

Honors Capstone

Re-Thinking Multiculturalism and Diversity at AU

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I. Introduction

American University (AU) prides itself in being an inclusive and diverse University. The school defines diversity in a broad sense, ranging from race and ethnicity to age and intellectual viewpoint (Strategic Plan 2008: 4); it embraces all forms of identities and provides support networks across campus for the character differentiations people possess. Recognizing the constant shift in demographics, the school is trying to reflect the greater multicultural society that continues to grow in the US. Many proponents of the school are committed to dedicating its resources to advance a diverse community on and off campus. In doing so, it hopes its outreach will lead to the retention of a multicultural population and the empowerment of historically marginalized communities.

Prior to promoting concepts like diversity and multiculturalism, the terms need to be defined because they can easily be construed and manipulated through numerous inaccuracies “produced by too dogmatic a generality and too positivistic a localized focus” (Said 8). Constructing a simplified format for the differentiating aspects of culture may appear to be helpful in the sense that it works to find more commonalities shared in humanity. However, this may lead to the problem of overlooking historical experiences and issues of power. Communities cannot be easily compacted into simplified categories because they are diverse within themselves. The concepts of multiculturalism and diversity have a wide range of complexities; put in simple terms, “diversity is dynamic, not static” (Cortes 155). Multiculturalism like any other broadly signifying word is “multi-accentual and must be adamantly challenged when defined as part of the discourse of domination or essentialism” (Giroux 246). Since we live in an ever-changing world life in all its forms cannot be fully compartmentalized.

In this paper, I attempt to understand the type of multiculturalism the school is trying to promote; and throughout the investigation, each aspect is problematized under a critical framework. To begin, I start with the inclusive model the school expresses in its outreach. Inclusion is the first step in addressing the need; and the school does a decent job in its professed dedication to diversity by giving “particular attention to the inclusion of underrepresented domestic minority students” (Strategic Plan 2008: 4). Yet, there appears to be a lack of critical analysis on the issue. In other words, there is not much mention to the reality of minorities being historically marginalized and the reasons behind it. Apart from building a more critical framework, I am generally interested in how the school plans to expand its diverse population. By looking at various programs, it becomes apparent that the school is being very proactive. But does the school complement its promotion of multiculturalism and diversity with a critical analysis of the structures of power that cause such lack of representation?

II. Literature Review

Three prominent multicultural theorists with varying backgrounds and experiences serve as main references in this research project. These writers are: Henry Giroux, a professor at McMaster University in Ontario, Canada and serves as the Global Television Chair in English and Cultural Studies, Chandra Talpade Mohanty is a Professor and Chair of Women's and Gender Studies at Syracuse, and Carlos E. Cortés, Professor Emeritus of History at the University of California, Riverside. Their literary works on multiculturalism and diversity provide an insightful analysis on the topic. Each writer provides a different, yet similar perspective as they introduce various concepts into their theoretical developments. They generally suggest resisting and creating a rupture in the dominant social order and evoke readers to examine themselves as individuals and as part of a collective.

All the writers believe individuals should have an active involvement in society and that knowledge and discourse through their various forms can serve as means for a greater sense of a social understanding. They also provide backgrounds on their personal experiences that allowed them to create a critical theory on multiculturalism. Different sects of society are represented through the authors who have intimate understandings of race, class and gender. Aspects of identity and other general concepts are constantly challenged as the theorists demonstrate there is no definite meaning of multiculturalism. The individual experiences and the development of various theories are seen as ever changing, but with the openness to change, adaptive measures may be taken to accommodate a more complex social outlay.

Insurgent Multiculturalism

In a personal essay entitled, “The Kids Aren’t Alright: Youth, Pedagogy and Cultural Studies” Dr. Henry Giroux provides information on his background which prompted him in becoming a leading activist and scholar in multiculturalism. Coming from a working-class background, Giroux describes himself as coming from an outlaw culture of class which marked him as “poor, inferior, linguistically inadequate, and dangerous” (Giroux 1996: 8). Resulting from these general perceptions which castigated him and his family, he was forced to “negotiate the power, violence, and cruelty of the dominant culture through [his] own lived histories, restricted languages, and narrow cultural experiences” (Giroux 1996: 9). By cumulating all his trials and tribulations into a narrative form, Mr. Giroux was able to formulate a theory on social relationships in an attempt to reach a more harmonious state in which such acts of injustice and discrimination will absolve. The experiences of Giroux’s upbringing are commonly felt across many sects of society and his constructive theories provide an all-encompassing standpoint in building a more inclusive and conscious society.

In his book entitled, *Pedagogy and the Politics of Hope: Theory, Culture and Schooling*, Giroux introduces a critical form of multiculturalism which he terms as being an insurgent and democratic concept. He describes it as a practice that offers a “new language for students and others to move between disciplinary borders and to travel within zones of cultural difference” (Giroux 238). The goal of such a thought is to theorize about the world and its population “within, rather than outside, antagonistic relations of domination and subordination” (Giroux 247). His summations are deeply associated with the need to relocate academic studies within a greater social context. The formulation of a critically theoretic framework that returns to a relational stature with the practicum links to “the production and legitimation of classroom knowledge, social identities, and values to the institutional environments in which they are produced” (Giroux 248). The establishment of an active relationship that reconnects academia with the greater community that is constantly changing provides a stronger sense of purpose for academia in hope for a more equitable society. Insurgent multiculturalism eradicates the hierarchical relationship often found between society and academia as it establishes a more conceptualized relationship based on interdependency.

In the book, Giroux also suggests that multiculturalism should promote pedagogical practices which offer the possibility for schools to become places where students and teachers can become ‘border crossers’. The borders which Giroux believes should be crossed are those which separate individuals and communities from one another, such as race, ethnicity, gender and nationality, among many others. He believes this idea will help in an interpersonal engagement through a critical and ethical reflection about what it means to bring a wider variety of cultures into dialogue with each other. The restructured collective framework would also help in theorizing on cultures in the pluralistic sense. Dr. Giroux believes that certain forms of

multiculturalism become acceptable only if it is “reduced to a pedagogy of reverence and transmission” (Giroux 245). This type of discourse based on respect only serves as a stepping stone for a more critical stance that does not dislodge an active personal engagement obtained through the act of crossing the borders which divide.

The introduction of a more critical view of multiculturalism Dr. Giroux provides goes beyond mere simple inclusion and naïve discussions. A requirement for his advocacy is a discourse of power and privilege because they serve as parts of a “broader attempt to fashion a renewed interest in cultural democracy and the creation of engaged and critical citizens” (Giroux 245). Discussions on culture and power are helpful in creating a critical analysis when framed under “the subsumption or sublation of social antagonism...the repression of social divisions...and a representation of the social that naturalizes cultural difference and turns it into a second nature argument” (Giroux 249). Having a populace interested in discussing and creating and more actively engaged community is the first step in building a state of multiculturalism. But those involved must first recognize the structures of power within its institutions and attempt to deconstruct them by becoming more aware of and overcoming their personal limitations.

Decolonization and Building Solidarity

Professor Chandra Talpade Mohanty focuses most of her work primarily on reconfiguring issues of power through the culture of colonization, which is theoretically materialized through transnational feminism and anti-racist education. Growing up in India (post-independence) Mohanty became interested in decolonization and economic and social justice. As a teacher and activist, her active scholarship is currently based on “the politics of difference and solidarity... the relation of feminist knowledges and scholarship to organizing and social movements... and theorizing agency, identity and resistance in the context of feminist

solidarity”’. (<http://wgs.syr.edu/Mohanty.htm>) She serves as a great resource in furthering the understanding of the self and others in the context of systematic oppression and in finding means to overcome social injustices. For her, along with almost every social advocate, education, in all its forms is the basis of empowerment and social harmony.

As a prominent postcolonial and transnational feminist theorist, Mohanty firmly believes that when discussing issues of institutionalized oppression, society “need[s] to be inclusive in our thinking...understanding a color line that is global” (Mohanty 192). This mentality is manifested in her book, *Feminism Without Borders: Decolonizing Theory, Practicing Solidarity*. Being positioned as a colonized subject in the third world, Dr. Mohanty greatly understands that the majority of social groups have faced issues of oppression throughout periods of history. Her work in this book is an attempt to help others understand the pain of a global reality in which most people can relate to in certain extents. She provides a thorough inspection of society in regards to intercultural relations. The goal and purpose of the writing is to ‘re-humanize’ colonized bodies and bring an awareness of different states of oppression as a way of building an understanding that would lead to a more culturally competent form of diversity.

To develop an awareness of the fact that each of us belongs to many groups and can share a sense of commonality with others across political and social borders, Mohanty believes education serves as the primary means. Education of course comes in many different forms. People can learn about society through rigorous studies, and through interactions with others. However, the knowledge one attains must include the socio-political context of certain social standings. For the Syracuse Professor, one of the most fundamental challenges of ‘diversity’ is to understand the collective differences within a society in terms of historical agency and

responsibility; she believes that after reaching this point, people could better understand one another and then be able to build solidarities across divisive boundaries (Mohanty 191).

Another important aspect of Mohanty's book is dialogue. She believes an open discussion facilitated in a safe space is one of the greatest tools that can be used in learning about others and is one of the greatest advantages of having a diverse classroom. She believes that above all else, a well-constituted analytical platform is needed as it allows for a constructive dialogue between diverse perspectives. These academic spaces make possible for "thinking of knowledge as praxis, of knowledge as embodying the very seeds of transformation and change" (Mohanty 195). The book, throughout its chapters, also notes that like many other aspects of this discourse, there are many foreseeable difficulties, which can be prevented. The paradigms she points to include: counter-hegemonic discourse and oppositional analytic spaces. Settings which possess domineering voices often face questions of cooptation and accommodation (Mohanty 198). For instance, some individuals may feel pressured into taking a certain position by majorities within a group. By doing so, the discussion on multiculturalism may slightly alter the status quo rather than transform one's thinking in regards to a pluralist society.

The Multicultural Individual

Carlos Cortes is another critical multicultural theorist and advocate who provides deep insight into the concept of diversity. As an award winning author and teacher, Cortes has become a leading scholar in the field of culture and history. He is also a lecturer/consultant who works "widely throughout the world on the implications of diversity for education, government, and private business" (Bio Cortes). His role with the media has been one of advocacy for more cultural competence as he serves as the 'Creative/Cultural Advisor' for Nickelodeon's children's

television series, "Dora the Explorer," and its sequel, "Go, Diego, Go!,". The work he commits to with multiculturalism is built as an infused synthesis of his strengths in culture and history.

In his book, *The Making and Remaking of a Multiculturalist*, Cortes introduces a more personal perspective in popular modes of theorization on diversity. He first and foremost understands the heterogeneous content and clarifies the experiences in which serves as a basis for his argumentation is subjective. The theories and concepts of multiculturalism and diversity, similar to personal experiences, can be “buffeted by a series of temporally overlapping, conceptually linked, sometimes conflicting, and continuously transformative forces, resulting in numerous changes of thought, action and direction” (xvii). In other words, multiculturalism is not a static term.

The structure of his writing reflects this revisionist concept by documenting the evolution of multiculturalism on both a theoretical and personal level. The book is more of an autobiographical work than a research project focused on theories and concepts. Cortes provides an anthology of personal articles written over the years that are then placed in chronological order to illustrate the “transitions in [his] involvement with multicultural education and the development of...thinking about diversity” (xvii). By personalizing multiculturalism, Cortes is able to provide a self-reflection of the individual and greater society. The reasoning behind his chosen writing format is that by doing so, it would “contribute to a better understanding of the multicultural education movement as well as the changing societal context in which it has operated” (xviii).

Documenting some of his personal misbeliefs on multiculturalism allows readers to identify with his writing. However, after dispelling these false ideas, Cortes was able to

overcome his misunderstandings and adjust his thinking into a more adaptive form. This aspect supports his overall goal of helping other “interrogate their own purposes, practices, beliefs and behaviors” (xix). Dr. Cortes believes that in doing so, the individual could become more deeply attuned with society. In helping the readers become more aware of their own personal limitations, the writer promotes various concepts which help expel the boundaries placed on individuals’ understandings of themselves and others. One specific concept he introduces is the idea of ‘multigroupness’ which “affects values, attitudes, beliefs, goals and behavior” and help in readjusting perceptions on “world trends and events [as having] a differential impact on persons belonging to different groups” (Cortes 112). This idea, along with many others, is based on personal experiences of the writer. Each concept incorporated in the writing help eliminate certain misbelieves often incorporated in popular discussions on multiculturalism and reflect a more active involvement from the individual.

III. Theoretical Framework

The AU Strategic Plan

American University’s Statement of Common Purpose, found in the 2008 Strategic Plan, the school asserts its “commitment to social justice, and its ability to respond to the needs of a changing world while retaining its core values [as being] hallmarks of the institution” (Strategic Plan 2008: 2). It goes on to say the school “actively encourages a commitment to public service, inclusive participation in university governance, equity and equal access, and an appreciation of diverse cultures and viewpoints” (Strategic Plan 2008: 2). These commitments are praiseworthy, but the substance of such claims can only be found in the materialization of the pledges.

One of the ten Transformation Goals in the Strategic Plan is to ‘reflect and value diversity’. In this section, the Plan emphasizes on AU’s “inclusiveness and respect for the unique

identity of individuals”. It defines diversity as a term which is all-encompassing, acknowledging the variety of identities people may have from race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, disability and socioeconomic status among many other aspects (Strategic Plan 2008: 4). The school recognizes the importance and advantages of diversity in regards to social and academic dynamics.

Understanding that there is a lack of representation on campus, especially from domestic minorities, the school has been making great efforts to increase its diversity. The underlying problem and the commitments found in the Strategic Plan will serve as the initial framework in structure of this research. More complex and intricate matters will also be incorporated into the examination on the current state of multiculturalism and diversity at AU.

Describing schools

The University setting is the primary source for this analysis, and is understood as being more than just a place of scholarly activities. Academic institutions are not only learning centers, they also serve as “political and cultural sites that represent accommodations and contestations over knowledge by differently empowered social constituencies” (quoted in Mohanty 194). Within the political and cultural structure of the academic institution, teachers and students “produce, reinforce, recreate, resist, and transform ideas about race, gender and difference in the classroom” (Mohanty 194). Schools, in part, need to be understood as sites engaged in the “strategic activity of ‘authorizing’ agency” and the exercising of a social influence that works “to articulate and regulate incommensurable meanings and identities” (quoted in Giroux 239). Recognizing the role individuals play within an institution, the classroom participants obtain a sense of being that becomes thoroughly “engage[d] in daily acts of cultural translation and negotiation” (Giroux 239).

Looking at the University as a complex social institution is the initial step in examining multiculturalism in an academic setting. Once the structure is understood, its practices can then be studied on a deeper analytical level. The theoretical and practical substances it provides to the social world are materials that can be used for the structured analysis. Despite political alignments that may be more ‘orientated’ towards multiculturalism, questions must still be asked on who is actually involved in discussions pertaining to particular populations. The acknowledgment of “questions on self- and collective knowledge of marginal peoples and the recovery of alternative, oppositional histories of domination and struggle” (Mohanty 195) is crucial in constructing a strong sense of diversity. Questions along these lines will be asked throughout the inspection of the academic body.

Identity and Inclusion

The next argumentative framework incorporated into the research focuses on issues of identity and inclusion. The goal is to establish an authentic role and position of the individual and successfully merge it with the institutional structure through a process of ‘inclusion’. The construction of identity will be used as a way to look at structures of power; and the concept of inclusion will be problematized through a feminist and deconstructionist philosophy. These aspects generally are meant to provoke a greater need for a more critical understanding of identity and the role it has for the individual and society. In addition, the organizational infrastructure of society will be viewed through its domineering effects over the individual and the issue of inclusion will be restructured in a way to respect those subjected to the social order.

Accepting that there is no stronger bond than that of humanity; the objective of this project is to help individuals overlook their cultural specificities and realize we all share a common sense of being. The view that people are all essentially human beings living in the

world as a collective whole provides another framework into the project. This standpoint may sound very simplistic and fantastical; but in actuality, the commonality that is truly felt is based on “the set of potentialities which must always be realized in particular individuals in particular ways, in the context of their time and place and society” (Kessler 937). Since we are all human beings in the world with our own particular life journeys, people can be viewed in terms of being a collective whole with a common sense of being. These commonalities can extend themselves to further developments as people share similar experiences and backgrounds in the social world.

When looking at the concept identity in regards to the promotion of an active civil involvement, it helps to focus on the complex social origins of each self-affirming individual. As people are introduced to a more socialized conception of the world, altering identities become constructed for various social groups through mediums like ‘race’ and ethnicity. However, there is a danger of reaching a false consciousness in affirming self through a strong personal identity thought to be independent. In a deterministic sense, that which is perceived as autonomous is the result of a systematic construction. Situated in an oppressive structure, members of an oppressed group may “fall into despondency; other times...to a distinct and tenaciously held identity” (Spinner-Halev 96).

General perceptions and ideologies thought to help promote an understanding of the self are in part due to the “political and epistemological issues [which] influence the social construction” (Collins 746) of each concept. In other words, the social setting contributes greatly to the development and progress of thematic principles. Subordinate and marginalized groups are often forced, under this framework, to use “alternative ways to create an independent consciousness and to rearticulate it through specialists validated by the oppressed themselves” (Collins 751). Furthermore, understanding more of the power relations within an oppressive

social structure allows one to see how “the coercive forces within an abusive power system create the identities that are required by the system” (DesAutels 45). These reasons and more, show the great significance to having an active involvement of self-affirming individuals across the entire social spectrum.

Identities that remain unchallenged serve as springboards for manipulated conflicts within and between differing social groups. For example, prior to much feminist scholarship, many females accepted the designated gender roles as a way of ‘sustaining’ a healthy household. An identity constructed by the dominating male class that dictated what women ‘should do’ relegated females to a position of docile servitude. This imposed concept of the self delimited autonomy for women; moreover, the construct served as a means to pacify ‘the other’ and retain an asymmetrical balance of power. Today, gender equality is within our grasps (though there still remain many obstacles) due to the collective resistance against a hierarchical power structure.

Feminist theorists have contributed greatly to the struggle of reaching a more equitable society by challenging social institutions and reclaiming the self as more of an autonomous actor. This school of thought is one of a few ideologies that are dedicated to expunging oppression and liberating the self. It does so through a critical analysis and an active involvement advocating for and demanding change. Self-advocacy is an important component for the restructuring of an unjust society. In an article entitled, *Feminism, Oppression and the State*, by Jeff Spinner-Halev, it is noted that, as the newly attained freedom allows for self-determination, “oppressed people will rarely look upon their oppressor as their liberator” (Spinner-Halev 113).

Individual Experiences

Granting a platform for systemically marginalized individuals allows for an invigorating learning atmosphere for those who have not been exposed to social realities like racism and it

provides a sense of empowerment for the systematically silenced individuals. Making room for experiences in the academic realm posits a fundamental challenge to the academy since it is perceived that “histories and experiences are deviant, marginal, or inessential to the acquisition of knowledge” (Mohanty 200). Experience strengthens the discussion of a classroom; but unless it is explicitly understood as historical, contingent, and the result of interpretation, it can coagulate into frozen, binary psychologistic positions (Mohanty 203). This aspect of the analysis will aid the promotion of expanding the model of inclusion into a system that is more pluralistic.

Basing conversations on personal experiences does not provide a descriptive totality of the social world, but instead serves as an “unmediated... interpretation of the social world” (Applebaum 408). The interpretation of personal experiences needs a strong form of analysis comparatively to the occurrence itself. For instance, systematically privileged students lacking exposure to cultural diversity may not notice racism; which can be contrasted with marginalized students who experience such treatment far more often. Perceptions of ‘what is racist’ are developed based on inherent social positionings. Granting authority to the experiences felt on both ends of the spectrum helps “discursive practices fortify assumptions about who we understand ourselves to be” (Applebaum 408). For this reason, experience plays a vital role in understanding others as it inclusively allows marginalized people to become more vocal in an interpersonal and multicultural context.

Unity in a Communal Plurality

Our society follows a constant duality that values both individualism and communitarian beliefs; however this binary “cannot be disposed of by appeals to a ‘higher self’ in which individuality and community are reconciled” (Phelan 160). The most constructive appeal that

can be directed towards this divisive sentiment is accepting the “capacity to live with the tension between the two, [while respecting] the proper recognition of difference as well as commonality” (Phelan 160). Yet, over-emphasizing on differences while ignoring similarities (or vice versa) does injustice to our understanding (Cortes 36) as collective beings and may lead to cases of political extremism that overlooks alternative perspectives.

The Latin phrase *E Pluribus Unum* is often translated as ‘out of many, one’ and is used in the Great Seal of the United States to express the union of the original thirteen colonies (Great Seal). This phrase can be perceived in various manners. People from a more politically conservative background can interpret this phrase as one which calls for a preservation of the ‘native’ US American culture, thus forcing ethnic groups to assimilate by adopting Anglo-American ideals. This interpretation focuses primarily on the *Unum* portion of the slogan and argues that the “maintenance of societal unity reigns as the more essential value... [and tends to] focus attention on upholding the societal core, not on preserving freedom for diversity” (Cortes 145). The counter perspective gives “primacy to the defense of individual freedom and societal diversity...seeking a capacious society that permits the maximum amount of socially benign diversity” (Cortes 145). The phrase *E Pluribus Unum* and the history behind its usage, embody the fact that social unity leads to a strong collective force. However, due to misguided interpretations, conflict has arisen stemming from the differing political perspectives that become stubborn in their ideals.

The campus culture is representative of a greater social outlay. As much theory a student may learn in the classroom s/he learns just as much ‘out in the real world’. Students often bring with them presuppositions of ethnic minority groups that have been developed in their households and local neighborhoods. The media also places an influential in the constructing

individuals' perceptions of the self as it "communicates categories of identity and serve to incorporate or mediate people's relationships within any given group or society" (Davila 6). As a student begins to find him/herself, they do so within a communal framework. Some students get involved with Greek Life, while others associate themselves with ethnic specific cultural groups on campus. By participating in these little communities, individuals construct a possible "launching pad to fuller participation in campus life" (Cortes 151).

However, certain issues arise when describing a larger campus community which tries to be all encompassing. Cortes states that the word community has become "one of the most overused and abused terms in the English language" (Cortes 151) as it manifests itself as a superficial construct that "values and enforces homogeneity often operating to exclude or oppress those seen as different" (Giroux and McLaren 47). Exclusion or oppression may be too strong of a term (or reality) for some people, but the actualization of silencing certain groups is difficult to dismiss. In order to go beyond the apparent impediment, "a serious engagement with the process of building bridges among groups" (Cortes 154) is required when a sense of community is formulated.

IV. Data and Methodology

The enrollment count on 'underrepresented domestic minorities' have been generally low at American University in comparison to national numbers. The data used was accumulated from the US Department of Education and the University's Academic Data Reference Book, which is published annually by the Office of Institutional Research & Assessment. The ethnic groups which are categorized as minority are Asian-American, African-American, Native-American and Latinos. The promotion of building a more diverse and multicultural campus population is based on the deficiency according to the given statistics. For example, in the fall of

2007, the percent of minority students was half the national average (See the Appendix for Tables and Graphs).

As the institutional research was conducted, various factors were put into consideration of the methodology. The goal of the project is to look at the entire process a minority student may experience throughout their academic careers. The ordering of the departments in the structure of the paper was purposely built to reflect the various aspects of promoting diversity.

First, the admissions process is described. Marquita Lightfoot was the contact person for the Admissions office and was selected because of her position related to the office's Multicultural Programs. The financial aspect of the recruitment affairs was incorporated into the section. The Director of the Fredrick Douglass Scholarship program was interviewed. His position and expansion of the program showed a materialization of the Strategic Plan. The Financial Aid Office was not incorporated into the project due to limited contact with personnel and because the focus of the paper was on institutional efforts. Even though Pell grants have helped create a more diverse pool of applicants, it is due in part of the federal government.

The following section looks at Student Services and Academics. The motive behind researching Student Services was based on the campus culture which contributes to the comfort and retention of 'multicultural students'. The particular support services incorporated into the paper were Multicultural Affairs, International Student and Scholar Services and Kay Spiritual Life Center. Their webpages and representatives provided solid background information on their services. The Academic portion of the paper is restricted to the College of Arts and Sciences. This is due greatly in part because it houses the two specific programs which deal directly with the promotions and teachings of multiculturalism that focuses on domestic populations: the Multiethnic Minor and the School of Education Teaching and Health. Representatives from

these departments were identified through their involvement with the promotion of programs within their respective fields dealing with multiculturalism.

V. Findings

Admissions

The admissions process sets the tone for the campus and is the first step in building a more diverse student body. In an interview with the Associate Director of Undergraduate Admissions and Multicultural Liaison, Ms. Marquita Lightfoot said the current state of multiculturalism is at a “good place with the support from key people in powerful positions” (Lightfoot). This statement is in direct reference to the senior university administrators and the collaborative effort to follow the commitments expressed under the strategic plan. The Admissions Office is equipped with the tools to effectively attract, screen and select qualified individuals to attend the University. Such resources include personnel, technology and marketing schemes (among many others), all of which reflect the multifaceted task of admitting students. Additional resources and programs have been granted to staff members working in support of students who face adverse situations and would be traditionally overlooked in the higher education system.

The practices of the Admissions Office are generally constructed in four cycles: planning, recruitment, reading/decision, and conversion. The school begins the admissions process through the planning cycle. This phase is held during the summer as staff members evaluate the effectiveness of their past efforts and determine how they will conduct their business for the next school year. In the next cycle, the admissions department goes through its recruitment phase by going to college fairs and visiting high schools. This process usually takes place in the fall, starting from around September and continuing until mid-November. Through the use of the

Enrollment Planning Service software, AU's admissions office is able to obtain information on certain geographic areas. With this technology, schools are broken down by their ethnic populations. If the demographics of the school are noted in having a high representation of minority students, it will be targeted in the 'diversity' recruitment efforts. As a way of further dedicating time and resources to 'multiculturalism', admissions representatives also attend college fairs directed towards certain minority groups.

The next cycle of the admissions process, known as the reading cycle, consists of personnel looking over applications. Students with a diverse background may strengthen an application, but does not guarantee admission to the university. Schools today, like AU, are looking for more well-rounded students who not only have a stellar academic record, but also have a history of involvement with their community. The holistic approach which the Admissions Office takes ensures that the students accepted will follow the AU ideals of civil service and social justice as well as be able to excel in their academics. A difficulty which administrators like Ms. Lightfoot face is based on determining success. School officials do not want to "bring someone who would not be successful and then have to drop out" (Lightfoot) all while incurring enormous amounts of debt. Although the school has put forth a special effort in recruiting underrepresented domestic minorities, strict standards and expectations of students are maintained as a way of retaining a strong reputation as a top-tier university.

Once the student's application has been fully evaluated, the school will make a decision on the prospective student based on a variety of determining factors. Once the decision has been made, the school will then try to convince the accepted student in attending the school by acquainting him/her with their offerings through mechanisms like preview days and overnight stays. The admissions office also makes an effort through call and e-mail campaigns which

connect prospective with current students. These activities fall under a stage in the process called conversion cycle. Similar to the recruitment efforts, multicultural students are given much attention under this cycle. Additional programs like the Summer Transition Enrichment Program (STEP) and the Fredrick Douglass Scholarship enhance the outreach effort and create incentives for students to enroll at AU.

STEP is a seven week program that follows the talent development model. It is designed to help students with “the transition from high school to college, empower [them] through knowledge and self-discovery, and develop academic skills needed to succeed” (STEP Homepage). During the program, incoming students interact with their future peers and take courses that will prepare them for the intensity of traditional college courses (i.e. math and pre-college writing). STEP has recently expanded from thirty to forty students and is no longer restricted to DC residents as students from across the nation are considered. Those selected for the program have a strong GPA, but possess standardized test scores which do not meet the institutional averages. Without such consideration, these students would be overlooked due to the ‘lopsidedness’ of their application.

There are many reasons behind these unbalanced applications, and the school takes into consideration possible social dynamics that lead to such irregular patterns. According to Ms. Lightfoot, there is a “strong correlation between socioeconomic status and test scores” as many ‘multicultural’ and first-generation students “are not exposed to education in a way that makes them competitive” (Lightfoot). The program proves to be very successful in recruiting and retaining students who would traditionally be disregarded due to their test scores without any consideration to their adverse situations. The aid provided for the transitional stage of the young

person's life helps develop the individual's skills and discover his/her talents over the course of their academic career.

The Fredrick Douglass Distinguished Scholar (FDDS) program is another initiative directed towards recruiting students of a 'diverse' background and is a direct application of the Strategic Plan housed under the Vice Provost for Undergraduate Studies' Office. Like STEP, the current FDDS program is an expansion of a previous scholarship fund which was once dedicated strictly for DC students. At around the 2005-06 academic school year, the program became open to the entire nation. It also now has someone formally leading the program, which is divided into two tracks: Fredrick Douglass Scholars and the Distinguished Scholars. Established in 1968, the scholarship program was designed to provide partial and complete funding for students who were able to "demonstrate a lifelong commitment to working for the advancement of under-resourced and underserved communities around the globe" (Fredrick Douglass Scholarship Program). Mr. Larry Thomas, the new director of the program stated that the Distinguished Scholars program is trying to be "more focused on humanitarianism [as it is] dedicated to aiding those interested in careers of social justice". The goal of the overall program, which includes both tracks, is to provide preparation for graduation and professional development, as well as to promote a sense of active citizenship dedicated to community service and civic engagement.

In its expansion, the program has been faced with many challenges. One issue, which most departments and programs face, is funding. Most money for the scholarship comes from tuition, but another portion comes from an institutional endowment. Through the FDDS program, the administration's commitment noted in the Strategic Plan has materialized by allocating more funds for the scholarships. However, the latter source is relatively low compared

to other peer institutions. Larry Thomas notes that trends show that “alumni do not give back to the school”. As a result, the program can only expand to a certain extent.

Another issue is the concern about which type of diversity the school is promoting. The standards used on judging the competitiveness of scholarship applicants is based on national numbers and trends which domestic minorities are not fully represented. In order to address such issue, Mr. Thomas initially planned on lowering the requirement for applicants to an SAT score of at least 1300. It was then decided then the SAT requirement will not be included in the promotion of the program, as a way to lessen any possible forms of intimidation. In this decision, it was also considered that the requirement for stellar SAT scores does not take into account the issues minorities face with standardized testing (i.e. cultural biases and lack of resources for test preparation among others). Additionally, Mr. Thomas feels that it needs to be clarified the Fredrick Douglass Scholarship will only help, not solve, the issue of minority representation on campus. Increasing the diversity of a college campus is a great challenge with many complexities and it will take a collective effort in reaching the school’s (abstract) goal.

Student Services

After the admissions process, students enroll in classes and become more acquainted with the campus community. Social factors play vital roles in the overall college experience. For those who are of a ‘diverse’ background and are not of the dominant social culture, support networks are of great importance to students. Most of the character differentiations people may behold are provided with recognized support systems across campus. Such resources include: the Kay Spiritual Life Center which supports various religious practices; the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transsexual and Ally resource center supports identity in regards to sexual orientation;

for students with disabilities, Disability Support Services ensures their needs are met; the Office of Multicultural Affairs addresses issues of race and ethnicity; and the International Student and Scholar Services helps with the matter of nationality that many foreign students face. All these resources help make the school a more welcoming place for students from all walks of life through their programming and services. Yet certain aspects of such networks that are aligned with the promotion of multiculturalism and diversity need to be critically analyzed.

Kay Spiritual Center

Religion plays an important role in creating a welcoming atmosphere for students from a diverse background, especially since one's spiritual belief system is an integral aspect of one's ethnic identity. In an article entitled 'The Religious Content of Ethnic Identities', Claire Mitchell of Queen's University in Belfast states that "religion often constitutes the fabric of ethnic identity...[and] is not just a *marker* of identity, but rather its symbols, rituals and organizations are used to boost ethnic identity" (Mitchell 1137-1140). In its attempt to accommodate students with all their spiritual needs, the Kay Spiritual Life Center provides a space for individuals to express and share their respective religious views. This resource serves the AU community on both the individual and social level. Apart from providing the resources needed for a 'holy exercise', Kay Spiritual Center also serves as a place for learning and social interaction.

The exposure to a diverse body of religious practitioners of different denominations may help individuals to "recognize the reasonableness of other beliefs and ways of life and to critically examine their own beliefs and practices in service of developing their autonomy" (Curren 286). Although the school was founded by Methodist and maintains a strong affiliation with the religious organization, Kay remains to be an open space for people of all religious

denominations. The Kay Spiritual Center houses twenty-five faith communities which include Christian, Muslim, Jewish, Buddhist, Baha'i, Hindu, and United Universalists groups. The ethic of hospitality which is housed in the Methodist church is based on the understanding that "there is power in living in a diverse environment where people of all creeds and beliefs are invited to share in the experience of a shared affirmation of our common humanity" (Chaplain's Welcome). The Kay Center reaches out to the global community as it serves "to remind us all of the essential foundation of our human connectedness and therein lies its special quality" (Chaplain's Welcome). Furthermore, the religious institution not only allows students and community members to be exposed to other cultures and religions, it also solidifies (or forces to question) one's own beliefs. Chaplain Joe Eldridge understands that multiculturalism, in its religious context, is advantageous for all individuals and communities since "there is a great need to interact with others as a way to understanding one's true human and spiritual identity" (Eldridge).

Office of Multicultural Affairs

The Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA) is a department within Campus Life which "acknowledges and addresses the multi-layered topics of identity... [and] enhances students' academic and personal growth by encouraging self-awareness, scholarly research, and a lifelong commitment to learning and service" (Multicultural Affairs). OMA is fully committed to increasing the graduation and retention rates of multicultural and first-generation students and does so in a variety of ways. They work to create a welcoming space for 'multicultural' students, promote achievement in academic excellence and help build leadership within students. Personnel provide counseling, serve as advocates for students and help create programs and events celebrating cultures.

OMA, in conjunction with Student Activities, helps cultural groups create programs for recognized heritage and awareness months. The months which are celebrated include American Indian Heritage Month (November), Asian Pacific American Month (April), Black History Month (February), and Latino Heritage Month (September 15-October 15). The programming includes social events, panel discussions and a variety of other happenings. The goal is to “educate the campus community about the histories and cultures of these communities as well as raise awareness about current issues affecting them” (Heritage and Awareness Months). Despite the good intentions of providing an open space for cultural groups, there is a great danger in the concept of ‘celebrating diversity’ which such events frequently promote.

International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS)

The general commitments of American University to ‘embrace diversity’ is followed by another student support center: The International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS). Expressed in their mission statement, ISSS works to continue the schools work in “building a global community”. They do so by aiding international students in a variety of ways ranging from organizing group outings to ensuring “compliance with federal regulations governing international educational exchange”.

One of the programs which help the social adjustments of international students is a weekly intercultural discussion group known as TALK. The department advertises this program on its website and cites students as saying "because of TALK, I am more alert when talking to people from other cultures. I also learned more about myself and I better understand my beliefs." The goal of the eight-week program is also to help students build awareness and understanding of other cultures. Held in an informal setting, participants discuss topics ranging from identity,

relationships and foods. Other programs which promote interactions of the multicultural group include leadership trainings, social events and excursions.

Academics

The commitment of embracing diversity and multiculturalism is reflective in some of the coursework offered at American University. The School of Education, Teaching and Health has been putting a great effort in extending the school's outreach to underrepresented communities by creating programs and building partnerships in the local DC area. The University has also helped support students of a 'diverse' background through the creation of the Multiethnic minor. Yet, such initiatives face certain setbacks and the promotion of intercultural management has further problematized the issue. Overall, the commitment has materialized in some fashions but "progress" needs to be further analyzed.

The School of Education, Teaching and Health (SETH, CAS)

The School of Education, Teaching and Health (SETH) has made the commitment on a variety of levels to address the issue of building a more diverse student body. The department has taken great steps in training future and practicing professionals in the field of education. Their pedagogical practices help build more conscious students aspiring to be teachers of the technologically-attuned, multicultural generation. SETH is also creating a stronger relationship with DC Public Schools and forming a bridge between the two institutions. This department is placed in a unique position within the institution because it promotes and works towards diversity both within and outside the University. Its active involvement in merging the greater community with the school grants this section a more in-depth (and lengthier) description of the programs it coordinates.

As a department in the academic institution, the school is based on first creating a theoretical basis for its practices which are then deployed by professionals in their respective field. Like the rest of society, the school recognizes that we are living in an ever-evolving world and is working to address the various needs and challenges brought forth. Reflection on such realities is placed at the core of SETH's philosophy since the act of reflecting is understood to be "integral to the goal of equitable education that attends to diversity... [and] helps the individual untangle the web of deeply entrenched personal beliefs about functioning in a democratic society" (School of Education Teaching and Health). The adaptive practices found in their teachings include the emphasis on the usage of technology and community-based learning in the classroom. Such mediums have proven to be quite imperative with a generation and culture that is more attuned with the different forms of learning. The school also works to build well-rounded students who will become professionals with a more comprehensive understanding of the different realms of academia. This emphasis can be found in the required coursework and the pedagogical practices of the faculty. Additionally, the shift in the national demographics requires professions to have more cultural awareness and competence.

The school is currently working with local charter schools which house Upward Bound programs. Upward Bound is one of eight federally-funded college opportunity programs—often referred as TRIO— that provide support for students from disadvantaged backgrounds (i.e. of a family with a household income less than \$33,075) pursuing a college education. The school has also created a position to handle an 'urban collaborative' program which is designed to support local DC students. The urban collaborative is a direct outreach towards youth as a way to understand the interests and concerns of prospective students.

Allocated in the department's operational budget is funding to bring middle and high school students living in the area to AU's campus. The goal is to familiarize students with the college setting and to motivate the youth in believing that a university education is attainable. The logistics of the operation vary for each visit. For some visiting schools, SETH provides an insight to the college experience, beyond academics. For instance, they provide tours of the campus and organize talks with current AU students involved in various aspects of student life, such as student government, culture groups, and Greek associations. Other visits are more comprehensive by providing summer coursework for some students.

All of these programs are often designed through partnerships with outside organizations. One organization that SETH partners with is College and Career Connections, a non-profit organization which "engages 6th-9th grade students in motivational, experiential college and career exploration programs" (<http://collegeandcareerconnections.org/about/index.shtml>). Another organization that brings students to the University is the United Planning Organization (UPO), which is a community action agency focusing on multiple service programs in the DC area. UPO's mission statement includes a commitment not only to support and advocate for low-income residents of DC, but to also "assist them in achieving self-sufficiency and self-determination, and to enhance generally the quality of life" (UPO Corporate). Such enhancement can be reached through education. In the past, UPO and SETH (along with other entities of the university) developed a summer school program with a social justice focused curriculum for some of middle schools in Southeast DC.

SETH has also developed certificate programs for new and current unlicensed DC teachers, including those who are furloughed or work as substitutes. Such initiatives designed for DC Public School and Charter School Teachers include the Alliance for Quality Urban

Education (AQUE) and the Capital Excellence grant and certificate programs. The certification programs were “created especially for DC teachers who are either beginning their teaching careers or looking to expand their current teaching expertise and skills” (Alternative Routes to Certification). A stated goal of one of these programs is to “recruit, prepare and retain highly qualified teachers in high needs areas of DC...[and to grant the] opportunity to gain initial licensure while being supported by supervising clinical faculty and a peer-to-peer mentoring model” (Capital Excellence). Training for the National Board for Professional Teaching Standards Certificate is offered by the school in addition to the certificates for licensure approved by the DC Office of the State Superintendent of Education. The fields of education in which these credentials are applicable towards include Early Childhood, Elementary, Secondary, ESOL and Special Education. Funding for some of these initiatives come from the US Department of Education, via the Teacher Quality Enhancement Partnership Grant, which provides \$6.8 million over a span of five years. Another resource for local teachers is an institutional grant that is offered to pay half of the total tuition costs for teachers interested in enrolling in non-degree coursework.

Multiethnic Studies, CAS

The multiethnic studies program is dedicated to examining the issue of ethnicity in the United States and across the globe. The program, which offers an interdisciplinary minor, helps students conceptualize the individual histories and experiences of different populations living amongst one another as a collective entity. The vigorous coursework helps synthesize information from various academic fields and has become an evolution of the scholarship found in the humanities. The courses offered cover a wide array of scholarly fields, including history, sociology, literature and government. This interdisciplinary approach allows for a broader sense

of understanding to the concept of ethnicity and offers the various tools found in the social sciences to examine the various aspects of human society. With an open-ended structure, students can create their own program that combines whichever culture study they would like. Overall, the coursework provides students with a grounded sense of living in a multicultural society and enhances the capability to understand others by respecting their histories and perspectives.

Implemented in the fall of 2004, the Multi-Ethnic Studies minor was created by Professor Sha of the Literature Department and Professor Jennings of Performing Arts. Prior to its formation, it was noted by the President and Provost's Committee on Diversity that there was a lamented absence of ethnic studies. Being that universities across the nation have developed such programs, the committee felt a need to implement the new initiative, but with a different approach. According to Professor Sha, the committee wanted to "convert the school's weakness into a possible strength". So instead of creating programs that are culture-specific, found at many other schools, the administrators decided to design a field of study that was all-encompassing and "what ethnic studies leads up to" (Sha). Putting forth the proposition of creating such a program, Professors Sha and Jennings received a curriculum development grant in 2002 in order to create systematic linkages between new and existing coursework. As a result, the all-inclusive comprehensive study connects different ethnicities and help individuals from diverse backgrounds understand themselves and their role in society.

I. Analysis and Conclusions

Admissions

The admissions process seems to be doing a thorough job in its outreach and selection efforts. The STEP program is a commendable aspect of the institution's openness to understanding the "patterns of association between socioeconomic disadvantage and adolescent adjustment" (Felner et al 787) in the academic realm. It had been highly documented that parents who are stuck in disadvantaged socioeconomic situations "often find it considerably more difficult to establish and maintain family-school connections that are important for facilitating academic success" (Felner et al 788). The schools willingness to work with students and families from a low socioeconomic background shows a continued commitment to diversity.

However, those who are entered into programs like STEP are of a selective few, who still fit the average student profile (except for the low test scores). In an essay entitled *Educational Equity and the Problem of Assessment*, Alexander Astin provides a different perspective on the recruitment and evaluation of students applying to schools. Astin believes that the reputational views of the school should be replaced by a 'talent development' model in which the "institution's excellence is judged in terms of how effectively it is able to educate the student... [and develop] talent's to the fullest extent" (Justiz et al 46). American University generally works to maintain its status as a highly competitive school; but it also follows the talent development model, to a certain extent.

The latest adjustments to the Fredrick Douglass Scholarship program shows the willingness of the school to look beyond the numbers game (GPA and SAT scores). The decision to not include SAT scores as part of the application process for the scholarship allows for students to show their diverse range of talents. The issues minorities face in regards to standardized testing is found evident in a study conducted by Dr. Janett E. Helms entitled *Why Is There No Study of Cultural Equivalence in Standardized Cognitive Ability Testing?*. In the article,

Dr. Helms examines the two perspectives (the implicit biological and the environmental viewpoints) traditionally used to “explain racial and ethnic group differences in cognitive ability tests (CAT) performance” (Helms 1083).

Cited for using “some version of the concept of culture to explain variations in average performance between groups”, further examination showed that the popular modes of analysis are placed in “manner of defining culture that ostensibly differs...[in their] use of different strategies for investigating the effects of culture on test performance” (Helms 1083). Noting the flaws and inadequacies in constructing valid interpretations from these perspectives, Helms recommended an alternative method of analyzing the standardized test problem. Instead of directing one’s energies to the populations with low test scores as a basis of investigation, Dr. Helms suggested that the test itself be re-examined. She felt it necessary for any system of measurement in competence in standardized testing to have “culture-specific models, principles, [and] definitions that can be used for examining issues of how culture per se influences the content of CATs as well as the performance of respondents on these tests” (Helms 1083). The alternative she provided is labeled the ‘culturalist perspective’ and takes into consideration the socio-cultural context of all aspects in the testing process. By making standardized testing scores secondary in some of the decision process, the school shows more of an understanding to the difficulties behind the institutional limitations minorities often face. Once the student has been accepted and decides to enroll in the University, the campus culture is becomes the next topic for multiculturalism.

Celebrating Diversity (Student Services)

Diversity is often posed in a manner which is harmonious; and depending on its foundation, this conception is far more harmful than it is constructive. With an unruffled definition of diversity, historical differences between groups are framed under “asymmetrical and incommensurate cultural spheres situated within hierarchies of domination and resistance” (Mohanty 193). Unequal relationships may be addressed with good intentions, but the challenge of race resides in a “fundamental re-conceptualization of our categories of analysis” (quoted in Mohanty 192). This conceived theoretical framework deals deeply with differences in a manner that provides a more historically specified perspective dedicated to understanding the issue as part of larger political processes within our social institutions. Exploitation and oppression placed in an accurate historical context that has evolved over generations is a solid grounding for an analysis based on “demanding action from all, which requires working hard to understand and to theorize questions of knowledge, power and experience” (Mohanty 216).

The Heritage Months organized by cultural groups leave open the possibility of the people avoiding issues of race and ethnicity in a direct and critical manner. The avoidance is manifested in a superficiality that is represented by the over-emphasis on ‘foods, fashions, festivals, and famous people’ approach cultural groups often take in facilitating discussion. It is also one of the tendencies to ignore substance while relying on platitudes (i.e. ‘celebrating diversity’) (Cortes 35). These forms of evasion are evident in a passive population that does not want to address some of life’s cruel realities. They provide an attitudinal engagement with diversity that “encourages an empty cultural pluralism and domesticates the historical agency” (Mohanty 200). Uncritical discussions poorly facilitated do a disservice to communities faced with adversity. Dr. Mohanty, as a deconstructionist, understands that when diversity is defined in terms of an apolitical, cultural pluralism it needs to be deeply challenged (Mohanty 208).

With a high international population on campus, it is important to create a sense of comfort for the foreign students. However, an overemphasis on international service may overlook the domestic situation. As stated before, there are forms of multiculturalism and diversity that can be falsely conceptualized or misleading; Carlos Cortés refers to the trend of international diversity over domestic multiculturalism as a case of ‘foreign escapism’. He states that multicultural education takes the form of foreign escapism by “substituting the temporally and physically near at hand with the long ago and far away” (Cortes 23). This concept serves as a mechanism used to avoid some of the harsh realities posed by multiculturalism in a historically racial society. In order to have a constructive form of multiculturalism that falls in line with social justice, a more critical analysis is strongly needed.

Academic Multiculturalism

A strongpoint of the Multiethnic minor is its multiplicity in culture studies. With a revitalized sense of the self, historically marginalized and privileged groups are able look at the callous past in light of working towards a brighter future. For knowledge, the very act of knowing is related to the power of self-definition (Mohanty 195). However, if a group remains singular and focuses on issues which only concern its specific community, it negates the collectivity promoted in multiculturalism. This is often found in identity politics and it can be argued that such conceptions fail “to move beyond a notion of difference structured in polarizing binaries and an uncritical appeal to a discourse of authenticity” (Giroux and McLaren 31). As self-identified social interest groups campaign around a cause pertaining to their particular constituency, the act of “mobilizing around a common group identity does not preclude forming strategic and philosophical alliances with other groups” (Lipsitz 68). Multiethnic studies emphasize the collectivity of society and connect the linkages between communities.

Despite the challenges the program faces (i.e. lack of institutional support), the field of study provides the much needed platform for discussion. Conversations and scholarly work on diversity can help expel stereotypes that might be put into question by those students lacking exposure to different cultures and communities. Since peoples are products of their home environment, students bring with them prejudices which they are unaware of due to their social upbringing. But with an open-minded, students are willing to learn about their differences and expel such intolerant mentalities. Nevertheless, friction will persist within and between populations as the socially and emotionally challenging subject matter expands the learning objectives of the college.

When a critical discussion on race and ethnicity commences under topics of diversity and multiculturalism, there are certain guidelines participants need to follow in order to avoid the misconceptions of implicit prejudices. Once a safe space has been affirmed and people are able to converse openly and freely about issues like race, it needs to be made clear “cultural discourse and exchange within a culture that what is commonly circulated by it, is not ‘truth’ but representations” (Said 21). There are no absolute truths that can be applied to an entire population; this presupposition leads to stereotypes and tokenization. As much diversity people may view between communities, there are just as much complex features within a community. Yet, representatives of a minority group often have the “tendency to speak for” (Mohanty 202) the group in which s/he identifies with as they are forced into this position through acts of tokenization. As racialized subjects, individuals are viewed as experts in all aspects of his/her respective culture.

In *The Making and Remaking of a Multiculturalist*, Carlos Cortes introduces the “just like” concept as a “reliance on simplistic depictions of the experience of one ethnic group...that

blurs the special qualities and demeans the uniqueness of each group” (Cortes 97). Cortes also provides his readers with the simple ethnic passivity (exploited/discriminated against) model, which places minority groups on a pedestal evoking feelings of guilt by members of the dominant popular culture. This model puts labels on ethnic minorities as strictly being victims of an unjust social structure; although discrimination and exploitation are “essential aspects of the ethnic experience...these themes should not be permitted to monopolize the study of ethnic groups” (Cortes 99). A critical sense of multiculturalism must modify the concentration from being exclusively focused on subordinate groups, because such an approach “tends to highlight their deficits, to one that examines how racism in its various forms is produced historically, semiotically, and institutionally at various levels of society (Giroux 237). Racism, as a social construct, is highly interrelated to issues of power.

Classes within the Ethnic Study Minor and related fields of study are intended to provide the ‘friendly’ space and facilitate discussion in a constructive manner; therefore, eliminating the misconceptions of people. Examination of the hierarchical control manifested in racism overrides the specificities found in cultural prejudices and discrimination. When studying cultures many scholars find it very important to formulate the investigation in a manner that connects knowledge and politics within “the specific context of the [particular] study, the subject matter, and its historical circumstances” (Said 15). Discourse is one of the most useful tools in gaining an insightful understanding of our worldly neighbors. However, an “uneven exchange with various kinds of power, shaped to a degree by the exchange with political, intellectual, and moral power” (Said 12) may lead to a counterproductive discussion. As a way to avoid the glossing over of issues, students are taught to recognize their privileges and to be conscious of their actions. Much of the material found on the discourse of power is evident can be found in

simple classroom dynamics as students can monopolize conversations and thus silence others. Further investigation on issues of power can also extend to the university and the structure of the curriculum itself.

This field of study may be very helpful for students who will be entering a multicultural workforce. The new and exciting field helps build the needed skills and knowledge to be successful (in the broadest terms) in a diverse social setting. An appreciation for other cultures may be attained through the acquired knowledge promoted within this field of study. It also serves the great need of providing a greater sense of understating of others. Being that the world is becoming more interdependent through various forms of globalization, the interactions of various communities create a diverse sphere of knowledge and relations that is found evident within the workforce and educational system. There is a great need to understand the ever-evolving social dynamics and this new and exciting field provides cultural skills to navigate in the world.

Power and Politics of Knowledge

Concepts involved in multiculturalism and diversity cannot effectively be understood in their entirety “without their force, or more precisely their configurations of power also being studied” (Said 5). It is quite obvious, due to the disproportionate numbers of minorities represented in higher education (among many other social factors), we live in a highly stratified society that grants certain people with “burdens and privileges of our histories and locations” (Mohanty 191). It is important not to run away from the social realities that have (and continue) to plague greater society and its institutions.

Looking at the current scholastic model as one based on providing a knowledge that is accumulated as capital, a new reformulation is required to focus “instead on the link between the historical configuration of social forms and the way they work subjectively” (Mohanty 195). Academic fields of study share aspects of the current educational structure that serve as “mere accumulation of disciplinary knowledge that can be exchanged on the world market for upward mobility” (Mohanty 195). This framework is equivocated with a corporate structure dedicated to efficiency and monetary gains. It may be difficult to find students who fully embrace an education without keeping their future gains in the back of their minds (i.e. networking and job placement).

The corporate mentality that is found in the academic institution has extended itself to the application multiculturalism and diversity. Like many other institutions, the academy has been corporatized as an industry that is “responsible for the management, commodification, and domestication of race...determining the politics of voice” (Mohanty 196). Diversity is not authentically embraced when it is framed in the sense of conflict management. Leaders of institutions provide training for its corporeal body in preventing (and essentially pacifying) issues like racism. This form of leadership is used “to understand the moments of friction and to resolve the conflicts ‘peacefully’; in other words, domesticate race and difference by formulating the problems in narrow, interpersonal terms and by rewriting historical contexts” (Mohanty 210). Such attempts do not constructively address the systems of power that are associated with issues like racism.

Multiculturalism can be sold, as described earlier through its superficiality, to prospective consumers. The corporate model of ‘dealing with’ multiculturalism within an institution develops more of a “professionalization of prejudice reduction, where culture is a supreme

commodity” (Mohanty 211). The politics behind commodifying such a concept creates an arbitrary selection of a diverse perspective that weakens some of the most dissenting voices. The programs and policies create a culture aimed at accommodating the ‘collective needs’ of the corporate body rather than providing a comprehensive transformation of an unruly organization. If pedagogical practices are to focus on more than the mere management, systematization and consumption of disciplinary knowledge, then the theorization and politicization of experience is imperative (Mohanty 201).

The school has been pro-active in promoting a more inclusive and diverse community through its numerous programs. The Admissions Office has been making a concerted effort in reaching out to ‘diverse’ communities. Once those students attend the University, various support networks help accommodate those from different backgrounds. Academia has also been aware of the shift in demographics and has developed coursework, like the Ethnic Studies Minor to incorporate a culture of inclusion into the curriculum. The School of Education, Teaching and Health has also been making commendable attempts of incorporating the disenfranchised members of the local community into the university context. In a sense, the school’s commitment of embracing a diverse community expressed in the Strategic Plan has materialized.

However, discourse and actions to deconstruct institutionalized power is lacking; as a result, it disavows the discussion by limiting students from being able to detach themselves and realize their role and position in society. Such an action depoliticizes the progressive culture a liberal education may hope to attain. Even when issues of power are discussed, if it does not provide an inclusive perspective that incorporates the social positioning of the marginalized and privileged individuals, the collective learning experience remains limited. Strength of multiculturalism is found in the diverse perspectives that can elaborate on complex issues. But

these viewpoints must truly represent a varied populace. A diverse student body allows for a collective advancement in education and social understanding. This aspect serves as both a goal and a basis for multicultural advocacy. With the track the school is going on, it will hopefully attain its goal of having a more diverse population. But the question remains: how critical will the concept of multiculturalism be used?

AppendixTable 1.
US 4-year
Private

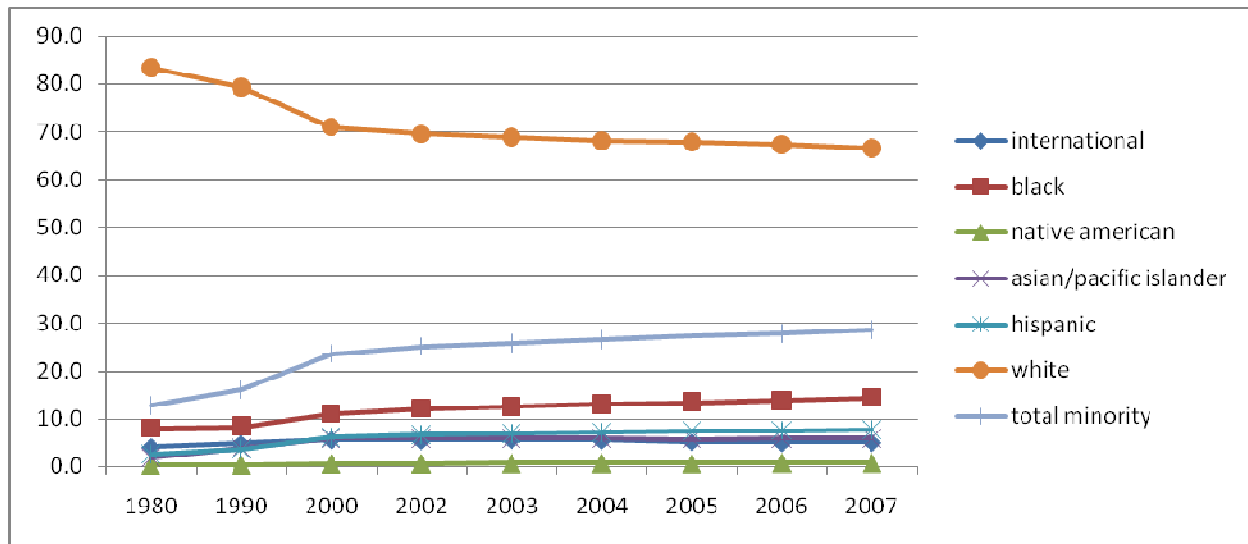
	1980	1990	2000	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
International	4.0	4.7	5.5	5.4	5.5	5.4	5.1	4.9	4.9
Black	8.0	8.3	11.1	12.1	12.5	13.0	13.4	13.8	14.3
Native American	0.3	0.4	0.6	0.6	0.6	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.7
Asian/Pacific Islander	1.8	3.9	5.9	5.8	5.8	5.8	5.8	5.8	5.9
Hispanic	2.5	3.5	6.0	6.5	6.8	7.1	7.3	7.5	7.6
White	83.3	79.2	70.9	69.5	68.8	68.1	67.7	67.3	66.5
total minority	12.7	16.1	23.6	25.1	25.7	26.5	27.2	27.8	28.6

SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Higher Education General Information Survey (HEGIS), "Fall Enrollment in Colleges and Universities" surveys, 1976 and 1980; and 1990 through 2007 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), "Fall Enrollment Survey" (IPEDS-EF:90), and Spring 2001 through Spring 2008. (This table was prepared October 2008.)

Table 2.

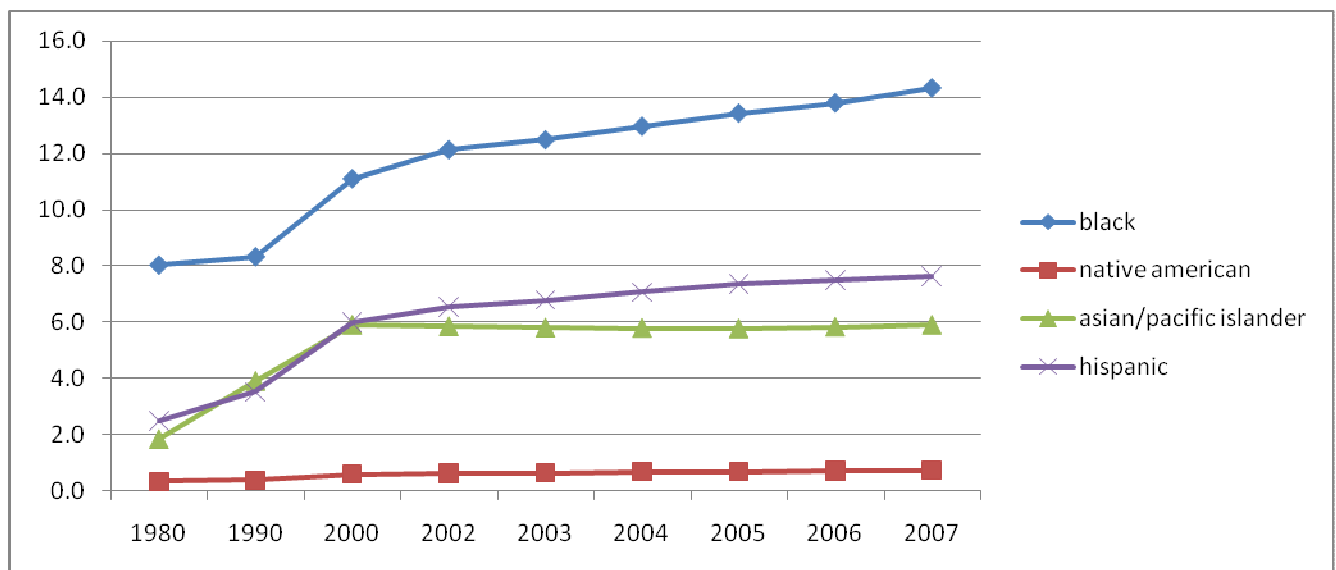
AU Undergraduate	1980	1990	2000	2001	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007
International	10.8	8	13.2	11.1	7.3	6.4	5.7	5.9	6
Black	12.4	5.4	6.6	5.7	5.5	5.8	6.1	5.3	4.8
Native American	0	0.3	0.4	0.2	0.3	0.4	0.4	0.4	0.5
Asian/Pacific Islander	1.7	3.3	3.9	4.2	4.7	4.8	5.1	5.1	4.9
Hispanic	2.3	4.1	4.8	4.5	4.5	4.6	4.5	4.3	4.6
Caucasian	72.8	78.9	58.8	60	62.2	62.8	62.8	63.5	63.5
Total Minority	16.4	13.1	15.7	14.6	15	15.6	16.1	15.1	14.8

Source: Academic Data Reference Book (ADRB) published annually by the Office of Institutional Research & Assessment. <http://www.american.edu/provost/oira/Academic-Data-Reference-Book.cfm>

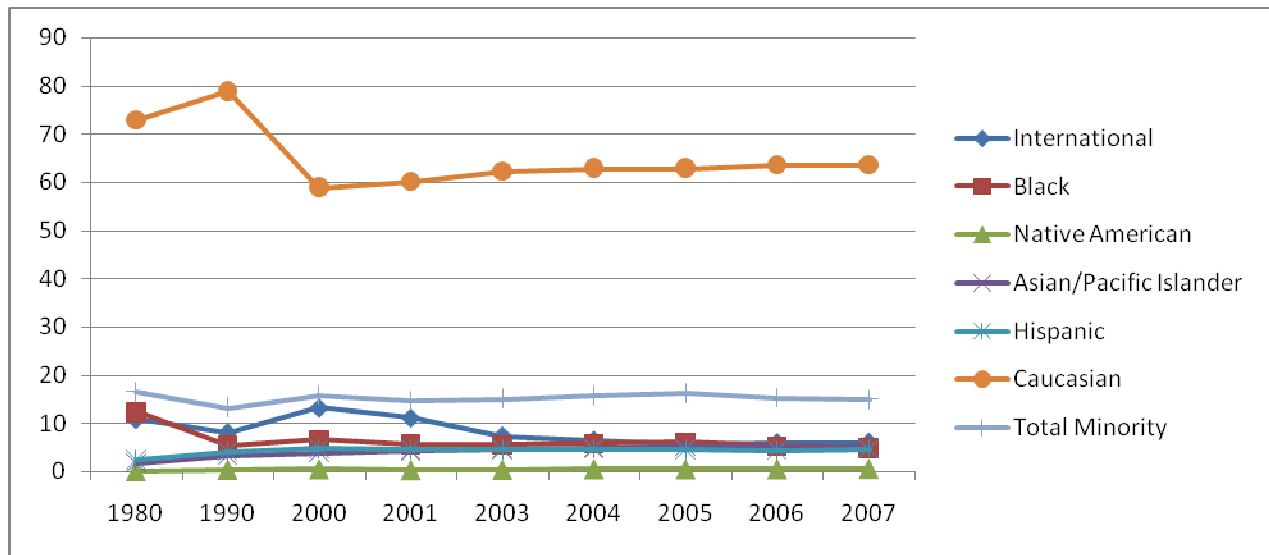


Graph 1. General student populations in US 4-year private universities.

Graph 2. Minority student populations in US 4-year private universities.

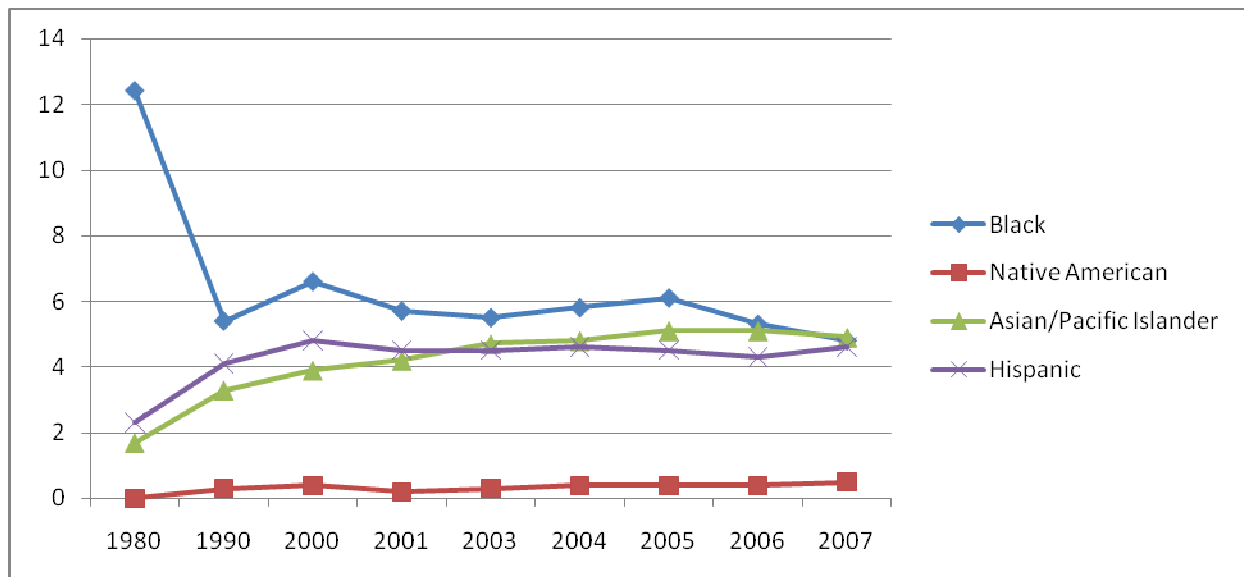


SOURCE: U.S. Department of Education, National Center for Education Statistics, Higher Education General Information Survey (HEGIS), "Fall Enrollment in Colleges and Universities" surveys, 1976 and 1980; and 1990 through 2007 Integrated Postsecondary Education Data System (IPEDS), "Fall Enrollment Survey" (IPEDS-EF:90), and Spring 2001 through Spring 2008. (This table was prepared October 2008.)



Graph 3. General student populations at American University.

Graph 4. Minority student population at American University.



Source: Academic Data Reference Book (ADRB) published annually by the Office of Institutional Research & Assessment. <http://www.american.edu/provost/oira/Academic-Data-Reference-Book.cfm>

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