

CALIFORNIA STATE UNIVERSITY, NORTHRIDGE

Dispersing Diversity at the California Community College: From Frameworks to  
Diffusion

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By  
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## ABSTRACT

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Doctor of Education in Education Leadership

Most contemporary scholarship on the purpose of diversity discourse and diversity experience in higher education is focused on the American university. A variety of studies on the topic offer insight into the ways diversity is measured on university campuses, the motives for diversity discourse on university campuses, the outcomes associated with university diversity discourse, and university students' experiences of diversity discourse. One would be hard pressed, however, to locate scholarship that offers insight into how diversity discourse and diversity experience play out on community college campuses. In order to help fill the research gap, this study examines the purpose diversity discourse and students' diversity experience across three California community colleges (CCC). The results of this study indicate that the purpose of CCC diversity discourse is to foster positive educational environments that support and represent diversity groups through campus programs in order to increase proportional student output. It is not to enhance the cognitive, intellectual, and emotional development of active learners through diverse interaction. At the CCC today, diversity experience fails to invoke active engagement; it signifies passive, impersonal seeing and hearing.

## **CHAPTER I: STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

When I decided to research diversity at California community colleges (CCC), I anticipated various opinions and insights would emerge both supporting and shunning my interest. The conversations on diversity I had with peers and students led to many ideas about all things diversity, including the language and purpose, and especially the experience of diversity. My liberal-minded acquaintances often would assume that my interest was in advocating for marginalized identities or cultural groups who have been traditionally underrepresented in higher education. Alternately, my conservative leaning acquaintances would find pleasure in my interest in interrogating diversity discourses and often assume my task was to dismantle these discourses to shed light on the contradictions I might find.

Perhaps to the dismay of both groups, however, neither position captures my current research interest. I do not intend to promote diversity discourse in the CCC, nor do I seek to dismantle CCC diversity discourse, per se. Instead, my goal in the following study is twofold: to understand the purpose of diversity across the largest public higher education system in the United States, the California community college (CCC), and to understand students' experiences of diversity within this system.

### **Historical Context of Diversity in the Community College**

In 1947, President Harry S. Truman's Presidential Commission on Higher Education published *Higher Education for American Democracy*, a six-volume report detailing the pressing goals that American public higher education must strive for in light of changes in science, invention, technology, atomic energy, dynamic groups of people, and American foreign policy, following World War II. These changes, the Commission

(1947) argued, required a rethinking of American public higher education as an apparatus for strengthening and expanding American democracy both nationally and globally. In consideration of the social, intellectual, economic, and population landscapes of post-World War II America, the Commission (1947) issued a series of recommendations for American public higher education. These recommendations included the development of a unified goal for higher education, the equalization and expansion of educational opportunities for minority and marginalized groups, and the limitation of barriers to educational opportunity for minority and marginalized groups.

If the unified purpose of American public higher education was to strengthen and expand American democracy both nationally and globally, it could no longer privilege small subsets of the public; its expansion and global dissemination would require increasing student enrollment. Accordingly, the Commission (1947) invoked diversity to highlight the potential of every individual and to point to the common conditions, qualities, and characteristics shared by all people. In terms of higher education, diversity signified the totality of heterogeneous students who could be interpolated into higher education in the service of “[A] strong and dynamic national community...and in time a strong and dynamic world community” (Vol. 1, p. 102).

In order to respond to the variety of human aptitudes and social needs in post-war America, the Commission (1947) recommended that colleges diversify both curriculum and pedagogical practices (Vol. 1, p. 46). Students were also to be given equal education opportunities “without regard to economic status, race, creed, color, sex, national origin, or ancestry” (Commission, Vol. 2, 1947, p. 3). Equal education opportunity would displace discriminatory frameworks that had kept giant swaths of the population out of

higher education. It would serve diversity by paving the way for an influx of previously untapped human potential to be developed in the service of the free world. But in order to provide these opportunities and reap the benefits of American public higher education, the number of college campuses and their responsibilities would also have to increase (Vol. 1, p. 67). The Commission (1947) thus advocated for the proliferation of community college systems across the country to bring many more people, economically and geographically, within the reach of higher education (Vol. 3, p. 70). Under this thinking the community college would provide historically minority and marginalized groups with free and equal access to education and at the same time interpolate a formerly unrecognized variety of distinct capacities from communities across the nation into American sociopolitical order (Vol. 1, p. 67).

However, in the years to come, diversity discourse in higher education would undergo a major transformation. The civil rights and anti-war movements of the 1960s provoked questions about the *freedom* of American democracy in light of the United States' unjust treatment of minority and underrepresented Americans and its ruthless war against the people of Vietnam (Spanos, 1993). In academia, emerging theories of deconstruction, feminism, and race spawned the proliferation of new knowledge about subjectivity and economic, social, and political formations (Spanos, 1993; Ferguson, 2012). This became especially clear as student groups protested and rioted against the complicity of public higher education in American sociopolitical hegemony.

Administrators responded by shifting diversity discourse away from American democracy and a strong national and global community and directed diversity discourse toward increasing minority student access to higher education and incorporating minority

identities into the curriculum. Quantification of minority identities became the means by which administrators confirmed a commitment to equal education opportunity and diversity (Ferguson, 2012). Minority groups would no longer face discrimination in American public higher education because administrators had recalibrated their institutions “in terms of diversification rather than standardization, no longer a center organized around a homogenous national identity” (Ferguson, 2012, p. 29).

Diversity discourse, then, ceased to signify the distinct and varied individual human horizons that could bolster American democracy. Instead, for the time being, it would come to signify the vastly distinct and varied group identities that had been historically disenfranchised and discriminated against in American public higher education. It would be dispersed as a counter-hegemonic ideology to dismantle institutionalized mechanisms of discrimination that had formerly prevented access and representation to minority and marginalized groups.

In contemporary American public higher education, however, diversity discourse no longer points to any particular national end. It is no longer invoked to expand American nationalism. And since institutional mechanisms of group discrimination are now forbidden in American public higher education, it is no longer directed at dismantling them. Today “it’s the diversity itself, not the thing the diversity leads to, that we’re supposed to like” (Michaels, 2016, p. 185). In lieu of the dialectic, it has become a reified ideology that perpetuates the uncompromising acknowledgment and acceptance of students’ multiple subject positions, pluralistic selves, and intersectional identities. In other words, diversity discourse today is an ideological formation dispersed on college campuses to counter identitarian antagonisms and to make people feel comfortable. It is

the “project of getting people (ourselves and, especially others) to stop being racist, sexist, classist, homophobes” (Michaels, 2016, p. 19).

### **Research Problem**

Most contemporary scholarship on the purpose of diversity discourse and diversity experience in higher education is focused on the American university. A variety of studies on the topic offer insight into the ways diversity is measured on university campuses, the motives for diversity discourse on university campuses, the outcomes associated with university diversity discourse, and university students’ experiences of diversity discourse. One would be hard pressed, however, to locate scholarship that offers insight into how diversity plays out on community college campuses, particularly within the CCC system. This may be a result of the fact that the proliferation of community colleges systems across the country was originally motivated by a desire to extend the reach of education to diverse groups who had previously been marginalized by higher education institutions. In California, specifically, the only requirement for any student to be admitted to a community college is a high school diploma or the equivalent, and even this requirement for admission can be waived at the discretion of a college board (CCC Apply, Admissions Requirements, 2017). However, it would be short sighted to presume that CCC administrators ceased to invoke diversity discourse simply because the CCC system has succeeded in providing equal access to and representation in higher education free of institutionalized, discriminatory barriers. In fact, one need only turn to the various mission statements, college catalogues, education master plans, and other administrative documents to witness the scope of diversity discourse in the CCC system. Consequently, the following study seeks to bring CCC diversity discourse into

the ongoing conversation about the purpose and experience of diversity discourse in American education writ large.

Diversity at American universities is typically measured in terms of structure, curriculum, and—more rarely—informal interaction. Structure points to the inclusion of students of color and other underrepresented groups. Curriculum points to the inclusion of information about different groups of people, such as students of color and other underrepresented groups. Informal interactional diversity speaks to the informal encounters between individuals on campus.

Most American universities focus on the *inclusion of students* of color and underrepresented groups and the *inclusion of information* about students of color and other underrepresented groups. However, research shows that informal interactional is most responsible for improved attitudes and reduced prejudice. There is also a correlation between informal interactional and openness to belief-change, socio-political activism, cognitive development, confidence, moral reasoning, democracy, and interactions with people who differ in terms of race, gender, values, political beliefs, and religious perspectives (Hurtado, 2007; Loes, et al., 2013; Parker & Pascarella, 2013; Pascarella, et al. 2012).

Spanos (1993) suggests that the structural and curricular representation of historically underrepresented students is inadequate as a means of interpolating them into the university. These representations are intended to show historically underrepresented groups that they are welcome at the university and that their subject positions are equally worthy of academic pursuit. Yet Spanos (1993) argues that this assurance is not the ultimate purpose of diversity discourse. The real purpose is something more banal as well

as ominous: the classification, hierarchization, supervision, and regularization of human difference (Spanos, 1993). Difference is calculated through scientific, economic, and sociopolitical tables (Spanos, 1993) with the goal of developing reified frameworks through which underrepresented students can be counted and accounted for. The purpose of this, Spanos (1993) argues, is to transform “the potentially disruptive energies of differential human being to ‘docile and useful bodies’” (p. 9). This allows the university to maintain its functionary position in “bourgeoisie humanism and the consumer capitalist power structure” (p. 32). In other words, structural and curricular representations of diversity in the university are not intended to expand students’ horizons of understanding or foster critical thinking.

Indeed, university administrators have long been aware of the potential gains from the dissemination and representation of diversity on university campuses. Minority difference and culture are sites of “calculation and strategy” to be tapped into so that university administrators can fulfill their own aims and objectives (Ferguson, 2012). Diversification, Ferguson (2012) argues, is not focused on integrating minority difference, but on absorbing it in order to make minority subjectivity into “object[s] of knowledge formation and institutional practices” (p. 232). This pegs diversity discourse as a substitute for minority agency, tableaux that abstract minority students from their existential situations and reduce them to categories of calculability and certainty (Ferguson, 2012). Quantification represents the inclusion of minority students on campuses, and interdisciplinary studies represents the inclusion of information about underrepresented groups in the curriculum. The purpose of this inclusion is to foster relations between higher education, capital, and the state (Ferguson, 2012); in other

words, echoing Spanos (1993), diversity, particularly in the form of structure and curriculum, is intended to quiet dissent and bring minority difference under the thrall of neoliberal ideology.

In a similar vein, Michaels (2016) argues that diversity discourse in American universities generally serves a conservative, neoliberal function; it is invoked to ensure that cultural discrimination does not prevent any student from pursuing the free market (p. 75). He also finds that various structural and curricular facets of diversity discourse in the university, particularly affirmative action admissions procedures and multicultural graduation requirements, are not in the interest of equality, but in the interest of preserving the class structure of American society by distracting people from poverty (p. 17). Diversity discourses keeps people focused on identity so that they do not have to confront the social inequality perpetuated by neoliberal ideology. The purpose of diversity discourse and higher education in America, Michaels (2012) concludes, is not interested in getting the rich kids to interact with the poor kids (p. 89), “but to make sure that nobody is stuck in poverty because of” institutional discrimination according to racial and gender classifications (p. 212). In other words, diversity discourse ensures that if anyone is stuck in poverty, it is because they choose poverty.

In short, diversity discourse in the American university is a misdirection. It reduces students to increasingly smaller categories of race, culture, sexual orientation, and gender (Whitt, et al., 2001) that often ignore class (Ritter, 2007). While diversity only seems to welcome traditionally minority students to campus, it may marginalize traditionally majority students and leave them feeling excluded from privileged classifications (Roper, 2004). And discourses of diversity fetishize students and put them

on display as bureaucratic commodities, effectively crystallizing difference and turning it into a spectacle to be counted and accounted for, rather than interacted with on equal terms (Tavares, 2007).

But what about the purpose and experience of diversity discourse at CCCs? Does it parallel the purported purposes and experiences of diversity discourse at universities across America? The mission of the community college today is increasingly represented through neoliberal discourse “focused on the needs of business and industry”(Ayers, 2005, p. 62). As market based principles displace traditional social principles in community college missions, learner based outcomes, outcomes often associated with interactional diversity, such as critical thinking, cognitive development, and socio-political activism, are eclipsed by industry demands for human capital (Ayers, 2005). This indicates that community college administrators are likely complicit in dispersing diversity discourse for hegemonic aims and in ways that reduce difference to sites of calculation, but the lack of research in this area makes it difficult to know for certain. Thus, the following study begins to fill this research gap by bringing CCC diversity discourse and students’ diversity experiences into the ongoing conversation about diversity in higher education.

### **Purpose and Significance**

The goal of this study is to determine the purpose of diversity at CCCs; to understand what CCC discourse says and does; to understand how CCC students interpret diversity; and to understand students’ diversity experience at CCCs. In short, this poststructural, phenomenological study seeks to discover and disclose the purpose and experience of diversity at the CCC.

The significance of this study is that it opens a path to thinking a diversity discourse attuned to CCC students. If administrators and students are to think diversely and think diversity in relation to education, it must be irreducible to sites for the reproduction of ideologies, whether hegemonic or counter hegemonic. Indeed, it must instead be dispersed to bolster student agency. This is especially important if community colleges administrators continue to represent their institutions as sites of cognitive, intellectual, and leadership development (Ayers, 2005).

### **Research Questions**

This study is guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the purpose of diversity discourse on California community college campuses?
2. How do students on California community college campuses experience diversity?

The secondary questions for this study were:

1. What does diversity discourse on California community college campuses represent?
2. What does diversity discourse on California community college campuses say?
3. What does diversity discourse on California community college campuses do?
4. How do students on California community college campuses interpret diversity?

## **Research Approach/ Theoretical-Conceptual Framework**

In this study, diversity discourse was taken up in an analysis drawing on both phenomenological and poststructural methodologies. In particular, I drew from the work from Georges Gusdorf and Michel Foucault.

Phenomenology is concerned with the meaning and essence of lived experience as articulated by research participants (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). This methodology is founded on the idea that speaking discloses man to the world; in other words, speaking is the publication of the consciousness of experience (Gusdorf, 1995). In order to understand how CCC students experience diversity discourse and how it is transformed into consciousness, I interviewed students from community college campuses across California.

Moreover, Foucauldian discourse analysis refers to an examination of the dominant ways of writing and speaking about a particular topic that have become reified over time; it also brings to light who benefits from this reification and who has been marginalized as a result of it (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 53). For Foucault (1972), a discursive formation is a group of statements about a topic that are dispersed in various locations and in various arrangements (p. 34); these dispersions often emerge through recurring objects, utterances, concepts, and themes (p. 37). Discourse analysis is the process of uncovering the modes of dispersion, the field of statements that are dispersed, and the conditions under which utterances appear, expand, are appropriated, or otherwise gain meaning. This methodology was utilized to develop a systematic description of diversity as a *discourse object* at CCCs.

## **Methodology**

This study is qualitative in nature, as the data were derived from administrative documents and the articulated experiences of students. Document analysis was used to determine the purpose of diversity discourse across the CCC system. Semi-structured interviews were facilitated to discover how CCC students experience diversity discourse. The documents and student participants came from purposively selected CCCs with semi-homogenous student populations. Contemporary public communication documents dispersing diversity were examined. Interviewees were recruited via snowball sampling.

## **Limitations**

There primary limitation of this study is the small number of sample sites and research participants in relation to the number of community colleges throughout the state of California. The findings in the study offer a launching point for future research, but they are not generalizable for the entire CCC system or American community colleges writ large. Furthermore, this study does not incorporate faculty perspectives on diversity discourse, which would add a significant dimension to the research.

## **Organization of the Dissertation**

In chapter two I present a review of the literature relevant to diversity discourse and diversity experience in higher education. In chapter three I provide a detailed description of the design of my study and the methods I used for data collection and analysis. I present the results of my study in chapter four. In the final chapter I include an interpretation of my findings, my recommendations for college practice and policies, and suggestions for future studies focused on diversity discourse and diversity experience at CCCs.

## CHAPTER II: REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

The paradoxes of diversity in higher education since Truman's Presidential Commission on Higher Education published *Higher Education for American Democracy* (1947) result from the fact that there is no singular, universal understanding of the purposes of diversity. In other words, diversity discourse is not a master narrative. Tensions emerge as multiple justifications for diversity on college campuses contrast one another. Some scholars from the past decade have argue that diversity discourse is responsible for fetishizing otherness and succumbs to limited categorical frameworks, while others hold that institutionalized diversity positively influences leadership qualities, literacy and critical thinking skills, and students' interest in civic responsibility. In fact, divergent beliefs about the nature and function of diversity at institutions of higher education across the country indicate that diversity discourse and diversity experience are oftentimes contradictory.

### **Justification for Community College Research**

Much of the research on diversity in higher education over the past 20 years is quantitative in nature, and it predominately focuses on students' experiences of diversity at four-year institutions. In order to help fill a gap in college diversity research, this study deviates from the four-year institutional focus to turn attention to diversity discourse at CCCs, the largest community college system in the United States. There are multiple justifications for focusing on CCCs.

First, as Spaid and Ozeki (2016) note, community colleges in the United States serve some of the most diverse students in higher education, and typical of most higher education institutions, this diversity is centered on race, ethnicity, age, and prior

academic achievement, among other categorical indicators (p. 96). However, the community college student population differs from 4-year student populations in various ways. For example, most community college students do not live on campus during their first year of college, whereas this is more common for university students. In their focus on student services professionals at the community college, those individuals often tasked with addressing diversity on campuses, Spaid and Ozeki (2016) find that the very theories guiding community college professionals are the very same theories that guide practices at 4-year institutions. Consequently, the theories guiding community college administrations are out of sync with the unique qualities of the community college as an institution that serves some of the most diverse students in the country. Not surprisingly, Spaid and Ozeki (2016) highlight the need for “specific knowledge and understanding of the experiences” (p. 96) of community college students in order to develop theories and practices specific to the educational experiences associated with attending a community college.

Spaid’s and Ozeki’s (2016) concerns about 4-year institutional theory informing how community college administrators think about and respond to students at the community college are rarely highlighted in the research on diversity in college education. In fact, much of the research on diversity in higher education fails to address community colleges writ large. Moreover, qualitative research into the purpose and experience of diversity at the community college is particularly scarce. Jones (2016), one of the rare scholars focused on the topic of diversity at community colleges, notes that community colleges, too, need to understand the conditions that promote diverse student contact (p. 81). His quantitative study on diversity sought to understand the impact of

enrollment, orientation programs, faculty interactions, and group activities in class and on campus that foster interactional diversity. Jones' (2016) is particularly interested in “understanding the conditions which foster and limit interactional diversity at 2-year institutions” (p. 81). He argues that when community colleges discover the conditions under which interactional diversity emerges, and when the “ institutional setting is supportive of students’ sense of belonging, competence, and autonomy, engagement will occur naturally” (Jones, 2016, p. 82). Consequently, Jones (2016), in the spirit of Spaid and Ozeki (2016), makes the case that community college professionals must discover the conditions for diverse interaction at their own institutional level rather than look for guiding theories and practices from the 4-year sector.

Ultimately, Spaid and Ozeki (2016) and Jones (2016) have called for educational scholars to look specifically at community colleges in order to develop theories and practices attuned to the students served by these institutions. This study heeds that call in its examination of diversity discourse and the experiences of diversity across CCCs.

**The CCC.** In order to better understand the discourse and experience of diversity at the community college and foster particular ways of thinking about diversity at the community college, this poststructural, phenomenological study sought to determine the purpose of diversity discourse and students’ diversity experience across three purposefully selected CCCs.

The California community college system is the largest organization of higher education in the United States; it serves over 2 million students across 114 colleges. In fact, “one in every five community college students in the nation attends a California community college” (CCCCO, Key Facts, 2017). The Community College Research

Center at Teachers College, Columbia University, indicates that 9 million undergraduate students were enrolled in community colleges throughout the country during the 2015-2016 academic year; this means that 39 percent of all undergraduate students during the 2015-2016 academic year were community college students (CCRC, Community College FAQs, 2017). During the 2015-2016 academic year, the CCC had 2.1 million students enrolled. Thus, as the figures add up, the CCC was responsible for educating roughly 26 percent of all community college students in the nation. With such glaring numbers, research focused specifically on diversity discourse and students' diversity experience at the CCC system appears justified.

### **Purposes of Diversity**

As previously indicated, conceptions of diversity, particularly in the field of education, are themselves diverse; this includes the aims of diversity, the discursive variations conceptualizing diversity, the dispersal of diversity discourse, and students' actual diversity experiences. In his address to the Harvard Federalist Society on "Intellectual Diversity and the Legal Academy," Distinguished Chair and Professor of Law, Michael Stokes Paulsen (2013), from the University of St. Thomas, remarked that "intellectual diversity—diversity of views and values, diversity of opinions expressed and discussed, diversity of approaches—is a value of paramount importance" (p. 145). Yet, he posits that diversity itself is not the "object of intellectual inquiry" (p. 147). Paulsen (2013) establishes that diversity's aim should be truth, but what this truth looks like is never fully clarified. Yet, since Paulsen (2013) is the chair of a Catholic law school, the one where he also teaches, it seems reasonable to surmise that he views truth in terms of the Judeo Christian Word. But the focus of the present discussion is not Paulsen's (2013)

Judeo Christian centered-circle; it is to establish the diversity of diversity. Hence, to get to the point, Paulsen (2013) distinguishes between intellectual diversity and intellectual truth, noting that ‘diversity of views’ should be regarded when in the interest of truth, or the Word. This means that ‘diversity of views’ for the sake of inclusivity is on the side of error as all views are not in the service of truth. In other words, Paulsen (2013) retreats from the notion of diversity as anything goes, which indicates that diversity is not in the service of personal and political agendas, but is of transcendent value. Consequently, he suggests that views hindering truth should be disqualified.

Paulsen (2013) is not alone in his belief that diversity of views can and should go beyond ideological interests. In their discussion of intellectual diversity, Cornwell and Stoddard (2003) argue that many proponents of diversity are often limited in their conception of diversity. More specifically, they indicate that intellectual diversity is summoned when ideologically minded groups seek affirmation of their viewpoints, or when subsets of the campus population feel “that the curriculum needs defending against the allegedly hegemonic forces of political powers” (p. 3). In other words, intellectual diversity is often limited to a justificatory role of left, right, and center political positions, which is why Cornwell and Stoddard (2003) find it problematic that diversity on college campuses is often measured through physiology and curriculum.

Physiology, in this case, refers to “bodies” (Cornwell and Stoddard, 2003, p. 3) that are often viewed as synonymous with diversity; in other words, diversity on college campuses is measured by a variety of physiological indicators reflected in the makeup of the campus community. Cornwell and Stoddard (2003), however, go beyond physiology as diversity and instead emphasize that the value of diversity lie in the multiplicity of

positionalities or viewpoints that give rise to multiple “ways of knowing” (p. 4). To them, positionality is more than a material body; it includes geography, power, social class, and other characteristics that shape individuals experiences of life and the many facets of identity that emerge from such intersectionality (p. 3). Consequently, Cornwell and Stoddard (2003) warn against narrow, crystalizing conceptions of diversity; in this case, crystalizing diversity “forecloses the free discussion of differences [and] also forecloses the quest for learning and knowledge creation sufficient to the complexities, both national and global, of the twenty-first century” (pp. 4-5). They also note that though curriculum present on many campuses is geared toward global citizenship and represents vast horizons of being in the world, it falls short “Precisely because the world looks different from different vantage points” (p. 7); that is, curriculum in the interest of diversity is always curriculum chosen from a limited vantage point and subsequently fails to be diverse. In the end, Cornwell and Stoddard (2003) turn their attention to the varying horizons of understanding and experience among college faculty and students, as well as the “different social locations that they can bring to the table in a collaborative or dialogic process of knowledge creation” (p. 7). To them, students and faculty arrive at multiple ways of knowing not purely through proximity to bodies and engagement with limited, diversity-centered curriculum, but through dialogic encounters that foster new ways of knowing and new ways of engaging others in a global world.

Paulsen (2013), Cornwell and Stoddard (2013) idealize diversity as a force behind multiple ways of knowing and arriving at intellectual truth, and they denounce limited foci on bodies and curriculum (Paulsen, 2013, p. 147; Cornwell & Stoddard, 2013, p. 3). In a similar vein, Bowman and Brandenberger (2012) also point beyond “bodies”

(Bowman & Brandenberger, 2012, p. 3) and focus on interactional experiences. Bowman and Brandenberger (2012) emphasize that education practitioners should understand student experiences of and with diversity, as well as the process underlying college diversity experiences and attitude change (p. 180), and they call attention to their finding that diversity can lead to “positive orientations toward equality and social responsibility” (p. 196). Additionally, they suggest that attitudes about difference improve among divergent individuals when they are dialogically engaged with one another; defamiliarization arrived at through dialogue thus serves as an impetus for the reconciliation or appropriation of difference, or what they call the “unexpected” (Bowman & Brandenberger, 2012, p. 182). Like Paulsen (2013), and Cornwell and Stoddard (2003), Bowman and Brandenberger (2012) question institutionalized diversity initiatives and conclude that many diversity initiatives may, in fact, actually curb students’ interest in fusing with diverse horizons of understanding. Since institutional facilitation of diversity discourages some students from engaging with difference, they suggest that future research focus on the “types and qualities of interactions that students with divergent orientations have” (Bowman & Brandenberger, 2012, p. 197). To avoid disengagement with the unexpected, they call for instructors and practitioners to attract students who may be uninterested in “interacting productively across difference” (p. 196), and further examine the conditions under which experiences of the unexpected, or, rather, diverse interaction occurs.

Not all scholars agree that the purpose or value of diversity is intellectual in nature or that diversity should be in the service of the fusion of horizons of understand or multiple ways of knowing. In their discussion of college campus diversity efforts,

Halualani, et al (2010) define diversity efforts as “any activity or program that promotes the active appreciation of all campus members” (p. 129). Their emphasis on appreciation spans a plethora of diversity categories typical reified in college diversity discourse: “gender, socioeconomic class, political perspective, age, race, ethnicity, religion, sexual orientation, disability, regional origin, nationality, occupation and language, among others” (Halualani, et al., p. 129). Thinking of diversity in terms of appreciation seemingly counters Paulsen’s (2013) argument that diversity should function in the service of truth and Cornwell’s and Stoddard’s (2003) claim that the purpose of diversity is to arrive at multiple ways of knowing in a globalized world that demands global citizens. However, similar to Paulsen (2013) and Cornwell and Stoddard (2003), Halualani, et al. (2010) do draw attention to diverse interaction as a primary factor in appreciation of difference.

What the above conceptions of diversity demonstrate is that there are, in fact, competing conceptions of diversity as well as competing interests in diversity on college campuses. To find agreement on the nature of diversity, its value, its outcomes, and its benefits across college campuses is akin to resolving the fictional curse of Babel. As there is no universal language of diversity, diversity thus remains a slippery signifier that is only stabilized through discursive reification. Overall, research on college diversity indicates that no quota of bodies, inventory of diversity curriculum, no categorical framing of diversity, and no institutional diversity initiatives can account for the purpose of diversity on college campuses.

## **Structural, Curricular, and Interactional Diversity**

Much of the research on diversity at 4-year colleges identifies three separate spheres of diversity. Pike and Kuh (2006) refer to these categories as structural, curricular, and informal interactional (p. 426). They maintain that structural diversity is typically concerned with the inclusion of students of color; curricular diversity includes “the incorporation of information about diverse groups in the curriculum” (Pike and Kun, 2006, p. 427); and interactional diversity speaks to the informal encounters between various individuals on campus. Structural diversity pertains to what Cornwell and Stoddard (2003) and Bowman and Brandenberger (2012) might refer to as “bodies.” Unlike them, however, Pike and Kuh (2006) emphasize that structural diversity is necessary for the realization of the benefits of diversity, i.e. social justice and multiple “ways of knowing” (Cornwell and Stoddard, 2003, p. 4) or “intellectual truth” (Paulsen, 2013, p. 147), and that structural diversity is “associated with exposure to diverse viewpoints as well as diverse people” (Pike and Kuh, 2006, p. 443). Yet Pike and Kuh (2006) also echo the sentiment that structural diversity alone is not sufficient for maximizing the benefits of diversity (Cornwell & Stoddard, 2013; Paulsen, 2013; Bowman and Brandenberger, 2012; Reposo, 2012; Hurtado, 2007; Chang, 2002). Though structural diversity sets the stage for diverse interaction, it does not guarantee that interaction, particularly because structural diversity categorically limits diversity to identitarian indicators.

Though they determine that structural and curricular diversity are necessary for diverse interaction, Pike and Kuh (2006) find that the benefits of campus diversity are primarily rooted in interactions among students, which suggests that institutional

diversity structures play a predominately supportive role for interactional diversity.

Though structural diversity is indicative of a campus environment, it often fails to support interactional diversity; campus diversity does not emerge from structure alone, but in “the frequency of interactions among students from different backgrounds” (Pike & Kuh, 2006, p. 445). Thus, bringing bodies to campus is one necessary facet of diversity, but the benefits of diversity depend on different groups experiencing each other through interaction. Consequently, Pike and Kuh (2006) suggest that future research examine the relationships among structural diversity and informal interactional diversity (p. 445-446).

Furthermore, Hurtado (2007) intimates that structural diversity is a necessary facet of the greater goal of diversity on college campuses, yet she, too, hones in on “Substantial and meaningful interaction” (Hurtado, 2007, p. 190) as the foundation of diverse learning and democracy. Hurtado (2007) finds that students who engage with diverse peers are more capable of empathy, pluralistic thinking, and concern for others and students with negative interactions with diverse peers display the opposite tendencies. She further notes that though diversity is entrenched in many campuses, the results or outcomes of diversity are drastically different at each location, but she is optimistic that “the emerging research on the educational benefits of diversity is beginning to establish the theoretical and empirical links in determining the optimal conditions under which these benefits operate” (Hurtado, 2007, p. 187).

Moreover, Hurtado (2007) finds that structural diversity does not do enough to facilitate the civic outcomes colleges hope to achieve. Instead, she argues, students who engage in “informal interactions with diverse peers have higher scores on measures of more complex thinking about people and their behavior, cultural and social awareness,

and perspective-taking skills (i.e. the ability to see the world from someone else's perspective)" (Hurtado, 2007, p. 191). In other words, under the right conditions, diversity serves multiple ways of knowing through interactions that expand students' worldviews in the service of "democratic sensibilities, including their pluralistic orientation, interest in poverty issues, and concern for the public good" (Hurtado, 2007, p. 191). From this one can surmise that Hurtado (2007) conceives of diversity as serving multiple functions simultaneously: social justice or restitution, and divergent interactional thinking for global citizenship (Cornwell & Stoddard, 2003, p. 3). She even highlights pluralism as the core of diversity, an insights advanced by previous scholars who advocate for diversity in the service of emergent ways of knowing and arriving at truth (Paulsen, 2013; Cornwell & Stoddard, 2013), of resisting the lure of stereotypical frameworks that cloud authentic, unexpected interaction (Bowman and Brandenberger, 2012) and that categorically limit diversity to structural frameworks (Raposa, 2012). In the end, Hurtado (2007) suggests that diversity should be in the service of expanding students' horizons of understanding so as to be able to "act, and make ethical decisions in an increasingly complex and diverse world" (Hurtado, 2007, p. 192).

Chang's (2002) exploration of diversity on college campuses focuses on the ways diversity discourse can both perpetuate diversity agendas and at the same time undermine diversity altogether. Unique to his research is the call for diversity to take a broader view of curriculum and pedagogy; he argues that diversity has to be embedded in every facet of the college, including the material to be taught and the means by which it is delivered. For Chang (2002), diversity cannot be a discourse that educational practitioners publically salute and then ignore in their teaching philosophies and curriculum. Like

Bowman and Brandenberger (2012), he argues that if educational practitioners fail to back up their own diversity discourse with action they may arrest educational benefits of diversity. He also highlights disconnect between discourses of diversity and the operationalization of those discourses, which, he notes, undermines diversity efforts altogether. For Chang (2002), focused curricular and pedagogical practices can potentially bridge a gap between diversity as a theory and diversity as a practice.

As a further complication to diversity, Chang (2002) addresses the “breadth and depth” of diversity on college campuses, seeking to determine whether or not colleges’ diversity activities achieve what they claim. He highlights that some of the problems arising from diversity discourse are direct ramifications of the slippery signifying nature of the term diversity. This slippery signifying nature has led to vast interpretations of diversity that both bear fruits of diversity and at the same time limit its own fruit bearing potential. He notes, “A more authentic discourse of diversity would begin with a broader view of learning and would recognize efforts that seek either to employ alternative modes of assessment or to broaden the range of valid educational outcomes” (Chang, 2002, p. 135). These outcomes are often connected to civic engagement, knowledge, tolerance, economics, difference, labor, citizenship, participation, and many other seeds of democracy, all of which are generally highlighted in literature on diversity (Hurtado, 2007; Paulsen, 2013; Cornwell & Stoddard, 2013). However, the current ways of determining the success of diversity, primarily through considerations of topics such as race-related admission practices (Chang, 2002, p. 135) prevent the disclosure of other factors of diversity, such as diversity in curriculum. These implications are paramount for maximizing the benefits of diversity, “particularly its capacity to sustain meaningful

and lasting democratic changes in higher education” (Chang, 2002, pp. 135-136). When structural diversity is used as the primary indicator of campus diversity there is the potential that “short-sightedness may both arrest educational potential and preserve the broader set of arrangements and institutional practices that diversity advocates seek to transform” (Chang, 2002, p. 136). One way forward, then, according to Chang (2002) is to equally prioritize structural and curricular diversity.

Structural, curricular, and interaction diversity are also explored by Loes, et al. (2013) to determine the impact of diversity on literacy, and, loosely, on critical thinking. Like previous scholars, they find that structural diversity alone does not change student’s beliefs and perspectives. However, they do credit structural diversity with providing students opportunities to interact with one another. They also indicate that curricular diversity exposes students to a variety of racial, ethnic, and cultural perspectives, and it is associated with particular student outcomes such as analytic problem solving, social/political activism, psychological well-being, cognition, critical thinking, racial understanding, overall satisfaction with college, grade point average, and persistence (Loes, et al., 2013, p. 838). However, Loes, et al. (2013) determine that it is interactional diversity that improves attitudes and reduces prejudice; interactional diversity is most associated with openness to diversity and defamiliarization, socio-political activism, cognitive development, critical thinking, confidence, moral reasoning, democracy, and interactions with people who differ in terms of gender, values, political beliefs, and religious perspectives (Loes, et al., 2013). Interactional diversity has a moderate affect on literacy whereas curricular diversity has only “chance effects” (Loes, et al., 2013, p. 853). Thus, since diversity experiences have a positive impact on things such as literacy, they

highlight the importance of colleges creating opportunities for diverse interactional engagement and to go beyond structural and curricular diversity alone.

### **Openness to Diversity**

Whitt, et al (2001) found that pre-college openness to diversity is the greatest influence on a student's openness to diversity. However, they also note that "individual experiences and environmental characteristics can produce growth and development in openness to diversity and challenge" (Whitt, et al, 2001, p. 188). With this in mind, they sought to understand institutional factors associated with student's openness to diversity and challenge on college campuses. First, they note that there is often reluctance to diversity amongst college students because it has been saturated in the discourses of their everyday and has lost its sensuous vigor; it has become a limited framework for the acceptable bounds of speaking about difference. Secondly, they draw attention to the fact that students are reduced to homogeneous categories in order to respond to perceived tensions that result from difference. These categories place students into "increasingly smaller groups, many of which are founded on commonalities of race, culture, sexual orientation, and gender" (Whitt, et al, 2001, p. 174). Third, they point out that there are college students who welcome defamiliarization and the appropriation of new ideas from diverse people. Finally, when students dialogically engage with one another about differences in experience, academic discipline, and more, they have a higher tendency to be open to difference (Whitt, et al, 2001).

In short, Whitt, et al. (2001), discover that "independent of all other influences, interactions with diverse peers, including conversations on topics associated with differences and which challenged previously held ideas and beliefs, were associated with

significant gains in openness to diversity and challenge” (p. 195). Their work clearly highlights that if education practitioners are to foster students’ openness to diversity, they must cultivate structure, curriculum, and interactional opportunities that support such openness. When these facets of diversity are understood, and the extent of their influence is known, colleges can better understand students’ experiences of diversity and create optimal conditions for diverse interaction (Whitt, et al, 2001, p. 197). Yet, they also suggests that tensions arise when implementing such programs because of the many divergent beliefs about diversity, ideas about what it means, what it says, and how it can best be implemented and facilitated.

Other generalizations about student’s openness to diversity and defamiliarization have been articulated by Pascarella, et al. (1996), who explain that openness to diversity is facilitated by intersecting experiences of housing, work, study, interaction with peers, and the college environment. In addition, Parker and Pascarella (2013) explain that diversity experiences contribute to leadership qualities in college students, and they specifically highlight interactional diversity as a primary factor of leadership development. This finding prompts them to recommend that “higher education and student affairs professionals [...] be intentional and strategic with regards to sustaining diversity-related programs and initiatives that have been shown to impact desired college outcomes (p. 228). In other words, they suggest that colleges develop diversity opportunities that lead to meaningful interactions in support of student outcomes, such as leadership qualities. Yet they also maintain that there is no way to generalize whether or not diversity experiences sustain these orientations since diversity experiences are unique to each individual and cannot be mandated through some singular structure; they are

unquantifiable. However, they reiterate that interactional diversity plays an impactful role in civic, social, and political views and, therefore, colleges should focus on creating “opportunities for students to interact with diverse others both inside and outside of the classroom” (Pascarella, et al. p. 491). It is through interaction, they note, that “liberalizing” (Pascarella, et al. p. 491) social effects are achieved. Like Bowman and Brandenberger (2012) Pascarella, et al. (2012) find that interactional diversity deflates stereotypical, limited frameworks of understanding others, challenges existing worldviews and beliefs, positively, and leads students to experiences of the unexpected.

### **Emergent Concerns and Criticisms**

There are many emergent concerns about the way higher education institutions approach diversity. Raposa (2012) concerns himself with the discourse of diversity and the logic that underlies diversity at college campuses, which often establishes limiting identity categories that determine the extent of diversity. These categories, in turn, leave out particular indicators of difference and situate college students into pre-established diversity categories that undermine “heterogeneous communities’ [...] potential to become great poems, fascinating stories” (Raposa, 2012, p. 442) and inadvertently diminish campus members’ “will to interpret” and participate in conversations about difference (Raposa, 2012, p. 442). Raposa (2012) further highlights that college campuses that are structurally diverse and that establish a discourse of diversity through limited categories may hinder the desire of campus members to take an active interest in engaging with differences that run counter to their own horizons of understanding. The framing of diversity to narrowly construed categories of difference, ones that rationalize the inclusion of some identitarian categories and the exclusion of others, inevitably

ignores important student experiences. For Raposa (2012), exclusionary effects are a result of the assumption that “The nature of diversity is also taken as something given, a fixed goal with questions raised only about the best strategies for achieving it” (Raposa, 2012, p. 432). Yet, one only needs to comb through diversity research from the past 70 or so years to understand that there is no “nature of diversity” (Raposa, 2012, p. 432), only diverse ways of interpreting diversity, its value, its benefits, and its outcomes. In so many words, Raposa (2012) suggests that diversity is at risk of becoming a reified, dead metaphor bound to categorical limitations that are unable to traverse the threshold between what Cornwell and Stoddard (2003) refer to as the vying justifications for diversity on college campuses: social justice or restitution, and divergent interactional thinking for global citizenship (p. 3).

Furthermore, regardless of the variety of discussions and perspectives of diversity, colleges still struggle to figure out how to approach diversity on campus. Iverson (2012) suggests that education practitioners examine diversity discourse and “interrogate the unquestioned assumptions, structures, and practices that construct diversity” (Iverson, 2012, p. 152). The goal of this is to eliminate unnecessarily crystallization of difference that she argues reduces minority students to discursive binaries of difference, particularly the binary of normal/different. This means that educational practitioners cannot blindly accept diversity discourse, but, instead, must engage it with a critical eye. As Iverson (2012) explains, most scholarship on diversity fails to consider how diversity discourse shapes beliefs. She notes, “Despite the proliferation of recommendations, initiatives, and strategies codified in diversity action plans, campuses continue to struggle with and strive for changes in institutional environment, climate, and culture to include, reflect, and

accommodate diversity” (Iverson, 2012, p. 151). In the end, Iverson (2012) reasons that the discursive limits of diversity inadvertently establish the groundwork for division and difference: “The insider/outsider binary is further reinforced by situating the diverse individual in comparison and opposition to a ‘majority’ or ‘norm.’ The diverse individual who achieves insider status is described in exceptional terms, marking the individual as different from other diverse individuals (within-group difference)” (p. 166). If diversity discourse on college campuses is to welcome students of all positionalities there must be a disruption to the dichotomous discourse that sustains the “insider/outsider binary” (Iverson, 2012, p. 168). A suspension of divisive discourse, she argues, may allow for college students to fuse horizons of understanding outside of a hierarchical binary that makes difference something to be considered on unequal terms.

In a similar vein, Ritter (2007) argues that diversity on college campuses promotes commonality instead of authentic appreciation for diversity (p. 569). She notes that diversity is limited to institutional interpretation because it is the interest of colleges to do so; reducing diversity “to characteristics which can be defined, categorised [sic] and measured” (Ritter, 2007, p. 569) serves to establish frameworks that colleges can easily implement for social cohesion and bureaucratic compliance. This indicates that a discourse of diversity can be adopted, implemented, and measured in order to affirm a college’s openness to and appreciation for diversity; it does not mean that colleges actually seek a diversity of diversity. Thus Ritter (2007), like Paulsen (2013), Cornwell and Stoddard (2013), asserts that diversity can be much more than an institutional framework that breeds commonality and appeases bureaucratic policy makers. The reduction of diversity to a discursive formation arrests its potential to enhance

motivation, learning, use of resources, participation, and achievement (p. 569). When colleges limit diversity in this way, they ironically promote the exact opposite of diversity; they promote commonality.

Not only does diversity discourse breed commonality, Tavares (2007) finds that it fetishizes students who fit the profile of the structurally diverse and puts them on display as commodities. She makes the point that the fetishization and commodification of individuals is indicative of thinking of diversity as an epistemology rather than ontology; in other words, “hybrid cultural realities” (p. 5) and lived experiences are overshadowed by tableaux of diversity. Diversity is something to be known, in this case, and not actively lived. If the benefits of diversity are to reach all students on campus, diversity discourse cannot frame some individuals as diversity objects and other individuals as spectator-recipients of these objects. Tavares (2007) thus calls for eliminating the fetishization and commodification of difference to make room for the vast positionalities of students on any given campus and to facilitate interaction on equal terms.

Finally, the marginalizing effects that result from approaches to diversity are not restricted to students fetishized as members of diversity populations. Perhaps surprisingly, Roper (2007) finds that some university students feel that they are not important on campus because they do not fit into structured diversity categories. He specifies that minority students often report feeling welcomed and supported on campus while traditional majority students report feelings of exclusion because they do not represent diversity discourse. These feelings have fostered suspicion and skepticism about the purpose of diversity, the motives for diversity, and the fairness and equity of diversity. Roper highlights that “even students who support and find value in diversity

are confused by our efforts” (p. 49). For some, the purpose of diversity remains questionable.

### **Summary**

The review of literature highlights the vying definitions for diversity; the perceived benefits of diversity; the structural, curricular, and interactional facets of diversity; students’ openness to diversity; and concerns about colleges’ approaches to diversity. However, these discussions pertain to the American university and fail to incorporate community colleges. Thus, in light of the literature on diversity, the call for specific research on community colleges, and the sheer number of students who attend American community colleges, this study is focused on understanding of the purpose of diversity discourse and students’ diversity experience at the CCC.

## **CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY**

### **Purpose of Study**

In this study I researched diversity discourse in CCCs as well as students' diversity experience. The goal of this study is to determine the purpose of diversity discourse at CCCs; to understand students' diversity experience at CCCs; and to answer the charges for and against diversity in higher education, as articulated in the previous chapters, in relation to the CCC system so as to offer recommendations for attuning diversity to CCC students.

### **Research Questions**

This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the purpose of diversity discourse on California community college campuses?
2. How do students on California community college campuses experience diversity?

The secondary questions for this study were:

1. What does diversity discourse on California community college campuses represent?
2. What does diversity discourse on California community college campuses say?
3. What does diversity discourse on California community college campuses do?
4. How do students on California community college campuses interpret diversity?

## **Chapter's Organization**

The following chapter is intended to guide the reader through my methods of inquiry. I begin by justifying my decision to use qualitative research methods and then articulate why I have employed phenomenological and poststructural methodologies in the study. I also describe why a purposive sampling strategy was used to gain access to my documents and human subjects. In addition, this chapter provides an overview of the types of information I sought from my data samples. The remainder of the chapter unpacks each step of my research design; explicates my data collection methods; and grounds my data analysis and synthesis techniques.

## **Justification for Qualitative Research Approach**

The rationale for choosing a qualitative research rather than a quantitative research approach was that numbers and statistical data could not give me access to the documents and narratives I needed to answer my research questions. I sought to understand the purpose of diversity discourse at CCCs, which required a close reading of public communication documents that disperse diversity discourse. In addition, I wanted to understand CCC students' experiences of diversity; to achieve this understanding, I had to give students the opportunity to interpret their diversity experience and disclose it through speaking. By engaging in a close reading of diversity discourse at CCCs and by listening to individuals "in their natural settings" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 41), the qualitative research approach yielded the opportunity "to enter the world of others and to attempt to achieve a *holistic* understanding" (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 41) of the meaning of the "activity, experience, or phenomenon" (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 23) of diversity on CCC campuses. In other words, a qualitative approach to my research

questions provided the data necessary for understanding the purposes and lived experiences of diversity across CCCs.

Within the qualitative research paradigm I utilized phenomenological and poststructural methodologies, as these were the most relevant qualitative research traditions for my study. Bloomberg and Volpe (2016) note, “The purpose of phenomenological research is to investigate the meaning of the lived experience of people, to identify the core essence of human experience or phenomena as described by research participants” (p. 48). Since I sought to understand students’ experiences of diversity, to understand how diversity discourse “is transformed into consciousness” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 25-26), to understand the “essence or basic underlying structure of the meaning” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 27) of students’ experiences of diversity, phenomenology was the appropriate research tradition; for it is concerned with understanding experience through language. As Gusdorf (1965) highlights, “the power of language [...] is to constitute, where incoherent sensations leave off, a universe to the measure of man” (p. 9). By collecting CCC students’ responses to a series of semi-structured interview questions, I arrived at a multiplicity of personal measurements of the experience of diversity, the summation of which is a detailed exposition of students’ diversity experience across three CCCs.

I also employed the poststructural tradition in my research to examine and interrogate CCC public communication documents that incorporate the signifier “diversity” (henceforth, this term will not be in quotation marks). More specifically, poststructuralism was used to examine public communication documents and trace the “the dominant ways of writing and speaking about” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 53)

diversity in order to discover “who has benefited from this discourse and who has become marginalized as a result of it” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 53). Such analysis inevitably provided detailed information about the various institutional conceptions, justifications, and overall purposes of diversity at CCCs. The poststructural inquiry was also employed to confirm or deny whether or not the charges against diversity in higher education that have been outlined in the previous chapters are also, in fact, applicable to the CCCs: that diversity is a hegemonic discourse intended to regulate difference; that it breeds commonality; and that it aestheticizes difference to fulfill institutional aims. Ultimately, the poststructural facet of my research sought to illuminate unquestioned assumptions and foundations of diversity discourses in CCCs; to bring to the surface any meanings of diversity that are suppressed in order to give the illusion of temporary stabilization of diversity as a signifier; and to see if I could locate a regularity of the number of statements, objects, types of statements, concepts, and thematic choices involved in the dispersion of the signifier diversity (Foucault, 1972). In short, the poststructural lens has served to clarify diversity as a discursive formation.

### **Setting, Sources, Sample**

#### **Description of Research Sample**

The loosely coupled organizational structure of the CCC system was the impetus for using purposeful, maximum variation sampling in this study. Weick (1976) notes that loose coupling “intends to convey the image that coupled events are responsive, but that each event also preserves its own identity and some evidence of its physical or logical separateness” (p. 3). The CCC system is composed of 114 colleges situated in 72 districts. A 17 member Board of Governors, appointed by the state governor, works with

a chancellor, whom the board selects, to develop the policy and recommendations that guide the entire CCC system. However, a locally elected Board of Trustees is responsible for overseeing the budget and operation for each district and the college(s) within that district. Each college within each district functions as a bureaucracy managed by a president whom is selected by the Board of Trustees (California Community College Chancellor's Office, Board of Governors, 2017). Thus, though the CCC Board of Governors and CCC chancellor determine policy and recommendations for the entire system, each district and each college within a district is run as an autonomous organization within a greater system. This organizational structure indicates that the CCC system is, in fact, a loosely coupled system; though there are statewide recommendations and policies each college must adopt, each district/college is ultimately an autonomous entity responsible for implementing policy and recommendations on its own terms. The CCC's organizational structure thus parallels Weick's (1976) loosely coupled organization in several ways: they can employ multiple means to achieve the same end; they lack coordination or coordination is slow to spread throughout the system; influence is slow to spread and weak while spreading throughout the system; and they operate relatively free of regulations (p. 5). All 114 CCCs within the 72 CCC districts are responsible for selecting the means by which policy and recommendations are instituted with little coordination, influence, or oversight with and by the CCC Board of Governors, the CCC Chancellor, and other colleges within the system. For example, in response to something like the CCC Board of Governors' affirmation of its *Commitment to Diversity* (1999), a commitment intended to promote the success of all students, "the diversity of faculty and staff," and "public awareness of the value of diversity"

(Community College League of California, 2003, p. 1), it is logical, if not expected, that each college in the CCC system will similarly commit to diversity, but that each will interpret and fulfill a commitment to diversity in divergent ways as appropriate to the their geographical and social contexts. In other words, the loosely coupled nature of the CCC suggests that a commitment to diversity across 114 campuses, or at the very least within 72 districts, would not be identical.

Consequently, in order to discover, understand, and gain insight into the purpose of diversity discourse and the subsequent diversity experience across the loosely coupled CCC system, I purposefully selected campuses that diverged from one another in terms of structural diversity (bodies), but that were similar in that each of them serves a non-structurally diverse student population (bodies). Purposeful sampling produced information-rich cases (Patton qtd. in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) that yielded insight and understanding (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016) into the purpose and experience of diversity discourse at campuses that are not structurally diverse. The vastly different contexts of each campus, as evidenced by demographic indicators, invited maximum variation sampling so that I could compare and contrast the purposefully selected cases; this sampling strategy increased the validity of my research, shed light on common patterns in relation to the purpose and experience of diversity across the CCC system, and subsequently allowed “for the possibility of a greater range of application” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 257) of my findings. In short, purposeful, maximum variation sampling allowed me to compare multiple in-depth studies of diversity discourse at particular institutions in order to discover the purpose of diversity discourse and diversity experience across the loosely coupled CCC system.

I purposely selected CCCs that lack structural diversity in one or more demographic categories, as indicated by economics or race/ethnicity; however, I want to make it very clear that this study is not focused on these structural categories. In other words, each of the CCCs I have selected as a sample site serves a semi-homogenous student population in terms of “bodies” on campus. The impetus for selecting CCCs housing structurally dominant student populations was to discover if and how each college’s student population affects diversity discourse and diversity experience, if at all. Consequently, my selection of CCC campuses was intended to elicit an understanding of the meaningfulness of diversity at each campus and determine whether or not the context of each campus produced original, localized thinking about diversity discourse. The process of comparing and contrasting these structurally divergent institutions was intended to clarify where diversity discourse is duplicated and where diversity discourse is attuned to the context of each campus. This examination was also geared toward determining the justifications for diversity at each campus, perhaps social justice or multiple ways of knowing; to determine if diversity is more than “a mobile army of metaphors, metonymies, anthropomorphisms, in short a sum of human relations which have been subjected to poetic and rhetorical intensification, translation, and decoration, and which, after they have been in use for a long time, strike a people as firmly established, canonical, and binding” (Nietzsche, 1873, p. 878); to determine if diversity is hegemonic; if it is an illusion of which we have forgotten it is an illusion (Nietzsche, 1873, p. 878); if it leads to pluralistic thinking and being; or if it brings the members of each campus community into the dialectic and gives way to the fusion of limited horizons of understanding. Thus, purposeful, maximum variation sampling was utilized to

understand the purpose of diversity discourse and diversity experience at three structurally saturated CCCs in the service of understanding the purpose and experience of diversity at the CCCs writ large.

In order to locate colleges with semi-homogenous populations, or colleges lacking what prior scholars refer to as structural diversity, I accessed California Community Colleges Chancellor's Office Management Information Systems Datamart (CCCCOMISD), California Community Colleges Student Success Scorecard (CCCSSS), and the United States Census Bureau (USCB) websites. I used the CCCCCOMISD website to generate spreadsheet data for all 114 colleges in the state based on the spring 2016 semester; a Student Enrollment Status Summary Report was generated to account for student ethnicity. The reports revealed the highest concentration of particular student demographics across the state, at given institutions. These demographics include Asian, Hispanic/Latino, Black/African American, white, and female. Colleges with the highest concentrations of student types were then compared to the 2016 CCCSSS to verify the data generated through CCCCCOMISD was accurate. Finally, the USCB was accessed to locate the most socioeconomically impoverished and least socioeconomically impoverished cities in California to locate the community colleges serving these populations within the state.

The data revealed that De Anza College has the largest population of Asian students (44%) at a single institution in the state, and it is also situated in the Foothill-De Anza Community College District, which serves the wealthiest city in the state of California, Los Altos. The poverty rate is at a mere 2.7% (U.S. Census). The college currently serves nearly 21,000 students (De Anza College, About De Anza, 2016).

Imperial Valley College has the largest number of Hispanic/Latino students (89.7%) at a single institution in the state of California. The college is located in the Southeastern corner of California, near the U.S.-Mexico border. It serves just over 10,000 students (Imperial Valley College, About Us, 2011)

Los Angeles Southwest College (LASC) has the largest population of Black/African American students (53.4%) and the largest female student population (67.9%) at a single institution in the state. The college serves roughly 20,000 students (Los Angeles Southwest College, About LASC, 2016).

Columbia College has the largest number of white students at a single institution in the state (75.8%). The college is located in the Yosemite Community College District, one of the largest geographic districts in California. The college serves just over 4,000 students (Columbia College, Campus History and Heritage, 2016).

Central Valley College is located in a community with the highest poverty rate in the state at 30.6% (U.S. Census). The dominant student demographic, who makes up 54% of the campus population, is Hispanic/Latino. The college serves over 30,000 students and offers a variety of degrees and certificates (Central Valley College, Facts and History, 2014).

Once I compiled a list of the least structurally diverse CCCs in the state, I contacted the directors of research, planning, or effectiveness at each institution via email and phone in order to gain approval to conduct research at each campus. The directors at De Anza College and Columbia College immediately turned me away. They said they were either unequipped to process my request, or they were not currently allowing external researchers to conduct studies on their campuses. I was given no further

information. I also wrote four emails and left four voice mail messages for each of the two directors listed at Los Angeles Southwest College. I never received a single response to my correspondence and my attempts to include the campus were inevitably unfruitful.

I thought I had gotten lucky when I made first contact with the director at Imperial Valley College. He seemed interested in helping me gain access to the college and told me he would contact me when he had more details. Three weeks went by before I reached out to him for a second time. He again assured me that he was working on my request and would get back to me shortly. Several days later he requested that I send him a detailed project information form, to which I obliged. He assured me it would not be much longer before I would be cleared to conduct my research. After not hearing back from the director for another three weeks I phoned him and left a voice mail message. I also emailed him. I never heard back from him. I phoned and emailed him three more times, but to no avail. In the end, the director at Imperial Valley College ghosted me.

Only one of the colleges on my initial list gave me an affirmative response. I have assigned the college a pseudonym at the request of the director; it shall henceforth be referred to as Central Valley College. The director at Central Valley was prompt in processing my request and I was quickly given permission to conduct research at the college.

As a result of my initial defeat, I returned the CCCSSS and the CCCCOMISD to identify other colleges with high concentration of particular student demographics. This round of searches turned up a new list of colleges that included Ohlone College. Ohlone College serves 16,000 students annually and has a student population that is primarily of Asian descent. I contacted the director at Ohlone College and was warmly received. He

told me that his college had recently conducted a campus wide diversity survey and would thus be interested in my study. I was verbally assured that the college would accommodate me. Several days later, the director emailed me. He also requested that I send him a project information form, and he again reassured me that I would be able to conduct research at the campus. Two days later he called me out of a concern about the term “neoliberal in my project information form. The very next day I received an email from the director stating that Ohlone College would not be able to accommodate my research request. I was not given a specific reason, and I never heard from the director again.

My luck changed, however, when I reached out to Northern Mountains College and Bay Area College (pseudonyms). Northern Mountains College serves roughly 9,000 students and has a majority white student population at nearly 68%. Bay Area College also serves roughly 9,000 students, but its majority student population is Asian, coming in at 44%.

Once I received approval to conduct my research at Central Valley College, Northern Mountains College, and Bay Area College, I began the process of locating human participants and collecting public communication documents dispersing the signifier diversity at each college.

In order to locate human participants at each institution, I used snowball sampling. An introductory email letter (see Appendix A) was sent to all club advisors listed on each of the approved colleges’ student life or college life webpages. I ask each advisor to distribute the letter to their club members via email in order to acquire initial participants who met the criteria established for my study (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p.

98). The participants had to be over the age of eighteen and have completed at least one full semester at the college. I was particularly interested in locating participants whose majors diverged from one another and who had experience with a campus support program, a campus club, a facet of student government, or with employment on campus, but this was not a mandatory requirement for participation in the study. Once I located my initial participants I asked them to pass my contact information on to classmates they thought might be interested in the study.

A purposeful, maximum variation, snowball-sampling procedure thus guided my research on the purpose of diversity discourse and diversity experience at CCCs.

### **Data Collection Instruments and Procedures**

The current study employed two research instruments: document review and interviews. The purpose of employing these methods was to gain information about different aspects of diversity: public communication documents that disperse diversity discourse on CCC campuses and students' diversity experience. Employing these different instruments across multiple sample sites allowed me to reduce the risk that my conclusions reflected only the biases of a specific method (Maxwell, 2013) or site, strengthened the validity of the study (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 158), and enhanced the integrity of my research. In short, document review and interviews provided me with the unbiased data I needed to qualitatively answer my research questions.

### **Data Collection Procedures**

**Document Review.** Since my research sought to understand diversity discourse at CCCs, documents were a crucial component of my work. Once I gained approval to conduct research, I mined through each campuses website to locate the signifier diversity

in contemporary public communication documents. The documents include mission statements, core values, college catalogues, education master plans, commitment to diversity statements, student equity webpages, and human resources webpages. The documents, viewed as objective sources of data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), were then examined in order to locate the collection of signs, ideas, and practices that constituted diversity discourse at each research site and to show how these discourses are legitimized.

The summation of documents from each institution provided insight into three CCCs positions on diversity, why diversity is dispersed, and what ideas are attached to diversity; my analysis of these documents is rich in portraying the values and beliefs of those who participant in establishing diversity discourse (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016). These documents “reveal aspirations, arrangements, tensions, relationships, and decisions that might be otherwise unknown through direct observation” (Patton qtd. in Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 164). And they indicate what colleges aspire to achieve through diversity discourse; what organizational arrangements support their use and shaping of diversity discourse; what tensions arise from diversity discourse; and what decisions prompt the dispersal of diversity discourse.

Though Merriam and Tisdell (2016) indicate that there can be problems establishing the authenticity and accuracy of documentary material (p. 181), the documents I selected are all public records and subject to governmental rules and regulations. Thus, the integrity of the documents accessed for this study is uncompromised.

**Interviews.** Interviews were used to collect data from students who agreed to participate in my study. Bloomberg and Volpe (2016) explain, “The interview is often selected as the primary method for data collection because it has the potential to elicit rich, thick descriptions. This instrument also offers researchers an opportunity to clarify statements and probe for additional information (p. 154). Since my research sought to understand CCC students’ diversity experience, one-on-one interviews were conducted “to elicit participants’ views of their lives, [...] as portrayed in their stories, and so gain access to their experiences, feelings, and social worlds” (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016, p. 155). Students’ “stories” thus provided the data for a deep understanding of their diversity experience.

Furthermore, I used a semistructured interview model to ensure a focused, yet flexible exploration of students’ interpretations and experiences. The flexibility of my semistructured interviews was rooted in a mix of both structured and unstructured questions intended to elicit both conscious and unconscious responses (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 136).

The interview protocol included notes to the interviewee indicating my interest in recording the interview, the means by which I would transcribe the interview data, and how/when I would destroy the data. Equally important, the protocol included a note explaining IRB forms and the means by which the identity of each participant would be kept confidential. I invited my participants to sign an IRB form and give me consent to include their responses in my research. Finally, all participants were notified that their participation in my research was entirely voluntary and that they could opt out at any time.

## **Data Analysis Procedures**

In order to manage the data I collected from the research sites, open coding was utilized to establish preliminary designations through repeated words and phrases (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 199). The coding took place throughout the data gathering process in order to limit the potential dismay that can oftentimes accompany the management of great amounts of information. The initial codes I established were then used to generate “categories that cut across the data, or in forms of models and theories that explain the data” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 202) in order to determine consistencies and inconsistencies in documents incorporating the signifier diversity, as well as interviewees’ responses to the semi-structured interview questions.

Upon establishing open codes for the data, the information underwent analytical coding to interpret and reflect on the meaning of administrative utterances and interviewee responses (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 206). The analytic coding was conducted through the methodological frameworks of poststructuralism and phenomenology. Upon establishing initial categories through inductive processing, I moved to deductive analysis in order to determine whether or not the initial categories were supported with subsequent data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 221). The inductive and deductive analyses inevitably produced informational categories that answered my research questions.

Since I gathered data from six different California community colleges, each campus was initially treated autonomously. The information gathered from documents and interviewees’ responses to the semi-structured interview questions was analyzed on a case-by-case basis in order to generate “intensive, holistic description[s] and analysis of

[...] single, bounded unit[s]” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, pp. 232-233). Once each case was thoroughly analyzed, a cross-case analysis was conducted in order “to build abstractions across cases” (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016, p. 234). The cross-case analysis serves as the crux of the forthcoming discussion.

### **Role of the Researcher**

I was the principal researcher for this study. I wrote the interview questions, conducted the interviews, located and analyzed the public communication documents, contacted the research site directors to gain access to each research site, and drove over 3,000 miles throughout the state of California from January 2018 to June 2018 to sit down with student participants to conduct one-on-one interviews at their respective campuses. I also coded, analyzed, and reasoned my way through the data, generated the categories and themes that answer the research questions, and penned the entirety of this composition.

## **CHAPTER IV: FINDINGS**

### **Introduction**

The aims of this study were to examine diversity discourse at the California Community College (CCC) to glean insight into its purpose and to understand students' diversity experience on campus. The data for this study was generated via fourteen one-hour, face-to-face interviews with students at three CCCs, and from these same colleges' public communication documents that disperse the signifier diversity. The overarching goal of the study is to open a path to thinking about how to attune diversity to all students' in the service of cognitive, intellectual, and leadership development (Ayers, 2005).

The primary theoretical frameworks that guided the research process were phenomenology and poststructural discourse analysis. Phenomenology is concerned with the lived experience of the research participants, whereas discourse analysis is concerned with the dominant ways of writing and speaking about particular topics that have become reified over time.

### **Documents**

All of the documents examined for this study are digital in format and were accessed electronically. I searched each college's website to locate webpages incorporating the search terms diversity and the variation diverse. The search results were then coded based on their appeal to either general public communication or institutional communication. In other words, the documents were separated based on whether they imagined audiences interested in understanding college missions, opportunities, and offerings, such as prospective students or parents, or audiences seeking

in-depth information about college operations, politics, policies, and so on, such as educational researchers.

This study focused specifically on documents coded as general public communication since it is concerned with the relationship between the dispersal of diversity discourse by each college and students' diversity experience on campus. Since many students at CCCs are not currently educational researchers or practitioners, it was presumed that their interests would lie in college documents appealing to public communication. Thus, all of the documents selected for the study are easily accessible by the general public on the colleges' websites. The documents include mission statements, core values, college catalogues, education master plans, commitment to diversity statements, student equity webpages, and human resources webpages. I proceeded to search each of the documents identified above for the signifier diversity and its variation diverse. When instances of the term were located they were organized in a data matrix for side-by-side comparison.

On another note, each college's institutional student learning outcomes (ISLO) were included in the document analysis. A majority of ISLOs are directly connected to the literature on the perceived outcomes of interactional diversity. Each college has near identical outcomes of communication, critical thinking, and community/global awareness. However, none of the colleges connects these outcomes to diversity. The ISLOs are omitted from diversity discourse at all three colleges included in the study.

### **Participants**

Fourteen students from three CCCs participated in the research during the Spring 2018 semester. All participants were over the age of 18 and had attended their respective

colleges for at least one full semester prior to the interview. Eleven of the participants identified as female (n=11); three participants identified as male (n=3). The majority of participants were between the ages of 18-24 (n=10), while the remaining participants were 25 years of age or older (n=4). The self-reported racial/ethnic backgrounds of the participants include Indian (n=1), Asian (n=1), Filipino (n=1), Caucasian (n=3), Mexican (n=3), Salvadorian (n=1), African American (n=2), Afghani (1), and Ukrainian (n=1). Three participants reported having children (n=3). One identified as a veteran (n=1). One identified as DACA student (n=1). One identified as Muslim (n=1). One identified as LGBTQ+ (n=1). Three participants reported that they work on campus (n=3); two serve on Student Senate/Associated Students (n=2), and two reported that they play football at their respective institutions (n=2).

### **Transfer of Data and Coding**

I performed the website document searches, and I also physically traveled to each college campus included in this study to conduct face-to-face interviews with the participants. The interviews were recorded on a password-protected iPhone. Upon completion of each interview, the MP3 recordings were uploaded to Temi.com for transcription. As I received each transcription, I listened to the recording while looking at the physical transcripts to ensure accuracy. This allowed me to determine recurring themes in participants' responses throughout the data collection process.

Once data were collected from each college's public communication documents and interview transcripts, all information was placed into data matrixes so that documented dispersals of the signifier diversity could be examined side by side to examine diversity discourse at the study sites. This was also done with interview

responses so that answers to the interview questions could be examined side by side. Interview responses were aligned with questions asked during interviews and with the research questions to generate categories.

I inductively coded the data, beginning with the research questions and interview questions. I then approached the data inductively, allowing for formerly unidentified themes to emerge. Findings are presented in the following sections: CCC document analysis results and student interview analysis results.

### **CCC Document Analysis Results**

All three colleges incorporate the term diversity into their core values, education master plan, human resources webpage, and student equity webpages. At least two colleges incorporate the term diversity in their mission statements and college catalogues, and they maintain specific “commitment to diversity” statements.

There are fifteen consistent terms dispersed with the signifier diversity across all three campuses. Each college connects the terms to the signifier diversity at least once in their public communication documents; however, most of the terms are connected to the signifier diversity multiple times and in multiple documents from each location. The repeated terms are as follows: success (n=10), culture (n=9), support (n=6), positive (n=6), equity (n=4), programs (n= 3), environment (n=3), race (n=7), gender (n= 8), ability (n=6), age (n=4), sexual orientation (n=4), socioeconomics (n=4), and religion (n=3). These recurring terms effectively constitute diversity discourse across the colleges included in this study.

## Success

Diversity was most often dispersed in proximity to the term success. The CCC system determines student success based on the percentage of community college students completing their educational goals; percentage of community college students earning a certificate or degree, transferring, or achieving transfer-readiness; number of students transferring to a four-year institution; number of degrees and certificates earned (CCC Student Success Task Force, Final Report, 2018). Connections between diversity and success emerged in documents connected to both human resources and student equity. While two colleges committed to “employing qualified administrators, faculty, and staff members who are dedicated to student success” (Northern Mountains, Commitment to Diversity, 2017 & Central Valley, Commitment to Diversity, 2006), another highlighted a plan

Designed to help transform the institution, develop an equity-minded culture, and create a collaborative institutional infrastructure that will better respond to the needs of its diverse student populations. Our vision is to create a student-centered, bias free learning community for all and to equitize the institution to create conditions for success. (Bay Area Community College, Student Equity, 2018)

The connection between diversity and student success further emerged in the core values of two of the colleges. While one institution simply provided a list of that include “success” and “diversity” (Northern Mountains, College Values, 2009), another explained that diversity as a core value means to “Create an institutional climate of full enfranchisement and participation for all students, faculty, and staff” with the goals of increasing “student success, retention, persistence, and transfer among historically

underrepresented students” and establishing “an on-going program to review, enhance, and coordinate issues and programs associated with student equity, access, opportunities, and success” (Bay Area, General Information, 2017).

## **Culture**

The term culture, or its variants cultural and culturally, are closely connected to the signifier diversity across campuses. One document stated, the “Community College District is an Equal Opportunity Employer that actively seeks employees who represent the rich diversity of cultures, racial groups, and abilities of its surrounding communities” (Northern Mountains, Employment Policies, 2018). However, other documents focused primarily on culture as an indicator of diversity. One stated that the college provides “a variety of culturally enriching experiences that embrace the diversity of the College community” (Bay Area, Master Plan, 2017) while another document stated that the college “provides students a rich and culturally diverse environment through student activities, club events and special heritage days and recognized months” (Central Valley, Catalogue, 2017).

## **Support**

Diversity is connected to support in various documents from all three campuses. One document overzealously focused on the idea of support and repeats the term two times in the same sentence: “We embrace diversity in all forms, appreciate our similarities and differences, and support a diverse, inclusive and culturally competent workforce that supports and provides role models to our students” (Central Valley, Human Resources, 2018). Another explains a desire to “Attract, retain and develop an exceptional group of diverse employees who support student learning and growth”

(Northern Mountains, Educational Master Plan, 2012). A third college connects support and diversity in a statement articulating a commitment to diversity: “A commitment to diversity means a dedication to the inclusion and support of individuals from all groups, encompassing the diverse characteristics of our community” (Bay Area, Commitment to Diversity, no date)

### **Positive**

The term positive, when connected to the signifier diversity, is synonymous with constructive, beneficial, affirmative, assuring, and advantageous. Whereas a “positive atmosphere” and “diversity” are unified under the umbrella of core values at one college (Northern Mountains, College Values, 2009), the term positive is connected to human resources documents at two other colleges. One reads,

It is the District's belief that taking active and vigorous steps to ensure equal employment opportunity and creating a working and academic environment that is welcoming to all, will foster diversity, promote excellence, and provide a positive student learning experience. (Northern Mountains, Introduction to Faculty and Staff Diversity, 2016)

The other says,

The [Bay Area] Staff/Faculty Diversity Plan details efforts to ensure a positive and inclusive working environment for all college faculty, staff, and administrators. Efforts for ensuring a positive and inclusive environment for students are covered in the Student Plan” (Bay Area, Commitment to Diversity, n.d.).

## **Equity**

The term equity is connected to the signifier diversity across all three colleges. Diversity is dispersed in the service of equity. One document states, “Equity recognizes the unique needs of our diverse student body while understanding the impact of when their needs are not met; it’s meeting students where they are in order for them to be successful” (Bay Area, Office of Student Equity and Success, no date). The core values at one college highlight “growth” while bringing diversity and equity into close proximity: “We are committed to sharing and exploring new ideas through collaboration, respect for diversity, promoting equity, and professional development” (Central Valley, About, 2017). Additionally, one document connects a college mission statement that expresses the commitment to provide “a diverse student population with access to educational opportunities that result in increasing student skills and earning a certificate or degree” to “The Office of Student Equity and Inclusion” that “supports the efforts of district personnel in providing access and promoting success for all students enrolled at [Northern Mountains] College, regardless of race, gender, age, disability, or economic circumstance” (Northern Mountains, Office of Student Equity and Inclusion, 2018).

## **Programs**

The term program implies an agenda, scheme, or plan composed of successive processes to push students to success goals. Every college indicates a commitment to programs in the service of “diverse” students. As one human resources document reads, “We strive to attract and retain a qualified and professional workforce that is committed to providing an academic environment that is welcoming and inclusive and to empower classified professionals, faculty, and administrators to provide exceptional programs and

services to our diverse student population” (Central Valley, Human Resources, 2018). At another college, the core value of diversity is aligned with the goal of developing and implementing “programs and services to provide equitable opportunities for all students” (Bay Area, General Information, 2007). One college’s mission statement connects diversity and programs, stating, “[Northern Mountains] provides a diverse student population with open access to undergraduate educational programs and learning opportunities, thereby contributing to the social, cultural, creative, intellectual, and economic development of our communities” (Northern Mountains, Mission Statement, 2018).

### **Environment**

When diversity is dispersed with the term environment, the focus is on the ambience of each campus. While one document focuses on “a diverse workforce who will contribute to an inclusive and welcoming educational and employment environment” (Bay Area, Diversity and EEO, n.d.), two other colleges have identical documents that state: “The Board recognizes that diversity in the educational and working environment fosters cultural awareness, promotes mutual understanding and respect, and provides suitable role models for all students” (Northern Mountains, Commitment to Diversity, 2017; Central Valley, Commitment to Diversity, 2006).

### **Diversity Categories**

Race, gender, ability, age, sexual orientation, socioeconomics, and religion can be found in documents from every campus. These terms narrow the categories that constitute diversity populations on campus. Only one campus provided a direct definition of diversity while the other two college’s documents disperse the signifier

diversity in proximity to the above listed identitarian categories. In one document, diversity is defined as such:

Diversity encompasses and values all the characteristics that make individuals or groups alike or different. A broad definition includes not only race, ethnicity, and gender, but also age, national origin, religion, ability, sexual orientation, socioeconomic status, education, marital status, language, and physical appearance. To value diversity is to welcome frank and open dialogue amongst all individuals and groups. (Central Valley, Definition of Terms, 2017)

Another document states,

The District is committed to nondiscrimination on the basis of ethnic group identification, race, color, national origin, religion, age, sex, physical disability, mental disability, genetic information, ancestry, gender identity, sexual orientation, language, accent, citizenship status, transgender status, parental status, marital status, economic status, military or veteran status, and medical condition consistent with applicable federal and state laws. (Bay Area, Diversity and EEO, no date)

These categories are also directly connected to one college's student equity webpage, which links the college's mission statement to the goal of the Office of Equity and Inclusion:

[Northern Mountains] is committed to providing a diverse student population with access to educational opportunities that result in increasing student skills and earning a certificate or degree ([Northern Mountains] Mission Statement). The Office of Student Equity and Inclusion supports the efforts of district personnel in

providing access and promoting success for all students enrolled at [Northern Mountains] College, regardless of race, gender, age, disability, or economic circumstance. (Northern Mountains, Office of Student Equity and Inclusion, 2018)

### **Additional Finding**

All three colleges have institutional student learning outcomes that include communication or effective communication; critical thinking and information competency, critical thinking, or critical inquiry; and community and global awareness and responsibility, community and citizenship, or community and global awareness (Central Valley, Strategic Plan Brochure, 2017; Bay Area, Catalogue, 2017; Northern Mountains, Educational Master Plan, 2012). These three outcomes show up on every college's website. Though these ISLOs are heavily supported by interactional diversity, as per the literature review, none of the colleges included in the study connect them to the signifier diversity.

### **Interview Data Analysis Results**

Most participants believed their campuses were structurally and curricularly diverse. However, the interview data also shows that diversity experience is predominately visual and aural rather than interactional or active. In addition, the interview findings substantiate the document analysis that highlights diversity as a discursive formation.

### **What is Diversity?**

Though participants knew in advance that the interview would focus on the topic of diversity, they were not provided with a definition of diversity. This was purposefully

done to ensure that their raw understanding of diversity was not clouded by a predetermined definition. Subsequently, at the very beginning of each interview, I asked participants to explain how they understand diversity. A majority of them indicated that diversity points to specific categories of race, religion, socioeconomics, culture, ethnicity, language, ability, mental health, and sexual orientation that separate people. However, diversity also signifies the unification of identitarian difference into a communal whole.

Two participants described diversity as a separation of people based on differences. Primrose said,

Diversity is a separation of people based on blank. A separation of people based on \_\_\_\_\_, and then you can fill in anything you want. It could be anything from how much money their family has in their pocket to whether or not they have a roof over their head, the color of their skin, their religion.

Gilia also mentioned separation in her definition of diversity: “diversity basically is a, some type of separation. There's a separation of some sort for whatever reason, separation of like races, creeds, and origins.”

In contrast to thinking of diversity as a separation of people based on diversity categories, multiple participants indicated that diversity implies unity amongst people from different categories; in other words, diversity is different categories of people coming together as a unified whole. One participant explained that “We are all one race, the human race, and everything else is culture. Diversity is differences, like cultural difference, like food, clothing, language” (Clover). This view of diversity was echoed by Maple, who explained diversity as “people from different races, people from different backgrounds, different religions, different colored, you know, just all in one community

or something. But mostly color, I think, or race.” Elder also commented that diversity is “different groups that groups that get together and build a diverse community based on ethnicity,” but she also said “it's not just culture and ethnicity, it's also disabilities.”

Two participants invoked the melting pot metaphor to articulate their views that diversity points to different categories of people enmeshed together as a whole. As Sage put it, “diversity is melting pot of all the different ethnicities and people coming here and doing what they're doing and trying to get better opportunities and to establish their lives through all the struggle.” This metaphor was also invoked by Cedar, who said, “Diversity is a melting pot. Variety all in the same place” and then clarified that diversity means “different types of students. Culturally different, religiously different, the ways people have grown up, their drive for being in college. Different reasons, things, and experiences bring people to campus.”

Like Cedar, other participants took diversity beyond identitarian categories. Lily remarked that diversity is something “we categorize into ethnicities or races or sexualities or genders, but ultimately it's just like knowing that you like what you've experienced isn't the only experience.” Primrose also indicated that diversity goes beyond identitarian categories, as evidenced by her observation that “Diversity comes from so many different aspects of life. When people hear the word diversity, they often think of race and socioeconomics, but there's so much more to it.” It is “a conversation happening between everybody and that discourse of other viewpoints” (Lily). It is “seeing new faces, new or more faces every day around the school” (Oak).

## **Precollege Exposure to Diversity**

Nearly every participant indicated precollege exposure to some idea of diversity. Precollege exposure to diversity was repeatedly attributed to parents and prior education.

**Family.** Several participants said that they were first exposed to diversity by their parents. The primary reasons cited for parental exposure to diversity were reducing prejudice, recognizing privilege, and fusing cultural perspectives. Some of the participants expressed parental exposure to diversity in the following ways:

I was 12 years old when my parents started to open up my mind to diversity because they would see like a lot of news and stuff, like what's going on in their world and they didn't want me to be like a person that was like, you could say prejudice towards another person. (Sycamore)

Willow's parents also exposed her to diversity:

I was lucky in terms of my parents worked really hard to make me, to have me in schools where there was a lot of diversity. They wanted us to see, because my parents are very well off, my family is very well off, but they wanted us to see that not everyone can go to the store and get things that they want. Not everyone has access to the amount of food that we have access to. Um, they wanted us to see how different cultures interact with each other. They wanted us to learn about different cultures.

Ash also attributed her first exposure to the idea of diversity to her parents. She said,

My parents, like growing up, they would always say like, take the best things from being Indian and take the best things from being American and mix the two. And they're like, and that's how you're gonna get like the best of your experience

here as a first generation American and all of that. And so it's like diversity was always like a factor in my life.

Sycamore, Willow, and Ash ultimately attributed their familial introductions to diversity to their parents' interests in getting them to think about their own lives and to cultivate an openness to difference. Their recollections of precollege exposure to diversity also indicate that their parents emphasized active participation as a facet of diversity.

**Prior education.** In addition, multiple participants reported precollege exposure to diversity in prior education. When they were exposed to an idea of diversity in school it was often focused on race or culture. Moreover, aside from Clover, who recalled being exposed to diversity when “This one African American boy, his name was Andre, his dad came in in the sixth grade and he talked about Martin Luther King and he introduced this whole other world to me that wasn't in the books,” other participants introduced to the idea of diversity in their prior education suggested that the experience was performative.

Lily was introduced to diversity in elementary school during Black History Month; she pejoratively acknowledged, “We celebrated black history month in the most like performative way possible. Like we'd have like trivia, like, oh, Jesse Owens, who is that guy.” Another participant recalled a similarly performative introduction to diversity:

We had, I forgot what it was called, but basically we would be able to wear like our, like our colors or like, so it was 30 people wearing like the Mexico shirts and like China's and all that, the jerseys or whatever, like representing themselves in their cultures. I guess that would probably be the closest. We'd be like we'd have one of those days and we all walk, walk around. It'd be like a low key, like a parade type of thing. (Maple)

Elder was also introduced to diversity in a performative manner during her early education. She recalled,

In my middle school and elementary they did multicultural things but it would just be once a year. They did like line-dancing, folklorico, uh, like belly dancing, those stuff. They were like, bring food from your culture, oh, we'll, we'll see some dances from some cultures that are taught there. Not everyone got a dance.

These responses highlight that precollege exposure to diversity, in prior education, was predominately visual and performative.

### **Dispersal of Diversity Discourse**

The participants in the study were asked a series of questions that sought to illuminate recurring objects, utterances, concepts, and themes cutting across their interpretations of diversity discourse and their diversity experiences while on campus.

**Sounds of diversity.** Multiple participants said that diversity is talked about in class by professors. Moreover, when professors talk about diversity in classes they typically highlight race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender, with an emphasis on oppression, marginalization, suffering, inclusion, and representation.

One student referenced a psychology class in which the professor addressed race and religion. She said that her professor incorporated diversity into the curriculum by Talking about um, education with kids and everything and how certain races or certain religions don't have like, you know, the ability or the, I don't know how to explain it, the standing or something of going to school while other races and other religious have the ability to go to school...And then he was talking about African American people who don't have the money to go to school. And then he

was talking about Asian people who are just have the brains to go to school with who can succeed with Indian people. (Clover)

In this example, to speak diversity means to draw distinctions between racial groups who face perceived ability and economic challenge and racial groups who are perceived to be exempt from ability and economic challenge. It also implies that diversity is aural and not actively experienced.

Lily also reported that her professors include diversity in the curriculum when they “talk about, you know, stereotypes about marginalized communities. They talked about the psychological effects of that institutionalized or structural oppression that they face.” Lily clarified, however, that when professors speak of diversity, “they’re talking about race, most of the time. They don’t say it out loud, but I know that’s what they mean. I dunno how to explain it. I just know that they’re talking about race specifically.” When asked what races were talked about she said, “Mostly like the three biggest groups is like African Americans, Latinos. And I think that’s it. That’s what I said three, but just two.” Additionally, Lily said that one of her professors talked about “the war on drugs or something like that or just like stereotypes. Like the TSA with Iranian Americans and Muslim Americans or anybody else that looks like they came from the Middle East even though their ethnicities are totally different.”

Sage also recalled that her former art professor incorporated diversity into the curriculum through discussions of race and themes of oppression or exclusion:

Well, I mean in my, I took also art class. There we talked about it in terms of how it was first it was just only like white folks drawing stuff or painting stuff and then, and then we learned about Mexican art and we learned about Frida Kahlo

and her husband, I don't remember his name, and we learn about that. And that was kind of like another concept of diversity and uh, yeah, I mean, we talked a lot about the Oscars so white last year.

This was not the only instance Sage recalled of hearing diversity. In her public speaking class they “talked about whether like about the guns issue, about the black people being mostly stopped by cops.” In one of her STEM classes her professor invited a guest speaker she connected to diversity to come and talk about his experience of becoming an astronomer: “we had the Jose Hernandez astronomer from Mexico, I mean not Mexico, but he's Mexican background come to the college.”

Elder also said that diversity was brought into the classroom when her professor hosted a guest speaker. She recalled that in her “first year of taking reading classes here, we were reading a Vietnamese author's book about when a war was going on there, that they have to basically lose everything. And the author came and talked to us around the same time that we were reading the book.”

Each time a student recollected an example of hearing diversity in relation to race or ethnicity, there was an emphasis on oppression, marginalization, or suffering.

However, not all professors brought diversity into the classroom through references to race. Sycamore explained that one of his professors brought diversity into the classroom by addressing LGBTQ+ students. He recalled that

At the Beginning of the semester, she was like, if you are LGBTQ or like you know anyone that is and has to talk, like she gives you her office, her office and her office hours and like let's you know that you're not alone and stuff like that.

Similarly, Primrose cited an instance of diversity in reference to preferred gender pronouns. On the first day of the semester, one of her professors “touched on diversity” by telling students to “tell us your name, something about you, and what [gender] pronouns you want to use.” These examples not only highlight that diversity discourse includes identitarian categories of sexual orientation and gender, but that students hear messages of inclusion.

Not all students hear diversity spoken about in classes; some hear it spoken in other places throughout campus. Ash, who works on campus and is also a member of the Associated Student government at her college, said, “the campus as a whole is focused on diversity.” She said that that the campus is predominantly “focused around the LGBTQ community,” “Native American people because there's also a huge concentration of Native people up here,” “women because sex trafficking and domestic abuse is a huge problem here. And those are the main three groups I would say.” She then added, “Black people, too.”

Thus, students experience diversity aurally as it is spoken in reference to race, religion, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender. The aural experience of diversity includes hearing the articulation of oppression, marginalization, suffering, inclusion, and representation of diversity populations. In short, classroom or curricular diversity does not imply active experience; it implies that hearing diversity discourse is synonymous with knowing and understanding diverse people.

### **Visual Representations of Diversity: Form and Content**

**Campus-wide media and content.** Participants also revealed that they experience diversity visually. The visual experience of diversity discourse comes

through a variety of media; advertisements, flyers, posters, photos, the college catalogue, and television screens around campus are the most commonly cited media for displaying diversity. These media often combine text and image to announce campus events, campus services, campus organizations, and other information about campus groups. Essentially, these are structural artifacts of diversity.

Cedar told me that representations of diversity are all around campus, and she referenced the recent college graduation photo as evidence: “I think that's everywhere. Um, like in our graduation photo there are all kinds of different students in one photo, so I mean and we're promoting the college with a sense or an understanding that each one of these students could be here.” Though Cedar did not specify any particular identitarian categories, she did indicate that the differences represented in the image are visual and are inclusive of any visually identifiable group.

Other students referenced similar categories of difference in visual representations of diversity on campus. Clover explained that diversity was represented on advertisements sprawled across the busses at her campus. She said that the bus advertisement is diverse because it is “a picture of people standing around and they're from different races and different religions or different color. I see like a Muslim girl with a scarf on. I see an African American guy, I see Asian people, I see white, Hispanic, all of those people just standing around together.”

Other students mentioned the College Catalogue as a medium for dispersing diversity. Elder noted that the last catalogue

Had people that, students that went here. I would see them around and I would have some in my classes. So it was nice seeing a familiar face. Like oh, okay,

they're using actual students from the school and not getting like some actors to do it from different cultures.

Here, Elder highlights that she experiences diversity by seeing cultural representations in print form. Maple also cited the college catalogue, noting that “they have pictures of people, uh, they're always different people, you know, it's not like they're going to keep the same face and have like, a lot of it's just a lot of people. It's just, all different races, cultures.” Maple also said that some of the images in the catalogue include narratives about the people pictured; for example, “There can be kind of like say in one picture, it'd be a girl telling about her story. Um, you know, what she wants to be. She's like the first person in her family to go to college, you know, and it can be like a Latina.” Yet Maple clarified that there is not only one racial group represented: “I guess you can say like they're not like the same again if we were bringing in race, they're not the same race. They're all different. And again, the stories are completely different. I guess that would probably be the diverse I see would probably be in like the catalogs.”

Sage also references the visual experience of diversity. Around her campus there are light poles with banners hanging from them. These banners have the faces of students from campus printed on them. Sage excitedly explained her approval of the banners and how they represent diversity:

We have a lot of these cool things around campus. You know, banners, and we have students there with their pictures, which is cool. We have woman firefighter right here when you go to the [Campus] Center, which is cool, and we have a, we have my own friends like from Mexicans or black on other pictures, which is also cool on those. And um around campus we have these, um, in the buildings

themselves, we have these TVs with um, stuff on them. Like usually it's about like events, but they're, I, I see also, you know, there's like scholarship for Pacific Islanders which is also cool.

One of Elder's visual experiences of diversity was facilitated by TVs on her campus that depict diversity: "they have TVs all over," and "you can see them on the, on the screens."

The screens advertise events for

Like if you want to join groups or if like, for example, for me I like how I said I was a DACA student they have like little seminar to like talk about like the ongoing topic and how we feel and just to have that support so we don't feel like we're alone. (Elder)

So campus images of diversity not only show various structural elements of diversity, such as racial, ethnic, religious, sexual orientation, and gender groups, but they also provide information for these particular groups about campus support programs.

In a similar vein, Lily said that she sees diversity in promotional materials across campus and that these materials represent multiple racial groups and also provides information about campus support programs:

For posters or promotional posters, even if you see it like in any of the pictures around campus, you see that when we talked about like achievements or, um, or just like anything as simple as like advertising the tutorial center, it's not just like white people, it's usually like the poster is of an Asian, not of an Asian, but like they're Asian, they're black, they're Latino or something like that, a woman.

Ash, who told me that the marketing material on campus is really good at promoting diversity, echoed this sentiment. She said,

The one common element that I see among all marketing is that you in posters and stuff like that; you don't have just white people where you don't just have all guys. It's like you have, you try to represent a lot of different people in marketing so people then see themselves in that. And so I mean you see that here on campus we had for black history month and that was promoted of course, you know with black people on the posters and you had events for their special graduations that different organizations hold on campus and there was one for black students graduating not just from the college but from you know, high school and an eighth grade graduation. And they marketed that with black people graduating. Ash, too, highlighted the visual experience of diversity and also reiterated various racial and gender images aimed toward inclusion and representation.

Oak recalled seeing a billboard that had the word diversity on it. He said that one day when he was walking through campus he noticed an image of “a person holding a cup or something like that and it had diversity on it. The cup was blue. Looked like he was standing like right here with a blue cup, I mean like with a cup in his hand like with blue stuff in, and he was black.” When asked what the purpose of the flyer was, Oak was unsure, but he had a visual experience of diversity, nonetheless.

In addition, Primrose said diversity is depicted in artwork across her campus; however, her visual experience goes beyond typical structural diversity categories. She said,

If you walk down one of the hallways around here, there's actually a big group of people, um, painted on the wall and all of them are different. Some are disabled, some are black, some are red heads and it's got, it used to have scripture across

the top. It says we're all different, but that doesn't make us the same or that doesn't. Something like that.

All in all, participants highlighted that their respective colleges utilize a variety of media to transmit structural diversity. Moreover, there is significant evidence indicating that structural diversity prompts a visual rather than active experience of diversity.

On a side note, though not a single participant said that the college website was used to disperse diversity, the document analysis above proves that it too is a medium for dispersing diversity discourse in visual terms.

**In-class media and content.** The media for dispersing diversity in classes include documentary films and books. The content dispersed through these mediums generally stays the same, with the exception of an increased attention to socioeconomics. For example, Gilia described a book that she is reading for her English class:

*A Parrot in the Oven* is basically is a book about, well it's a guy named Manny and he's basically telling about his life story. He's a Mexican American, Mexican American. His parents are full-blooded a Mexican and basically how he's living his life in a white world pretty much, you know, the things that he's encountered being Hispanic and um, growing up in poverty and low income housing and things like that. But then is introduced to something much more like, which he could have, you know, as long as he went to school and did the things that he needed to do in order to get those things.

Sage also recalled representations of race and socioeconomics in her English class book, *A Different Mirror*, in which the author

Explains how all this racism and discrimination against people that one man was driving, an Asian man was riding in a taxi and the taxi driver asked him, oh, how long have you been here? And he's like, what? I was born here. So that was kind of interesting and also really helped me to kind of get blend in with culture and realize all these kinds of weird stuff happening everywhere and now people can just like be so ignorant towards that.

Sage also said that her professor “would assign us to read, how do you call that, um, when black people were hanged, hung, and all of that stuff, and I learned about that...about racism issues or some like issues was Japanese Americans being persecuted because internments.”

Lily reported that in her honors colloquium class they “watched a documentary about poverty in Brazil or like in my sociology class, I mean you would expect it from a sociology class, but it's like stuff about the middle class is shrinking middle class, um, like, uh, the plight of the undocumented.” Similarly, Cedar said,

Some teachers will show different films on different diverse topics. Like um, maybe you're an English class and you are learning about black literature or something and you'll watch a film on someone who is African who's writing books or I don't know, whatever.

In short, though the mediums for in-class dispersals of diversity discourse differ from other mediums used across campus, the content is similar, and the visual and aural experience remains the same.

**Campus event as medium.** Several participants drew attention to events on campus they thought were indicative of diversity. They include Native American day, Gender Quest, Cinco de Mayo, and Chinese New Year. Ash noted that

For Native American Day, you had Native American people promoting their culture. They came here and spoke for themselves. There was a student panel and all that. And so diversity is marketed by actually by the people that are part of those groups. And even the stuff for the LGBTQ community, there's this program every Monday called Gender Quest and it's for people that are either want to be educated on trans issues or they themselves need a safe space.

Willow also said that her campus is focused on representing or visually depicting diversity through campus events. She said

They're good about doing, like they have Native American Day, they have the African American events, they have Native day and they have African American events and they have Native Day and they have African American day events. Guess what Hispanics get? Cinco de Mayo.”

Cedar also referenced Native American day and Cinco de Mayo events at her college as indications of diversity on campus. She said

There was Hispanic people doing their dance thing and then they had tacos. I don't know if that's racially insensitive, but seems, seems kind of normal. But anyways, there was tacos and music and dancing and all kinds of different stuff. We had the um, native American heritage month and that was in the campus center stage and they had like, um, some people from the life center come and drum and that was kinda cool.

Clover also recalled an instance of performative diversity around Chinese New Year, “I’ve seen people if its like Chinese New Year I’ve seen people dress up in their little dresses and sometimes teachers pass out those little happy new year, those red cards, red envelopes, but then there wouldn't be any money.”

Campus events are thus seemingly geared toward structural and curricular facets of diversity, and they too invite students to experience diversity visually and aurally rather than actively.

### **Concepts and Themes of Diversity**

Participants were asked if they could think of dominant concepts/themes associated with diversity on their campuses. Support and inclusion, in so many words, were the two dominant themes across all three campuses.

Primrose singled out support and awareness and also alluded to inclusion: “there are specific support groups for a lot of, of, uh, different cultures. Um, so there are um, different like pride days. There are different clubs and groups associated with raising awareness.” Lily similarly responded that

A really big running theme whenever diversity is involved is we have to be inclusive or like we have to represent everybody. Just like inclusion. That word pops up a lot. That's a big one. It's just like Inclusion, and like we have to include everybody, and I'm just like in what, and stuff like that.

She even noted that the theme of inclusion might be repetitive: “It's mostly been the same thing. It's just like inclusion, inclusion, stuff like that.” Primrose put it in different but similar terms when she said that she has seen diversity directed “only toward

acceptance,” while Poppy said that it is connected to respect: “I have seen respect and diversity,” that is, “respect for diversity.”

In addition, Elder identified cultural promotion and inclusion as the major themes of diversity on her campus. She said,

You know how each month a diversity has, has a month. So in those months they do little events to promote their culture like they have, they have like food from those cultures, that have, um, they have not talks, but I know they read poetry and I know they do events.

She even gave an example of from her childhood development class that emphasized inclusion and representation:

I took a diversity class, but with child development. In my child development class, we learned how to incorporate diversity since I, since I guess toddlers from preschool ages, sorry, from preschool ages where it's like, OK, let's say when we have a group of children come into the classroom, we obviously want to have a play area to have dress up clothes from their own culture and the kitchen area, like foods that they recognize at home from every culture. And especially books because not every child sees a book about themselves. So we have to incorporate in each classroom, especially if they have a disability...Um, we also talked about how some people may feel very insecure about themselves being in the classroom.

Here too, the themes and concepts of diversity invite students to visually and aurally experience diversity without active, interpersonal engagement.

## **Goal/Purpose of Diversity**

The overarching goal of diversity on campus is basically the same as the concepts or themes of diversity: support and inclusion. The purpose, ultimately, “is to make everyone feel included, to give, we create a sense of belonging for populations who may not have felt like they belonged before. It will make them more successful and they will do better if they feel better” (Cedar). Lily also thought inclusion is both the theme and goal of diversity and that it can gotten at with “proper representation.” Additionally, one participant said the purpose of diversity is so that “Maybe people wont be so judgmental. They'll have more of an understanding” (Sage). Clarkia identified a similar purpose:

I just think it's like to make everyone feel welcome. Like there's like there's no discrimination at all. Like everyone's treated equally and we all should have like, how I think of it is like we should all have the services and programs available to all students and everyone attending that college. Like if you are enrolled in that college then everything should be available to you in an open minded in the open arms kind of situation.

Throughout the study, only two participants thought there was an alternate purpose to diversity. Whereas Gilia stated that “Everybody can bring something to the table, you know, rather their race or wherever they came from, you know, as long as we're humans and we're in this together and trying to make something, then there's no problem,” Poppy suggested that “Without diversity, the world would be a very boring place...It’s about the beauty of human life.”

## **Promoting Diversity**

Most participants said their campuses attempt to promote some idea of diversity. The colleges do this through the Office of Student Life, Associated students, support programs, and general education classes.

**Associated students.** Multiple participants said that Associated Students attempt to foster diverse interaction by hosting campus events. Poppy said,

Um, there was a lady, uh, her name is Randy and she is one of the Associated Student body government gals and, um, I met her at a scholarship function for the League of Women Voters and she and I buddied up and, um, she puts on all these events all over campus, um, whether it be diversity days or ballpark hot dogs or you know, it's wear a rainbow and support, you know, the LGTQ community.

Elder also said that Associated Students coordinate events to “try to get the students involved. They have the thing where they give food;” however, she believes that “People go because it's free food, but that's the only reason why they're going, they try to inform them as they're getting food, but I think they just pay more attention to the food.” Maple also said that Associated Students put on club day events: “When they have those little club days or something, they're all set up right there in the middle. And then they're open to like literally talking to anyone or they try to, you know, to bring to the table. They don't usually aim for like a certain type of person. Like they just want you to like, you know, finding information about that stuff.”

**Student life.** Multiple students said the Office of Student Life puts on events across campus. Cedar said Student Life sets “up events or incentivize like, um, hangouts and they invite, they include all different, they include all students. So I don't know

whether it's sending an email or text message or flyers on campus.” Sycamore also said that Student Life puts on events during the first week of the semester: “Like right here they have people sing perform stuff like that, just from here on campus, people who have talent.” Willow also noted that Student Life hosts “events like welcome day and all the college clubs. We have like club kickoffs, all the clubs come out to the quad and people can talk to the different clubs and see if they want to join.”

**Support programs.** Colleges attempt to increase structural diversity by offering support programs and support groups for students. Students reported that their colleges actively promote diversity on campus by offering support and service programs such as EOPS, food pantries, and other campus support groups. As Lily stated,

There's like a food pantry every Friday for students who are food insecure and so they're allowed to get groceries for free as long as you present, you know, an ASB card, they don't ask like what's your income. Like they don't try to put a litmus test to how you poverse you are, like if you're hungry you just go get groceries. And then um, there's like programs like educational opportunities EOPS or something like that. I don't know a lot about it, but I know that's a channel for them to go to and just like a bunch of clubs like the African American student union or like, um, a MECHA. So yeah, they tried to address the best they can. And then there's even like a tutorial center like pass center free printing, free snacks called brain food, something like that.

In a similar vein, Sycamore said that at his college “they let you know about like Ram Pantry for in case like you're struggling financially and stuff like that, like they'll let you take food.” Ram Pantry is the name of the food pantry at his campus.

Elder also referenced campus support programs as evidence of her college's promotion of diversity. She noted that at her campus

They have really good, um, low income programs. They have a lot of um, so like they have the MESA, they have EOPS, they have Access, they have STEM club. So I think that that could help to because not a lot of schools have that support system that some students may need.

Willow also honed in on a support programs or services on campus as evidence of the college fostering diversity on campus. She referenced a program she herself participated in: "I think the one, the program that's really helped me the most, like once I found out what it was and got over the whole stigma of it was the PACE program because the amount of resources that they offer in that one little program are huge."

**Classes.** As the following statements indicate, the colleges' general practice of allowing student to enroll in random classes leads to opportunities for diverse interaction. Students also must take a series of general education classes if they are to achieve success. These factors lead peers into close proximity with one another and inadvertently establish opportunities for informal interactional diversity; however, nowhere do the colleges included in this study indicate that this is intentional. As Cedar put it,

All students at [Northern Mountains] College and all colleges have to take general classes. Right? So they all are different but they're in the same class and that's diversity. That's diversity. I feel like everyone there is different, but it's a variety of different people, but they're all together.

Cedar was not alone in her identification of randomly ending up in a class with different people as one of the ways in which her college fosters diverse interaction. Primrose recalled that she

Used to think that people who hung around the math area must have been very, very boring, but I did have classes that pulled me to the area regardless. And so I ended up sitting next to a couple people that I assumed would otherwise not be somebody that I'd like to socialize with and became decent friends. Another way that, that helps, that, this campus helps is the mix of people. I have a veteran in one of my classes, but I judged very harshly at first. Um, she fit the valley girl stereotype, very high-pitched voice, lots of makeup, nails and everything.

Hundred dollar outfit for a \$2 day. And, and I judged really harshly, but we were um, I had to pick a group to work on a project with and I decided that I wanted to work with her. I wanted to know if she really was a vet. I had my doubts based on that. And she served, I think she said eight years she served our country on the front line. She's got PTSD and everything and I didn't want to be her friend just because the way she dressed and I was absolutely appalled at myself for that.

There isn't really a class that's specifically for African Americans or classes specifically for veterans or a set of classes specifically for disabled people. They just sort of dump everybody into one room.

The very act of being “dumping” into a math class presented Primrose with an opportunity to interact with people who were different from her in multiple ways.

Clarkia also explained that diverse interaction was facilitated in class; however, he credited professors with initiating diverse interaction. He noted that

On the first day of class, you know, you kinda say like some things about you and everything like that, but it's general questions. It's not really specific oriented but that gives you, I think that gives us room to actually explain where we come from and to explain like our own story type of stuff, you know. So I guess that is pretty cool because they're so generalized that they're will, they're making us put it in, fill in the specifics. So it's pretty much like tell our story and like where we came from.

Sage credited her classes for introducing her to other students as well as opening her mind to historical issues affecting group other than her own. She said,

If you consider this course, what I studied in English 1A, that's obviously changed me. For example, I became friends with the, we have the COFE, which is a Community of Future Engineers and there we mostly have Mexican people and at first I was like, ah, you know, that's kind of weird. But when I learned about their history and how California was part of Mexico and how they just took it over, I was like what?

In a similar vein, Elder attributed course offerings and professors at the college with fostering interaction with ideas that had formerly been off limits to her. She specifically indicated that the college fosters diversity through

The classes, the people they hire, the professors obviously help form who I am. For example, my first year of college here, my professor informed us about a needle exchange program and I never in my life I would think when I was in high school I would think of like what they did and when I was informed about it I was

like that's a great idea. Like I used to be kind of like, no, like you're just like influenced them to take more drugs.

### **Participation in Campus Events and Activities**

For the most part, the extent of diversity experience is in the classroom with peers and professors. Of the fourteen students interviewed, nine said they do not participate in or attend campus events or activities that come under the purview of diversity. Of the remaining students, three worked on campus and two were representatives for Associated Students, so they attended events at the college sponsored by their respective organizations. However, this does not necessarily mean these students all actually want to attend events, as indicated by Oak: “We had like a, like a black history event. We had, um, we went over there, um, in the theater room back there in the 600 and we watched like a movie about black history month and stuff like that. I didn't really want to go to it, but that was the only one I went to.” When I asked Oak why he didn't want to attend campus events he said, “I'll just be staying to myself, I won't want to be around like a bigger crowd.”

There were other reasons student reported not attending events or participating in diversity related activities on campus. Sycamore said that he is occupied playing football and going to class, “so I'm too busy to do other things.” This was the general sentiment disclosed by students. Sage was also preoccupied; she said, “I'm not that active, you know, I have a lot of stuff to do at home, like my own projects and stuff like that.” This reason was also cited by Elder, who explained, “I'm not as involved as I would like to be because I'm always studying or I just really don't have time to be at school.” Even Willow said, “I'm just so wrapped up in my own group of people, so I'm too busy.”

Not all participants who refrain from campus events and activities geared toward diversity used a busy schedule or lack of time as the reason for not actively engaging diversity on campus. Four students simply said they go to campus to attend class and they leave. Clarkia told me, “I mean I only have classes here at night so I'm only here during the nighttime as well. So it's like, there's not a lot of students coming here during that time as well too. I'm not really talking to anyone. In and out kind of stuff.” A similar response was given by Gilia, who said, “Honestly, when I'm here I just, I'm just here for the moment and then I'm gone, so I don't really hang out. I'm like a loner when I'm here. Like I'm here to study and to, you know, go to class and then as soon as class is done, I'm out of here.” Clover echoed Gilia’s honesty, stating, “To be honest, I go into my classes, I come out of my classes. I don't really involve myself in those extra activities that go on outside.” Maple, too, remarked that she is one of those people on campus who breezes in and out of class and does not attend events or participate in campus activities: “A lot of people do come in usually just to go to class and they go, go and do their life, you know, that's what I do.” The general sentiment, then, is that diversity experience does not mean active participation. This is not a value held by the majority of participants; they do not seek out interaction with people different from themselves.

### **Diverse Interaction Happens in Classes**

I asked students to describe any interactions they have had on campus that they would consider diverse. The major theme that emerged was that diverse interaction happens in classes organically or because it is facilitated by professors. Clover cited small in-class group activities as example of her own diverse interaction. She said,

I feel like the only way people interact is when, the only good thing about classes when they assign assignments or something like that is when they put random people together instead of telling them, OK, go pick out your group. I feel like it's mostly teachers that were like OK, get into random groups. I feel like they would probably be doing the favor to other people than, you know, other stuff, just putting them into groups and then you can talk about whatever you guys want.

Cedar also acknowledged that diverse interaction happens in class and that this interaction is often as random as the class a student ends up in:

Obviously you're in college, you get to choose a lot of your classes, but there are still general requirements and I think that a lot of diverse friendships or whatever connection with difference or with diversity or understanding of it or participation in it is maybe in those classes you get to meet people who are different than you. Their studies may not even be focused in the same area as you, but you're still in class together and so you create friendships and they may have been friendships that you didn't have before.

Ash also attributes her diverse interaction with being in a class. She honed in on a prior creative writing class:

I've been in a lot of different classes and in a lot in all my different classes it's always been a completely different thing because it's like in like in my creative writing class last year I had someone who was a recovering drug addict. I had someone who was a former like they were sexually abused as a child. I had people who were like me who were just like mentally ill or formerly mentally ill and it's

just like when people come together like that and they share their experiences and it is diversity because these people coming from all these different backgrounds.

In addition, though not in reference to a class, Poppy explained that all of her math courses have had a required ETC-tutoring hour that extends the class session; she says that it is in this supplemental class session that she has had the most diverse interaction:

Every single class has an ETC extending the class session, a tutoring outside of the professor's lecture as part of, it's included as free tutoring. And so I think, I think that that's where, um, I've run into the most diverse engagement is inside the tutoring center. There will be one of the tables that is for statistics. And then the other end of the table is for the math 103, but you know, we sit right next to each other and it's an academic area that we're all forced to be right next to each other even though we're studying different subjects.

Interestingly, the interactional diversity experiences students report are not purposefully determined by the colleges. Instead, while the college supports or promotes visual and aural diversity experience, interactional diversity experience, the type of diversity experience that leads to cognitive, intellectual, and emotional growth, comes to fruition when institutional intentions are not guiding the interaction.

### **Group Homogeneity**

In the end, students see and hear a whole lot about diversity. They even have occasional active experiences of diversity. However, there was one other anticipated theme that emerged in the interviews: group homogeneity. Multiple participants indicated that their peers typically stay in homogenous groups or cliques when they are not in class. Gilia said that “You can kind of see, you know, sometimes they're a group

of black people, there's are a group of whites, you know, there are Asians in their own group, like everybody kind of stays to themselves and the lesbians, gays, bisexuals.” Clarkia also noticed groups sticking together on his campus, he said, “We are open to everybody, but, yeah, everyone's still kind of stay or sticks to what they're comfortable with. Koreans be hangin' out with Koreans and stuff like that.” Cedar also pointed out that

There's different areas of campus where new students all hang out together and then continuing students hang out together. Students of color hang out together, students of not color hang out together. Um, religiously similar students who believe similar things as far as religion goes hang out together in different areas.

However, not all students who identified homogenous groups on campus thought the common characteristics of members were connected to race, religion, ethnicity, or student status. Both Primrose and Poppy expressed that homogenous groups are based on common social behaviors and dispositions. Primrose explained that

There's the loud, obnoxious types, but they seem to click together around, um, over that way. I'm not sure. Um, but you can see them, they sort of lean against the planters and they'll point at ladies and they'll cat call and stuff and I choose not to associate with that. My click genuinely hangs around the smoking areas because we all smoke or at least the majority of us do.

And Poppy said that

The like groups tend to stick with the like groups, you know, the, the people who want to shave their heads or wear Mohawks kind of hang out together. And the

guys with the gold chains and the gold teeth who smoke weed kind of all hang out together and you know, the math and science people all kind of hang out together. What this indicates is though students report a saturation of elements of structural and curricular diversity that they experience visually and aurally, and though some students experience informal diverse interactions with peers in classes, groups do not care about mixing with other groups or generating any sort of diverse unity.

### **Summary**

The findings indicate that diversity discourse is dispersed across CCCs through a variety of print, digital, and live media. Additionally, the contents of dispersal are similar at all three of the CCCs included in this study even though the contexts and semi-homogenous student populations at each college are radically different. The discursive formation of diversity is readily dispersed in support of output (success). Rarely, if at all, is diversity discourse focused on informal interaction between students on campus.

Students' experiences of diversity are primarily visual and aural. Their diversity experiences are not typically active, animated, or buoyant, nor are they interpersonal or dialogic. Students' diversity experiences do not hinge on interpersonal exchanges that might significantly influence their thoughts, emotions, behaviors, and relationships; interpersonal transactions that have the potential to enhance critical thinking, communication competency, and global/communal awareness are infrequent (McCornack & Morrison, 2018).

## **CHAPTER V: DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION**

### **Introduction**

This chapter presents an overall summary of the study. The findings are connected to the preceding literature review and also examined through poststructural and phenomenological lenses. This chapter also highlights the limitations of the study as well as the generalizability of the findings. Finally, the implications for CCCs' approaches to diversity discourse are explored, and recommendations for future research are offered.

### **Overview of the Study**

#### **Problem and Purpose**

The goal of this study was to understand the purpose of diversity discourse and students' diversity experience across three CCCs. The justification for this research rests in the fact that most contemporary scholarship on the purpose of diversity discourse and diversity experience in higher education is focused on the American university. There is minimal scholarship focused on the purpose of diversity discourse and diversity experience at American community colleges, let alone CCCs. This study was an attempt to fill the research gap by bringing CCC diversity discourse into the ongoing conversation about diversity in higher education in order to contribute to the attunement of diversity to CCC students.

#### **Research Questions**

There were two primary research questions and four secondary questions that guided this study; four of these questions are directed toward diversity discourse and two

are directed toward students' experiences on campus. This study was guided by the following research questions:

1. What is the purpose of diversity discourse on California community college campuses?
2. How do students on California community college campuses experience diversity?

The secondary questions for this study were:

1. What does diversity discourse on California community college campuses represent?
2. What does diversity discourse on California community college campuses say?
3. What does diversity discourse on California community college campuses do?
4. How do students on California community college campuses interpret diversity?

## **Methodology**

To conduct this study, I employed phenomenological and poststructural methodologies with a particular emphasis on Foucauldian poststructural discourse analysis and Husserlian existential phenomenology. The former was selected in order to delineate diversity as a discursive formation across the research sites by tracing the dispersal of the signifier diversity in public communication documents. The latter was selected to capture the pure, raw experience and interpretation of diversity experience from students' perspectives. With the above methodologies guiding my research, I acquired twenty-four documents and recruited fourteen student participants across three CCCs to conduct the study.

## Summary of Major Findings

### Purpose of Diversity Discourse

On the surface, diversity discourse points to the fostering of positive educational environments that support and represent diversity groups through campus programs in order to increase student success. The CCC system identifies student success as the percentage of community college students completing their educational goals; percentage of community college students earning a certificate or degree, transferring, or achieving transfer-readiness; number of students transferring to a four-year institution; number of degrees and certificates earned (CCCCO, Student Success Task Force, 2012). At the CCC, diversity groups most often include individuals who have been historically underrepresented in higher education because of race, gender, ability, age, sexual orientation, socioeconomics, or religion. In order to fulfill the purpose of diversity discourse, it is dispersed across campuses both structurally and curricularly; performance, print, and digital media serve as visual representations of diverse bodies on campus; books, documentaries, guest speakers, and campus events provide visual and aural information about diversity populations. The function of these dispersions is to represent diversity populations in order to provide them with a sense of inclusion on campus that facilitates an increase in the number or percentage of students who achieve success. In other words, the purpose of diversity discourse is to support an increase in output while minimizing disproportionate representation in output.

**Representing.** Diversity discourse presents images of and speaks for students identified with diversity populations. The most common representations as per students' visual experiences of diversity include depictions of African American/Black,

Hispanic/Latino, Native American, and LGBTQ+ students. Students' aural experiences of diversity include messages that express the historic and contemporary suffering, oppression, poverty, and other struggles faced by underrepresented diversity groups.

**What say.** Diversity discourse at the CCC communicates a commitment to making students from diversity populations feel included, represented, and accepted on campus so as to increase the number or percentage of students from these groups who achieve the CCCs metric for success. It communicates CCCs' respect, acceptance, and inclusion of diversity populations, and it conveys a commitment on behalf of each college to support the interpolation of these individuals into higher education for increased output.

**What do.** Diversity discourse typifies individuals who fit into diversity frameworks, presents information about diversity populations, and bolsters the proliferation of campus support programs to increase student percentages and numbers. It also visually and verbally establishes an inclusive ambience on each campus to assuage any feelings that might otherwise arise from underrepresentation, exclusion, or marginalization faced by diversity populations; again, this is done with the goal of increasing diversity student population output.

### **Students' Diversity Experience**

The dominant modes of diversity experience at CCCs are visual and aural; these experiences of diversity ensue in students' encounters with structural and curricular representations of diversity populations. From professors' speaking in classes to documentaries projected on screens to traditional dance performances and traditional

little dresses and red envelopes, students at CCCs see and hear representations of diversity frequently.

Some students also have interactional—dialogic—experiences of diversity. This mode of diversity experience occurs outside of the purview of CCC’s representational diversity efforts. Interpersonal diverse interaction is typically experienced in classes or instructional labs where peers come into contact with one another; these active experiences often occur at the prompting of professors, but they are always a result of students’ volition. The colleges play only a slight role in promoting these experiences, however: the randomness of being “dumped” (Primrose) in a class with other students or the fact that colleges require “all students to take general education classes” (Cedar) puts different students in close proximity to one other.

**Interpreting diversity.** Students generally interpret diversity to mean difference or separation rooted in race, culture, sexual orientation, gender, and disability, with a specific focus on underrepresented or historically marginalized groups. The groups most identified in interpretations of diversity are African American/Black, Latino/Hispanic, Native American, and LGBTQ+. Furthermore, students frequently think of diversity population in terms of suffering, oppression, hardship, and poverty. Diversity populations are described in terms of colonialism, lynching, internment, sex trafficking, and racism (Poppy; Sage; Ash). To many students, diversity means to draw attention to the historic or contemporary oppression and suffering of marginalized groups.

Students also interpret diversity to mean the unification of difference in a communal whole, a fusion of perspectives all in one place, divergent experiences, or an ongoing conversation. These primary interpretations of diversity indicate that students

interpret diversity as the recognition of identitarian differences all contained in one place; it is recognized as homogenous groups who are integrated into the campus community as a whole.

### **No Attachment**

The most unexpected finding in the study is that diversity is not connected to any of the campuses' Institutional Student Learning Outcomes (ISLOs) associated with cognitive, intellectual, or emotional growth in students. Yet diversity is listed as a core value at each institution. All three campuses in this study have near identical ISLOs of critical thinking, effective communication, and community/global awareness, yet all three campuses' decisively fail to connect them to the signifier diversity. Moreover, not a single student connected diversity to critical thinking, effective communication, or community/global awareness.

## **Discussion**

### **Connection to Prior Scholarship**

CCCs strive to be structurally diverse (Pike & Kuh, 2006) even if they do not have significant numbers of diverse "bodies" on campus. Each campus in the study strives to represent students of color and other underrepresented groups through a variety of media and campus events; they similarly offer support programs focused on the inclusion of these same students. The campuses are also curricularly diverse (Pike & Kuh, 2006) in the sense that class discussions and campus events and activities are directed at the inclusion of information about students of color and other underrepresented groups. Chang's (2007) concern regarding the inclusion of information about these groups appears to be assuaged as students from across CCCs report aural and

visual exposure to in-class and campus-wide curriculum focused on diversity populations.

However, facilitating opportunities for informal interactional diversity does not appear to be a priority across CCCs even though prior scholarship suggests a correlation between informal interactional diversity and openness to belief-change, socio-political activism, cognitive development, confidence, moral reasoning, democracy, and interactions with people who differ in terms of race, gender, values, political beliefs, and religious perspectives (Hurtado, 2007; Loes, et al., 2013; Parker & Pascarella, 2013; Pascarella, et al. 2012). This is especially notable since each of the colleges in the study maintains a list of ISLOs that include critical thinking, communication competency, and global/communal engagement; these ISLOs are particularly supported by interpersonal engagement between different students on a given campus. Yet, CCCs put their energy toward increasing opportunities for visual and aural experiences of representations of diversity groups rather than opportunities for informal interaction. Instead of interacting with unique human beings, students often interact with representations of human beings. This presumes that people have to see and hear before they can know or that seeing and hearing tableaux leads to knowledge and understanding of other people.

The findings also suggest that CCCs are responsible for reducing students to homogenous categories of race, culture, sexual orientation, and gender (Whitt, et al., 2001). Not only are students reduced to representational categories, but each category also seems to be accompanied by a narrative of oppression, suffering, poverty, or other social hardship. The limited reified frameworks of representation (Ritter, 2007), and the accompanying narratives consequently function as the objects of visual and aural

diversity experience. That diversity discourse at the CCC promotes commonality instead of authentic appreciation for diversity (Ritter, 2007) seems to be true. This is evidenced by the fact that most students as well as public communication documents identify diverse people in terms race, culture, sexuality, and gender categories attached to suffering. The fact that these common categories exist across multiple CCCs seemingly confirms Ritter's (2007) concern that diversity discourse is inevitably reduced to characteristics that can be defined, and measured, in short, categories that are easily reproducible both structurally and curricularly across campuses.

Students are crystalized through representations that breed commonality; beings that might have otherwise been interpersonally engaged are turned into spectacles for spectators. The individuals who fit within diversity categories are not so much understood as persons, but as objective representations of diversity. This finding is consistent with Tavers (2007) argument that diversity discourse fetishizes individuals and puts them on display as commodities. Those individuals on CCC campuses who fit the mold of diversity populations are determined in advance through representations, and they effectively become artifacts of diversity discourse; in other words, the real humans become the living, breathing proof of the representations, effectively crystallizing difference and turning it into a spectacle to be abstractly examined rather than interacted with on equal terms (Tavares, 2007).

The lack of connection between CCC diversity discourse and critical thinking, cognitive development, and socio-political activism (Ayers, 2005), as well as communication competence and global/communal awareness, i.e., Bloom's taxonomy, gives credence to Ayers (2005) concern that the community college may no longer be

concerned with the cultivation of active learners, but instead with industry demands for human capital. The CCCs subordination of success to numerical output in the form of percentages and numbers is the clearest evidence that diversity discourse is dispersed with hegemonic aims that reduce difference to sites of calculation to increase output of a diverse array of consumers and workers.

Diversity discourse and diversity experience at CCCs are generally not concerned with the complex multiplicity of positionalities, intersectionalities, and other experiences that give way to students' multiple ways of knowing (Cornwell & Stoddard, 2003). Students' horizons are sacrificed for easily reproducible structural and curricular representations. These representations reflect the categories included in diversity discourse regardless of the context of the campus, and they are readily available across CCCs for visual and aural consumption.

There is often reluctance to diversity amongst college students because diversity discourse has been saturated in their everyday and has lost its sensuous vigor; it has become a limited framework for the acceptable bounds of thinking about difference (Whitt, et al, 2001, p. 174). One need only consider that some students reported precollege exposure to diversity discourse in early education that is nearly identical to the diversity discourse they report exposure to at the CCC; this is only enhanced by the fact that diversity experience at all levels of education is similarly visual, aural, and performative; think parading around in shirts (Maple), eating tacos (Cedar), wearing little dresses and red envelopes (Clover), and showing up for the powwow (Poppy).

Diversity discourse and diversity experience have no relation to divergent values, opinions, and approaches, nor is it focused on multiple ways of knowing (Paulsen, 2013;

Cornwell & Stoddard 2003). Instead, diversity is a teleological framework that is invoked to help increase output numbers for individual colleges and to bolster the sociopolitical functionary position of the CCC. The similar function of diversity discourse at the CCC and the general American university are striking.

Diversity initiatives may not entirely fail to stimulate interaction amongst divergent students, as suggested by Bowman and Brandenberger (2012), but they certainly are not facilitating group fusion across campuses. Whitt, et al (2001) found that “independent of all other influences, interactions with diverse peers, including conversations on topics associated with difference and which challenge previously held ideas and beliefs, were associated with significant gains in openness to diversity and challenge” (p. 195). However, it appears that students are primarily engaged in homogenous groups; openness to diverse ideas, belief, and differences is not enhanced through interaction with difference. This may be a result of the fact that CCCs are predominately focused on formal, didactic campus events and activities rather than informal interaction. Whatever the case, the majority of students included in the study said they did not attend campus events and activities unless they worked for a campus organization and were otherwise required to attend. Furthermore, the events and activities cited by students do not readily promote interaction because they are geared to didacticism. This is not to say that students who do attend events and activities fail to interact entirely; however, many events fail to invite interactional, interpersonal engagement.

Across the three colleges in the study, the greatest contributing factor to interactional diversity was interaction with professors and peers in classes, not campus

events and activities. Students do not seem to readily care about events or activities. They are primarily concerned with going to class and then leaving campus to tend to their lives. As argued by Raposa (2012), college campuses can be structurally and curricularly diverse, but diversity discourse limited to reified categories does not necessarily spark an interest in campus members' active engagement with one another. The sheer percentage of students who said they do not participate in or attend diversity themed activities and events give credence to this conclusion. Students care about being represented, included, and accepted. This is understandable. But they do not care about interpersonal engagement. This seems paradoxical since to be a student implies active learning, yet most campus diversity efforts indicate passive individuals accepting institutional didacticism.

CCC diversity efforts focus on the inclusion and acceptance of diversity populations, not on the active appreciation of all campus members. Yet, Hulualani, et al (2010) defines diversity efforts as "any activity or program that promotes the active appreciation of all campus members" (p. 129). The campuses in this study promote the active appreciation, inclusion, representation, and acceptance of diversity populations without mention for diversity populations' active engagement with traditional populations. Diversity discourse at CCCs may bolster acceptance of diversity populations, but it does not encourage interpersonal interaction amongst traditional populations. However, to be fair, diversity discourse does promote campus support programs, which are available for all eligible students on campus, regardless of diversity status.

Though diversity welcomes traditionally minority students to campus, traditional majority students are not sure if they count in diversity discourse (Roper, 2004). Diversity discourse at CCCs promotes a dichotomous insider/outsider binary (Iverson, 2012). This binary functions in two ways at CCCs. Students from diversity populations are viewed as outsiders while traditional majority populations (Ropers, 2007) are viewed as insiders. The binary also indicated that the CCCs views diversity as unidirectional; diversity populations have something new or different to offer traditional majority populations, but they traditional majority populations do not signify anything new to historically underrepresented or minority populations. Perhaps this means that the gains to be had from diversity are intended for some students and not others. The benefits of diversity, often associated with increases in intellectual and cognitive development, critical thinking, literacy, and more, might be unevenly gained if the focus on diversity populations is predominately rooted in representation, inclusion, and proportional numbers in success metrics. Yet the point remains that if diversity discourse on college campuses is to welcome students of all positionalities and to benefit all students equally, there must be a disruption to the dichotomous discourse that sustains the insider/outsider binary (Iverson, 2012).

### **Poststructural Analysis**

Many attempts to make campuses diverse, or multicultural, have proven fruitful in establishing welcoming environs for student populations historically marginalized as a result of racial, gender, and sexual bias (Rorty, 1995, p. 3). Yet following the advice of Foucault and looking at the “simultaneous or successive emergence” or the “interplay of [...] appearances and dispersions” (Foucault, 1972, p. 35) of the signifier diversity, it

becomes apparent that there is a discursive unity across CCCs. Foucault (1972) reminds us that “we must recognize that they may not, in the last resort, be what they seem at first sight” (p. 26). In other words, though at first sight diversity discourse is directed at establishing welcoming environs, there are more fundamental motives for its dispersal. The phrases and objects of diversity discourse are not accidentally chosen; they are actively selected for public communication. The many overlapping dispersals across campuses that are hundreds of miles apart and that serve very different student demographics indicates that CCCs, in general, want to ensure welcoming environs, particularly for historically marginalized students. However, a closer examination of CCC diversity discourse reveals a deep connection to an increase in the numerical output of students for accountability. Though diversity discourse points to welcoming environs, the presumable purpose of establishing these environs is none other than the fulfillment of the colleges’ output goals, not necessarily enhancing the cognitive, intellectual, and emotional development of active learners through diverse interaction.

Spanos’ (1993) earlier insight to this same practice at the university is relevant to the discussion of the purpose of diversity discourse on CCC campuses. He advances the idea that the purpose of diversity discourse is the classification, hierarchization, supervision, and regularization of human difference. Difference is calculated through scientific, economic, and sociopolitical tables (Spanos, 1993) to develop reified frameworks through which underrepresented students can be understood and communicated about to themselves and others. Like university diversity discourse, CCC diversity discourse performs a similar function, but with the goal of making people feel

comfortable and welcomed, to appease dissent, and to bolster neoliberal ideology through diverse output (Spanos, 1993).

Ferguson (2012), too, supports that diversity at the university is not focused on integrating difference but on absorbing it in order to make minority subjectivity into “object[s] of knowledge formation and institutional practices” (p. 232). The performative nature of campus events and activities, as well as the curricular representations of suffering, oppression, and poverty of historically marginalized groups shows the extent to which the CCC turns diversity populations into objects of knowledge; even campus support programs evidence institutional practices founded on the objectification of diversity groups. The special diversity days for diversity populations cited in interview responses is indication enough of this practice occurring across campuses.

CCC students across the state are presented with the same tableaux of diversity. CCCs participate in sustaining a grand narrative of human relations by informing both diversity populations and traditional majority populations who they all are and the narratives that define them on campus. Calculability appears to be the motive for such moves as evidenced by the fact that reified tableaux are dispersed in connection with the number and percentage of students interpolated into higher education. Ferguson (2012) suggests that these sorts of actions are intended to manage relations between higher education, capital, and the state (Ferguson, 2012), to quiet dissent and bring minority difference under the thrall of the state. The purpose of diversity is not to get different groups on campus to interact; it is not about getting the rich kids to interact with the poor kids, but to represent that anybody can be a student and pursue the free market (Michaels, 2016, p. 75). At the CCC, anybody can be a student. An increase in student output

means an increase in free market production and consumption. It also represents the CCC system as a liberal guardian of emancipation that is fulfilling the “project of getting people (ourselves and, especially others) to stop being racist, sexist, classist, homophobes” (Michaels, 2016, p. 19). It delivers a message of emancipation: through subordination to the institution, historically marginalized, and really all community college students writ large, will gain cultural capital and be afforded higher levels of consumption.

If the goal of diversity were contextual student learning, CCCs would likely avoid reproducing diversity discourse; they would not simply disperse the same formation of diversity across vastly different campuses with vastly different student demographics. If CCCs were concerned with the cognitive, intellectual, and emotional development of students they would seemingly work to ensure that student representation and inclusion function in the service getting students to interact with one another, to engage difference, to grow intellectually and emotionally, not simply reproduce limited categorical frameworks under the guise of diversity for the sake of increased output.

CCCs funding is based on the number of students who enroll in classes at each college; the State will purportedly begin funding these institutions based on completion rates in the very near future. As it stands, each individual college must secure increased numbers and percentages to ensure their own survival. The more student output, the more money each college will bring in. The more relevant the state views each college as a functionary, the more revenue these institutions will be given. Student output equals dollars and power. It justifies tax dollars spent on education. Student success numbers

and percentages are the evidence of education, not the cognitive, intellectual, and emotional, capacities of students.

### **Phenomenological Analysis**

CCC Diversity rarely signifies active experience. It is not dialogic or kinetic. The discourse object of diversity has settled into common meaning (Gusdorf, 1995), and, as a result, CCC students are spoken for and about rather than spoken with on equal terms. The individual horizons of CCC students are sacrificed for common meanings to manage difference in the service of bolstering numerical and percentile output. The telos of diversity discourse is subordinated “to a determinism that in advance would distort it in the direction of a transcendent finality” (Gusdorf, 1995, p. 45). However, this is exactly what the CCC does with diversity; it points it to the finality of increased student output.

Diversity has taken on the sounds of a fixed tongue (Gusdorf, 1995). In his discussion of living speech, Gusdorf (1995) writes that for speech to be living, it must be emergent; it must transcend itself in the very act of speaking. When the language of diversity becomes fixed and humans validate the representations of diversity rather than exude diversity through self-efficacy, diversity proves it is not longer living; for Gusdorf (1995) this is a sign of decay. The decay is a result of reproductive dispersion that crystalized a discourse and turn the individuals swept up in it into reified objects that are verified through representation. CCC diversity discourse and diversity experience do not invoke “a dynamic form of transactional communication between people in which the messages exchanged significantly influence their thoughts, emotions, behaviors, and relationships” (McCornack & Morrison, 2018, p. 4). Diversity discourse and diversity

experience are in a state of decay because they fail to invoke active engagement; these now signify passive, impersonal seeing and hearing.

Gusdorf (1995) writes that true communication is “the realization of a unity” (p. 57) achieved only through each person’s “discovery of himself in the contact with the other” (p. 57). The visual and aural experience of representations of diversity on CCC campuses does not indicate that there is true communicative unity between students arrived at through contact. There are presentations of representations of diversity, but there are not generally equally grounded parties entering into true communication so that both might transcend former modes of being and thinking through interaction. The fact that many of the students in the study said people on their campuses stay in homogenous groups and that they do not participate in campus events and activities indicates that the discovery of self and other through true communication is not the outcome of campus diversity efforts.

Diversity then seems to be a tableau; the tableau is substituted for real humans. Diversity is a model of meaning that students are viewed through. Reality will be real when it looks like the model, just like diversity will be real when the campus population is fluent in diversity discourse and sees the world of the campus through it. It does not give way to knowing through dialogue, for “In order to be able to ask, one must want to know, and that means knowing that one does not know” (Gadamer, 2000, p. 363). However, CCCs already know what counts as diversity and they educate students to view diversity through these same limited frameworks.

True dialogue occurs when the individuals involved are of an “open and receptive attitude, as opposed to sterile discussions in which each participant limits himself to

restating his convictions” (Gusdorf, 1995, p. 103). This point is relevant to CCCs attempts to foster interaction by hosting curricular and performative diversity events and activities. Informal interaction implies an “Authentic dialogue characterizes the encounter of subjects of good will, each of whom testifies for the other, not to himself alone, but to their common values (Gusdorf, 195, p. 103).

Images and language about diversity do not facilitate change in behavior and thinking of real, living people. However, many students appear to be okay with their colleges’ visual, audio, and performative representations of diversity on campus. After all, it has proven to be an inescapable fact of public education in California. The image is taken for the thing itself!

### **Limitations**

First of all, the number of student participants is small compared to the number of students in the CCC system. In general, it was very difficult to get student interested in participating in this study. After all, a repetitive image diversity of has been saturated in their academic lives since early education.

Furthermore, the number of schools from which participants and documents were drawn was small in comparison to the number of campuses in the CCC system. There are 114 CCCs, but my research draws from only three. This is a result of multiple colleges not responding to my inquires, multiple colleges not following through on verbal consent with written consent, research directors offering and then rescinding offers to conduct research, and flat out denials to conduct research.

Other limitations include the fact that this study focused on the public face of diversity discourse at the research sites, and it only considered students diversity

experiences. The documents were also taken only from what the colleges publically communicate to the community via their websites. It did not account for internal department, senate, classified, or other organizational documents that might disperse the signifier diversity in divergent ways. Thus, an examination of internal documents across colleges would likely yield even more conclusive findings. Moreover, interviews with faculty, staff, and other campus constituents would certainly widen the scope of understanding the purpose of diversity discourse and diversity experiences at CCCs.

There is no doubt that the small number of sample sites and participants affects the generalizability of my findings. However, the fact that three divergent campuses and 14 unique student participants from various regions in California validate the prior literature on diversity in higher education indicates that my findings are relevant.

### **Implications**

Empirically, the implications of my study are limited because the research sites and interview participants are small. But this size does not impeach the rhetorical, philosophical, and political findings of the phenomenal and post-structural frameworks.

College administrators do not have to choose student success through numerical accountability at the expense of critical thinking, communication competency, and global/community awareness. Interactional, dialogic diversity does not have to be hijacked by structural and curricular diversity, nor does it need to do any hijacking. If CCCs have regard for the outcomes associated with interactional diversity, they should modify their diversity discourse and ensure that the signifier diversity, or its variants, is dispersed in proximity to Institutional Student Learning Outcomes. It should also be dispersed with reference to informal interaction. It would not be very difficult for

colleges to connect the signifier diversity with interpersonal engagement. While CCCs strive to fulfill their success metrics, they can also emphasize and normalize diversity as an active experience that increases intellectual and cognitive growth. If CCCs care about students developing intellectual and cognitive capacities, they must emphasize an active dimension of diversity on campus, maybe even have an interactional diversity statement that emphasizes the gains to be made from the fusion of limited horizons of understanding (Gadamer, 1960).

The findings highlight the role played by professors and campus clubs in fostering interactional diversity. Perhaps colleges can further work to incentivize faculty members to take active roles in the advisement of student clubs. Faculty can even be incentivized to initiate new clubs on campus. Students listen to professors, and professors seem to be able to get students to engage with one another dialogically. Yet faculty must be supported and encouraged to develop or guide campus clubs founded on the premise of informal interactional diversity.

During the interview process, one student from one of the research sites told me about a program facilitated by her college's office of equity and inclusion. It is called Human Library. Though focused on historically marginalized or underrepresented populations and didacticism, it is a promising concept for fostering interactional diversity. Human library is a program where human beings from historically underrepresented populations become "books" that people can check out and read, or engage with dialogically. Though performative and arguably guilty of formally reproducing the same old diversity frameworks, the program shows an orientation toward interaction. Instituting some model of Human Library that is inclusive of the entire

campus community and not focused solely on “people from backgrounds that are stereotyped negatively” (Ash) as a means for getting students to engage with difference for the sake of cognitive, intellectual, and emotional development may draw students to campus for interpersonal diverse interaction. This program, though focused specifically on groups identified as marginalized, did appear, according to students, to deviate from typical diversity discourse by emphasizing a hermeneutic diversity.

### **Recommendations for Future Research**

Future research on diversity discourse should expand to include significantly more students as well as other campus constituents such as faculty and staff. It should also take into account internal documents at CCCs that disperse the signifier diversity in order to confirm and/or enhance the generalizability of the findings connected to diversity discourse. The number of institutions from which documents and students are drawn should also be expanded significantly. Furthermore, different campus departments and divisions may frame and disperse diversity in a variety of ways; it would be worthwhile to know how the different epistemological schools/divisions at CCCs think about and reference the diversity.

Future research focused on diversity discourse at the CCC should also focus on comparisons of diversity discourse at the CCC, the California State University, and the University of California systems in order to understand whether or not there are similarities and difference between each systems’ approach to diversity. Determining the scope of diversity discourse in California’s public education institutions and the various experiences of diversity at both community college and the university levels will further clarify the unique experiences of community college students and aide in the

development of conceptual and theoretical approaches to diversity specifically attuned to CCC students.

Additionally, the overarching goal of increased student success numbers and the social and economic impact of increased output numbers should be examined. There is a significant emphasis on a proportional increase in success numbers, but the motives for increasing these numbers is not entirely transparent. A study focused on the economics and politics of CCCs, as well as the CCCs' impact on the economics and politics of the state of California, would likely clarify the perceived benefits of increased output and indicate the gains to be made. Future research should determine what CCCs gain from increased output and how those gains affect the state of California. In other words, understanding the economics and politics of increased output may further clarify the numerical and political significance of diversity discourse.

It would also be fitting to research emergent approaches to diversity across American community colleges, specifically ones that go beyond representation and didacticism. These would include all approaches that are seemingly attuned to students and avoid hegemonic or counter-hegemonic ideologies. As noted, "Human Library" is an innovative program focused on understanding. An inventory of approaches for motivating student interaction will likely generate new and divergent approaches to diversity on CCC campuses.

### **Concluding Statement**

Since the Commission's 1947 examination of the role of diversity in education, diversity discourse has permeated nearly every public and private institution. At the CIA level, diversity has been described as a "powerful tool" that "pays dividends;" a "valuable

asset” necessary “to combat the threats our country will be facing in the decades ahead;” it is the very tool necessary for recruiting “collectors from diverse ethnic backgrounds and with a wide range of expertise who can think and communicate like our targets and pierce their human and technical networks”(Tenent, 1999, p. 2). As sociologists study diversity in the corporate realm, they are finding that employees often view diversity efforts as coercive and threatening to personal autonomy, and that diversity may actually catalyze bias and resentment (Dobbin & Kalev, 2016). Whether viewed as progressive or hegemonic, it seems that diversity discourse has, in fact, permeated institutions across the country since its articulation in the Commission’s (1947) report, and its reception is met with both praise and skepticism. However, in higher education, diversity discourse has not really changed since the protest movements in the 1960s. CCCs today incorporate diversity discourse as a way to calculate difference and organize it according to institutional and state goals.

As diversity discourse transforms CCC students into fixed objects; it otherizes everyone on campus. Some students are otherized as different, and some students are otherized as traditional: “The invention of the Other is not achieved by the individual, a subject imprisoned in its own egocentrism; otherness becomes very active in the symbolic organization of social reproduction as a result of all the speeches given about difference and identity” (Jeudy, 1994, p. 102). Once otherized, dispersals reinforce predetermined meaning and reduce the human being to human representation. For Jeudy, (1994), the result of such reduction is blindness. Students become blind to another when their only source of information is an image-event rather than active experience; “the meaning is also already played out: it is imposed as a figure of transmission” (Jeudy,

1994, p. 123). Yet, if we still value the cognitive, intellectual, and emotional potential of all of our students, we must critique practices of reification that limit students to image-events and question such limited parameters of student success. Then again, if critical thinking, communication competency, and global/communal awareness are no longer deeply-rooted values at the CCC, things seem to be going quite well.

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**Appendix A**  
**California State University, Northridge**  
**Research Invitation**

January 1, 2018

Dear Student,

I am conducting interviews during the Spring 2018 semester as part of a research study to increase understanding of the purpose and experience of diversity discourse on California community college campuses. In this study, diversity discourse refers to groups of statements about diversity that are dispersed in various locations and in various arrangements across campus; these dispersions often emerge through recurring objects, utterances, concepts, and themes. As a student, you are in an ideal position to provide me with valuable firsthand information about diversity discourse at your campus, from your own perspective.

The interview takes roughly one hour and is semi-structured, so there is much flexibility in the way the interview can unfold. I am simply trying to capture your perspectives and experiences of diversity discourse on campus. Your responses to the interview questions will be kept confidential. You will be assigned a pseudonym to help ensure that personal identifiers are not revealed during the analysis and write up of findings.

Though there is no compensation for participating in this study, your participation will be a valuable addition to my research and may lead to a greater understanding of diversity discourse at California community college campuses.

If you are willing and able to participate, please let me know your availability so that I can schedule the interview on a day that is convenient for you.

If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me. I can be reached via email at [shane.underwood@my.csun.edu](mailto:shane.underwood@my.csun.edu). I look forward to working with you!

Best,

Shane Underwood  
Doctoral Candidate  
Educational Leadership & Policy Studies  
California State University, Northridge

**Appendix B**  
**California State University, Northridge**  
**Interview Protocol**

Project: *Dispersing diversity at the California community college: From frameworks to fusion*

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Time: \_\_\_\_\_

Location: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewee: \_\_\_\_\_

Release form: \_\_\_\_\_

**Notes to interviewee:**

Thank you for agreeing to this interview. I am extremely grateful for your participation in my research on diversity discourse at the California community college.

In order to accurately represent your answers to the following interview questions, I would like to record our conversation today. I will be the only individual with access to the recording. The recording will be transcribed, and upon completion of this research project it will be destroyed/erased. Furthermore, I must ask you to sign a consent form that guarantees all of your information will be kept confidential, that your participation is voluntary, and that you may end your participation at any time.

The following interview will last about one hour. Over the next hour I would like to ask you a series semi-structured questions that I have prepared in advance. However, I invite and encourage you to offer insight and share experiences that fall out of the range of the interview questions.

**Purpose of research:**

The goal of my research is to understand the purpose of diversity discourse at California community colleges and to understand how students at California community colleges experience diversity discourse in order to further attune diversity discourse to students.

In this study, diversity discourse refers to the dominant ways of writing and speaking about diversity across campus. It includes the groups of statements referring to diversity that are dispersed in various locations and in various arrangements; these dispersions often emerge through recurring objects, utterances, concepts, and themes.

**Interview Questions:**

- 1) Tell me about yourself:
  - How long have you lived in the area?
  - What is it like living here?
  - How would you describe the community you live in?
  - What is your neighborhood like?
  
- 2) What brought you to this college?
  - Why did you choose to enroll here?
  - How long have you been a student here?
  - What are your overarching educational goals?
  - How would you describe your experience as a student at this college?
  
- 3) What does the term diversity mean to you?
  - How do you understand the term diversity?
  - What is your definition of diversity?
  
- 4) Can you remember when you first encountered the term diversity?
  - Was diversity talked about at home when you were growing up?
    - If so, how was it talked about?
  - Was diversity talked about at your elementary, middle, and high schools?
    - If so, how was it talked about at each level of education?
  
- 5) Would you say this college is diverse?
  - If yes, what makes it diverse/how is it diverse?
  - If no, why is it non-diverse?
  
- 6) When you are on campus, in or out of class, do you hear people talk about diversity?
  - In what context do you hear people talk about diversity?
  - What do you hear?
  - Can you think of any unique or recurring statements?
  - What is your experience of what you hear?
  
- 7) When you are on campus, in or out of class, do you see objects, images, or representation that point to diversity?
  - If yes, what objects, images, or representations do you see?
  - Where do you see these?
  - How often do you see these things?
  - What is your experience of what you see?
  
- 8) When you are on campus, in or out of class, do you encounter concepts or themes pointing to diversity?
  - If yes, what are they?
  - Where do you encounter these?

Are there any particular books, movies, or other media that come to mind?  
What is your experience of these concepts or themes?

9) Can you think of any experiences you have had on campus that have been influenced by the college's diversity discourse?

What are these experiences?

Where did these experiences occur?

What were they like?

What feelings did they evoke?

10) In your own experience, has this college's diversity discourse impacted the way you interact with other people on campus?

If so, what role has it played?

If not, why do you think it hasn't impacted you?

11) Have you had any negative experiences stemming from diversity discourse at this college?

12) Do you have any recommendations for how this college and California community colleges, in general, can further attune diversity discourse to students?

**Appendix C**  
**California State University, Northridge**  
**Consent to Act as a Human Research Participant**

**Dispersing Diversity at the California Community College: From Frameworks to Fusion**

You are being asked to participate in a research study, *Dispersing Diversity at the California Community College: From Frameworks to Fusion*, a study conducted by Shane Underwood as part of the requirements for the Ed.D. degree in Education Leadership and Policy Studies. Participation in this study is completely voluntary. Please read the information below and ask questions about anything that you do not understand before deciding if you want to participate. A researcher listed below will be available to answer your questions.

**RESEARCH TEAM**

**Researcher:**

Shane Underwood  
Department of Educational Leadership and Policy Studies  
18111 Nordhoff St.  
Northridge, CA 91330- 8248  
831-345-8116  
srunderwood@pasadena.edu

**Faculty Advisor:**

Dr. Harry Hellenbrand  
Department of English  
18111 Nordhoff St.  
Northridge, CA 91330- 8248  
818-677-3431  
harry.hellenbrand@csun.edu

**PURPOSE OF STUDY**

The goal of this study is to determine the purpose of diversity; to trace the relationship between administrative actions/utterances and the emergence of diversity discourse; to understand how the students and faculty who work within the bounds of diversity discourse interpret diversity; and to understand how student and faculty experience diversity at California community colleges.

**SUBJECTS**

You may not directly benefit from this study. However, your contribution will contribute to the ongoing discussion of diversity discourse in higher education and allow college administrators and researchers further insight into how to attune diversity discourse to students.

**Inclusion Requirements**

You are eligible to participate in this study if you are at least 18 years of age, are a full time student, and have completed at least one semester of coursework at your college.

**Time Commitment**

This study will involve approximately one hour and thirty minutes of your time.

**PROCEDURES**

The following procedures will occur: You will be asked to answer a series of semi-structured interview questions during a one-hour face-to-face interview. After I have transcribed and coded your responses, you may be asked to answer a series of follow up questions via email or telephone, if necessary.

**RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**

There are no known harms or discomforts associated with this study beyond those encountered in normal daily life. However, social and psychological risks may include stress, anxiety, or emotional discomfort. If you experience any of these discomforts throughout the interview process, you will be referred to the campus health center for psychological services or outside counseling at your own cost.

**BENEFITS****Subject Benefits**

You may not directly benefit from participation in this study.

**Benefits to Others or Society**

This study will contribute to the ongoing discussion of diversity discourse in higher education and allow college administrators and researchers further insight into how to attune diversity discourse to students' being.

**ALTERNATIVES TO PARTICIPATION**

The only alternative to participation in this study is not to participate.

**COMPENSATION, COSTS AND REIMBURSEMENT****Compensation for Participation**

There is no compensation for your participation in this research study.

**WITHDRAWAL OR TERMINATION FROM THE STUDY AND CONSEQUENCES**

You are free to withdraw from this study at any time. If you decide to withdraw from this study you should notify the research team immediately. The research team may also end your participation in this study if you do not follow instructions, miss scheduled visits, or if your safety and welfare are at risk.

## **CONFIDENTIALITY**

### **Subject Identifiable Data**

All identifiable information that will be collected about you will be removed and replaced with a code. A list linking the code and your identifiable information will be kept separate from the research data.

### **Data Storage**

All research data will be stored on a laptop computer that is password protected. The audio recordings will also be stored on an iPhone until they are transferred to the same laptop computer that is password protected; the audio recording will then be transcribed and erased upon completion of the research project.

### **Data Access**

The researcher and faculty advisor, named on the first page of this form, will have access to your interview responses. Any information derived from this research project that personally identifies you will not be voluntarily released or disclosed without your separate consent, except as specifically required by law. Publications and/or presentations that result from this study will not include identifiable information about you.

### **Data Retention**

The researcher intends to keep the research data until the research is published and/or presented and then it will be destroyed.

## **IF YOU HAVE QUESTIONS**

If you have any comments, concerns, or questions regarding the conduct of this research please contact the research team listed on the first page of this form.

If you have concerns or complaints about the research study, research team, or questions about your rights as a research participant, please contact Research and Sponsored Projects, 18111 Nordhoff Street, California State University, Northridge, Northridge, CA 91330-8232, or phone 818-677-2901.

## **VOLUNTARY PARTICIPATION STATEMENT**

You should not sign this form unless you have read it and been given a copy of it to keep. **Participation in this study is voluntary.** You may refuse to answer any question or discontinue your involvement at any time without penalty or loss of benefits to which you might otherwise be entitled. Your decision will not affect your relationship with California State University, Northridge. Your signature below indicates that you have read the information in this consent form and have had a chance to ask any questions that you have about the study.

**I agree to participate in the study.**

I agree to be audio recorded

I do not wish to be audio recorded

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Participant Signature

---

Date

---

Printed Name of Participant

---

Researcher Signature

---

Date

---

Printed Name of Researcher