknowledgement of power dynamics might emerge, become privatized and isolated (Giroux, 2003). Here, accountability is lost and the responsibility to recognize one's perpetration of wrongdoing against another is no longer necessary. Under neoliberalism, individual misfortune, no matter how widespread, does not require intervention but instead requires the individual to privately negotiate, through a rational, market-based analysis of the choices available to them, a safety net. In this case, all forms of acknowledgement become unnecessary.

Moreover, participation in, and engagement with, the structuring of society is voided through the prioritization of the deregulation of economic, social, and political spheres. If agency is thought of as a private endeavor, and not a collective power, participation and engagement in society is no longer an imperative. Social responsibility and obligations are abandoned, as the common good has been replaced with self-interest. Instead, withdrawal from social spheres, and the exertion of agency from individual, isolated bubbles becomes typical. Participation and engagement are no longer essential.

For all of these reasons, community is also no longer prioritized. Neoliberalism reduces the need to participate and engage in community and no longer requires the acknowledgement of others within it, or an acknowledgement of one's own place within a given community. This is because a collective, common good loses relevancy when faced with the prioritization of individualism and self-interest. Belonging in a community is no longer dictated by how one

relates to others, because the public identity of "citizen" is lost under neoliberalism's agenda. "Neoliberalism devitalizes democracy because it has no language for defending a politics in which citizenship becomes an investment in public life rather than an obligation to consume, relegated in this instance to an utterly privatized affair" (Giroux, 2003, pg. 202). Again, the need for an understanding of difference as valuable to a community (Mouffe, 1992) becomes irrelevant, as the community is forgotten and difference is reduced to its marketability and commodification.

Conclusion

Women of color respondents were more likely to point out the neoliberal nature of inclusion at Cactus College. This was evidenced through their awareness of instances of both student and institutional decoupling (Mampaey, 2017) and their recognition of the prioritization of capital over social justice commitments by the institution (Giroux, 2003). This awareness was largely due to women of color's unique positionalities, which contributed to their experiences with both racist and sexist encounters and structures present at the college. Two other white male respondents also pointed to the neoliberal nature of the push for inclusion, as they recognized the individualization of collective problems (Giroux, 2003), the utilization of the "politics of presence" (Mohanty, 2013), and the removal of critically conscious spheres (Giroux, 2003) by the college.

Although many white student respondents did point to the fact that conversations about inclusion were present in social spheres at the college, and that, as students, they were motivated to think about or discuss inclusion at the college more so than any of the other educational institutions they had attended, they also recognized that social spheres at the college were

segregated. These segregated spaces were rationalized through notions of the "human condition", including the idea that it is natural for individuals to seek out what they are most familiar with. In this case, the students themselves reflected the actions of the college as they had begun to decouple in their private lives. The incorporation of decoupling into the private lives of white students represents the hegemony of neoliberalism at Cactus College (Brown, 2003).

The presence of neoliberalism at the college helps to explain why inclusive, democratic, classroom communities have yet to be realized at Cactus College, as evidenced by women of color's feelings of exclusion within the classroom and other social spheres, because neoliberalism voids democratic values through its main tenets. Overall, the social justice commitments of the college were utilized to create a politics of presence (Mohanty, 2013) and to build an institutional identity (Hartley and Morphew, 2008), but did not benefit women of color, as they continued to experience marginalization and exclusion both within, and outside, of the classroom.

Chapter 4:

Discussion

My findings indicate that definitions of inclusion were largely similar, as they all contained democratic values which suggested that my respondents hoped to build inclusive democratic classroom communities, realized through democratic ways of relating to one another. Although differences in definitions of inclusion were present within the definitions provided by women of color, these differences were still constituted by democratic ways of relating to classroom peers. Regardless, women of color expressed continued feelings of exclusion at Cactus College, both within the classroom and on campus, generally because of differences within definitions of inclusion and because of the presence of neoliberalism at the college. These findings help to answer my research questions, including: How do definitions of inclusion differ among classroom actors within discussion based classrooms? How do these various definitions affect the experiences of women of color at Cactus College?

How is it, though, that various students and professors of differing demographics painted very similar pictures of what inclusion means to them and how it can be achieved in the classroom, while women of color continued to feel excluded within these classroom spaces? This can be explained by the differences present within definitions of inclusion. However, it may be further explained by the presence of neoliberalism at Cactus College, and within the push for inclusion, as neoliberalism's main tenets manipulate and void democratic values. The presence of neoliberalism was indicated by women of color's experiences with instances of individual and institutional decoupling and the institutional prioritization of capital over social justice commitments. The fact that instances of decoupling occurred in the private lives of students exhibited the hegemony of neoliberalism at Cactus College.

I do not mean to say that these students are necessarily neoliberal individuals, but instead that these students have been shaped by the environments in which they were found in. In other words, they had modeled the institutional behaviors Cactus College employed, unbeknownst to themselves. I also do not mean to imply that women of color have not been shaped by these contexts, as they surely have as well. However, their experiences with racism and sexism on campus allowed them to see the contradictions within these environments, between publicly stated values and action. Women of color felt as though a disconnect existed between the publicly stated values of the college, and their peers, and the actions of both of these entities. This disconnect was evidenced by the treatment they endured, and the feelings they had regarding belonging. Women of color were treated as if, and felt as though, they did not belong at Cactus College, exhibiting that they experienced feelings of exclusion. In their eyes, values exhibited a public commitment, and institutional and individual public commitments were often not realized. Whether or not these individuals, or the institution, is in fact neoliberal may be subject to debate. Regardless, the experiences of the women of color I interviewed pointed to the fact that this is what they perceived.

I would like to point out that the phrase "women of color" is a phrase that groups the experiences of Black, Asian American, Indigenous, Latiné/Latinx, and other minority women, as it was emerged out of the recognition that the identities of women from various minority groups lead these women to confront both gendered and racialized power dynamics within their everyday lives. Women of color, themselves, experience the world in diverse ways. I do not wish to negate the distinct experiences women of color face, based on the differences in their perceived or identified race, as the structures that women of color face also differ. Black women encounter anti-blackness, while Asian American women face the model minority myth, and so

on. Of course, overlaps also exist between the structures women of color face, not just with gendered and racialized power dynamics, but also colorism in their distinct communities, and more. Women of color is itself a term that is subject to debate, and that contains its own tensions and complexities that I do not wish to overlook.

My findings also imply that the language of inclusion, as utilized by Cactus College, is disingenuous. The lack of discussion surrounding the institution's use of the language of inclusion points to the fact that this rhetoric allows the institution to ignore the instances of exclusion that occur on campus. This language allows the institution to reduce the racist and sexist instances that occur at Cactus College to minute, individual issues perpetuated by a singular actor who failed to fulfill the publicly stated values they invested in or who they, themselves, committed to, instead of recognizing these instances as a widespread social issue. Shifting blame to the individual helps the college to avoid claims of a campus culture embedded with racialized and patriarchal power dynamics. In this way, inclusion rhetoric is the mechanism through which Cactus College assumes a post-racist, post-sexist image (Mohanty, 2013), while ignoring the racism and sexism that is present on campus.

Ahmed (2012) argues that diversification documents are used as a measurement for diversity and inclusion and are not evaluated based on their content, but instead on their existence because, "The existence of the document is taken as evidence that the institutional world it documents (racism, inequality, injustice) has been overcome" (Ahmed, 2012, pg. 100)[9]. My findings indicate that the language of inclusion, as utilized by Cactus College, allows the institution to do this as well, in the case of inclusion. The language of inclusion allows the college to argue that the institutional world of exclusion has been overcome. However, this institutional world has yet to be overcome, as evidenced by my findings. Instead, a culture of

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[9] Chapter 1, pg. 14.

racism and sexism, which leads to feelings of exclusion, still exists within Cactus College. Women of color are still encountering these structures within the college, on a daily basis. In this case, the language of inclusion is disingenuous; it is a distraction from the experience of exclusion and allows the college to obviate the concerns of women of color.

Moreover, my findings also indicate that different definitions of inclusion were present in different contexts. White student respondents thought of inclusion in different ways in the classroom than in other social spaces, as evidenced by instances of individual decoupling. Although they defined inclusion as democratic ways of relating to one another in the classroom, white students viewed the segregation of other social spaces at the college as "natural" or "normal" and did not, necessarily, feel inclined to exercise these democratic ways of relating to one another outside of the classroom. This does indicate an instance of decoupling, and the hegemony of neoliberalism at the college, but it also implies that inclusion should not be thought of as one state of being. White students thought of inclusion in the classroom as distinct from inclusion outside of the classroom.

In this case, inclusion is not generic. Inclusion has to be accomplished in the classroom, and then remade, over and over again, in other contexts. It cannot, simply, be achieved in the classroom and then be assumed to exist in other social settings within a college. Inclusion is a continually ongoing process, constructed through different modes at different levels of society (Rapp and Corral-Granados, 2021). It does not occur everywhere, all at once, if it is accomplished in the classroom. It is, instead, an ongoing project that requires the involvement of the entire campus community ro be achieved in every social setting within the college. As Serena pointed out in one of our interviews, "With racism or sexism or anything like that, you are not innocent until proven guilty, because being an ally requires active work and if you're not actively

working and actively showing that you're an ally, then you're not one." What I am arguing here is that the same goes for inclusion. Inclusion requires active effort and work, in various social spaces, much like the classroom. This further indicates that the language of inclusion, as utilized by Cactus College, is disingenuous, as inclusion cannot be applied to an entire institution with one act of utterance. Cactus College cannot continue to claim that it is an inclusive institution, when women of color continue to express feelings of exclusion in the classroom, and on campus. Real work needs to be done here, in order for inclusion to be accomplished, and in order for Cactus College to be considered an inclusive institution.

Recommendations

In order for inclusion to be achieved in the classrooms of Cactus College, the inclusive practices of the college and individual university/classroom actors must be modified. As was evidenced by the definitions of inclusion provided by my respondents, the use of acknowledgement of identity, narrative, and wrongdoing and particular kinds of rhetoric can further inclusion in the classroom. Moreover, through the participation of all present and the engagement of classroom actors, as well as the cultivation of a classroom community fostered through the exercisiton of understanding and the nurturing of feelings of belonging, inclusion can be developed in the classroom. These values, and the practices used to realize them, should be considered recommendations to all classroom actors present within Cactus College, such as professors and students. Respondents also had other recommendations for the facilitation of inclusion.

Two professors, one woman of color and one white male, suggested some kind of oversight or institutional mediation for inclusive practices. The white male professor suggested

student evaluations of faculty advising, to allow students to indicate whether or not their faculty advisor is engaging in practices that make them feel excluded, and the female of color professor suggested institutional mediation of the acknowledgement of wrongdoing on the institution's behalf. My two female student respondents of color also provided suggestions for fostering more inclusive practices. Imani recommended a form of racial training for students, to educate students on overt and covert racist structures, and statements at community meetings that note that the college, and individual university actors, value the voices of women and students of color. Serena suggested hiring more women of color in faculty positions and centering the voices of women of color both inside, and outside of the classroom. The differences present within women of color's definitions of inclusion can be utilized as prescriptions for inclusivity as well. Such that, women of color's suggestions for fostering inclusivity largely regarded the recognition of wrongdoing. Moreover, stressing the importance of narrative and acknowledging narrative can be viewed as recommendations for inclusion, as these were practices that women of color considered absent from both inside and outside of the classroom as well.

I would like to recommend that Cactus College prioritize its social justice commitments over capital, as to cultivate a model of behavior that may be mirrored by individual university and classroom actors. The college's stated values should be thought of as public commitments, much like the way in which women of color viewed them. These values should not be compromised for monetary gains, and instances of harm that contradict these values should not be overlooked in an effort to maintain the institutional identity the college has built. Instead, the college should call attention to these instances of harm, and attempt to mediate them, regardless of the possible inconvenience or damage this attention may bring. This would evidence a prioritization of social justice commitments over capital, and may be mirrored by the university

and classroom actors present in the institution, as this mirroring has occurred before in the case of decoupling.

A model, fostered by the institution, may help to cultivate a more inclusive institution overall, as well as inclusive spaces within the institution itself. Again, a model of behavior that exhibits the prioritization of social justice commitments over capital should not be used to apply a generic conception of inclusion to the entirety of the institution, as inclusion requires active effort in each distinct setting it hopes to be cultivated within. Regardless, this model of behavior may help to induce these behaviors in others, allowing for the development of inclusive spaces across the college. These tenets, which include freedom, individualization, and privatization remove the need for acknowledgement

Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to determine how definitions of inclusivity may differ among university actors present within discussion based classroom spaces, including students, and professors, and how these university actors understood their role in establishing an inclusive classroom. The overall objective was to determine how these various definitions of inclusion, present within the classroom, affected the experiences of women of color at Cactus College, a predominately white, small, private, liberal arts college in Southern California. To determine this, research questions were constructed, including: How do definitions of inclusion differ among classroom actors within discussion based classrooms? How do these various definitions affect the experiences of women of color at Cactus College?

These research questions sought to fill a gap in the scholarship, as research on what ideologies motivate the methods and practice of inclusion within higher education, as well as research regarding the effects of inclusion on women of color in higher education, is lacking. The literature on the topic of inclusion indicates that the language of inclusion has emerged in various political and educational theories, though it also suggests that the entanglement of education with the political (Arendt 1968; Foucault, 1979) has incentivized diversity and inclusion rhetoric within academic spaces. As there has been a popularization of identity politics in the public sphere, educational institutions must align with this shifted focus (Zeigler and Peak, 1970; Ortega, 2006). Additionally, because of the privatization of higher education within a competitive, globalized, neoliberal market, educational institutions are motivated to view both prospective and attending students as "consumers" (Saunders, 2007; Morrissey 2015). In order to attract consumers, institutions need to foster an "institutional identity" that is appealing to these consumers (Hartley and Morphew, 2008). Fostering an "institutional identity" includes the

commodification of race and identity for the purposes of attracting capital gains from white demographics, who view diversity as functional in the context of their short and long term goals (Berrey, 2011; Lewis and Shah, 2021) because of the popularization of identity politics within the public sphere.

In order to answer the driving research questions of this study, qualitative research methods were utilized. These methods included semi-structured, ethnographic, one-on-one interviews with 12 students and professors, as well as classroom observations in 5 discussion based classes at Cactus College. Of the 12 respondents, 8 were students and 4 were professors. Of the 8 student respondents, 2 identified as women of color, both with black lineage, 5 identified as white males, and 1 identified as a white female. Of the 4 professor respondents, 1 identified as a woman of color, 1 identified as a white male, and 2 identified as white women. The discussion based courses observed ranged from a variety of academic departments, including the humanities, social sciences, and STEM fields. Interviews allowed the researcher to become aware of the various definitions of inclusion present at Cactus College while classroom observations allowed the researcher to determine if the structures of the course observed align with definitions of inclusion provided by students and professors.

The findings of this study indicate that definitions of inclusion provided by respondents were embedded with various notions of democracy. Democracy was conceived as a way of life, and not as an organizing structure for governmental or administrative processes. The democratic values embedded within definitions of inclusion included: acknowledgement, rhetoric, participation, engagement, community, belonging, and understanding. Acknowledgement was conceived as the recognition of one's own identity, the recognition of the identities of others in the space, or giving credit to an individual or community who had contributed to understanding

of concepts covered in class. Rhetoric was used to demonstrate allyship with some of the struggles classroom actors face in their personal lives and to practice acknowledgement. Students and professors recognized that the use of particular kinds of rhetoric was integral to fostering the comfortability of all present. Acknowledgement, and proper uses of rhetoric, were employed by professors as a model for inclusive behavior in the classroom space. Definitions and practices of inclusion that stressed acknowledgement and rhetoric demonstrated the linguistic tools that Young (2000) has indicated are crucial to the creation of an inclusive deliberative democracy that reflects political equality and promotes justice.

Professor's sought to cultivate participation and engagement by making classroom content accessible to all present. Engagement was thought of as listening, making the classroom space free from distraction, and paying attention. Participation and engagement were also cultivated through Freire's (1970) liberatory model of education, which argues that both students and teachers are simultaneously learners and producers of knowledge. This model helped to cultivate engagement and participation among all members of the classroom. Definitions and practices of inclusion that emphasized participation and engagement allowed for the redistribution of decision-making power and helped to deconstruct normalized conceptions of authority in the classroom. This is central to Pateman's (1970) conception of a participatory democracy, as she asserts that participation promotes political efficacy and redistributions of power.

Lastly, respondents felt that they belonged within the classroom community because they all had something to offer or learn. Students recognized that, in order to learn they had to be open to different types of people and perspectives. They also recognized that learning is achieved by being pushed out of one's comfort zone, through confrontations with difference. Both students

and professors also noted that there should be a mutual understanding that everyone may be at different points in their learning process or academic journeys, in order to help cultivate feelings of belonging within the classroom community they hoped to construct. Definitions and practices of inclusion that prioritized community, belonging, and understanding indicated similar definitions of citizenship and political community provided by Mouffe (1992). This was because difference was conceived as central to the classroom community and because all classroom actors understood their commonality: a desire to learn. Thus, belonging in the classroom community was fostered through this commonality. Overall, these democratic values, embedded within definitions of inclusion, indicate that my respondents hoped to cultivate inclusive, democratic, classroom communities, realized through democratic ways of relating to one another.

Differences in definitions of inclusion were also present among respondents. Women of color were the only demographic of respondents to stress the importance of narrative and the acknowledgement of wrongdoing. Narrative was important to women of color because it was viewed as a tool to foster understanding between themselves and their peers (Young, 2000), who were often situated differently because of the nature of the predominately white institution studied. When the personal narratives of women of color were left unacknowledged, by peers or professors, women of color felt uncomfortable in the classroom, feared being perceived stereotypically, and withdrew from traditional forms of participation. These feelings of uncomfortability led to feelings of exclusion from the classroom.

Lack of acknowledgement of personal narratives may have been a symptom of the inclusive practice of "making space". Although this practice was also considered integral to inclusion, by women of color and other respondents, women of color advocated for the employment of making space and offering support, through acknowledgement, to occur in

tandem. In this case, recognition of the importance of narrative, and the acknowledgement of narrative, was crucial to fostering an inclusive classroom space for women of color.

Additionally, acknowledgement of wrongdoing was viewed as a necessary inclusive practice, because it allowed for the establishment, or reestablishment of trust (Young, 2000), between women of color and those acknowledging. Women of color wished for acknowledgement of wrongdoing on both an individual and institutional level. This type of acknowledgement was framed differently than acknowledgement of historical relevance or identity, because it required personal reflection and accountability. Overall, differences in definitions of inclusion highlight that identity plays a role in the ways inclusion is conceived by individuals. The differences present within definitions of inclusion provided by women of color were not discussed or considered by respondents of any other demographics. Women of color were attune to the importance of distinct, democratic ways of relating to one another because of the manner in which their unique positionalities affected their experiences in the classroom.

Women of color's unique identities also provided them an acute awareness of the presence of neoliberalism within the push for inclusion. This was evidenced through their awareness of instances of both student and institutional decoupling (Mampaey, 2017) and their recognition of the prioritization of capital over social justice commitments by the institution (Giroux, 2003). This awareness was largely due to women of color's unique positionalities, which contributed to their experiences with both racist and sexist encounters and structures present at the college. Two other white male respondents also pointed to the neoliberal nature of the push for inclusion, as they noted that the college's stated values were often used as "propaganda", recognized the tokenization of students and faculty of color and the

individualization of the push for inclusion, and pointed to the removal of critically conscious spheres.

Although white student respondents were less likely to point to the neoliberal nature of inclusion at the college, they did note that, as students, they were motivated to think about or discuss inclusion at the college more so than any of the other educational institutions they had attended, and indicated that they engaged in conversations about inclusion within social spheres at the college. However, they also considered social spheres at the college to be segregated and rationalized the segregation of these spaces with notions of the "human condition", such that it was "natural" or "normal" for students to seek out individuals who align with what they are most familiar with. In this case, the students themselves reflected the actions of the college as they had begun to decouple in their private lives. The incorporation of decoupling into the private lives of white students represents the hegemony of neoliberalism at Cactus College (Brown, 2003). This finding may also indicate that white students thought of inclusion inside and outside of the classroom, differently. This points to the fact that inclusion should not be thought of as generic, but that inclusion is instead a process that requires active work to be remade in different settings.

The presence of neoliberalism at the college is important, as it helps to explain why inclusive, democratic, classroom communities have yet to be realized at Cactus College. The lack of inclusive, democratic classroom communities that respondents hoped to cultivate was evidenced by women of color's feelings of exclusion within the classroom and other social spheres. These classroom communities may not have been realized because the main tenets of neoliberalism are able to manipulate and void the democratic values present within definitions of inclusion.

My research cannot speak to whether or not Cactus College should be classified as a

neoliberal institution and does not argue that classroom actors or white students at the college are themselves neoliberal. Instead, my research indicates that the language of inclusion, as utilized by Cactus College, is disingenuous. This is because women of color continued to be treated, and feel, as if they did not belong within their institution of higher education. They expressed feelings of exclusion within the classroom, and on campus generally, highlighting that the realization of inclusive, democratic, classroom communities has yet to be achieved. This may be explained by the presence and hegemony of neoliberalism at the college, that women of color were aware of. Regardless, Cactus College cannot continue to claim that it is an inclusive institution, with inclusive classrooms present on campus, when women of color continue to experience marginalization and exclusion on behalf of their peers, professors, administrators, and institution. Instead, active effort must be invested into inclusion at the college, if the realization of inclusive classrooms hopes to be achieved.

This research seeks to contribute to a larger scholarship regarding the experiences of women of color in higher education, and to center and uplift the voices of women of color at Cactus College. However, further research needs to be conducted within higher education, regarding the use of the language of inclusion and the ways in which this language, definitions of inclusion, and practices of inclusion affect the experiences of women of color in higher education. Women of color deserve to be centered within the push for inclusion, as their identities are unique and must be accounted for. This centering can only occur if the experiences of women of color continue to be researched, specifically the experiences of women of color in relation to inclusion within higher education.

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Appendix A: Recruitment Emails

Dear Professor,
My name is Xochitl Husted and I am conducting research at Cactus College. I wanted to get in contact with you because I am planning to do research for my thesis and was hoping you would be willing to participate in my study. My research investigates definitions of inclusivity and inclusive action employed in the classroom. I was hoping to have an approximate one hour interview with you about inclusivity and to sit in on your class, CLASS 00, for 2 classroom observations. If you would like to meet to discuss more about the project or possible observations, I can sign up for office hours or do a Zoom call. I will also send you a consent form that explains more about the project, what it will entail, and your role in the project itself. I will need this consent form signed and returned to me before I can begin observations in your class. Hope all is well and to talk soon.

Sincerely,
Xochitl

Dear Student,

My name is Xochitl Husted and I am conducting research at Cactus College. I wanted to get in contact with you because my research investigates definitions of inclusivity and inclusive action employed in the classroom / the educational experiences of women of color in discussion based classrooms. I was hoping to interview you, for the purposes of this study. If you would like to meet to discuss more about the project or your possible involvement in the study, we can set up a Zoom call or you can text me at (XXX) XXX-XXXX. I will also send you a consent form that explains more about the project, what it will entail, and your role in the project itself. If you feel that you would like to participate, the consent form will need to be signed and returned to me before you can begin your involvement in the study. Hope all is well and to talk soon.

Sincerely,
Xochitl

Appendix B: Consent Forms

Research Study Student Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study that examines your professor and student definitions of inclusivity at Cactus College. You were selected as a possible participant because you are enrolled in one of the discussion based courses I am observing for this study. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Background Information: The purpose of this study is to further understand definitions of inclusivity and how these definitions culminate in the classroom space. I will be examining how inclusion occurs in the classroom and how definitions of inclusivity among classroom actors may differ.

My name is Xochitl Husted. I am the student investigator performing this research study for my thesis, in tandem with my fellowship under the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Foundation. This study is being performed under the supervision of William Barndt, a Political Studies professor. My contact information, and Professor Barndt's contact information, can be found on page 3. If you have any further questions about the study, feel free to contact either of us.

Procedures: If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to do the following: perform a one hour interview with the researcher that focuses on your definition of inclusivity. We will discuss how your educational experiences within discussion based classrooms have been at Cactus College, thus far, and in the discussion based course you are currently enrolled in. This interview will be conducted over Zoom and will occur at the time most convenient for you. It may last one to two hours. I will record our interview and take notes on what we discuss. Because these meetings will be recorded, I will need you to provide consent for the recording and storing of these interviews. A space for your initials exemplifying that you consent to this can be found on page 3.

I stress that this consent form only relates to your participation in the study during the semester of XXXX and does not commit you to additional responsibilities, as you are free to withdraw from the study at any time or to decide not to continue with the project if it is extended.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study: We do not anticipate any risks for you participating in this study. However, let it be known, there is a possible risk of your identity being discovered by an outside entity. The likelihood of this occurring is very low, as the notes pertaining to our interviews and discussions will remain in a password protected file on my personal computer. Additionally, with quarantine procedures in place, third parties have limited access to my computer. I will also refrain from using identifying factors in data collection and storing and I will utilize pseudonyms throughout my study and in my findings.

The information being discussed in interviews is sensitive information, as it regards professors and students at the college you attend. In this case, if your identity were to be discovered, this could present risks to your well being on this college campus. This should be considered before you provide you consent for participation in this study.

Indirect benefits to your participation include a contribution to a larger field of knowledge pertaining to definitions of inclusivity within discussion based classrooms.Classroom observations will help others better understand the positive and negative contributors to educational experience within discussion based classrooms.

Confidentiality: Your name will not be revealed to anyone outside of our interviews. The notes and recordings from these interviews will be placed in a password protected file on my computer. Only I will have access to this file. Recordings from our meetings will not be used for any other purpose than my final research findings. Within these findings, pseudonyms will be used in order to ensure your identity is not revealed. These recordings and notes I take on our interviews will likely not be deleted, as this study may continue on after the semester has ended. However, they will still remain in a password protected file, which will not be available to anyone other than myself. Your privacy is valued and the content we discuss will be confidential.

Voluntary Nature of Participation: Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Cactus College or with other cooperating entities. You may skip any questions you do not feel comfortable answering or postpone answering them until a later date, when you feel ready to discuss them. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time. This decision will not affect your relationship with me or Cactus College. Any data, such as interview transcripts, involving your person will be disposed of properly if you choose to leave the study. The content we discuss will still remain confidential if you decide to no longer participate in this study.

Resources Available to You: Because the nature of the topics we will be discussing are sensitive to both your experiences at Cactus and your emotional well-being, resources may be necessary for additional support after our interviews. I would like to stress that if any topic is too sensitive, or if you would like to postpone discussion about a topic until a later date, I am very willing to accommodate your needs as your emotional well-being is one of my top priorities. I am also here to discuss how you are feeling before, during, and after an interview. Continuation of interviews may also be evaluated based on how you feel your mental state is, such that meetings can be postponed or removal from the study organized. However, if you feel that you would like to seek outside support during the study, information about Monsour Counseling and Psychological Services are noted below.

Counseling and Psychological Services:
- Website: https://services.claremont.edu/mcaps/
- Phone: (909) 621-8202

- For calls that occur after hours, press 1 to be immediately connected to an on-call therapist
- Hours: 8:00 am – 5:00 pm
- Telehealth: https://www.timely.md/faq/7c-health-the-claremont-colleges/
    - TalkNow would be the service provided by Telehealth for sessions regarding mental health.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Xochitl Husted. Please ask any questions you may have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at my personal phone number (530-205-5804) or email me (xhusted@pitzer.edu). You may also contact the advisor of this study, William Barndt, for additional questions (William_Barndt@pitzer.edu). If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (irb@pitzer.edu).

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information, and have received answers to any questions I asked. I am at least 18 years old and I consent to participate in the study.

Name of Participant, Printed_____ Date _____

Signature of Participant_____ Date _____

Signature of Principal Investigator: _____ Date _____

Statement of Consent for the Recording and Storing of Participant Interviews:

I agree to be recorded during interviews and to have my interviews stored by the researcher: Yes _____ No _____ Initials _____ Date _____

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

This consent form will be kept by the researcher for at least three years beyond the end of the study and was approved by the IRB on [date].

Research Study Professor Consent Form

You are invited to participate in a research study that examines professor and student definitions of inclusivity at Cactus College. You were selected as a possible participant because you teach a discussion based course that I hope to observe for this study. We ask that you read this form and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to be in the study.

Background Information:

The purpose of this study is to further understand professoriate definitions of inclusivity and how professor's incorporate these definitions into the classroom space. I will be examining how inclusion occurs in the classroom, and how definitions of inclusivity among classroom actors may differ.

My name is Xochitl Husted. I am the student investigator performing this research study for my thesis, in tandem with my fellowship under the Mellon Mays Undergraduate Foundation. This study is being performed under the supervision of William Barndt, a Political Studies professor. My contact information, and Professor Barndt's contact information, can be found on page 3. If you have any further questions about the study, feel free to contact either of us.

Procedures:

If you agree to be in this study, we will ask you to do the following: perform a one hour interview with the researcher that focuses on your definition of inclusivity and allow the researcher to observe the indicated course they plan to sit in on and that you teach for two course sessions. These observations will occur either through zoom, or in person, and will occur at the time of the course. I will take notes on what occurs within the course.

I stress that this consent form only relates to your participation in the study during the Fall semester of 2021 and does not commit you to additional responsibilities in the Fall, as you are free to withdraw from the study at any time or to decide not to continue with the project if it is extended.

Confidentiality:

Your name will not be revealed to anyone outside the course. The field notes I take will be placed in an encrypted file on my computer. Only I will have access to this file. Within my final findings, pseudonyms will be used in order to ensure your identity is not revealed. The notes I take within the course will likely not be deleted, as this study may continue on after the semester has ended. However, they will still remain in a password protected file, which will not be available to anyone other than myself. Your privacy is valued and the content observed will be confidential.

Additionally, the name of the course will not be noted in my finalized findings. The only thing noted will be the field of the course itself, such as Economics, Political Studies, Environmental Studies etc. I will not identify the field or department in which you teach.

Risks and Benefits of Being in the Study:

We do not anticipate any risks for you participating in this study. However, let it be known, there is a possible risk of your identity being discovered by an outside entity. The likelihood of this occurring is very low, as the notes pertaining to our interviews and discussions will remain in a

password protected file on my personal computer. Additionally, with quarantine procedures in place, third parties have limited access to my computer. I will also refrain from using identifying factors in data collection and storing and I will utilize pseudonyms throughout my study and in my findings.

The information being discussed in interviews is sensitive information, as it regards the faculty and students at the college you are employed at. In this case, if your identity were to be discovered, this could present risks to your well being on this college campus. This should be considered before you provide your consent for participation in this study.

Indirect benefits to your participation include a contribution to a larger field of knowledge pertaining to inclusivity within discussion based classrooms. Classroom observations will help others better understand the positive and negative contributors to educational experience within discussion based classrooms.

Voluntary Nature of Participation: Your decision whether or not to participate will not affect your current or future relations with Cactus College or with other cooperating entities. If you decide to participate, you are free to withdraw at any time. This decision will not affect your relationship with me or Cactus College. Any data involving the course you teach will be disposed of properly if you choose to leave the study. The content I observe will still remain confidential if you decide to no longer participate in this study.

Contacts and Questions: The researcher conducting this study is Xochitl Husted. Please ask any questions you may have now. If you have questions later, you may contact me at my personal phone number (530-205-5804) or email me (xhusted@pitzer.edu). You may also contact the advisor of this study, William Barndt, for additional questions (William_Barndt@pitzer.edu). If you have any questions or concerns regarding your rights as a subject in this study, you may contact the Institutional Review Board (irb@pitzer.edu).

Statement of Consent: I have read the above information, and have received answers to any questions I asked. I am at least 18 years old and I consent to participate in the study.

Name of Participant, Printed_____Date _____

Signature of Participant_____ Date _____

Signature of Principal Investigator: _____ Date _____

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

This consent form will be kept by the researcher for at least three years beyond the end of the study and was approved by the IRB on [date].

Appendix C: IRB Protocols

1. The title of the research and the name of the principal investigator:

Finding a Place for Women of Color: An Examination of Definitions of Inclusion, Neoliberalism, and Their Effects on Women of Color in Higher Education

Principal Investigator: Xochitl Husted

2. The research question or questions under investigation:

How do definitions of inclusion differ among classroom actors within discussion based classrooms?

How do these various definitions affect the experiences of women of color at Cactus College?

3. The nature of the population to be studied.

I will likely draw 8-10 participants from various discussion based courses. There will be no vulnerable populations recruited. Participants will be told that their understandings of "inclusivity" are being investigated. I will not disclose much else as to ensure that their responses are not heavily influenced by what I am researching. My research requires minimal deception.

4. How consent will be obtained and from whom (e.g., adult participants, minors and their parents/guardians, organizational consent, etc.)

Consent will be obtained directly from interviewees and professors. They will all be over the age of 18.

5. The degree of sensitivity of the information to be gathered and, if participants are to be personally identified, the steps that will be taken to ensure confidentiality;

There is a degree of sensitivity regarding the information gathered. Keeping participants' identities concealed is safest, as there could be social ramifications if they were revealed. In this case, I will ensure that the professors of the students interviewed do not know they are participating in interviews and that their identities are not revealed to anyone else, such as other students or administrators, during my research. I will use pseudonyms to protect their identities in my findings.

Additionally, the information being discussed in interviews is sensitive information, as it regards colleagues and peers at the college the participants attend. In this case, if their identity were to be discovered, this could present risks to their well being on campus.

6. The methods to be used (e.g., survey, experiment, field observations, etc.)

For my research, I will sit in on discussion based courses to observe the ways in which students and professors interpret and emulate inclusivity in the classroom space and how these interpretations are influenced by the social environment of Cactus College generally. These courses may be from any field of studies that Cactus offers. I will not identify the field or

department in which the professor teaches and I will refer to them by a pseudonym. I will also not name the school at which I am conducting my research, but instead note that it is a "small liberal arts college in California". These tactics will help to decrease the likelihood of readers uncovering the identity of professors by making it harder to deduce what department they teach in, what college they are employed by, and other identifying characteristics.

I will pool the data in my findings. When analyzing my findings, I will not do so in a manner that lists what happened in each class individually, but instead look at the findings as a whole. This will help to pull the reader's attention towards the underlying structures in classrooms at the college generally, instead of allowing readers to focus on the conduct that occurred within any specific classroom.

Discussion based classroom settings have been chosen due to the ways in which inclusivity is fostered in classrooms that encourage active and attentive participation. While observing these classes, I will be looking for the ways in which understandings of the term inclusivity are reproduced through behavior. Are the students' definition of inclusivity practiced in discussions? How do the professor's structure of their courses align with their understanding of inclusivity? This will be observed through classroom observations.

In order to closely analyze these understandings, I will conduct in-depth interviews with students of all demographics in order to allow for multiple definitions of inclusivity to be analyzed. I will recruit 4-8 interviewees from each course I observe. These students will not be identified in my findings and aliases will be used to protect their identities. These students must all be undergraduate students, as this is an investigation into the undergraduate experience. They will also be chosen from my research site, the discussion based courses that I plan to observe. This will allow me to closely watch classroom dynamics and then further discuss how they align or differ with the definitions of "inclusivity" provided. Classroom observations will indicate whether or not understandings of inclusivity are being emulated in the classroom space.

I will also interview the professor, in order to better understand how their definition of "inclusivity" is translated into the classroom structure. This will allow me to better understand what intentional action is being taken and why.

Students may feel more comfortable discussing their experiences, due to our shared experiences as students. This will allow for more intimate and open conversation about what is transpiring within the classroom and how they view "inclusivity". In this case, my positionality as a student makes this dialogue more accessible. My analysis will enable a better understanding of how, and why, everyone understands their contributions to making their campus and classroom a safe space.

7. An assessment of the benefits of the project, including its contribution to scientific knowledge and any direct benefits it may offer to the participants;

Understandings of inclusivity must be investigated, as different definitions lead to different outcomes that can negatively impact student groups, such as women of color. By shedding light on these definitions, one will see what effects various interpretations of the same term, in a singular space, have. This allows for a better understanding of the institution at hand, and the classroom space generally.

8. An assessment of the risks to participants and how they will be handled;
Risks include participant identities being revealed to other students and professors. In order to avoid this, I will do private Zoom interviews and not disclose any identities during or after the interview process. Notes and recordings from interviews will remain in a password protected file on my personal computer, which third parties have limited, to no, access to.