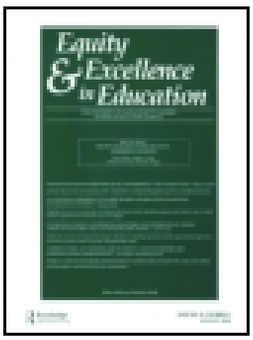

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Capitalizing on Change: The Discursive Framing of Diversity in U.S. Land-Grant Universities

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Capitalizing on Change: The Discursive Framing of Diversity in U.S. Land-Grant Universities

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Using policy discourse analysis, the author analyzed 21 diversity action plans issued at 20 U.S. land-grant universities over a five-year period to identify images of diversity and the problems and solutions represented in diversity action plans. Discourses of marketplace, excellence, managerialism, and democracy emerged and served to construct images of the diverse individual as a commodity, entrepreneur, and change agent. These findings suggest that the dominance of the marketplace discourse may situate the diverse individual as a resource to be exploited and inspire entrepreneurial endeavors rather than change-making activism. Diversity action plans in their current form may unintentionally undermine the achievement of their equity goals.

BACKGROUND AND SIGNIFICANCE

The central purposes of U.S. higher education are, according to Bowen, Kurzweil, and Tobin (2005), to build human capital, to learn to "live a life" (p. 2), and to inspire civic virtues that are "immensely important for the responsible exercise of democracy" (p. 3). Bowen (2004) refers to these as "excellence objectives"—defined to include "educating large numbers of students to a high standard and carrying out a vigorous research agenda" in order to produce an "unequaled stock of human capital" (pp. 6–7). Yet, educational attainment in the U.S. has reached a plateau, if not declined; pre-collegiate preparation is inadequate for many; segments of the national population continue to be grossly underrepresented on campus[1]; and equity in education remains a sought-after goal (Bowen et al., 2005; Ibarra, 2001; Perna, 2002; Valverde, 1998). An imperative, then, is to address these inequities and meet the academe's commitment to inclusive excellence.

The recognition that these objectives—excellence and equity—are inextricably linked is evident in academic research on the educational benefits of diversity (American Council on Education and American Association of University Professors, 2000; Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002; Hu & Kuh, 2003; Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005; Milem & Hakuta, 2000; Orfield, 2001; Smith et al., 1997; Terenzini, Cabrera, Colbeck, Bjorkland, & Parente, 2001) and in investigations of the significance of public policy focused primarily on increasing access for diverse groups (Horn

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& Flores, 2003; Marin & Lee, 2003; Perna, Steele, Woda, & Hibbert, 2005; Perna & Titus, 2004). Further, administrators at many U.S. postsecondary institutions recognize and endorse the emphasis on excellence and a commitment to equity. This emphasis and commitment are evident in diversity planning efforts and the generation of diversity action plans[2] through which to codify strategies to increase access and retention of historically underrepresented populations, improve campus climate and inter-group relations, incorporate diversity into the curriculum, and utilize diversity as a resource for an enriched and engaged academic environment (Hurtado, 1992; Ibarra, 2001; Smith & Schonfeld, 2000). Extensive research exists on diversity in U.S. higher education; yet, relatively little research investigates institutional equity policies (e.g., diversity action plans) and their role as a solution to access and equity problems on college and university campuses. In this study, I analyze the discursive framing of diversity in diversity action plans generated by U.S. land-grant universities.

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PURPOSE AND QUESTIONS

In order to enhance understanding of these diversity policy documents, how they contribute to producing a particular cultural reality, and how they may compromise the achievement of their own goals, this study identifies and analyzes discourses circulating in diversity action plans. These policy documents are a primary means by which universities advance recommendations regarding their professed commitment to equal access and an inclusive climate for all members of the campus community. As such, diversity action plans not only record and reflect a campus culture[3] but also construct a particular reality for members of the institution (Allan, 2003). Well-intentioned attempts to create a more inclusive campus climate may unwittingly reinforce practices that support exclusion and inequity (Lee, 2002). For instance, an emphasis on equality implies sameness (versus a focus on the ideal of equity, which strives for fairness). Framing the problem of access as inequality typically illuminates deficits and generates recommendations to correct those (individual) deficits (e.g., remedial courses and support services), whereas a focus on inequity shifts attention to institutional practices, disparity in the allocation of resources, and the production of unequal educational outcomes (Bensimon, 2005; Brown, 1999). The use of assumptive concepts in language may limit a policy's effectiveness; may construct a world for "others" that disqualifies them from participation, even as it strives to include them as full participants; and may actually reinscribe the very problem the policy seeks to alleviate (Allan, 2003; Bacchi, 1999; Ball, 1990; Scheurich, 1994).

This study analyzes the text of 21 diversity action plans in U.S. higher education to understand how these documents frame diversity and what reality is produced by diversity action plans. More specifically, this inquiry employs Allan's (2003) method of policy discourse analysis to investigate the images of diversity and the construction of "diversity problems" as articulated in diversity action plans. Policy discourse analysis is "an approach to policy analysis that works to uncover policy silences and make visible the powerful discourses framing policy initiatives" (Allan, 2008, p. 1). The following research questions framed this study:

- What are the predominant images of diversity in diversity action plans?
- How are problems related to diversity represented in diversity action plans?

- How are solutions related to "diversity problems" represented in diversity action plans?
- What discourses are employed to shape these images, problems, and solutions?

THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

For this investigation, I am drawing upon multiple theoretical frames: a commitment to social justice; a belief that many competing truth claims exist; and recognition of power as a productive force. Inspired by various movements situated within critical theory, including feminism, critical race theory, and inquiry, that can broadly be viewed as activism (Ladson-Billings, 2000; Lather, 1991; Nielson, 1990; Reinharz, 1992), this study employs a critical approach to policy studies that helps to raise important questions about the control and production of knowledge and the ways policy can be used to empower individuals to act upon/in their environment to challenge dominant ideology (Ball, 1994; Marshall, 1999).

This research also is influenced by poststructuralist views, evident in its interest in texts (policy) and the discourses that constitute social, cultural products, and in its attention to who has the power to shape the public perception about the worth of diversity, as well as the ways knowledge is used to re/produce social inequalities (Ball, 1990). Poststructural approaches to policy analysis question taken-for-granted assumptions embedded in the naming of policy problems and analyze unintended consequences of policy solutions (Allan, 2003; Bacchi, 1999; Ball, 1990; Scheurich, 1994). For instance, Allan, in her analysis of the text of women's commission reports issued at four research universities, investigated how discourses generated by these reports constructed women's status in academe. Allan's analysis revealed a discourse of professionalism that "works to construct a belief that all women will benefit from professional/career advancement" (p. 60) and a caregiving discourse that characterizes women as emotional, nurturing, and maternal, concerned "with adequately caring for family in the context of their work" (p. 63). Allan observes that the tension between "professional expectations and family needs is a hallmark of gender equity concerns" (p. 63); "the caregiving discourse positions women as primary caregivers, and may reinforce the assumption that men do not serve in that role" (p. 64).

This study, with its focus on the discourses circulating in diversity action plans that contribute to shaping our understanding of diversity, draws upon discourse theory. Discourses are "artifacts of language through which the very reality they purport to reflect is constructed" (Riggins, in Allan, 2008, p. 6). Discourses "order and combine words in particular ways and exclude or displace other combinations" (Ball, in Bacchi, 1999, p. 41). More than simply words, discourses provide "frameworks or ways of viewing issues" (Bacchi, 1999, p. 40); they are about what can be said and who can speak, when, and with what authority (Ball, 1990). However, some discourses are taken up more readily than others; "dominant discourses work by setting up the terms of reference and by disallowing or marginalizing alternatives" (Shore & Wright, 1997, p. 18). Dominant discourses are reaffirmed through their institutionalization, and can be identified most easily by the way in which they have become taken-for-granted (Allan, 2003; Bacchi, 1999; Mills, 1997). Finally, through discourse, we take up or inhabit particular social identities. Our identity position—or subjectivity —refers to "our ways of being an individual," positions we construct for ourselves through discourse (Weedon, 1997, p. 21). For instance, mother, professional, and activist are all identity positions that one might occupy. The discourses and identity positions that

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emerged from this analysis will be described later in this article. First, I will briefly describe the sample and analytic process for this study.

METHOD

The sample for this study consisted of 21 diversity action plans issued at 20 U.S. land-grant universities over a five-year period. These documents were selected from screening U.S. "1862 land-grant"[4] universities and seeking institutions that had a diversity committee charged by a senior administrator (e.g., president, provost) that had developed at least one diversity action plan[5]issued within a recent five-year period (1999–2004).

The process of data analysis was informed by established methods of qualitative inquiry (Marshall & Rossman, 1999; Miles & Huberman, 1994). Initially, I conducted line-by-line analysis of each report in reply to the research questions. Once all documents were coded, I used NVivo, computer software designed for qualitative data analysis, to generate "reports" for each category—images, problems, and solutions—across all diversity action plans. These reports were then analyzed using both deductive and inductive processes, which served as the second phase of coding; in this phase, the codes assigned were both descriptive and interpretive (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Finally, an examination of the coded data for conceptual patterns and linkages illuminated how coded text reflected and shaped discourses circulating within the scripts and how these discourses produced particular identity positions.

FINDINGS AND INTERPRETATIONS

Four discourses shaping images of diverse individuals[6] emerged from analysis: marketplace, excellence, managerialism, and democracy. The marketplace discourse and two discursive strands—excellence and managerialism—were dominant, producing images of diverse individuals as objects possessing (economic) value that will contribute to the institution's ability to maintain or gain a competitive edge and achieve prominence in the academic marketplace. These discourses coalesce to produce the diverse individual as a commodity. Analysis also revealed a discourse of democracy that emerges as an alternative to the dominant marketplace discourse, producing an image of the diverse individual as a change agent for equity. From the tension between the discourses of democracy and the marketplace emerges the entrepreneur. Figure 1

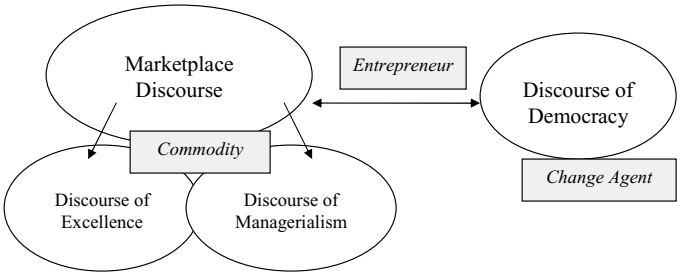

FIGURE 1 Discourses and subject positions.

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provides a visual display of the discourses, relationships among them, and the social identities (subject positions) produced by them.

Marketplace Discourse

The diversity action plans analyzed for this investigation describe higher education as a "highly competitive market." The policies acknowledge "fierce competition" in the recruitment of diverse individuals and strategize about how to maintain a "competitive edge" in response to "rapidly changing market conditions" and "a new demographic reality" in an increasingly "global marketplace." Further, in response to external pressures (i.e., workplaces for which universities prepare their graduates), diversity action plans describe the need for students to have "exposure to multicultural perspectives" in order to "compete" and "understand the concerns of a global workforce." These characterizations in the reports are made visible by a marketplace discourse.

The marketplace discourse is evidenced by an increasingly pervasive view of higher education as a marketplace: the degree is perceived to be the product, students and their parents are the consumers, and "the *administrator* rather than the professor [is] the central figure of the University" (Readings, 1996, p. 3). Some scholars assert that the prevalence of this view of higher education as a marketplace is shaped by the decline in government support of higher education that contributes to increased attention to one's standing in relation to external forces (the "market") and a focus on the bottom-line (Eckel & King, 2004; O'Meara, 2001; Readings, 1996). The marketplace then is characterized primarily by competition; indeed, "the ability to compete—for students, resources, faculty, and prestige—becomes a driving strategic force" (Eckel & King, 2004, p. 16).

In the diversity action plans analyzed for this investigation, diversity[7] (and by implication diverse individuals) is described as essential—"a key ingredient"—for achieving and maintaining a competitive edge. For instance, one document states that "Internal and external constituencies both expect to see *visible signs of commitment to diversity* reflected in the institution's leadership," adding that "major American businesses have made clear that the skills needed in today's *increasingly global marketplace* can only be developed through exposure to widely diverse people, cultures, ideas, and viewpoints" (Pennsylvania State University, 2004, p. 2, emphasis added). Another diversity action plan indicates that diversity "not only contributes to the academic vitality of the campus, but also *makes us more competitive* among our peer institutions" (University of Wisconsin, 1999, p. 3, emphasis added).

The marketplace discourse is primarily characterized by competition. Thus, the predominant problem identified during analysis and made visible by the marketplace discourse is an institution being "less-equipped to meet the diversity challenge" and consequently unprepared to compete in the marketplace. Specifically, the (real or perceived) inability to acquire diverse individuals, a commodity for which there is demand, fuels "fierce competition." One policy queries: "What do we need to do to become more competitive in attracting students, faculty and staff from under represented populations?" (North Carolina State University, 1999, p. 8).

The inability to compete is linked with another problem made visible by the marketplace discourse: inattention to or lack of preparedness to respond to "a new and rapidly changing demographic reality." One report asserts: "we have to have a plan to get there" (University of

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Connecticut, 2002, p. 6), especially, as another policy notes, if we "expect to benefit from that growth [from predicted demographic changes]" (Virginia Tech University, 2000, p. 4). Another document observes: "much more needs to be done if the university is to realize the goal of becoming a leader in the state and the nation in the areas of increasing the pool of college bound minority students" (Ohio State University, 2000, §C, ¶3).

Analysis identified scarce resources as a problem, typically linked with descriptions of an institution's (in)ability to compete or described as an immediate or potential inhibitor of the institution's diversity efforts. Most diversity action plans observed "shrinking state support," "inadequate levels of public support," "serious budget shortfalls," and "financial stress." The reports further note that diversity initiatives are "seriously under-funded" but also that the institution "stands to lose significant financial resources if diversity issues are not addressed." These fiscal concerns were identified as hurdles to overcome and impediments to progress. Thus, correspondingly, funding, namely the strategic use of monies to realize diversity-related goals, emerged from the analytic process as a solution to problems shaped by the marketplace discourse. Exemplified by a recommendation in one document, "Financial resources will be targeted . . . on areas where there are high concentrations of diverse students" (University of Maine, 2003, ¶50). A few diversity action plans also recommend developing partnerships and contracts with financial potential and utilizing these funds in the service of diversity initiatives.

This analysis revealed numerous recommendations to institute programs that would contribute to the institution's ability to compete. Eckel and King (2004) state that a result (or consequence) of marketplace-inspired thinking "is that activities and research in certain fields . . . become higher institutional priorities because they have stronger market value" (p. 15). For instance, one report advocates to "enroll international students, particularly from *diverse nations of strategic importance* to Texas, as an important and effective way to diversify the overall climate of the university" (Texas A&M University, 2002, p. 18, emphasis added). Academic initiatives (e.g., developing research institutes, creating international programs, and implementing changes in the curriculum) are often recommended to respond to market demand. Also the development of diversity training programs or the introduction of a new "product" (in response to market demand) emerged as a solution from coding.

Finally, analysis of diversity action plans revealed two other strategies recommended for institutions to gain or retain their standing in the marketplace: emphasize efficiency and productivity, enabling universities to compete in the marketplace; and give significant attention to establishing and promoting one's reputation. Each of these is made visible through discourses of managerialism and excellence (respectively), distinct strands within the dominant marketplace discourse. These findings are described next, supported by data excerpts.

Discourse of Excellence

Analysis revealed images of "reputation," "prominence," "high standards," "world-class distinction," "high regard," "first-class," and "prestige" made visible by a discourse of excellence carried by diversity action plans. The discourse of excellence is characterized by a focus on quality and performance and on success and reputation. According to Readings (1996), the quest for excellence is evident in all aspects of higher education, from scholarship to parking. It also is prominent in diversity action plans.

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Excellence is one marker of an institution's ability to compete, and diversity is described in the reports as inextricably linked to excellence. As succinctly stated by one report: "diversity and excellence are mutually reinforcing" (University of Maryland, 2000, p. 8). Exemplified by another data excerpt, one policy asserts: "Diversity and civility are essential for NC State's continuing *world-class distinction* as a progressive land-grant institution committed to *excellence* and equity. . . . Like *quality*, diversity must become an integral part of the institutional culture (North Carolina State University, 1999, p. 13, emphasis added).

This analysis identified few problems made visible by the discourse of excellence (in some ways it is counterintuitive to have excellence problems). However, a few reports cite concerns about a perceived overemphasis on diversity and that an increase in diversity could compromise institutional excellence and undermine one's standing in the market. For instance, one report remarks, "For many on the Berkeley campus, 'diversity' is perceived as a compromise with academic excellence or a 'trade-off' between academic rigor and political correctness" (University of California at Berkeley, 2000, p. 7). Another document, reporting findings from its campus climate survey, states

> [Forty] percent of on-campus faculty members felt that Virginia Tech was placing too much emphasis on diversity; 56 percent felt that one problem with diversity was the admission of under-prepared students; and 44 percent were concerned that affirmative action would lead to hiring less qualified faculty members. (Virginia Tech University, 2000, p. 16)

Analysis of the diversity action plans revealed several solutions made visible by a discourse of excellence: emulating other reputable programs; employing benchmarking as a strategy to measure the quality of diversity initiatives; and developing performance indicators to measure success—all in an effort to establish and promote one's reputation in the marketplace. A primary strategy by which diversity action plans purport to measure the success and quality of diversity initiatives and, equally, the universities' status in the market is through performance indicators. These "indices of excellence" (Readings, 1996, p. 133) enable institutions to judge their progress in relation to themselves and their peers. One report recommends assessing how its offering of multicultural courses "compares to other universities" (University of Arkansas, 2002, p. 14); another compares the diversity of its board to Fortune 500 companies; still another collects "comparative data" to make "apparent that we are no worse than our peers" (University of Connecticut, 2002, p. 5). Comparisons to peers and aspirants were often described as benchmarking.[8] This process enables institutions to measure their progress, to identify the "industry" leaders (University of California at Berkeley, 2000, p. 6), and to develop plans to adopt a "best practice model" (Auburn University, 2004, p. 3), again, in order to gain a competitive edge in the market.

Generally, diversity—and diverse individuals—is characterized in the reports as a "rich resource" (Texas A&M University, 2002, p. 20), "valuable resources to draw upon" (Pennsylvania State University, 2004, p. 14), "a key component to educational excellence in the 21st century" (Auburn University, 2004, p. 8), and "an essential source of excellence and a defining character of our community" (University of Idaho, 2004, p. 5). These characterizations are made visible by a discourse of excellence, supported by a dominant marketplace discourse that contributes to shaping the diverse individual as a commodity for achieving the goal of elevated institutional standing within the marketplace. A university's commitment to diversity is part of institutional strategy to compete in the market—for students, faculty, funding, and prestige. The discourse

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of excellence emerged from analysis as closely aligned with the discourse of managerialism, described next.

Discourse of Managerialism

Predominant images of "efficiency," "productivity," "accountability," "coordination;" "using all available management tools" to develop a "business case" for "managing and leveraging diversity" emerged from coding and are made visible by a discourse of managerialism supported by a dominant marketplace discourse. While the discourse of excellence values quality, success, and performance, the discourse of managerialism values efficiency, productivity, and progress and is characterized by an emphasis on effectiveness, accountability, monitoring costs and effects, and quality assurance, all of which enhance a university's ability to compete in the marketplace (Eckel & King, 2004).

Responding to economic cut-backs and to public and governmental pressures to compete, universities are increasingly adopting business tactics and, more specifically, employing management strategies in the university culture (Meadmore, 1998; Miller, 1998). For instance, one diversity action plan argues that "automation and streamlined employment processes are critical to the creation of a more welcoming environment" (University of California at Berkeley, 2000, p. 8). A few documents suggest developing a "business case for embracing diversity" as part of their rationale for "effectively managing and leveraging diversity for the entire campus" (Auburn University, 2004, p. 4; University of Connecticut, 2002; North Carolina State University, 1999).

Diversity action plans attest that greater progress could be made if the organization were more efficient. While these reports acknowledge limited resources, especially financial, the discursive strand of managerialism shifts the focus from an absence of resources to wasted resources: practices, programs, services, and mechanisms that are of lesser or little benefit to realizing diversity-related goals. The emphasis is on monitoring costs and effects associated with diversity, to maximize the educational benefits of diversity for minimal cost. This view also presupposes that it is possible—and essential—to systematically evaluate diversity-related practices and programs in order to enhance or eliminate them.

The values of managerialism have been promoted as being universal: management is inherently good, and better, efficient management will solve any problem (Pollitt, 1990; Sachs, 1999). Thus, the "diversity challenge," made visible by a discourse of managerialism, is characterized by poor management or lack of leadership, insufficient accountability, absence of coordinated efforts, and inadequate progress or achievement of diversity-related goals. One report concludes: "Consistently poor results in almost every corner of the university attested to the fact that no effective processes or practices were in place" (Virginia Tech University, 2000, p. 36).

The discourse of managerialism emphasizes hierarchical, top-down, command-and-control management used to get things done, like communicate vision, build community, and accomplish change (Alvesson & Willmott, 1996). Thus, poor management or a lack of leadership, at times characterized as an absence of coordinated diversity efforts, is a problem made visible by a discourse of managerialism. As written in one report: "if senior administrators *lack the will* to hold individuals accountable by utilizing all of the management tools (e.g., budget, merit increases, reappointment) available to them, the goals of this plan will not be met" (Ohio State University, 2000, Preface, ¶13, emphasis added). Several documents observe the need for senior

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administrators to utilize their "authority to promote diversity and hold units accountable for their performance."

Attention to accountability—or rather, the lack thereof—also emerged during the analytic process as a problem, made visible by a discourse of managerialism. Numerous diversity action plans are critical that "there is no accountability for lack of progress in implementing diversity on our campus" (University of Maryland, 2000, p. 12; also North Carolina State University, 1999; Ohio State University, 2000; Pennsylvania State University, 2004; University of California at Berkeley, 2000; University of Wisconsin, 1999) The one institution in this sample that issued two diversity action plans in a five-year period makes no mention of accountability in its first report (University of Maine, 1999). However, it delineates numerous statements regarding accountability in its second report, noting specifically that "Probably the greatest impediment to the implementation of the Diversity Action Plan continues to be a *diffusion of responsibility and accountability* for diversity efforts" (University of Maine, 2003, ¶17, emphasis added). Further, the diversity action plans express concern over inadequate—or sheer lack of—coordination. For instance, the reports detect "little coordination and cooperation" (University of Maryland, 2000, p. 9), and note that diversity efforts "tend to be disconnected" (North Carolina State University, 1999, p. 6) and are "not well integrated" (University of California at Berkeley, 2000, p. 6).

The solutions, then, to this "diversity challenge" are efficient management; enhanced coordination of diversity efforts; improvement of processes, procedures, and practices; routinization of assessment and evaluation; establishing mechanisms for quality assurance; and embedding accountability into the system to ensure progress and success. Central to the achievement of these recommendations and to the realization of diversity goals is better management. This can be achieved through both the identification and appointment of an individual who will "have a specialist's knowledge of the research on diversity, a track record of successful implementation of diversity programs, and, of course, the clout to hold others accountable" (University of Maryland, 2000, p. 11), and through organizational changes that enhance and facilitate coordinated and collaborative diversity efforts, as exemplified by this quote:

> Create a UA diversity resource office and clearinghouse staffed to coordinate, maintain, and assess certain diversity initiatives; research best practices; provide assistance and collaboration; provide "diversity facilitation"; and centralize diversity efforts by gathering and maintaining a knowledge base and inventory of all UA diversity-related programs, resources, and initiatives. (University of Arizona, 2003, p. 18)

If quality is a central value in the discourse of excellence, then quality assurance is a core value in the discourse of managerialism. These assurances are evident in calls for systematic routinization of diversity efforts. As one diversity action plan states "'What gets measured gets done' becomes the motto for executing a plan" (Auburn University, 2004, p. 47). Most reports recommend: "Collect and organize data to systematically and effectively assess diversity progress" (University of Idaho, 2004, p. 12); "establish a continuous improvement process" (Virginia Tech University, 2000, p. 13); and create "databases . . . to mark progress over time in achieving greater diversity" (Ohio State University, 2000, §E, ¶1; also Cornell University, 2004; Pennsylvania State University, 2004; Texas A&M University, 2002; University of Arizona, 2003; University of Georgia, 2002).

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Inextricably linked to monitoring and assessing is accountability. As one report observes, "As we move *progressively forward* implementing the plan's strategic recommendations, the document will squarely *beam the accountable spotlight* on individuals and units who are ultimately responsible for meeting the diversity challenge" (Auburn University, 2004, p. 4, emphasis added). Another policy states, "using all available management tools," the university must "hold each administrator and unit accountable for progress . . . making clear the expectations and consequences" (Ohio State University, 2000, University's Goals, ¶2).

The Commodity. The diversity action plans assert that "diversity increases educational possibilities" (Virginia Tech University, 2000, p. 29) and, in order to "capitalize on" diversity (Texas A&M University, 2002, p. 20), the reports recommend to "make effective use of all our citizens" (University of Connecticut, 2002, p. 4) and "take full advantage of educational benefits of diversity" (University of Idaho, 2004, p. 17). Further, diversity action plans demand "effectively managing and leveraging diversity" (Auburn University, 2004, p. 14) to "promote the value and benefits of diversity" (Virginia Tech University, 2000, p. 11) in or by the institution to maintain (or gain) a competitive edge and to achieve prominence in the academic marketplace. These characterizations are made visible by the marketplace discourse and the two discursive strands—excellence and managerialism—that coalesce to produce the diverse individual as a commodity which (who) has value to the university.

Analysis identified the diverse individual as useful (e.g., an institution can utilize diverse individuals to advance the university's reputation). For instance, numerous diversity action plans describe the use of diversity—diverse individuals—in promotional materials to market the university's commitment to diversity and the "value and benefits of diversity" (Virginia Tech University, 2000, p. 11). Cognizant of this use-value, many diversity action plans also propose the "diversification of academic offerings" in order to "appeal to a wider audience" (Texas A&M University, 2002, p. 15).

The diverse individual, discursively shaped as a commodity, also has exchange value, or economic value. This exchange value is most evident in linkages in diversity action plans between the acquisition of diverse individuals and subsequent financial gains. For instance, numerous reports note that "increasing diversity" is "directly tied" to "expenditures of federal monies" (Auburn University, 2004, p. 11). The exchange value of the diverse individual also is apparent in descriptions of the relationship between diversity and a university's reputation, status and ultimate standing in the market. Thus, the university that successfully acquires this commodity—the diverse individual—enjoys elevated status in the marketplace and benefits from enhanced purchasing power to acquire other/more diverse individuals, as well as other related commodities (e.g., area studies programs).

However, not all diverse bodies have equal value. Diversity action plans emphasize the industry demand for "talented," "promising," "high-achieving," "exceptional," "outstanding," and "highly qualified" diverse individuals. This demand is both within higher education—the "fierce competition" for diverse students and employees—and from the workplaces for which universities prepare graduates. Thus, in order for this commodity to have value, universities must be responsive to industry demand and produce diverse, multiculturally competent individuals that adhere to industry standards.

In sum, the diverse individual—"no less than books, computers, and classrooms" (University of Idaho, 2004, p. 5) and "as important in today's world as technology" (Pennsylvania State

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University, 2004, p. 14)—is constructed by discourses circulating in diversity action plans as a commodity in the "merciless marketplace" (O'Meara, 2001, p. 3) of higher education. Strategic use of this commodity enables universities to acquire or maintain a competitive edge in the market.

Analysis revealed that the marketplace discourse does not stand alone in normalizing particular diversity practices and strategies. This discourse is supported by other discourses carried by diversity action plans. For instance, the discourses of excellence and managerialism, supported by the dominant marketplace discourse are closely aligned with discourses of quality, efficiency, and productivity, circulating within institutions of higher education and in broader Western society (Bensimon, 1995; Readings, 1996). The marketplace discourse also intersects and competes with a discourse of democracy.

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Discourse of Democracy

This analysis of diversity action plans reveals institutional calls for "inclusion and opportunity," "civic responsibility," "commitment to freedom, equity, and reason," and "deliberative dialogue," and professes a "moral imperative" for "justice, fairness and equal access," and social equality and respect for the individual within a community. These characterizations in the reports are made visible by a discourse of democracy, which emerges as an alternative to and challenges the constitutive power of the dominant marketplace discourse.

According to Giroux (1993), "democracy is both a discourse and a practice that produces particular narratives and identities in-the-making, informed by the principles of freedom, equality, and social justice" (¶2). In diversity action plans, these principles are pronounced in descriptions of the formation of the diversity planning committees that authored the policies; attention to public, participatory, and egalitarian decision-making processes; and in the explication of vision that undergirds the diversity planning process. More specifically, diversity action plans assure "that student voices would be heard;" that campus constituencies and interest groups should have a voice in the process;" "that all facets of diversity are equally represented;" and that the university is committed to "the ideas of a pluralistic, multiracial, open and democratic society."

"Shared democratic values" (Cornell University, 2004, p. 18) are exemplified by calls for equity and equality. In large part, the purpose for diversity planning and policy development is to address inter-group inequities. Thus, inequality is described by diversity action plans as a significant problem in the realization of democratic ideals. The policies recognize "that previous discrimination . . . has foreclosed economic opportunity" (University of Idaho, 2004, Appendix 3, p. 6) and the need to "redress historical inequities that continue to plague our nations" (University of Nebraska, 1999, p. 1); and express concern "about the real hardships imposed on some families" by current employment policies that produce "clear inequity" (University of Maryland, 2000, p. 14).

Equality as a concept has been a cornerstone of democracy; yet, this concept has been contested throughout history, and this struggle also is evident in the diversity action plans. A solution to inequality, not unique to land-grant universities, is the use of law to ensure equal treatment; more specifically, taking affirmative action and using equal opportunity laws. As one diversity action plan succinctly states: "Affirmative action is a tool used to facilitate equal opportunity" (Virginia Tech University, 2000, p. 6; also University of Idaho, 2004). However, the use of this "tool" is

often characterized as a problem by the policies. Consistent with popular, scholarly, and legal debate in society, the use of affirmative action is contested in diversity action plans. Explicitly stated in two documents that appended climate survey results in their diversity action plans, some faculty, staff, and students associate the use of affirmative action with a reduction in standards.

Inclusion, representative process, cooperative and collaborative consensus, and rigorous dialogue are all characteristics in the reports made visible by a discourse of democracy. Various solutions to the problems that undermine the achievement of democratic ideals, including the use of town meetings, inter-groups dialogue, and presidential commissions emerge as key strategies to facilitate open, public dialogue and participatory decision-making. The diversity action plans propose facilitating "campus-wide dialogue [to promote] . . . open examination of difficult yet critical issues" and initiating "critical institutional dialogue which will forge the agenda for change" (North Carolina State University, 1999, p. 11); and creating "more open forum discussion opportunities" (Auburn University, 2004, p. 21; also Cornell University, 2004; Ohio State University, 2000; Texas A&M University, 2002; University of Arizona, 2003; University of Connecticut, 2002; University of Idaho, 2004; University of Illinois, 2002; University of Maine, 1999; University of Nevada, 2002; Virginia Tech University, 2000). Scholars attest to the need for and benefits of cross-difference dialogue, and more specifically engaging dangerous discourses (Nieto, 1999). Yet, these recommendations to facilitate dialogue (and the potential for dialogue to be employed as a change-making strategy) are less prominent in diversity action plans than are other solutions.

A primary strategy for achieving a university's vision of equality, fairness, and social justice is the use of presidential commissions to document the status and to address the concerns of identity-based groups. Many institutions in this sample had one or more presidential commissions prior to the drafting of a diversity action plan. These groups serve as a mechanism by which to "initiate and sustain a dialogue around the value of diversity and multiculturalism within the university community" (Virginia Tech University, 2000, p. 38) and as "advocacy groups for their constituencies . . . to make their concerns known at the highest levels of administration" (University of Maryland, 2000, p. 10). Further, they "model the importance and viability of alliances" (University of Nevada, 2002, p. 1; also Virginia Tech University, 2000); they "are more like 'grass-roots' organizations" (University of Maryland, 2000, p. 10; also University of Wisconsin, 1999); and in real and symbolic ways demonstrate "that the campus stands together in support of all its members" (University of Maryland, 2000, p. 14; also University of Connecticut, 2002).

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Change Agent. Collaborative spirit and grassroots actions are characteristics made visible by the discourse of democracy that constructs an individual as a change agent. Through the efforts of one or through alliances, change-making possibilities exist within both the individual and the collective. Yet, this analysis revealed that the call for individual and collective action to enact change is often juxtaposed, at times in the same stretch of text, with characterizations made visible by managerial and marketplace discourses. The dominance and greater weight of the marketplace discourse likely undermines the change-making possibilities of the discourse of democracy.

COMPETING DISCOURSES

When the discourses of democracy and the marketplace coalesce, the image of the change agent, possessing individual and collective capacity to act and strategize for change, gives way to an image of an entrepreneur, encouraged and rewarded for individual initiative and the development of innovative programs that ensure the university a competitive edge in the market. The use of incentives and rewards described in diversity action plans serve to encourage entrepreneurial endeavors rather than (individual and structural) change-making efforts.

The dominance of the marketplace discourse gives rise to a competitive, rather than a collaborative ethos. The democratic ideals of public, participatory, and egalitarian processes (made visible by a discourse of democracy) are co-opted by managerial principles of efficiency, productivity, and accountability (produced by discourse of managerialism, supported by a dominant marketplace discourse). The Pennsylvania State University (2004) diversity action plan boasts "One of the strongest aspects of Penn State's diversity progress is a system of accountability that is comprehensive, participatory, and public" (p. 15).

The grass-roots, bottom-up activism is eclipsed by top-down, expert hierarchy. The strongest evidence for this is the use of presidential commissions, described in most reports, to "initiate and sustain a dialogue around the value of diversity" (Virginia Tech University, 2000, p. 38). While the intentions in their use are democratic—to facilitate a robust exchange of ideas—presidential commissions are elitist by definition; membership is rarely open to the campus community, instead representatives are appointed by senior administrators. Consequently, achievement of democratic ideals of deliberative dialogue and social equality are compromised by situating "grass-roots" activism in entities that are not open to the public, reside within central administration, and "*have no power* to assure adherence to campus equity policies" (University of Maryland, 2000, p. 10, emphasis added).

The discourse of democracy stresses open, public, dialogue and decentralized (decentered) communication processes, whereas a discourse of managerialism calls for centralized, hierarchical communication. For instance, one report exemplifies this tension, initially observing: "diversity fosters inclusiveness, encourages the exchange of new ideas, improves decision-making, and broadens the scope of problem solving" (University of Nebraska, 1999, p. 1); yet, later recommending that "Communications regarding diversity objectives will come directly from Central Administration and/or campus Chancellors to the campuses" (p. 12).

These examples illustrate contradictions produced through multiple and competing discourses carried by diversity action plans. The diverse individual situated as a commodity, a social identity produced by the marketplace discourse, is used strategically by the university to achieve institutional effectiveness, quality, and excellence, in order to acquire or maintain one's reputation and competitive edge in the academic marketplace. In stark contrast, the change agent, an identity produced by a discourse of democracy, empowers diverse individuals to contest and resist normalizing powers, and actively construct alternatives (Giroux, 1993). However, the dominance of the marketplace discourse may (unintentionally) undermine the change-making possibilities of the discourse of democracy. The competing discourses carried by diversity action plans may situate the change agent as a resource to be exploited for what is "good" and "common" and "shared" and "normal" (Carlson & Apple, 1998, p. 13), and risks further marginalizing "others" and compromising equity goals. Further, out of the tension evident between the discourses of democracy and the marketplace, images of the change agent give way to images of an entrepreneur, encouraged

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and rewarded for initiative and the development of innovative programs that ensure the university a competitive edge in the marketplace.

SUMMARY AND IMPLICATIONS

This investigation of discourses circulating in diversity action plans identified discourses of the marketplace, excellence, managerialism, and democracy as most prominent in conveying images of diverse individuals. These discourses contribute to shaping perceptions of diversity and constructing particular social identities for diverse individuals to assume. Awareness of the discursive construction of diversity can help individuals engaged in the policy-making process to be more strategic in their efforts to inform change and achieve equity in U.S. higher education. The use of such awareness is complicated; policymakers cannot write discourse into a policy recommendation to produce different effects. Individuals do not "stand outside of discourse and choose when, where, and how to take up particular discourses to produce some intended and predictable effect" (Allan, 2003, p. 65). However, the "strategic deployment of discourse" (Allan, 2003, p. 65) can lead to meaningful conversations about the problem of diversity, enabling policymakers to disrupt the status quo and destabilize the regulatory tendencies of dominant discourses.

In sum, the aim of this investigation is to increase practitioners' awareness of the conditions that produce particular diversity discourses, how some discourses both constrain and liberate and how diversity action plans in their current form may (unwittingly) compromise the achievement of their own goals. Further, I hope this inquiry inspires new questions and further research about discourses of diversity, how policy discourses come together to make particular perspectives more prominent than others, and how these discourses contribute to re/producing particular cultural realities on university campuses.

NOTES

1. The participation of minorities in higher education remains low relative to their population or their high school graduation rates. For instance, African Americans and Hispanics continue to lag behind Whites in the percentage of college-age, high school graduates enrolled in college (Harvey, 2003). In 2000, the proportion of white students (ages 18–24) attending college was 43.2%, but African American and Hispanic students' participation rates fall behind, at 39.4% and 36.5%, respectively (College Enrollment by Racial and Ethnic Group, 2003). For all groups, including Whites, women account for more than half the total college population, and for black student enrollment in particular, black women enrolled in higher education are disproportionately represented compared with black men (63% women; 37% men) (College Enrollment by Racial and Ethnic Group, 2003). Additionally, the majority of historically underrepresented racial groups are enrolled in 2-year public institutions, fewer in 4-year public institutions, and the fewest in private 2-year institutions (College Enrollment by Racial and Ethnic Group, 2003).
2. These documents are referred to by various names, depending on the institution (e.g., Diversity Action Plan, Report on Diversity and Globalization, Diversity and Human Rights Comprehensive Plan for Action and Accountability); however, I collectively referred to these reports as diversity action plans.
3. By institutional culture I mean the "shared values, assumptions, beliefs, and ideologies" that guide and shape campus norms and rules, contribute to faculty, staff, and students' perceptions of self and others, and "provide a frame of reference within which to interpret the meaning of events and actions" (Kuh & Whitt, 1988/2000, p. 162; see also Tierney, 1993).

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4. The designation "1862 land-grant" derives from legislation passed in 1862—Morrill Land Grant Act—that awarded land grants to states and were extended to more institutions as present state boundaries were defined. Typically, references to land-grant universities do not include this designator (1862); however, it is important to acknowledge and differentiate from the Morrill 1890 (Agricultural College Act of 1890) land-grants and the 1994 land-grants (Equity in Educational Land-Grant Status Act of 1994).
5. While committees and reports have various titles, I was seeking plans that addressed diversity in the broadest sense. This parameter excluded reports generated by other committees charged by senior administrators (e.g., commissions on the status of racial minorities, women, and persons with disabilities).
6. The diversity action plans refer to individuals using a variety of terms, e.g., members of historically disadvantaged groups, targeted groups, under-represented persons, those who have been historically marginalized and previously excluded, and diverse persons. For the purpose of this study, I collectively refer to individuals as diverse persons. While not ideal, this collective reference allows for a consistent signifier throughout the text.
7. Evident throughout the analysis of the diversity action plans was the almost interchangeable use of terms describing the "diverse individual" and the collective label "diversity"—the subject often was portrayed as an object. Thus, as I draw upon the language of the reports to write this, some stretches of text may be awkward in their reference to a thing (diversity) to describe a person (diverse individual).
8. Benchmarking is an illustration of how a discourse does not stand alone and that multiple discourses are circulating in diversity action plans. Benchmarking is evident in the discourse of excellence; yet, is also made visible by a discourse of managerialism that is also described in this article.

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