

**THE MAKING AND SELLING OF AN ILLUSION:
AN EXAMINATION OF RACIAL AND GENDER DIVERSITY IN POST CIVIL-
RIGHTS U.S. CORPORATIONS**

A Dissertation

by

DAVID GERONIMO TRUC-THANH EMBRICK

Submitted to the Office of Graduate Studies of
Texas A&M University
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

December 2006

Major Subject: Sociology

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ABSTRACT

The Making and Selling of an Illusion: An Examination of Racial and Gender Diversity
in Post Civil-Rights U.S. Corporations. (December 2006)

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“Diversity” has become one of the most commonly used words by U.S. corporations. Indeed, many companies claim that they have spent millions, sometimes billions of dollars to create an egalitarian workplace for all workers. Given the amount of money spent and the increased amount of research that corporations have done on the issue of diversity, we should expect some progress in terms of equality or equal rights for minority and female workers. However, while there has been a substantial increase in the rise of corporate philosophy espousing diversity, there is also overwhelming data that suggests minorities and women are still unable to obtain opportunities or to achieve success at the same rates as their white male counterparts. How can we explain the apparent contradictions? Furthermore, why are many companies that have historically barred minorities and women from their workplace now publicizing their support for racial and gender integration? I suggest that corporations are using the word “diversity” as an ideological tool designed to promote themselves at the forefront of equality in the U.S. Using in-depth interviews conducted with 40 middle and senior-level managers and upper-level executive officers from Fortune 1000 companies, I find that while the word

diversity is frequently uttered by managers (and strategically used in various media outlets), most managers are unable to clearly define diversity. Moreover, while managers claim their companies are interested in diversity, there is no convincing evidence that would suggest this is true. Thus, my findings suggest that many corporations use “diversity” as a shield to hide the fact that nothing has really changed in the structure of U.S corporations. That is, U.S. corporations have been, and continue to be, exclusive clubhouses for upper class white males.

DEDICATION

This is dedicated to all the working class folks who break their backs on a daily basis for very little wages and very little respect; to the women and minorities who consistently have to deal with gender and racial discrimination; to anyone who has faced the ruthless hand of corporate oppression.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I have often heard, to borrow from an old African proverb, that it takes a village to produce a Ph.D. This is undoubtedly true; at least, this is true in my case. Other than a few stumbles, my academic ride has been a pleasant one. I owe a debt of gratitude to a great many folks who have helped me on my journey. For his unwavering confidence, even during times where it appeared as if I would never make it in academia (yes, I am talking about the Howard Schuman references here), I give my utmost thanks to Eduardo Bonilla-Silva. He took a working-class student who could barely write his own name and produced a scholar who can theorize race and ethnicity in the U.S., but is still barely able to write his own name. Eduardo, you truly are the mentor of all mentors. I am very thankful to have Rogelio Saenz on my team. His devotion to poor and working-class students is nothing less than commendable. Edward Murguia provided me with much needed guidance, both in the classroom and out. I will miss our conversations on “life in academia.” Joseph Jewell provided me with critique and helped me to “keep it real.” Thanks Joseph. My research on diversity in corporations would not have been successful without the help of Mitchell Rice, a professor in the political science department at Texas A&M. Thanks for taking the time to work with me.

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NOMENCLATURE**Acronyms**

AA/EEO	Affirmative Action/Equal Employment Opportunity
BM	Branch Manager
CC	Corporate Region (in this case region C)
CDO	Chief Diversity Officer
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
CFO	Chief Financial Officer
COO	Chief Operating Officer
CQ	Corporate Headquarters
D&O	Directors and Officers
DVO	Diversity Office
DWG	Diversity Working Group
EEOC	Equal Employment Opportunity Commission
FLSA	Fair Labor Standards Act
FM	Field Manager
HR	Human Resources
OEO	Office of Equal Opportunity
OFCCP	Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs
RD	Regional Director
RM	Regional Manager
VP	Vice President

Terms

Affirmative Action	A policy (usually mandated) to increase opportunities for women and minorities, especially in employment.
Diversity	The practice of affording equal treatment, justice, and opportunity to every group in society, no matter what their differences, in addition to providing these groups with equal representation and opportunities.
Inclusion	A new term used in corporate America that advocates that all people—usually with an emphasis on white males—should be given the same opportunities to ensure success in the company.
Multiculturalism	The process of “recognizing, understanding and appreciating cultures” that are different from one’s own. The emphasis is on regarding different cultures as an asset in an organization, instead of a disadvantage (see Rice 2005:77).

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.

~ Martin Luther King Jr.¹

There is all the difference in the world between treating people equally and attempting to make them equal. While the first is the condition of a free society, the second means as De Tocqueville describes it, 'a new form of servitude.'

~ F.A. Hayek

Diversity is a commonly heard word in today's society. Type the word in the Google search engine and you get over 562 million results. One might even say that the word "diversity" has become mainstream. In addition to the Internet, "diversity," in all its variants, can be found displayed in schools, in newspapers and magazines, and on television. Politicians bring up "diversity" in their campaigns, members of the clergy urge their congregations to embrace "diversity," and university presidents argue that their campuses are bastions of diversity. And, with increasing frequency since the late 1960s, many U.S. companies have seemingly welcomed "diversity." In fact, "diversity" is fast becoming one of the most commonly used words in the corporate world.

This dissertation follows the style and format of *American Sociological Review*.

Company websites are filled with commentary regarding their diversity policies and practices. Many companies, in their training seminars and company policy pamphlets, and through various media outlets, advertise that they have invested heavily in creating and maintaining diversity in the workplace. Moreover, many companies claim that they sincerely believe in “diversity.” Indeed, these companies claim that they have spent hundreds of thousands, sometimes millions of dollars to create a more “diverse” workplace that is not just considerate of its employees, but to its clientele as well. Given the enormous amount of money that many corporations claim to have spent on diversity research, training, and recruitment, it stands to reason that these companies should be exhibiting more progressive signs of racial and gender equity in the workplace. That is, we should be seeing more women and minorities at the middle-to-upper, and even senior and executive, levels of the corporate ladder, in positions that allow for greater decision-making responsibilities rather than token representation. However, while there has been a substantial increase in the rise of corporate philosophy espousing diversity, there are data suggesting otherwise.

Minorities in the Corporate World

Currently, six African Americans hold the title CEO (Chief Executive Officer) in the top *Fortune* 500 U.S. corporations.² Further examination of *Fortune* companies reveals one additional African American CEO, for a total of seven African American CEOs in the *Fortune* 1000. Hence, while African Americans constitute 12.3 percent of the total U.S. population, they represent not much more than one percent (1.2%) of CEOs in America’s largest company (less than one percent—.07%—if looking at the *Fortune*

1000 companies). The situation is considerably worse for Asians and Latinos who are even less represented and whose positions of authority typically are limited to overseas ambassador or consultant type jobs. In fact, Zweigenhaft and Domhoff's (2006) recent research on diversity in the power elite revealed that even in the top 100 corporations, where diversity is reportedly the highest, only 10 percent of the directorships are held by blacks, four percent by Latinos, and one percent by Asians. This is disturbing news. More alarming, however, is that a similar pattern can be found when examining middle and senior management positions in many companies across the U.S. Indeed, according to Fernandez (1999), minorities hold less than two percent of the senior corporate positions and less than six percent of middle-to-upper level managerial positions in major U.S. corporations.

But the scope of this problem of racial inequality is much larger. The above statistics provide an insight to the inequalities present in higher corporate positions. Consider some additional facts pertaining to the unequal treatment of blacks and Hispanics in the U.S. workforce overall:

- The wage gap between Latino and white workers widened from 1989 to 2001. Whereas in 1989 Latinos earned 60% of what white workers earned, in 2001 they only earned 52.6% (De Give 2002). The wage gap between black men and white men widened slightly from 1995 to 2001. Whereas in 1995 black men earned 76% of what white men earned, in 2001 they only earned 75% (AFSCME 2005).
- The typical black family had 60% as much income as a white family in 1968, but only 58% as much in 2002 (Muhammad et al. 2004).

- Blacks and Latinos are less likely, compared to whites, to obtain mentors who will help them achieve upward mobility in the workplace (Fernandez 1981; Ibarra 1993; Miller 1986; Morrison and Von Glinow 1990; see also Travis 1991). The end result is that black and Latino workers are much more likely to remain in relatively low-paying and non-managerial positions within their companies compared to their white counterparts.
- Overwhelmingly, white executives perceive similar behavior between white and minorities differently. For example, white male “screamers³” are seen as “having a bad day,” or “that’s just his way.” In contrast, Latino male “screamers” are seen as overly aggressive, and black male “screamers” are often seen as militant, or even violent (Fernandez 1999).

Additionally, the last five years have seen an increase in the number of lawsuits filed against major corporations for racial discrimination. Well-publicized discrimination lawsuits and settlements against companies during the 1990s such as Texaco, Coca-Cola and Denny’s Restaurants did not fade away but were replaced by new ones. Today, major corporations such as Whirlpool, Universal Studios, Nationwide Insurance, Eli Lilly, Tyson Foods, among many others, face charges of racial discrimination from their employees. The recent lawsuits against Tyson Foods and Eli Lilly, in particular, alleged that both companies not only paid black employees less than their white counterparts, but also subjected black employees to extremely hostile work environments where racial epithets were constantly uttered by white

employees and in the case of Tyson Foods, symbols of racial hatred such as the hangman's noose were hung in the lavatories and an employee break room in a factory in Alabama. In 2003, FedEx settled a lawsuit filed by the EEOC on behalf of 20 black workers who were constantly being denied promotions, either from part-time to full-time positions or from worker to supervisory positions. These promotions instead went to whites. Two of the biggest and most well-know companies, Dell and Walgreens, currently face federal lawsuits from customers, the former allegedly for denying credit to minority and specifically Latino customers, and the latter for a situation in which one of the managers ordered cashiers to harass black customers on the sales floor of one its store branches until they left the premises.

Women in the Corporate World

The outlook for women in major (and in many smaller) corporations is equally distressing. Of the top *Fortune* 1000 U.S. corporate CEOs, only 20 are women. That number is cut in half when focusing solely on the *Fortune* 500 companies where only 10 women are ranked as CEOs of their company, the latest addition to this exclusive club being Brenda C. Barnes who was recently made CEO of Sara Lee in 2005.⁴ Hence, women represent two percent of CEOs in both the *Fortune* 500 and *Fortune* 1000. In his analysis of gender discrimination in the workplace, Fernandez (1999: 60-61) presented the following astonishing statistics to demonstrate the persistence of gender

discrimination in U.S. corporations:

- While women have come to constitute a full half of the workforce, less than 0.5 percent of the highest-paid officers and directors of the top 1000 U.S. companies are women.
- Women hold only 2.6 percent of the top executive positions in *Fortune* 500 companies.
- While female managers work slightly more hours (52.5 hours per week) than do male managers (52.0 hours per week), their average annual earnings (\$44,000) are lower than those of males (\$50,000; see also Wirth 2002).
- Women are more likely to hold lower managerial positions compared to men, even though they have a higher educational level.

Similar to the recent increase in racial discrimination lawsuits, many companies are also finding themselves defendants in gender discrimination and sexual harassment cases. For example, Morgan Stanley⁵ and ExxonMobil both faced charges of sex and gender discrimination. Recently, a \$190 million dollar sexual-harassment lawsuit was filed against the president and CEO of Toyota North America for making repeated unwanted sexual advances toward one of his assistants.⁶ More disturbing, however, is the lawsuit against Alarm One, a 300-employee company based in Anaheim, California, by a woman who alleged that she was spanked in front of her co-workers as part of a camaraderie-building exercise.⁷

Diverse...or Not Diverse: That Is the Question

If the above statistics suggest American businesses still have a long way to go before they are able to claim racial and gender parity, why would many corporations argue that they enforce diversity and diversity-based initiatives (e.g., affirmative action)? Also, why would these companies advertise that they are diverse and inclusive companies? How can we explain the apparent contradictions? Furthermore, why are companies, many which have historically barred minorities and women from their workplace, now publicizing support for racial and gender integration?

My central question in this dissertation is on the discrepancy between corporations' public pronouncements on diversity and their actual practices regarding diversity. That is, how are corporations able to promote themselves as diverse organizations, in some cases, exemplary models of diversity, in light of the available data contradicting this image?

There are generally two responses to this query. One group of analysts argues that companies recognize the need for diversity, now and in the future, because the issue is centrally linked to a company's ability to generate healthy profits. With an increasing minority population that are bound to become the numeric majority in the near future, companies will need to implement more effective diversity programs and policies (e.g., affirmative action programs, minority recruitment policies, etc.) or face possible loss of business from minorities (Fine 1995; Henderson 1994; Mor Barak 2005). Already, many large multinational companies are finding out that on a global scale, diversity makes good business sense (Milliken and Martins, 1996). Indeed, according to proponents of this argument, many companies have gone to extremes to make diversity a top priority in the

workplace. Thence, the question for researchers in this camp is not whether companies are trying to promote diversity within the workplace, but whether or not the techniques used by many companies actually work. According to a number of studies, many companies have been largely unsuccessful in their diversity attempts because they have not really integrated minorities and women into the workplace effectively (Bowen et al. 1999; Fine 1995; Gottfredson 1992; Jackson and Alvarez 1992; Thomas and Ely 2000; Thomas 1992; Thomas 2004). Companies need to create truly integrated workspaces instead of segregating women and minorities into different jobs or tasks.

The problem, however, is that many managers justify racial and gender segregation by claiming it as a business tactic that increases company profits. Consequently, black managers are typically asked to oversee branches in the ghetto and Latino managers are centrally located in places that have predominately Latino clientele. Chad, a black Branch Manager of a major rental company, illustrates clearly this type of business mentality:

Ahhh, I mean, you know, to me, in a perfect world, you know, it's based upon truly the individuals' talents. And putting those talents, matching the talents to where the needs are. You know, if I got, if I got an office in Orange County in Beltway Z which is heavily, you know, an Asian population then, you know, why not be smart and put my strongest Asian management team in there to not only just, you know, just conduct business there but to actually, you know, to be able to communicate with the people and conduct business. Not just, you know, not just make money off of them, but, you know, actually communicate what we're

doing, everything that's going on. Cause I'm sure there's a lot, there's a lot lost in translation that the company benefits off of.

While this may have some initial benefits for companies, in the long run segregating minorities from whites creates racialized spaces⁸ in the company, severely limiting the chances of minorities and women to gain economic opportunities compared to whites.

Alternatively, other scholars claim that most companies are already diverse. Hence, there is no need for policies or practices that create or enforce diversity. Forcing diversity in situations where diversity already exists leads to discrimination. According to McAllister⁹ (2004), not only will white men become the minority population by the year 2050, they will face hardships in attaining and keeping jobs because the majority of these jobs are going to white women and to minorities. Research by O'Donnell¹⁰ (2003) suggests that forcing companies to engage in diversity-training programs and implementing diversity policies and practices will only create anti-diversity sentiment among workers and managers. Moreover, O'Donnell claims that sexual harassment and racial and gender discrimination have dramatically increased in corporations that implemented diversity policies and held diversity training exercises for their employees. Still, other scholars claim that diversity is nothing more than a leftist attempt to create an anti-individualist, anti-liberty, and anti-equality society. For example, Wood (2003) argues that diversity is a concept invented by the left that has become an excuse used to discriminate against whites in America.

Diversity as an Ideology

Contrary to many contemporary arguments regarding the issue of diversity in the U.S., I suggest that an alternative explanation should be explored. Specifically, I argue that the word diversity, similar to its predecessor, “multiculturalism,” has become a cultural ideology, one that resonates with the U.S. mainstream view that America is a color-blind and gender-blind country¹¹. This ideology emerged in the 1960s and 1970s (initially in the form of “multiculturalism,” and later as “diversity”) as a response to the social and political demands of the Civil Rights Movement. The diversity ideology was further enhanced by the establishment of federal government programs (e.g., President ‘s Commission on Equal Employment, etc.) designed to increase opportunities for women and minorities in the labor market. In some cases federal programs such as those enforced by the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP) created strict requirements for companies that wanted to contract out their services to the government. Corporations, in order to avoid additional mandatory diversity requirements from the federal government, began co-opting the language and many of the practices of the diversity ideology, essentially repackaging it to their advantage.

Today, most Americans tend to believe that we live in a society where people are not judged by their gender or skin color, but by their staunch character and merit. Thus, because racial and gender discrimination is a thing of the past, institutions such as our educational system, big business, the military, and others must be sincere, especially if they are willing to spend money publicizing their commitment to diversity.

Contrary to this belief, I contend that the majority of businesses in corporate America are not interested in creating truly egalitarian and “diverse” workplaces, but

rather, are interested in maintaining the status quo hierarchy that have long served the interests of white males in the U.S. To their favor, corporations need not maintain “diverse” workplaces to a greater extent than simply creating the illusion that they espouse racial or gender equality. Thus, corporate officials are using diversity and diversity-type language as a means to perpetuate and maintain an ideology that centers on *ideas* of equality and egalitarianism, while *in practice* they maintain highly inequitable work environments. The diversity ideology is important in establishing the connection between businesses and consumers, but it really does little in terms of actually helping minorities and women move up the corporate ladder.

How This Dissertation Is Organized

In the following chapter, I outline a brief history of the development of multiculturalism and diversity since the Civil Rights Movement. I end the chapter by arguing that the notions of multiculturalism and the diversity ideology, in all its varied meanings, have been co-opted by corporations for their own advantage. That is, corporations have managed to take the ideas generated by the Civil Rights Movement, and repackage them in such a way as to foster a color-blind and gender-blind cultural climate that minimizes racial and gender inequalities, yet enable corporations to maintain a white male system of power with few consequences to the corporations. In Chapter III, I review some of the more notable studies on the topic of diversity, focusing on research that has been done with regard to diversity in the workplace. In Chapter IV, I outline my methodology for this project and discuss some of the problems I faced as a minority trying to interview white managers. In Chapter V, I expose a number of tactics

companies use to create a public image of themselves as advocates of diversity, even in cases where the data illustrates otherwise. In addition, I reveal some of the inconsistencies I found when interviewing high-level managers and executives who work for *Fortune* 1000 companies in regards to how they define diversity, their ability to explain their company's policy on diversity, and their views of affirmative action. In Chapter VI, I elaborate on the frames used by corporate managers and executives to explain why minorities and women have not been as successful as their white male counterparts in the business world. These frames are consistent with Bonilla-Silva's (2006) argument that a color-blind ideology has emerged since the post-Civil Rights era enabling whites to justify the inequalities that continue to affect minorities (and women). Finally, in Chapter VII, I discuss some of the shortcomings of my research project. I also discuss some of the preliminary data I am currently working on that will help to enhance my claim regarding diversity in corporate America. I conclude with a discussion of the importance of studying corporations' definitions and interpretations of words such as "diversity," and discuss the implications of my research.

CHAPTER II

FROM CIVIL RIGHTS AND MULTICULTURALISM TO THE DIVERSITY

IDEOLOGY:

A HISTORICAL TRIP FROM THEN TO NOW

Diversity, n., pl. -ties. 1. The State or fact of being diverse; difference or variety. 2. A point of difference.

Diverse, adj. 1. Of a different kind; unlike. 2. Of various kinds; varied.

~Random House Webster's Dictionary

To Understand a given ideology, we have to take into account everything that is going on in the higher circles of the society in question—classes, fractions of classes, institutions, power struggles, diverging and converging interests.

~ Henri Lefebvre¹² (1966)

The term “diversity” is broad and misleading. It is broad in the sense that many people seem to think of diversity as an all-inclusive term. That is, diversity symbolizes, at once, a variety of people in our society who differ with respect to race, class, gender, sexuality, disability, age, and much more. In fact, Webster’s Dictionary defines diversity using simple words such as “difference” and “varied,” both of which are words that are very general and very broad in their meaning. And as I will illustrate in subsequent chapters, such a broad definition can create situations in which sensitive topics such as race and gender are easily neglected or overlooked.

The word “diversity” is misleading in that with the notion of diversity almost invariably comes an assumption of equality and fairness. However, rarely do we find variety or equality in the U.S. Ageism and discrimination against the disabled occurs on a routine basis (see Nelson 2002). Gay and lesbians continue to fight for even the most basic human rights (Badgett and Kibbe 1992, Berstein and Kostelac 2002). And women and minorities continue to be overlooked in corporate positions that hold any serious decision-making power (Burk 2005; see also Acker 2006). They also continue to be underrepresented in higher education, both as students and as faculty members (Feagin et al. 1996, see also a newer study by Renzulli et al. 2006). And contrary to the few token representatives that get overplayed by the media (e.g., Condoleezza Rice, Colin Powell, etc.), women and especially minorities get very little representation in U.S. politics. In fact, according to a June 2006 report by *Diversity, Inc.*,¹³ although minorities comprise over 30 percent of the U.S. population and over 34 percent of the labor force, they only represent six percent of the 4,100 U.S. Senate employees across America. The article further states, “The top Washington, D.C.-based positions in almost every Senate office—chief of staff, legislative director and communications director—are practically reserved for white men and women” (171). Not only do minorities have little say in the political decision-making that goes on in the U.S. Senate, they have little power in influencing those who do hold power. Thus, recommendations to U.S. senators from their staff, ranging from hiring personnel to policy-making, are made without the benefit of having minorities’ views represented.

Nonetheless, diversity is a term that appeals to mainstream America because it goes hand-in-hand with the idea of the American Dream, a concept based on notions of

meritocracy, individuality and freedom, where anyone can make it, if they only try hard enough. It is a term that fits with America's age-old theme of being a "land of opportunity." However, it is a relatively new term, the latest in a series of terms used during specific times in American history to make bold, symbolic statements regarding tolerance and open-mindedness in the U.S.

Pre-Civil Rights Era: A Time of Change

The notion that all people are equal, imbued with certain inalienable rights, and that all should be treated fairly and justly is relatively new in America. Of course, one could point to the Constitution of the United States or, in particular, the Bill of Rights and make the claim that the U.S. has always been just and fair, relying of course on the ever popular "We the people" line marking the beginning of the Constitution. Or one could point to the preamble of the U.S. Declaration of Independence (1776) that specifically mentions equality and inalienable rights to make one's case:

*We hold these Truths to be self-evident, that all Men are created equal,
that they are endowed, by their Creator, with certain unalienable Rights,
that among these are Life, Liberty, and the Pursuit of Happiness.*

But, history has a way of rewriting itself, or of disappearing all together, and most people are blind to America's long racist and sexist practices. For example, according to Feagin¹⁴ (2006), the U.S. Constitution is a racial document that historically helped to set the stage for the development of a racist society. Of course, the founding fathers were also sexist. Women had few rights compared to men in the early history of the U.S. Hence, the intentions of the founding fathers had always been one of white male

supremacy. The racial and gender practices of our nation are so deeply embedded in our institutions and have such a long and intentional history that according to Bonilla-Silva¹⁵ (2006), it will take much more than superficial changes (i.e., in our educational system, social structure, etc.) to create total racial and gender harmony.

Abraham Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation on January 1st, 1863, paved the way for the dismantling of slavery in the U.S. However, whites continued to maintain social, economic, and political control through the use of Jim Crow legislation, highly racialized scare tactics, and a court system openly hostile to minorities. And white males were systematically able to thwart an increasing women's suffrage movement that would not gain momentum until the early twentieth century. Indeed, it was not until the 19th Amendment to the Constitution was ratified in August 26, 1920 that women could finally vote. It was not until the early 1930s that federal court decisions were finally made to stop overt racial segregation at all white universities, the culmination of which many would claim to be the 1954 landmark *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* case that declared that denying education to anyone, regardless of race, was unconstitutional.

A major win for minorities came in the form of President Franklin D. Roosevelt's Executive Order 8802, better known as the Fair Employment Act. Under pressure from a massive protest organized by the Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters (led by Bayard Rustin, A. Philip Randolph, and A. J. Muste) Roosevelt signed the Executive Order on the eve of WWII, June 25, 1941, prohibiting racial discrimination in the national defense and other government related industries. The Fair Employment Act was the first federal law prohibiting discrimination in the U.S. It established the Committee on Fair Employment Practices, headed by the Office of Production Management, whose job was

to investigate discrimination violations and take appropriate action. Although the Fair Employment Act served as acknowledgement from the government to address racial issues, Executive Order 8802 carried no punitive measures for companies that did not comply. President Roosevelt's intent in creating the Executive Order was to curtail protests and strikes to ensure the production of military weapons and supplies as the U.S. prepared for war. Nonetheless, the Executive Order served as precedent for future presidential orders dealing with discrimination in the workplace.

As World War II began to become an inevitable situation for the U.S., the idea of America as a great big "melting pot"¹⁶ became a central theme for a government trying to unite its people to a common cause. World War II also created a new set of dilemma for businesses that had lost the majority of their workforce to war. As men were being shipped off to fight overseas, increasingly many companies had to resort to women laborers as well as minority and immigrant male workers who were unable, or ineligible to serve in the Armed Forces. Ergo, record numbers of women and minorities were given the opportunity to enter into the U.S. labor force and into jobs that were previously dominated by white men. Nevertheless, although World War II provided unprecedented opportunities for women and minorities to obtain better paying jobs than they previously had, racial and gender barriers were not erased and discrimination against women and minorities continued, albeit on a smaller scale than before. The end of World War II signaled a return to white male supremacy ideals that had plagued America since long before the Revolution. Along with increased blatant and overt racial and sex discrimination came racial hostility not only from white males, but also from the educational, political, and court systems, all of which were comprised of white males.

America's "melting pot" was an exclusive club, and excluded from this club were blacks, Asians, Latinos, and some dark-skinned European groups. Around the same time, the U.S. government was busy supporting a large political campaign designed to get women out of the workforce and back into the homes where they were before the war started.

Favorable changes came once again for minorities when the courts declared school segregation to be illegal. The *Brown v. Topeka Board of Education* case marked more than just a win for minorities wanting a better education. It marked a significant time of change in U.S. history. Along with changes in the law favoring women and minorities, laws were also being changed to allow at least token numbers of immigrants into the U.S., some from countries whose people were previously barred or limited from the United States. The late 1940s and early 1950s were also times of strife. Increased racial riots and frequent protests created uncomfortable situations for many white men. And as Omi and Winant¹⁷ (1994) have noted, the social and political movements of many minority groups posed a real challenge to the political, cultural, and social structures in America. But while the riots and protests against racial and gender discrimination were effective tools for creating social change, real progress came about as a result of changes in the legality of racial and sex discrimination. It was these legal changes that forced businesses to change their tactics when it came to dealing with minorities and women, both as customers as well as employees. The biggest change for many businesses came about with the ratification of Civil Rights Act of 1964, which read:

An Act. To enforce the constitutional right to vote, to confer jurisdiction upon the district courts of the United States to provide injunctive relief against discrimination in public accommodations, to authorize the

Attorney General to institute suits to protect constitutional rights in public facilities and public education, to extend the Commission on Civil Rights, to prevent discrimination in federally assisted programs, to establish a Commission on Equal Employment Opportunity, and for other purposes. Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled, that this Act may be cited as the "Civil Rights Act of 1964"¹⁸.

Of particular interest to businesses was Title VII (Section 2000e-2, 703) of the 1964 Civil Rights Act that provided equal protection under the law for women and minorities as well as enforcement of that law. Title VII was written as an equal employment opportunity clause that prohibited employers, labor organizations, and employment agencies from discriminating based on an individual's race, color, religion, sex, or national origin. For many companies Title VII (along with other laws such as the Equal Pay Act of 1963¹⁹, the Voting Rights Act of 1965, the Immigration Act of 1965, etc.) posed serious threats to the white male power structure present in corporate America. After all, it was not until after changes in the law to protect women and minorities were enacted that corporate businesses faced legal ramifications for racial and sex discrimination. Indeed, before this, most businesses freely, and openly discriminated against women and minorities and although record numbers of women and minorities were being employed by many businesses compared to pre-World War II times, most of the jobs tended to be menial, low-paid jobs and opportunities for advancement in the company were few and far between. In fact, according to Burstein (1985: 1), it was not uncommon for "employers seeking white-collar workers to specify that they were interested only in Protestant or

‘Nordic’ applicants.” Minorities and women were denied access to many jobs. And skilled labor unions (e.g., American Federation of Labor (AFL), etc.), which presented better opportunities compared to other non-skilled unions for managerial promotions (e.g., Congress of Industrial Organizations (CIO), etc.), often excluded women and minorities from their organizations (Green 1978, 1998). Reserved for white men were the managerial and executive positions of a company, a social incubator that helped them to maintain their social status, their white privilege, and their exclusive power.

Multiculturalism in the 1960s and 1970s

The Civil Rights Act of 1964 alone was not responsible for the internal changes that were taking place in many companies in the late 1960s and early 1970s. As a result of the Civil Rights Movement, new policies and programs were needed to quell the growing public image of America as a racist and sexist society, as well as the growing public dissent. Thus, the notion of “multiculturalism” was introduced to the U.S. First used in 1957 to describe Switzerland (Parrillo 2005), multiculturalism is a theory centered on the idea that countries should embrace the rich ethnic and cultural variety that makes up their nation. The idea of multiculturalism spread in the 1970s through the political agendas of several countries, varying from country to country. For example, the idea of multiculturalism was adopted into Canadian law in 1971 (known as the Official Multiculturalism Act of 1971) as a political response to the grievances filed by Canada’s French-speaking minority. Initially, the Canadian government wanted to implement a series of programs guided by the notions of biculturalism. However that idea was overwhelmingly attacked on a number of fronts, the major argument was that

biculturalism did not respect, nor recognize, Canadians who were not of French or English descent. Subsequently, the Official Multiculturalism Act of 1971 was added to Canada's 1982 constitution.

The notion of multiculturalism took on a different agenda, however, in the U.S. as more effort was placed on advertising multiculturalism in order to curb the growing global view of Americans as bigots and hypocrites rather than embracing the idea of racial and ethnic pluralism (Layton 2000²⁰). In an attempt to improve the economic and social status of minorities, the federal government not only implemented a series of legislative acts to help protect their rights, but multicultural policies became the standard in various federal departments and in the everyday business conducted between the government and those who wanted to do business with it. Although the notion of multiculturalism was never ratified into law, the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC), put into place by the Civil Rights Act of 1964, as well the Office of Federal Contract Compliance Programs (OFCCP), established in 1965 and governed by the Department of Labor, created pressure for many businesses through the implementation of new federal purchase and federal compliance programs designed around the ideas of equal opportunity and cultural pluralism. Not all businesses agreed with these new federal guidelines, but those interested in doing business with the U.S. government found themselves creating new offices of multiculturalism and affirmative action in an effort to meet the new workplace standards.

Though the pressure from the EEOC on businesses to open up their workplaces to women and minorities was high, a number of corporations embraced multiculturalism early on in an effort to move ahead of what was already a growing trend in the federal

government. This was a rational act given the likelihood that EEOC would make multicultural policies a staple in their new agenda, but it was also seen as good politics given the changing demographic context. Many companies that implemented multicultural policies in the workplace early on were seen as progressive leaders at a time when mainstream conservatives in the United States were facing the onslaught of a number of large progressive movements. According to Zweigenhaft and Domhoff (2003), the early 1970s represented an unprecedented time in corporate history for educated women and blacks who were previously denied access to the top echelon of corporate businesses. And while the numbers of women and blacks entering these positions were relatively small, they represented a breakthrough in an area that previous was dominated by elite white males.

Affirmative Action

If multiculturalism was the mantra during the middle-to-late 1960s through early 1980s, affirmative action²¹ policies and programs ensured that women and minorities would gain entry into jobs previously denied them. Affirmative action programs were widely implemented in many educational, government, and business organizations early on and created a unique opportunity for women and minorities who wanted a piece of the American Dream. According to West (1996: 32), the fundamental purpose of affirmative action was to "...put a significant dent in the tightly controlled networks of privileged white male citizens who monopolized the good jobs and influential positions in American society." Thus, affirmative action was not simply a means by which women and

minorities could gain access to better-paid jobs and higher-level positions, it was a counter to the continuing legacy of white male supremacy.²²

Used as a counter-argument to the prevailing notion of meritocracy, President Lyndon B. Johnson justified the use of affirmative action programs in his 1965 talk at Howard University.²³ In his famous speech, President Johnson remarked, "You do not take a person who, for years, has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him up to the starting line in a race and then say, 'you are free to compete with all the others', and still justly believe that you have been completely fair." Affirmative action received widespread attention in the late 1960s to early 1970s through Executive Orders 10925²⁴, implemented by President John F. Kennedy, and Executive Order 11246²⁵ which was implemented by President Lyndon B. Johnson. Both executive orders were administered and enforced by OFCCP and both served as mechanisms to reduce barriers to women and minorities in private as well as public employment. New programs were added and old ones renewed throughout the 1970s as the Nixon and Ford administrations were active supporters of affirmative action and other policies that promoted equal opportunity, a strategy that, according to Marable (1996), allowed the Republican Party to better connect with an expanding black middle class. According to Williams (1996: 244), it was President Nixon's administration that created a new set of policies that required all affirmative action programs to include "minority and female hiring goals and timetables to which the contractor must commit its 'good-faith' efforts," a requirement that Laurence Silberman as under-secretary of labor claimed would ensure opportunities for women and minorities.

In addition to the federal government, affirmative action became popular on college campuses as a number of student movements called for their schools to actively recruit minority students. Although in many instances the affirmative action agenda was led by minority groups [e.g., Black Student Movement (BSM), El Movimiento Estudiantil Chicano de Aztlan (MEChA), Mexican American Student Association (MASA), etc.], the spurring of students on campus came from other fronts as well [e.g., Students for a Democratic Society (SDS), Southern Student Organizing Committee (SSOC), etc.]. And in the business world, companies faced heated pressure from the EEOC and OFCCP to conform to multicultural and nondiscriminatory practices. Many companies found themselves on the wrong end of discrimination lawsuits filed by the EEOC and many settlements were arranged to not only pay monetary compensation to women and minorities for violating their rights, but to also establish company programs and policies that would help fuel women and minority success in the workplace.²⁶ Regardless, mixed in with the growing social, political, and economic pressures to become multicultural, there was also little social or political backlash during the late 1960s and early-to-middle 1970s to affirmative action programs and policies (at least the complaints of whites were less vocal compared to the backlash multiculturalism and affirmative action faced in 1980s). Consequently, many large corporations took advantage of the situation and voluntarily implemented affirmative action programs on their own. Indeed, organizations such as Plans for Progress, a collaboration of over 165 *Fortune* 500 companies, freely engaged in affirmative action efforts to recruit women and minorities into their workplaces.²⁷

Starting in the late 1970s, and further fueled by a Reagan administration in the 1980s that slashed and burned many social welfare as well as EEOC programs, affirmative action became a national controversy. In her article “The Politics of Affirmative Action,” Williams (1996) provides three reasons to explain the growth of hostility towards affirmative action during this time. First, the post-World War II boom had severely waned and with an increasing economic globalization also came job loss for many U.S. citizens, especially in the manufacturing sector. Competition and cheap labor markets overseas also helped to increase hostility toward immigrants, a situation that did not help minorities who were citizens of the U.S. as they became “otherized” along with anyone who did not fit the skin-tone and phenotype of white Europeans. Second, increases in technology fueled a growing anxiety of job security. Automation in the factories led to a phenomenal level of clerical and technical job loss. And third, a factor agreed upon by most liberal scholars studying the issue of affirmative action, the economic policies of the Reagan and Bush administrations intentionally devised a series of plans to generate public discontent with affirmative action. These plans included not only severe cuts to many welfare and social programs, but also racially-coded language designed to appeal to white voters and public discourse that argued that since racism was no longer an issue in the U.S., programs designed to create opportunities for minorities were no longer needed. The idea that everyone was on a level playing field generated new hope for whites (males in particular) in the form of “reverse discrimination,” a notion suggesting that whites were being racially discriminated against. In addition to the changes made by the Reagan and Bush administrations, Executive Orders 10925 and 11246 were amended and made ineffective and the EEOC and OFCCP found themselves

targets of the Department of Justice as well as the White House. Amazingly, though affirmative action was rapidly losing ground in the political and social arenas of the U.S., most businesses in corporate America continued to retain their affirmative action programs until they could replace it with policies and practices of a new kind: diversity.

Growth and Expansion of a New Term: Diversity

Diversity is the latest oft-used term following its predecessor “multiculturalism” to counter the growing controversies multiculturalism and affirmative action programs were generating in the late 1970s and early 1980s as corporations began co-opting the term “diversity.” The word “diversity” served the corporate interest well because it was not as limiting as “multiculturalism,” nor was it tied to the growing perception that policies such as affirmative action were discriminatory in themselves. This did not mean that corporations necessarily abandoned affirmative action programs. For some companies, affirmative action policies were taken apart, rearranged, and placed under the new title of “diveristy programs” (see Kelly and Dobin 1998). For other companies, affirmative action continued to serve as the centerpiece in their diversity policies [a recent example of this is illustrated by the large number of corporations (65 leading *Fortune* 500 companies to include General Motors, the world’s largest car manufacturing company) that sided with Michigan in the Michigan law school case, *Grutter v. Bollinger*²⁸ (Green 2004)].

Again, corporations adopting diversity policies were seen as the front runners of progressiveness, especially at a time when various social movements, this time on a more global scale, were questioning whether or not America was truly an egalitarian nation.

Multiculturalism became the central theme after World War II, when thousands of black and minority soldiers were returning to the United States in search of career opportunities. With the Civil Rights Act of 1964 came the expectation of fair and equal opportunities for workers of all colors. Between 1950 and 1976, the number of women in the U.S. workforce increased from 18.4 million to over 38.4 million, respectively (Green 1980). During this time, unprecedented numbers of women were also pursuing higher education to increase their chances of competing effectively in the job market. With the 1980s and 1990s came political assaults on multicultural policies and practices. However, also prominent, as a result of conservative Reaganomic politics and new legislation, were the increased numbers of racial riots and social unrest from minorities and other supporters of their cause of racial equality. Diversity was seen as the new corporate solution to the problem of workplace discrimination.

The idea that corporations are interested in developing and maintaining a diverse and inclusive work environment is rather new, one that was around in the 1950s through 1970s with multiculturalism and affirmative action and continues on today with notions of diversity. Before the pre-Civil Rights era it was uncommon for women and minorities to occupy top managerial and executive positions in businesses (DiTomaso and Smith 1996). This is not to say that minorities and women were not allowed to work for many companies, rather they were mostly excluded from positions of power and authority. A close examination of U.S. corporate history illustrates a long pattern of resentment and hostility towards women and minorities that did not change, publicly in any event, until recently. However, statistics continue to indicate that minorities and women are not even close to achieving parity with their white male counterparts. Furthermore, many

companies continue to implement various tactics to prevent women and minorities from achieving any sense of real power or authority in the corporate world (e.g., sex segregation, glass ceilings, etc.). Given the history of corporate America and the fact that racial and gender discrimination continue to pose major problems for achieving racial and gender equality, should we be somewhat skeptical about diversity policies and practices that are advertised by many companies?

Defining Diversity

One question we should ask when discussing issues of diversity is: what exactly do people mean when they utter the word “diversity”? In one of the previous sections, I noted that the official definition given in Webster’s dictionary was short and referred to the act of being “varied” or having “difference.” But how do mainstream Americans interpret the word “diversity” and moreover, how do their definitions differ from that of white corporate managers and executives. Are they talking about “cultural diversity” and the differences between peoples’ cultural and social milieu? Are they discussing diversity specifically in terms of language, religion, family, community, gender, sexuality, or countless other human variations in society? Additionally, how do organizational interpretations of diversity differ from a sociological understanding of the term? I define here the word “diversity” as the practice of affording equal treatment, justice, and opportunity to every group in society, no matter what their differences, in addition to providing these groups with equal representation and opportunities. Although my definition is quite different from the definitions given by many of the corporate managers and executives I interviewed, it is not that far off from the definitions given by

most liberal social scientists. For example, Anderson and Taylor (2004: 10) define diversity as:

...the variety of group experiences that result from the social structure of society.

Diversity is a broad concept that includes studying group differences in society's opportunities, the shaping of social institutions by different social factors, the formation of group and individual identity, and the process of social change.

What makes my ideas regarding diversity different from that of many other researchers is that I also define diversity as an ideology, one that has gained prominence in the U.S. since the Civil Rights Movement.

Understanding Ideology

In order to really comprehend the complexities of racial and gender dynamics in the corporate world, one first needs to understand ideology. Destutt de Tracy (1801)²⁹, a French Enlightenment aristocrat and philosopher in the 18th century, is believed to have been the first person to coin the term, ideology. In his work, *Elements d'ideologie*—a comprehensive collection of memoirs written on the subject of ideology, Destutt de Tracy defined ideology as the “science of ideas.” But Destutt de Tracy was only one of a group of early philosophers who belonged to the school of ideologues (and who called themselves ideologists), as it was well known in France at this time. The ideologists' recognition of ideology, however, is rather distinct from most social scientists' current definition of the term. Whereas 18th (and even early 19th) century French ideologists regarded ideology as an individual's representation of how the world works, most modern-day sociologists and social scientists would generally define ideology as a

collective “common sense” way of envisioning how the world works—ethical, political, social, racial, etc. Simply put, ideology refers to the deeply entrenched ideas, beliefs, and practices developed by institutions or groups of individuals in society.

Marxism and Ideology

Since de Tracy’s earliest definition, many social scientists and philosophers have expanded the notion of ideology as a better way to understand the social inequalities present in society. Most notable is Karl Marx (1970), who argued (with Fredrich Engels) that societies could not be ruled by force alone, but must rely on ideology in order to have effective dominant control over the people. That is, the best way to control people is not through oppression or coercion, but by legitimizing the current order of the world through the dominant institutions in society. These institutions promote the values and norms of a given society, as well as provide a rationalization of how the world works, in order to maintain the status quo.³⁰

According to Marx, ideology could not be determined by just any group of people in society. Rather, Marx suggested that ideology was a set of ideas proposed and instigated to the public by the dominant class of a given society. That is, those in power must rely on ideologies to take from workers, “in addition to material wealth, their ‘spiritual’ acceptance” of the situation they are in (Lefebvre1966: 76). But, not only do workers accept their situation, they may even support the decisions of those in charge. For Marx, since the “base determines the superstructure” in a capitalist society and the ruling class controls the base (i.e., the means of production), ideology (as one part of the superstructure) directly serves the interests of the ruling class.

Antonio Gramsci's Notion of "Hegemony"

Ideologies are embedded in the superstructure of society, along with a society's legal, political, and religious systems. According to Gramsci (1971), all major institutions within a given society are affected by the dominant ideology. They are invisible to most people in a given society. However, they also *appear* to be individually driven and thus, are often recognized as the norm from which all other ideas are seen as radical or irrational.³¹

Antonio Gramsci expanded on Marx's ideas regarding ideology with his conception of "hegemony," a socialization process that shapes peoples' interpretations of the current order of the social world. Gramsci suggested that in addition to violence and coercion, capitalism maintained control through a "hegemonic culture," where the values of the ruling class became the "common sense" values for the rest of the people in society. That is, capitalism prevailed because the working class (and other classes) identified with the values and norms of the ruling class. Hence, the dominant ideas of the ruling class get reinforced when the majority of the people in society accept those ideas as "common sense" ideas. The cultural hegemony of the dominant class prevents workers from recognizing their own interests or developing the means from which to revolt (see also Jackman 1994). Hegemony, then, helps to maintain the status quo in society, rather than conflict.

Putting It All Together: The Diversity Ideology

The diversity ideology is steeped in lore that suggests that our society has come to a point in time where everyone, to include all racial and ethnic groups and women in

particular, is treated fairly and equally. It is similar to the age-old notion of the “American Dream” in that there is an idea that opportunity exists for anyone who will work hard enough for it. But whereas the “American Dream” is vague in terms how much harder one has to work compared to another to achieve success, the diversity ideology suggests there is a level playing field when it comes to opportunities in such avenues as education, politics, and corporate America, among others. Thus, the diversity ideology advocates not just opportunity, but equal opportunity.

The Ideology of Color-Blindness

In his 1997 *American Sociological Review* article titled “Rethinking Racism: Toward a Structural Interpretation,” Bonilla-Silva argued that since the Civil Rights Movement in the late 1950s and early 1960s, new covert and subtle racial practices have replaced the old overt and “in-your-face” Jim Crow techniques that were previously used by whites to keep minorities in their place. Bonilla-Silva coins this shift in America’s racial practices “new racism.” As a result of “new racism” practices, an ideology of colorblindness has emerged to justify and rationalize continued racial oppression³². Thus, whites claim that racism does not exist, that racial segregation is a natural occurrence, or that culture explains why minorities do not do as well as their white counterparts. The diversity ideology is similar to Bonilla-Silva’s (2006, 2001) notion of the color-blind ideology. It is a byproduct of the changes that occurred as a result of the Civil Rights Movement. However, the diversity ideology is centered on white male oppression. It allows white males (and women and minorities) to rationalize and justify racial and gender oppression that occur in America. It works hegemonically by accepting

the language and even the moral order of diversity, without dealing with the practical and political elements involved in creating a truly diverse workplace. Nevertheless, the issue of racial and gender oppression in the U.S. is not a simple one. White women discriminate against minorities even as white males, in turn, discriminate against them. Hence, I do not suggest the diversity ideology as an alternative to the ideology of color-blindness. Rather, the ideologies of color-blindness and diversity work in conjunction with one another to maintain white male privilege.

The Diversity Ideology and Corporate America

I rely on the Marxist concept of ideology, specifically Gramsci's concept of "cultural hegemony," as the theoretical foundation to explain the diversity ideology. Whereas many researchers have studied diversity issues from many angles and viewpoints (e.g., education, community, military, etc.), my research is centered on the diversity ideology as it relates to the corporate world. My argument is that a diversity ideology emerged in late 1960s that has helped corporations become increasingly sophisticated in their ability to portray themselves as supporters of racial and gender equality. But, they make no real substantial changes in their policies and practices to create real changes in the racial and gender composition of their workplaces. Specifically, corporations co-opted the notions of diversity that was established by the Civil Rights Movement and helped to perpetuate a diversity ideology that has enabled them to advocate racial and gender equality, yet maintain highly inequitable work environments and an even more inequitable chain of command. Ergo, many corporations argue that they are spending huge sums of money, and are working diligently to foster a

corporate environment that is largely free of racial and gender discrimination but, as I demonstrate in Chapters V and VI, there are four reasons to suspect otherwise. First, many companies continue to have highly segregated workplaces, segregated both racially and by gender. Racial and gender segregation in the workplace foster an environment that is favorable to white employees. Second, contrary to the public image, many companies try to adopt as advocates of affirmative action, the data indicate that not only are most managers and executives against affirmative action, their companies most likely do not have affirmative action policies in place. Third, although most senior-level managers and executives claim that their companies have diversity policies and are adamant about their companies' enthusiasm regarding diversity initiatives and practices, many are unable to adequately explain those policies and practices. Forth, the definition of diversity itself has become so broad that it tends to exclude discussion or critique of racial and gender issues that may be occurring in a particular company. The fact of the matter is that if race and gender issues do not get addressed as a central part of diversity, they do not get resolved. In addition, and similar to the ideology of color-blindness, a number of frames have emerged in corporate America to justify why women and minorities continue to be less successful. These frames are useful not only as public rational explanations for the racial and gender inequality that persists in corporate America, but also as the justifications used by workers (including a number of women and minorities who buy in to the diversity ideology) who are more privy to the mostly white male hierarchal structure that manages and runs their company.

Consequently, the diversity ideology has allowed many corporations to claim they support racial and gender equality, when in truth they do not. Just because there are

companies that have relative large numbers of minorities or women working for them does not guarantee they are diverse. Neither does providing women and minorities with limited access and opportunities to the upper managerial positions of a company confirm their commitment to diversity. Nevertheless, because corporations have developed a compelling argument centered on notions of diversity, they are able to convince the public that they are on the forefront of progressiveness. By implementing policies at the lower levels of their businesses, corporations are able to convey an ideology of equality and egalitarianism, even if only at a superficial level. By siding with affirmative action cases, promoting “best practices,” and implementing diversity training programs in their workplaces, corporations are also able to generate an air of sincerity. Yet, according to Jackman (1994: 65), “ideologies that are promoted with sincerity are more compelling.” Diversity, then, is used to divest, rather than invest, change into corporate institutions.

CHAPTER III

DO CORPORATIONS NEED DIVERSITY:

WHAT DOES PREVIOUS RESEARCH SUGGEST?

The U.S. is a vast playground for scholars interested in studying multiculturalism and diversity. Distinctly different from many other countries, the U.S. is a hodgepodge of ethnic and racial cultures, nationalities, religions, and so on and so forth. Because of this, many sociologists and other researchers are interested in whether a system of inequality continues to prevail in this country and if the answer is yes, in what ways do these inequalities manifest themselves, how are they reproduced, and how do we create a more egalitarian society. For a number of scholars, a diverse society is not necessarily a just or equal society. Still, given the amount of attention to multiculturalism and diversity, research in these areas continues to be relatively limited. By this I do not mean to say that few studies have been conducted on the subject. Rather, the research that has been done on diversity has tended to rely one of two assumptions.

The first assumption is that corporations are already diverse. Therefore, trying to establish and enforce diversity policies and practices in the workplace is a wasted effort for many companies. Moreover, it leads to increased racial and gender discrimination in the workplace (O'Donnell 2003). The second assumption, and one that is made by many liberal scholars, is that corporations (and the actors that run them) that do not enforce diversity policies and practices in their workplaces are acting irrationally. As more minorities and women earn business degrees, and with an increasing minority population,

corporations who continue to have homogenous workplaces are likely to see a substantial drop in their bottom line as minorities and women boycott their businesses (Thomas 2004). They are also likely to face discrimination lawsuits from women and minorities (Henderson 1994). And they will be less capable of surviving in a global world that places demands on creativity and differing perspectives on how to do business (Jackson and Alvarez 1992).

In order to give a better sense of some of the research that has been done on diversity I have divided the first half of this chapter into two sections. In the first section I provide a short overview of some of the studies that have been done on race, gender, and diversity in the U.S. In the second section, I present a number of different views on diversity in corporate America and illustrate how my argument adds to the overall research.

Race, Gender, and Diversity in America: An Overview

A number of researchers claim that the use of the term “diversity” is inappropriate because it only misleads what is already a diverse society (Wood 2003; see also Ryan O’Donnell’s 2003 article, *The Corporate Diversity Scam*), one where racial discrimination is “a thing of the past” (D’Souza 1999, Dickerson 2004, Henry 1994, Steele 1988), and is even more apt to be aimed at white men rather than women and minorities (Glazer 1987). Yet, most of the research conducted on inequality in the United States illustrates that we are more racially segregated than ever before and that racial and gender discrimination is far from being just an ugly face from our past. For example, we know that as far as neighborhoods go, blacks and other minorities largely live segregated

lives from whites (Massey and Denton 1994) and that this pattern of isolation is largely due to whites' desire to live in neighborhoods free of blacks and other minorities, rather than the other way around (Johnson and Shapiro 2003, Farley 1996, Krysan and Farley 2002). The pattern is similar when looking at interracial marriages. While interracial marriages have increased somewhat for whites and other minority groups such as Latino/as and Asians, there has only been a slight increase in the formation of black-white intimate relationships (Childs 2005; Yancey 2003). Furthermore, the increase in interracial marriage between whites and Latinos or Asians does not necessarily correlate with decreased white prejudice or discrimination against Latinos and Asians (Childs 2005).

In the business world, while women and minorities have made some gains in obtaining entry into previously white male dominated workplaces, many continue to be denied access and opportunity because of the structural or social elements involved in racial and gender discrimination³³ (Braddock and McPartland 1986, 1987; Kirschman and Neckerman 1991; Neckerman and Kirschman 1991; Royster 2003). Women and minorities who are able to enjoy the satisfaction of a "good job" are less likely to achieve upward mobility. When they do experience mobility, they are more likely to be placed in very limited and dead-end positions (e.g., office of affirmative action, office of human resources, etc.) compared to white males (Collins 1997, 1998; Fernandez 1981, 1998; Jones 1973, 1986).

Studies on wage earnings indicate there is a large gap between the earnings of black and white heads of household (Darity 1991; Darity and Myers 1993) and an increasingly wide gap between black and white wealth (Conley 1999; Epperson 2004;

Oliver and Shapiro 1997). Other studies indicate that while relative hourly wages may have increased for black men, the annual work time for these men have decreased (Blau and Beller 1992). Furthermore, there is evidence pointing not only to employers' favoritism of white over black employees (Cotton 1985, 1988), but also to skin tone discrimination where employers are more likely to pay higher wages to minorities who are light-skinned compared to their darker-skinned counterparts (Davila et al. 1993). Women continue also to face wage discrimination in the workplace. Between 1983 and 2000, women's earnings remained stagnant, where women earned less than 80 cents for every dollar earned by men³⁴. Since 2000, however, the workplace pay gap between men and women has worsened. In 2003, women earned 75.5 cents for every dollar earned by men. According to Longley (2004: 1), "Between 2002 and 2003, median annual earnings for full-time year round women workers shrank by 0.6 percent, to \$30,724, while men's earnings remained unchanged, at \$40,668." While the wage gap is somewhat closer when looking at jobs that are regulated by the government, in many private-sector jobs the gap is much larger.

In the educational system, women and minorities face racial obstacles that deter their chances for success at the lower levels³⁵. For example, minority children are often stereotyped as coming from drug-ridden, abused, or neglected homes. Thus, they are often ignored or tracked into vocational programs instead of college preparatory courses by teachers who often view them as "undesirables" (Blau 2003; Kozol 1991; Lewis 2003; Valenzuela 1999). Teachers tend to spend more hands-on time with boys in the classroom, often overlooking or neglecting girls (Frawley 2005; Zittleman 2006). Additionally, obstacles continue to hinder women and minorities' chances at the college

and university levels. Minorities often face subtle (and sometimes overt) racial discrimination, as well as immense psychological stress at many university campuses as a result of being in an environment that looks upon minorities as intellectually inferior and only adept at sports (Feagin et al. 1996, Smith et al. Forthcoming). Women often find themselves tracked into liberal arts or non-physical sciences by professors and counselors who would argue that these are fields best suited to women, even though the physical sciences tend to offer better benefits, such as more prestige and higher pay compared to other fields (Blickenstaff 2005). Finally, women and minorities continue to be underrepresented in faculty positions at U.S. universities. What is worse is that the limited numbers of women and minorities in American academia tend to be concentrated at the lower levels university positions. According to Allen et al. (2002: 189), “Women professors and African American faculty are less likely to be tenured, spend more time on teaching and administrative tasks v. research, are located in less prestigious institutions, and have lower academic ranks compared to their white male peers³⁶.”

Finally, while some social scientists argue that whites’ attitudes towards minorities become more progressive the higher their socioeconomic status (Quillian 1995, 1996; Schuman et al. 1997), recent research suggests that working-class people, especially women, tend to be more progressive (Bonilla-Silva 1997; Johnson and Marini 1998). The logic is that as whites’ socioeconomic status increases, they are likely to move into predominantly white neighborhoods, further segregating themselves from blacks and other minorities. By situating themselves into the “white habitus³⁷,” they are less likely to relate to or understand the social inequalities faced by most minorities. Considering that most upper-level corporate executives are likely to be on the upper end

of the class ladder, it is also likely that their attitudes and views on blacks and other minorities may be more racially biased and stereotyped than not.

Conservative Perspectives on Race, Gender, and Diversity

Most of the conservative viewpoints on diversity argue that “diversity” is a scam. For some scholars in this camp, the argument is that corporations are already diverse. Therefore, corporations that are spending millions of dollars to pursue diversity (via diversity training programs, diversity initiatives, etc.) are wasting their time and playing into the hands of left-wing liberals whose agenda does not include “real equality” (O’Donnell 2003; Wood 2003). Other scholars such as Glazer (2002) claim that because the U.S. has laws in place to prevent racial and sex discrimination, everyone is guaranteed equal opportunity and the “American Dream.” According to Glazer, merit, instead of race and gender should be used as criteria from which to judge people.

Glazer is not alone in his argument that state laws have taken care of racial and gender discrimination (at least in the workplace). Books abound from conservative writers who are compelled to announce to the world that race and gender issues are no longer a problem in the U.S. Indeed, look in any library and one can find books that minimize race and gender. Books such as *The End of Racism* by Dinesh D’Souza (1995), *Losing the Race: Self-Sabotage in Black America* by John H. McWhorter (2000), *The Myth of a Racist Criminal Justice System* by William Wilbanks (1987), *The Content of Our Character: A New Vision of Race in America* by Shelby Steele (1990), *America in Black and White: One Nation, Indivisible* by Stephan and Abigail Thernstrom, and others offer arguments that blame minorities for their current and sustained predicament.

Moreover, since the middle-to-late 1970s, there has been an increase of anti-affirmative action books written, many of which suggest that while in the past women and minorities were discriminated against, today white males find themselves on the chopping block of “reverse discrimination.” These books include, among others: *Affirmative Discrimination: Ethnic Inequality and Public Policy* by Nathan Glazer (1975), *The Remedy: Class, Race, and Affirmative Action* by Richard D. Kahlenberg (1995), *Civil Rights: Rhetoric or Reality?* by Thomas Sowell (1984).

But while books such as the above can be expected from mostly conservative writers, what is most interesting are the studies written by moderate, and even liberal scholars. Books such as *Diversity Consciousness: Opening Our Minds to People, Cultures, and Opportunities* by Richard D. Bucher (2000), *Beyond Race and Gender: Unleashing the Power of Your Total Work Force by Managing Diversity* by R. Roosevelt Thomas (1991), *We Can All Get Along: 50 Steps You Can Take to Help End Racism at Home, at Work, in Your Community* by Clyde W. Ford (1994), *The Declining Significance of Race: Blacks and Changing American Institutions* by William Julius Wilson (1978), and others serve to reinforce conservative viewpoints that racism and gender discrimination is no longer the threat it used to be in the pre-Civil Rights Era. Most of these books are written with a viewpoint that either minimizes racial and gender discrimination or suggests that because racism and gender discrimination are individual, rather than social or systemic problems, with hard work and an open mind racial and gender equality can be easily achieved.

The problem with these studies is that the assumption that racial and gender discrimination are issues of the past are wrong. Because discrimination against women

and minorities today are often subtle and non-apparent, it only appears that issues of race and gender have all but disappeared. However, as discussed at the beginning of this chapter, minorities and women are discriminated against at almost every level of American society (i.e., educational, economic, political, etc.).

‘Diversity Management’ and ‘Best Practices’

The school of management and business, to include public policy and administration, has cornered the market on much of the research that has been done in regards to diversity theories and issues. While this camp is large, almost all of the studies describe diversity as a strategy for creating better employee relations, improving employee retention, and satisfying customer-business affairs (i.e., improving the bottom line). For most of these studies, understanding why diversity is important for corporate executives and high level managers today can be divided into two main reasons. First, there is corporate anxiety of population change, specifically the growth of the Latino (especially Mexican American) population, but also the perception that blacks and Asians will also increase in size (Fine 1995; Henderson 1994). As these groups represent potential future customers, companies must be sure that they are not publicly viewed as being a racial and sexist company. Second, there is the idea that diversity is not only good for business (i.e., if minority groups perceive the company as one that engages in progressive practices, they will be more likely to do business with the company), but it is also “good business” (Bowen et al. 1999; Fine 1995; Gottfredson 1992; Jackson and Alvarez 1992; Thomas 1992; Thomas 2004). That is, diversity creates a climate in the

workplace that takes advantage of a wide range of creativity, as opposed to being limited by the ideas of one (white) group.

Population Change

Currently, one of the most frequently used explanations on why companies are interested (or should be interested) in creating a more diverse workforce has to do more with financial security, rather than concern for racial and gender equality. Because companies often have to subject themselves to the scrutiny of the public, they are unwilling to call attention to themselves in a society that publicly taboos racial, sex, and even class discrimination.

Researchers argue that companies fear losing millions of dollars every year to deal with discrimination lawsuits (Cohn 2000; Rice and Arekere 2005). And many companies also fear what would happen to them should the public perceive them as an overly racist or sexist company. Indeed, the average cost to litigate a discrimination lawsuit in the mid-1990s was \$75,000 (see Henderson 1994). On the extreme end, a few companies such as State Farm and General Motors were forced to pay millions of dollars to the plaintiffs.

Corporations are facing the demographic reality that minorities (specifically Mexicans and other Latino/as) are rapidly increasing in population size and may pose a possible threat to companies that are unable or unwilling to incorporate minorities into their workplaces (Fine 1995; Henderson 1994; Mor Barak 2005). They also face the reality that women's participation in the job market has consistently increased to the point where they now constitute well over 50 percent (if not more) of the U.S. workforce

(Green 1980). By incorporating women and minorities into their companies, businesses are able to portray themselves as companies that care about minorities and women, about equality, and about diversity. Ignoring diversity would prove costly should a significant segment of the population decide to boycott their goods and services. This is understandable considering that minorities and women make up a 1.3 trillion dollar market according to IBM's calculations (see Rice and Arekere 2005: 24).

Managing Diversity and "Best Practices"

"Managing diversity" and "best practices" represent two of the newer ideas in the school of business management and administration. In this perspective, companies are interested in maximizing the benefits attached to having workers that reflect different cultural, age, gender, national, and racial variations. Researchers who study "managing diversity" and "best practices" claim that companies that manage to create "teams" of "diverse" employees benefit by taking advantage of workers' unique and differing perspectives and talents (Bowen et al. 1999; Fine 1995; Gottfredson 1992; Jackson and Alvarez 1992; Thomas 1992; Thomas 2004). A more diverse workforce, according to these researchers, will increase organization effectiveness, lift company morale, and enhance productivity. Thomas and Ely (2000: 80) claim that, "diversity should be understood as the varied perspectives and approaches to work that members of different identity groups bring." Their argument is that minorities and women do not only bring with them "insider information" about their group, they also bring in a variety of ideas of how to "do" work.

According to Jackson and Alvarez (1992), companies are facing increasingly greater pressure to be able to deal with unexpected factors that may arise from increased globalization (see also Gordon 1995). With the recent estimate that 45 percent of larger companies (those with 10,000 or more employees) have experienced international expansion in the last two years, companies need, more than ever, to be able to generate ideas and creativity “outside the box.” For example, employing black managers to oversee branches in the ghetto, or placing Latino managers with Latino clients does not effectively utilize the full potential of minority workers.

Finally, an offshoot of the above perspectives is that policies such as “best practices” not only generate employee creativity through varying perspectives, but they also allow employees to have a greater role in organizational decision-making. According to Naff and Thompson (2000), employee involvement (an idea that has been around since the 1940s but not really effectively implemented until the last decade or so) can increase productivity, job quality, and job satisfaction.³⁸

One reason policies such as “best practices” or “diversity management” may not be working is that high-level managers may be utilizing such policies as “dead-end policies.” That is, companies may be employing these tactics at the lower end of businesses where it faces public scrutiny, but not at the higher end where companies may be better shielded from the public eye. For example, companies such as IBM claim they are exploring how diversity (in terms of “best practices”) may be beneficial to them because of the unique approaches and talents available in diverse group settings (Thomas 2004). The problem with these approaches is that while they are a step in the right direction toward achieving diversity, they are only a first step. Most companies that are

involved in best practices only do so at the lower levels of employment. Thus, as one climbs the corporate ladder, one finds that it often becomes whiter (and more male) the higher one climbs (Collins 1998). In most of the arguments, there is an assumption that there is genuine commitment to diversity by the executive management and that this commitment runs throughout the company. However, as Nancy DiTomaso (1996: 103) points out, “the progress minorities have made seems to have a rather low limit. Minorities are still concentrated in lower-level jobs with less opportunity than those held by white men.”

Other Organizational Theories on Diversity

Decision Theory

Another theory that needs to be examined is the idea that contrary to the tenets of neoclassical economic thought, executives and upper-level managers do not always make decisions for the benefit of their companies (March and Simon 1958; Perrow 1986). According to Cyert and March (1963), there are three problems with neoclassical ideas. First, individuals in businesses have additional goals besides profit. These goals vary depending on the individual, but they range from sexist and racist practices to issues of personal glory, ego boosting, and maximizing individual earnings. Second, individuals in businesses do not always make the right choices. That is, individuals making important decisions on behalf of their company are often presented with limited data from which to work. Because information-gathering techniques are often imperfect, miscalculations are bound to happen. Finally, individuals in businesses are rational when they need to be.

Business people will make rational decisions as long as their jobs are on the line. When job security is no longer an issue, they begin pursuing alternative goals.

The major problem with decision theory is the assumption that individual actors largely commit racial and gender discrimination in the workplace. There is also an assumption that individuals in businesses will make rational decisions when forced to do so and that the notions of “diversity” usually guide most corporations.

Network and Rationality Theories

Studies on corporate networks suggest that minorities are not presented with the same network opportunities compared to whites (Fernandez 1981, Ibarra 1993; Miller 1986; Morrison and Von Glinow 1990; see also Travis 1991). Given that networking and mentoring are among the most essential components determining upward mobility in the corporate world, minorities who are unable to tap into these rich resources are at a serious disadvantage. A variation of network theory suggests that pathways to success do exist for minorities depending on the manager’s perceptions of minorities. For example, white executives are less likely to overlook promoting minorities to higher-level management jobs within the company if they do not buy into the myths and stereotypes that are persistently attached to minorities. According to Fernandez (1975, 1981, 1998), stereotypes are one of the major reasons why minorities are overlooked during promotion time.

In sharp contrast, Thomas and Gabarro (1999) suggest that minorities need only two things that will grant them success in the business world: preparation and opportunity. Any lack of one of the two components will spell impending disaster. The

assumption is that minorities need only convince higher-level executives that they do not lack the credentials needed to do the job (i.e., that they are just as capable as white workers rather than being an “undeserving” product of affirmative action), and they need access to top officials in order to prove their worth.

The only problem with the above arguments is that they are based on the idea that diversity is a rational act. That is, allowing minorities greater opportunities for upward mobility in the corporate world will increase company profits, generate greater internal stability, and/or increase employee retention. Therefore, white managers and executives who choose to ignore diversity are effectively behaving irrationally. However, a different perspective would conclude whites’ decisions to prevent blacks and other minorities from being promoted to higher-level positions in their companies is anything but irrational. Using decision theory as a foundation for understanding the actions of businesspeople, white males may be acting very rationally in their attempts to maintain white dominance at the upper echelons of the corporate world. That is, white male executives have a stake in surrounding themselves with other white males (see Cyert and March 1963).

Conclusion

Critics of diversity policies and practices often minimize or ignore the fact that race and gender discrimination are still factors that prevent women and minorities from being as successful as white males in the corporate world. Advocates of “managing diversity” and “best practices” often assume that companies are interested in creating a more egalitarian environment for all of their employees rather than being interested in preventing discrimination lawsuits and protecting the “bottom line.” Considering that

often only the middle-to-bottom levels of most companies are in public view, companies may find it more feasible to concentrate women and minorities in lower-level positions where the public frequently sees them. Other business, organizational, and even sociological theories on diversity assume that corporations that do not care about diversity are irrational actors. However, because white males occupy most of the positions of power in corporate America, their decision to ignore diversity may be seen as very rational.

To quote a line from Rice (2003: 14), in order for corporations to make serious their commitments on diversity, they have to first “get their own houses in order.” Diversity policies and practices must be enforced and serious efforts must be placed on placing women and minorities into higher-level positions where they will be able to have effective control over how the company will be run (and what the racial and gender make-up of the company will be). However, diversity policies and practices in many corporations are like third toilets in a home. They are often broken and rarely used. And like unused toilets, diversity policies and practices that are not enforced become fixtures without purpose. Whether my toilet is broken or not, I can still claim to have three toilets in my house. Similarly, corporations do not have to enforce their policies in order to claim that they have them. But if not effectively used and enforced, diversity policies only help to reinforce the status quo. My argument is not that diversity policies and practices (e.g., managing diversity, best practices, etc.) do not work or are not useful tactics for creating racial and gender equity in the workplace. My argument is that the white male power structure in corporate America has co-opted the notions of the diversity ideology in order to keep the top echelons of corporations white and male. Corporations

are not interested in creating diversity so much as they are concerned with maintaining the illusion that they are interested in diversity. If it is true that a diversity ideology exists, then it will take more than just creating diversity policies and practices in the workplace to ensure true racial and gender equality in the business world.

In the next chapter, I discuss my methodology for this dissertation project.

CHAPTER IV

METHODOLOGY AND DATA

Uncovering diversity practices and understanding how corporate officials interpret, implement, and enforce diversity in their workplaces is a daunting and exhausting endeavor. To test my ideas regarding diversity in the corporate world, in-depth, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 32 middle-to-senior level managers and directors and eight executive and corporate level employees in top *Fortune* 1000 companies.³⁹ I choose to conduct interviews with managers from *Fortune* 1000 companies, rather than companies from the *Fortune* 500, because the larger number of companies provided me with more flexibility in terms of my ability to get interviews in cities near Texas A&M University. Most of the respondents resided in Texas (although a number of respondents were scattered across the U.S. in places such as Colorado, Maryland, Washington, DC, etc.). I initially met a number of the respondents during a diversity conference held in October 2004. Other respondents were contacted either through informal networks or directly using a recent listing of *Fortune* 1000 contacts—one respondent I met on a flight to a national sociological conference.

While I would have liked the sample to be more random, locating and having senior and executive level (and even middle-to-high level) corporate officials to agree to an interview, as other studies have also noted (see Weber et al. 1988), is difficult, to say the least. However, considering that the respondents came from corporations who were more open to discussions about diversity, I believe this actually helps to strengthen my

argument. Corporations who regularly attend diversity conferences and are more open to discussions of diversity are more likely to publicly acknowledge themselves as diverse companies. They are also more likely to have elaborate justifications for any racial and gender inconsistencies that may occur in their companies. Corporations who avoid public scrutiny of the racial and gender makeup of their companies may be less likely to even be concerned with diversity, much less have diversity policies and practices in place. Since the object of my research is to expose companies who claim they are diverse, but really are not, I do not necessarily need the other companies to make my case.

The interviews were conducted between May 2005 and June 2006 with approximately half of the interviews having been conducted via face-to-face and the other half via phone. Interviews that were conducted via face-to-face took place either in the respondents work office or in a secluded restaurant corner nearby the respondents' workplace. 13 of the respondents were women and 27 were men. Three of the respondents self-identified themselves as black, two as Latina, one as Asian, and 24 as white. Their ages ranged from early 30s to late 60s, and all but seven of the respondents had earned at least a Bachelor's degree from an accredited university. Out of the seven respondents who did not have a Bachelor's degree, five reported they were close to earning a Bachelor's degree but had never gotten around to finishing their coursework. In all, 38 *Fortune* 1000 companies were represented. The interviews ranged between 45 minutes to 90 minutes in length. Each respondent was asked to sign a consent form agreeing to be interviewed and tape-recorded. A transcriber was hired to transcribe the

tapes verbatim, to include verbal cues and semantics. All names of respondents, as well as the company they worked for, were then coded for further analysis.

Race-Matching

My initial attempts to do face-to-face interviews with high-level managers and executives proved to be somewhat disastrous, partly because of the research subject matter, but mostly because of my skin-tone and phenotype. As a yellow-toned Vietnamese American with an ambiguous, yet non-European phenotype, most managers and executives were suspicious of my research as well as my reasons for wanting to interview them. On a number of occasions, after having scheduled interviews with high-level manager (including vice-presidents or presidents of sales or operations—typically white males), I found myself, after arriving at the interview site and checking in with the front desk, interviewing lower-level minority managers (typically females). I was also often referred to the human resources department of many companies. It was evident very early on in this project that race-matching would be a central issue that needed to be dealt with.

Fortunately, using a grant I obtained from Race and Ethnic Studies Institute at Texas A&M University, I was able to hire two white informants to contact, set-up, and conduct interviews with white managers and executives. Both of the informants had managerial backgrounds and were capable of navigating the waters of big business with relative ease and authority. One of the informants had previously held a high-level position in a *Fortune* 500 company as a regional director and proved to be a real asset to this research, many times providing guidance to my limited understanding of social life

and etiquette at the higher levels of the corporate world. My informants conducted 25 of the 40 interviews. All of their respondents were white and most were male. I conducted the remainder of the interviews. I conducted face-to-face interviews with eight of 15 respondents (6 who were minorities and 2 who were white). The remaining seven interviews were conducted via phone.

Phone Interviews

The interviews I conducted by phone usually went very well, provided I could explain to the manager that my research was in her or his company's best interest. My method for conducting phone interviews fell into three stages. First, I contacted the human resources department for the company that was to be interviewed. Next, I asked to speak to the vice-president of operations or someone who could help me with my research project. I explained (usually to an assistant in the human resources department) that I was a researcher at Texas A&M University studying diversity in major corporations in the U.S. I also mentioned that according to my records, their company was one of a few models of diversity. Thus, I wanted to get more information about the success of their company, compared to other *Fortune* 1000 companies, in regards to their diversity policies and practices. Although rarely was I able to interview vice-presidents or presidents of operations or sales, in more than a few instances my call was transferred to a high-level manager in the company. In almost all of the interviews that took place via phone, the interviewees were much more open to discussions involving diversity in the workplace and issues of race and gender.

Interview Questions

Superficial examinations of many *Fortune* companies reveal them to be advocates of fairness, egalitarianism, and equal rights. Yet, unquestionably, current data illustrates that minorities and women continue to face obstacles that bar their success in the corporate world.

My questions (see appendix A) were designed to gain a better understanding of not only how corporations and corporate officials were defining “diversity,” but also, how they were implementing and enforcing policies and practices of “diversity” in their workplaces. The interviews all began with general background information that focused on social distance questions that measured how much contact with other races the respondent had while growing up as well as currently. These were followed by questions over diversity and affirmative action. Most of these questions were centered on obtaining the respondents’ (and their company’s) definition of “diversity,” as well as their general feelings on issues surrounding diversity, affirmative action, etc.

Finally, I asked a series of questions that asked respondents to explain why minorities and women were not doing well compared to white men in many major corporations and then offer their opinions of what might need to happen to get more women and minorities into higher-level corporate positions. The interview ended with a question asking for respondents’ opinions on the effectiveness of diversity policies overall: “Current research suggests that while many corporations have pushed for diversity, their policies have been largely ineffective. Do you agree or disagree with this assessment?”

In the next two chapters, I reveal some of the findings from my interviews with these company managers and corporate executives.

CHAPTER V

DIVERSITY:

THE DISCREPANCIES BETWEEN PREACHING AND PRACTICE

Equal rights for women is a goal that resonates with individualism and freedom of choice. Yet that goal failed because, legally, in order to be treated alike, people have to 'be' alike, and the prevailing belief in Western societies is that women and men are intrinsically different.

~ Judith Lorber⁴⁰ (1994)

Negroes, of course, know the power of white solidarity better than any one else. A negro put it this way: Although white men often appear to be good friends to Negroes, if a Negro commits a crime against a white man, the white friend will invariably turn against him; whereas if a white man has any little trouble, all his white friends flock to him and defend him.

~John Dollard⁴¹ (1937)

The United States of America is a democratic, meritocratic society. It is color-blind and it is gender-blind. So the argument goes according to many leading conservative scholars (D'Souza 1995; Steele 1990; Thermstrom and Thermstrom 1997). Therefore, there is no need for affirmative action programs (Glazer 1987 [1975]; McWhorter 2000), social

welfare policies (Murray 1984), programs developed to create a more equal and fair criminal justice system (Wilbanks 1987), or diversity policies and practices (Wood 2003). The system is fair. In one of his earlier books, *The Declining Significance of Race: Blacks and the Changing American Institutions*, sociologist William Julius Wilson (1978)⁴² suggests that the significance of race is declining. Wilson has long since changed his opinion about race issues in America. Nonetheless, other scholars continue to make similar arguments (Murray 1984; Sowell 1984). In addition, women have made tremendous strides in the workplace. The Equal Pay Act of 1963 ensures that women and men receive equal wages in the workplace. Women are nurturers and their need to spend more time with their family than at the workplace better explains why women are less likely to occupy high-level positions in big-business (Levin 1992, Randle 2002).

Most Americans, men and women, whites and minorities, hold these beliefs.⁴³ After all, discrimination is against the law. Companies breaking the law would face stiff penalties from the federal government. And, their tarnished public image would cause customers to avoid their products and services, in turn, causing the company to lose money. Moreover, our current social system is a far cry from the days of Jim Crow laws when minorities faced overt racial discrimination on an everyday basis and when women did not have the right to vote. One would be hard pressed to find instances where employers explained to women that their gender was unwelcome in the workplace, or responded to blacks looking for a job, “We don’t hire niggers here.” Hence, to most Americans, the idea that racism or gender discrimination continues to be a problem in the U.S. is absurd. Indeed, just look how far we have come. Arguments made by minorities and women regarding discrimination in the workplace are usually unfounded, at best.

Minorities who are unhappy with the current system are just playing the race card. Women are provocateurs and gold-diggers who try to wiggle their way up the corporate ladder, using sex instead of hard work. And corporate America feeds these mainstream notions regarding race and gender in the U.S. by advertising themselves as “equal opportunity employers,” as fair employers, and more frequently in the past 20 years, as employers that care about diversity. The central image that is portrayed to the American people over and over again is that corporations are working hard to diversify their companies. Individuals (i.e., women and minorities) who are not successful should take individual responsibility for their failures.

Although, mainstream ideas regarding fairness, opportunity, and racial and gender equality in the big business run into a snag when forced to face the “white male solidarity⁴⁴” that runs the corporate world, setting barriers for minorities and women wanting to gain entry into the workplace, denying them promotions and pay raises, and denying them access to the upper levels of management. Studies by Braddock and McPartland (1986), Kirschman and Neckerman (1991), Fernandez (1999), Royster (2003) and others illustrate that while women and minorities have made some gains in obtaining access into previously white dominated workplaces, many continue to be denied access and opportunity because of the structural or social elements involved in racial discrimination (see also Amott and Matthaei 1996; Reskin and Padavic 2002; Reskin and Roos 2000). Research by notable authors, such as Sharon Collins (1997) and Anthony Stith (1998), shows that minorities who are able to enjoy the satisfaction of a “good job” are less likely to achieve upward mobility compared to their white male counterparts. When they do get promoted, they are more likely to be placed in very

limited and dead-end positions—*head of affirmative action*, *head of human resources*, and so on—positions otherwise known as “glass ceiling” positions. These positions garner little prestige and often the managers who occupy these jobs are seen as less than competent. Anthony Stith (1998:22) describes the concept of the “glass ceiling” as a “visual image of people pressing up against a window, getting a tantalizing view of a wonderful world before them, but being denied entry to it.” For those lucky few minorities who are able to overcome these obstacles, researchers Ibarra (1993) and Fernandez (1981) argue that blacks and Latinos are less likely, compared to whites, to obtain mentors who will help them move to the next level. Blacks who make it to the top as CEOs of major corporations face new hardships, such as having to maneuver socially, politically, and emotionally in typically all white settings (Davis and Watson 1982; see also Travis 1999).

An Inside Look at the Composition of Corporate America Elites

What does the racial and gender make-up of major *Fortune* companies look like, especially at the upper-levels of the corporate hierarchy? A number of scholars claim corporate elites are mostly white males (Burk 2005, Domhoff 2005, Fernandez 1999, Zweigenhalf and Domhoff 2003). Companies argue that they are making progress in their attempts to diversify their work environments.

Not too long ago, *DiversityInc*, a leading business-oriented magazine devoted to issues surrounding diversity, ran an article in its online newsletter announcing that sometime soon, Ronald A. Williams will most likely become the 6th black CEO to run a *Fortune* 500 company. The mention of this news quickly made media headlines. As the

news circulated in the business world that another black man was about to join the circle of high-ranked elites, newspapers and magazines such as the *San Francisco Chronicle* reported on the increasing success of blacks in the business world. In an interview with Bruce S. Gordon, 15th president of the NAACP, a *BusinessWeek* reporter asked:⁴⁵

There's an unprecedented number of black CEOs in Corporate America.

What has allowed them to reach a point where blacks hold such corporate power?

Indeed, there is a notion floating in the business world that we are witnessing the decline of racial discrimination in corporate America.

Yet, it is true that the number of black male CEOs in the *Fortune* 500 have tripled in the last 13 years, from two in the early 1990s⁴⁶ to six in 2006. However, these numbers are still relatively small compared to the increasing number of blacks who are graduating with college degrees, just barely constituting one percent of the total population of *Fortune* 500 CEOs. Second, minorities and women who occupy the top-ranked position of CEO of a company are unlikely to make decisions that threaten the security and privilege of white males, especially considering they often comprise the majority of members on a corporation's board (Zweigenhaft and Domhoff 2003). For example, consider Merrill Lynch. As a Wall Street firm, it is one of the largest and well-known *Fortune* 500 companies. Moreover, Merrill Lynch is regarded as one of the better models in the corporate world relative to racial diversity, winning a number of diversity awards from *Fortune* magazine and placing 44th on DiversityInc's 2006 *Top 50 Companies for Diversity* (Merrill Lynch also placed number one in the category *Top 10 Companies for People with Disabilities*, number two in the category *Top 10 Companies*

for Executive Women, and number four in the category *Top 10 Companies for Asian Americans*. Finally, because Merrill Lynch is regarded as one of the models of diversity in the business world, we can expect most other companies in the *Fortune* 500 and *Fortune* 1000 to be less than adequate when it comes to women and minorities in upper-level corporate positions.

Out of Merrill Lynch's 11 board members, two are African American: Stanley O'Neal who became CEO of the company in April 2002, and Aulana L. Peters, widely known as one of the few African American women who serve on *Fortune* 500 boards. A superficial analysis might suggest that the racial composition of this board is not that bad. However, closer examination of the executive members of Merrill Lynch reveals a mostly white male group of people. Indeed, out of the 34 ranking officers, only three are women. Moreover, only one person in that group, Jason Wright, is African American. Of notable importance is the fact that Jason Wright just happens to be head of public affairs at Merrill Lynch, a position that ensures any exposure to the media will be met by a minority face that represents Merrill Lynch. Because senior-level and executive managers are the gatekeepers in their companies, the fact that the majority are white creates additional barriers for women and minorities who are less likely to be mentored compared to their white counterparts (Collins 1998).

Other than Jason Wright, there are several executive members at Merrill Lynch who are Asian. Considering Merrill Lynch's recent award as one of the best companies for Asian Americans (see the 2006 issue of *DiversityInc*), an examination of the positions these Asian officers occupy should be questioned. What we find in this case is that the majority of Asian executive members in Merrill Lynch tend to occupy ambassadorial

positions to overseas Asian countries or markets (e.g., Director of Japanese Securities, Director of Global Asian markets, etc.), rather than central positions in the company. Although these are not insignificant positions in the world of big business, they do indicate that Asian Americans have not yet fully been accepted in corporate America. As Frank Wu (2003) has noted, contrary to the minority model stereotypes, Asians continue to be viewed negatively by most whites.

And the Diversity Award of the Year Goes to...

How do companies avoid close scrutiny? And how are they able to advertise to the public that they are sincerely interested in issues of diversity in the workplace, even in cases where they are publicly revealed as racist and sexist companies? One simple and very effective way for companies to create an illusion that they are interested in diversity is by donating money to charities and organizations whose goals specifically call for various issues of equality for women and minorities. These charities are usually organizations that have access to the media and are well publicized. Another method used by companies is to stifle news of potentially racial or gender conflicts in the company while purposely advertising news of company diversity. The diversity ideology allows companies to project an illusion of trust to the public. If businesses are willing to spend a fortune on creating diversity in the workplace, and if they seem sincere enough, then why should we not believe them? For instance, Carly Fiorina became the first woman to occupy a CEO position in a major computer company in the *Fortune* 500. Her record from 1999 until 2005 was impressive (although Hewlett Packard claims their stocks began declining as soon as she took over as CEO of the company), often

surpassing many previous male CEOs. In February 2005, Fiorina was forced to resign over a bad merger deal that was made in 2002. Although a number of business analysts argue that most male CEOs would have been asked to resign were they in Fiorina's position, Kolb (2005) suggested that there are subtle gender overtones that are rarely considered when it comes to women in the corporate world. For instance, according to Kolb, rarely do colleagues support women in power positions. Men, on the other hand, tend to get supported even in instances where they have not performed to their expectations.

Hewlett Packard's argument over Fiorina's resignation was that there were disagreements between Fiorina and the other board members over the merger deal that eventually led to their decision to oust Fiorina. The announcement of Fiorina's resignation was followed by the publication of numerous articles in business magazines whose main intent was to exacerbate her flaws and shortcomings as a business leader. There were few commentaries in the business news regarding her successes. According to Hollards (2005), this is typical in a business world that is dominated by men. In a 2005 newspaper article, *The Washington Times*, Hollards noted that women who fail to meet the social standards and expectations of men often do not make it in the business world.⁴⁷

Another example of how the diversity ideology work to the advantage of major corporations can be found in the recent lawsuit by 13 black employees against Tyson Foods. In this lawsuit, the employees maintained that a "white only" sign and padlock denied them access to a bathroom and break-room in an Alabama plant. Even after repeated attempts to inform higher authority of the racial discrimination that was taking

place in this plant, no effort was made to stop the racial practices and no attempts were made to investigate the incidents. In addition to the segregated bathroom and break-room, plant managers frequently uttered racial epithets and used racial scare tactics such as hanging a hangman's noose in the workplace. The lawsuit was filed in August 2005.⁴⁸ In October 2005, Tyson Foods announced that it was donating \$26,000 dollars to the Congressional Black Caucus Foundation. That same week, Tyson Foods was given a diversity award as the corporation of the year. In a similar, more recent example, corporate giant Wal-Mart was forced to apologize for racially offensive movie suggestions on its website, after being ousted by bloggers who demanded Wal-Mart take responsibility for its racist actions. Apparently, customers who were interested in buying movies such as *Charlie and the Chocolate Factory* and *Planet of the Apes* were being directed to a listing of recommended movies that included *Introducing Dorothy Dandridge* and *Martin Luther King: I Have a Dream/Assassination of MLK*. Wal-Mart announced its apologies at the beginning of the year 2006 and announced it would make a more concerted effort to support minority organizations. In June 2006, *DiversityInc* awarded Wal-Mart number 6 on its *Top 10 Companies for African Americans* and included them in its *25 Noteworthy Companies* award.

Revealing the Truth about Corporate Diversity: Exposing the Diversity Ideology

Looking at the racial- and gender-makeup of managers and executive members in companies and focusing on companies' use of charities and the media to portray themselves as diverse organizations is one way to uncover the contradictions of many corporations when it comes to issues of racial and gender equality. However, these are

facts that are often widely available to the public (e.g., pictures of the executive managers and board of directors of many companies can be found online, etc.). Because companies are aware of this, they need to have arguments to counter the inconsistencies of what they preach to what they practice. For example, by claiming that their work environments are not as diverse as they would like them to be, but that they are extremely interested in creating more diversity in their workplaces and are doing everything they can to make diversity a central issue for their business, a company can generate public sympathy. This tactic works well for any major institution in the U.S. It downplays or minimizes the inequalities that persist in institutions. In addition, it also helps to create a favorable public image for institutions, which are then seen as caring and concerned organizations. Major universities get away with this all the time. Multiculturalism and diversity offices are created and well advertised in not only the media but also in the local communities. In some cases, such as the creation of a vice-president of diversity position by Robert M. Gates, current president of Texas A&M University, the publicity is done so well that a backlash is created by angry whites who not only vocalize their negative opinions of diversity, but also engage in violent acts against women and minorities as a way to symbolize their frustrations.⁴⁹ But for all that universities have claimed to do in the name of diversity, data still illustrate that schools remain segregated sanctuaries for white students and faculty members (Bowman and Smith 2002; Feagin et al. 1996). And even though universities preach diversity, closer examination usually reveals that universities are often light when it comes to implementing any policies or practices that will foster real diversity. When several businesses gained public attention for harassing minorities and gay and lesbians in a location near Texas A&M University, university president

Gates failed the real test of diversity by siding with the businesses rather than the students who were discriminated against. When Harvard University faced increasing pressure to explain the status of women professors at Harvard, university president Lawrence H. Summers, instead of addressing the real issue of gender discrimination in academia, proceeded to publicly explain women's genetic inferiority to men as a viable reason to explain why female professors were not doing as well compared to male professors at Harvard (see Bombardieri 2005).

There are other indicators, however, that may allow us to examine diversity in corporations. Using primarily interview data, I reveal three major discrepancies that highlight the inconsistencies of corporations who argue they are interested in promoting diversity. These discrepancies are a further indication that companies might not be as interested in diversity as they claim to be. I have labeled them: diversity without race and gender, diversity vagueness, and the Myth of Corporate Affirmative Action.

Including Diversity, Excluding Race and Gender

An article in the June 2006 issue of *DiversityInc* titled, "The Truth about Diversity from Top 50 CEOs and CDOS," asked major corporate executives for their thoughts on various issues of diversity. Only five of the 50 executive leaders mentioned in the article answered that diversity had anything to do with race or gender, or discussed issues of race and gender as matters that needed to be dealt with or discussed. CEOs and CDOs (Chief Diversity Officer) who did mention race and gender made sure to emphasize the importance racial and gender equality. For example, Dennis Nally, a white CEO of PricewaterhouseCoopers, made the following comment:

I have learned that I have to do more than just say we support diversity; rather, I have to communicate examples of the types of situations that I know make it difficult for women and minorities in corporate America to feel included and fairly treated in order to make clear that leadership really ‘gets it.’

Ralph W. Babb Jr., a white CEO of Comerica mentioned:

I am proud of the fact that I have increased the number of my female and minority direct reports.

However, more commonly, CEOs and CDOs broadened the term diversity to include many other areas. In turn, issues of race and gender tended to be de-emphasized, or ignored all together. For example, Dick Kovacevich, a white CEO of Wells Fargo, noted the following in regards to diversity:

When we talk to our team members about diversity, we describe it as just another word for ‘creativity,’ for ‘fresh thinking,’ for ‘different perspectives,’ for ‘intellectual capital.’ Each of us have our own personal story on diversity—we grew up in different towns, have different educations, have different life experiences than the person sitting next to us.

Broader, and even perplexing, was Leslie D. Jones’, a black CDO of Ernst & Young, diversity explanation:

Diversity is about everyone—not about everyone else.

Jones is referring to the notion of inclusiveness in this statement. Inclusiveness is a relatively new term in the corporate world often used in conjunction with the term diversity. Potentially, the concept of inclusion is a good one that refers to the idea that everyone should be included (in this case the workplace or company as a whole) and no one should be left out. The problem with the idea of inclusiveness, however, lies in its dependency of diversity. If the definition of diversity is vague, then the idea of inclusiveness becomes useless. This can be seen in Jones' ambiguous statement. The broad vagueness of the statement and non-specificity of race and gender make Jones' interpretation of diversity one that has no right or wrong answer. It also makes it difficult to create effective diversity policies. The notion of inclusion (or inclusiveness) that has become more frequently used by corporate managers and executives presents an alternative way to say that everyone should be treated in a meritocratic way, without recognizing that barriers continue to exist for women and minorities in the corporate world. In a few cases, the inclusion of white men have been over-emphasized, as if to suggest that corporations need to perhaps make corrections for acts of "reverse discrimination." For example, Steve Larson, a white Senior VP and CDO of Wachovia, had this to remark about diversity:

As diversity has been practiced, race has been defined as minority and gender as not male. In other words, white men have been excluded from the definition. Our focus in diversity is on inclusion for all identity groups and we continually remind ourselves that this means white men too.

Interview data from my respondents indicated a similar pattern to that seen in the content analysis of the *DiversityInc* article. Issues of race and gender were largely being ignored

or included in such a broad list of categories as to be made invisible.⁵⁰ The first time I noticed this pattern of racial and gender exclusion was at a diversity meeting I attended in Houston, TX on October 2004. In this meeting, directors, vice presidents, presidents, and even CEOs of major corporations gave presentations to one another defining diversity as just about everything under the sun—except race and gender, although gender was emphasized slightly more when the presenters were women. In fact, the most widely used definitions of diversity at this conference focused on ageism and nepotism and typically the definitions were similar to the following:

- Diversity is about having that 65 year-old person there and not feel as if he's unwanted.
- Diversity is about not hiring people who have the same last name.

I initially found this strange until I noticed that although race and gender were rarely mentioned, it was made very apparent in company pamphlets where equal numbers of black, white, Latino, and Asian men and women were visibly well represented. However, because issues of race and gender were never brought up, neither was questions raised regarding racial and gender diversity in the workplace. By increasing the number of categories of people that fall under the umbrella of diversity, companies are able to effectively escape close examination of racial and gender inequalities that might occur in their workplaces. As long as no one brings it up, it can be ignored.

Table 3. Respondents' Definition of Diversity by Gender

Gender	Race & Ethnicity	Broadly	Negatively	Off the Wall	Total
Male	4 (14.8%)	16 (59.3%)	3 (11.1%)	4 (14.8%)	27 (67.5%)
Female	4 (30.7%)	7 (53.8%)	0 (0%)	2 (15.5%)	13 (32.5%)
Total	8 (20%)	23 (57.5%)	3 (7.5%)	6 (15%)	40 (100%)

N = 40

This pattern of racial and gender exclusion was present at the diversity conference, in the recent 2006 *DiversityInc* article interviewing CEOs and CDOs of major *Fortune* 500 companies, and in my interviews where less than one-fourth of the respondents clearly mentioned race or gender when defining diversity (see Tables 3). The remaining respondents defined diversity in one of three categories: broad and encompassing, reverse discrimination, or completely off-the-wall.

Recognizing race and gender- Only eight (20 percent; (14.8 percent of the men and 30.7 percent of the women) respondents explicitly mentioned race or gender when asked for their definition of diversity. However, these managers were pretty clear that diversity, for them, included race and gender categories⁵¹. Jack, a white general manager for a large consulting business, explained diversity as follows:

A broad, just a broad spectrum of people. Typically I associate it with three areas: race, educational background, and economic background.

More typically, respondents' definition of diversity in this category were similar to Stephen's, an executive vice-president of a large real estate corporation:

Ah, I think of it as principally as, ah, diversity with respect to ethnicity and gender.

It is worth mentioning that 30.7 percent of the respondents who answered in this category were women (compared to men at 14.8 percent), a finding that is consistent with Johnson and Marini's (1998) argument that because (white) women tend to associate with minorities (at work, as neighbors, etc.) more compared to white men, they are more likely to be sympathetic to their causes. It is also worth mentioning that a number of respondents worked for companies that were located in politically liberal cities and states, a situation that could explain why some of these interviewees might have been more likely to give more progressive answers. A good example of this can be seen in Ashley's, a white Vice-President of Marketing for a major publishing business, explanation of diversity:

Um, it is kind of interesting in the San Francisco office, at one point, I hired a white guy and that was probably the biggest diversity index changer in the office. There wasn't one, I should preface that by, a white straight guy, because there were few white guys but they were all gay, and I hired like the first straight white guy that had been hired in 10 years, you know, (laughs), so publishing has changed in the last 20 years, when I was hired it wasn't like this, but it's a pretty women dominated business, our

CFO is a woman, our president is a woman, I am a woman, you know like, it is pretty um, women led, but then also, particular, I was in charge of the San Francisco office for most of my career and I just took over San Francisco and Boston last two years, but San Francisco is an extremely diverse city so, we you know, there are ton of minorities in the office, there is never any kind of, you know, there is definitely a minority of whites compared to ah, you know all different backgrounds.

Broad Diversity- 23 (57.5 percent; 59.3 percent of the men and 53.8 percent of the women) respondents either defined diversity as cultural or socioeconomic background, or defined it so broadly (often by including a laundry list of categories) that race and gender became secondary issues or even ignored. More often diversity was defined in terms of individual backgrounds, socioeconomic status, or even different life styles. For example, Brandon, a white Service Director⁵² of a company that specializes in information technologies, defined diversity as:

Ah, when I hear the word diversity I think about, incorporating multiple life styles, philosophies, belief systems, and having them work together.

Brandon's definition of diversity does not mention race or gender and the interpretation of what he means by "multiple life styles, philosophies, and belief systems" is unclear. Somewhat similarly to Brandon, John, a white mid-level manager in his early thirties described diversity in the following way:

Diversity? ...it's just having individuals from all backgrounds, from different socioeconomic backgrounds, different, you know, family

backgrounds, different relationship backgrounds, different, just diverse people. Just different, come from different backgrounds and having different cultures, you know. I mean that's what I consider diverse. Someone else might have from a family of twenty, you know, poor and you might have someone else from a family of two, you know, someone else that might have divorced parents. You know, just different, just different backgrounds.

Again, it is important to note that John also does not mention race or gender in his definition of diversity. This is a typical pattern of respondents who fall into this category. Nevertheless, John's mentioning of culture could be interpreted as a code word for race, specifically minorities. However, purposely leaving out the word race dilutes the importance that is placed on it and centers attention to the other areas that are discussed. An example of a more vague form of broadness can be found with Lily's, a white Branch Manager of a major business specializing in electronics, definition:

When I hear diversity, I think it's different types of people working in a working environment.

Like many of the other respondents in this category, Lily's response is short and sweet. Her definition of diversity is left wide-open for interpretation. Because Lily believes her company is diverse, it is unlikely she would enforce policies that called for "real" diversity, even though she admitted that there were not many minorities who worked there. There were a few respondents who did mention race or gender (or both), but made sure these notions were well mixed in with a long laundry list of other categories. For

instance, Harry, a Vice-President of Operations for a large company based in New York, interestingly said the following about diversity:

Diversity is huge. It's about status, socioeconomic standing, family background, different cultures and religions, you name it. Yes, it's about ethnicity but it's so much more to it than that. It's about allowing employees to bring their dogs to work with them, or being able to wear flip-flops to work on casual day.

The word ethnicity is mentioned in Harry's definition of diversity. However, its importance is diluted against the seven other categories mentioned, some of which are so outside the typical definition of diversity (e.g., being able to wear flip flops at work) that Harry could have easily fit into my off-the-wall category.

Diversity as reverse discrimination- Three (7.5 percent; 11.1 percent of the men and none of the women) respondents defined diversity as reverse discrimination against whites. As mentioned above, it is interesting to note that, although only a small portion, only men defined diversity in this manner. This is understandable, however, given that white men stand to lose a number of privileges (i.e., white privilege and male privilege) should effective measures to create equality in the workplace ever become enforced. Respondents in this category felt diversity meant that some people were getting a free ride and gave answers similar to Steve Larson's (in one of the above paragraphs) or Frank's, a senior-level manager and pilot for a major airline:

Uhhhh, what I think about that is lowering standards to let people in that aren't willing to, uhmmm, you know, go through the, go through the steps that it has to take or uhmmm, the people that are presently, you know, getting hired or getting promoted uhmmm have to take. OK, I mean if someone got a job and they worked for ten years and they're up to be promoted and they just happened to be, you know a white man or a white woman and then some other person that's been there four years and says, 'hey, well I deserve to get promoted,' and they don't happen to be white, well, under diversity they outta get promoted so we can be a more diverse work force, so.

Frank's answer is clear and to the point. Diversity is defined as lower standards and unfair practices that take jobs and opportunities away from white men. Frank also became very tense and angry when asked this question, as did Joseph, a Director of Software Development for a computer company, who said the following in regards to diversity:

Um, when I was in college, diversity was kind of crammed down our throats and largely when I think of diversity I think of affirmative action, ah, yeah.

When asked to explain how he would envision diversity in the workplace, Joseph replied:

Um, I envision diversity in the workplace as not having a predisposition to hire ah, people based on race, sex, ah, but choosing the person who is best for the job and whether as long as two applicants are qualified for the job or which ever one performs or the interviewer feels will be best for the job

and fits the position best and not taking into account any type of race or sex.

Since affirmative action is a heated topic in today's public debate, and often not well received by the general public, defining diversity as affirmative action (or as reverse discrimination) allow managers to portray (and even justify) diversity as a bad idea or worse, one that further exacerbates discrimination rather than resolve it.

Off-the-wall diversity- Finally, seven (15 percent, 14.8 percent of the men and 15.5 percent of the women) respondents defined diversity in terms so different compared to the other respondents that I labeled them as off-the-wall diversity. While this is not as common a reply compared to the broad interpretation of diversity, it still indicates that a large portion (in this case close to one-sixth) of the definitions of diversity by higher-level corporate managers completely neglect, or have little or no interest in pursuing a company agenda that calls for racial and gender equality. One of the oddest replies was given by Ryan, a district manager of a large international corporation who defined diversity more in terms of one's ability to do different job tasks:

...not putting all your eggs in one basket, you know just, just having things spread out. It's kinda like laying on your back trying to float on water instead of trying to stand straight up. Uhhmm, the employees having more than one job that they're required to do.

Heather, a Human Resources Manager for a company that specializes in services for the developmentally disabled, had a shorter, yet similar answer than Ryan:

Diversity means ah, spreading out equal job duties for each qualifications.

Both Ryan's and Heather's explanation of diversity not only ignores the issue of race and gender completely, but is also ignores other institutionalized forms of inequalities that occur in the workplace (e.g., ageism, discrimination against gays and lesbians, etc.). In other instances, it was quite clear that the manager being questioned really did not understand what diversity meant. For instance, Brianna, a General Manager of a company specializing in hospitality management, had this to say when asked to give her definition of diversity:

You know, I honestly don't think much about it, ah, I don't know.

Nothing comes to mind. If I had to pick out a specific term or whatever it's just that, I don't have a problem with it, it just hasn't occurred to me very much.

Either Brianna honestly could not define diversity in even the simplest manner, or she felt uncomfortable with the topic and did not want to provide her thoughts on it. Similar to the other examples, race and gender were not mentioned.

A special look at minorities' definitions of diversity- Although the sample size of my minority respondents is small, it is useful to compare their definitions of diversity to the responses given by white interviewees. One would suspect that managers of color might be more sympathetic to the plight faced by women and minorities, given they have more of an inside understanding of the hardships faced women and minorities on an everyday basis. However, the data illustrates that black managers, for the most part, held similar views as their white counterparts (see Table 4).

Only one (16.7 percent) of the six minority respondents explicitly included race and gender as a crucial part of diversity. One respondent (16.7 percent) gave an answer that was off-the-wall. And although none of the minority managers described diversity as reverse discrimination, four (66.6 percent) gave broad answers that minimized or ignored the importance of racial or gender equality.

Table 4. Respondents' Definition of Diversity by Race

Race	Race & Ethnicity	Broadly	Negatively	Off the Wall	Total
White	7 (20.6%)	19 (55.9%)	3 (8.8%)	5 (14.7%)	34 (85%)
Minority	1 (16.7%)	4 (66.6%)	0 (0%)	1 (16.7%)	6 (15%)
Total	8 (20%)	23 (57.5%)	3 (7.5%)	6 (15%)	40 (100%)

N = 40

Chad, a branch manager in Houston, when asked his definition of diversity, gave an off-the-wall definition not too different from that of Ryan and Heather:

...diversity just means you're just diverse just because you're smart enough to figure out that, you know, you need eight totally different types of people to really and truly give you a good think tank. So it's not all redundant. You know, if you really want to really build something, then everyone's gonna come up with different ideas and different perspectives.

Monique, a black senior manager of employee relations at a major airline company, defined diversity as individuality. In doing so, she made sure to broaden the definition widely, thereby minimizing the importance of race and gender in her reply:

I think about, uhhh just accepting individuality and that's my definition of it whether it's race, sex, sexual orientation, uhmmm national origin, or whether it's, you know, one person's from the country, one person's from the city, one person's from a different region, or whether it's age, generational differences, it, to me it's just accepting individual's different work styles. Uhmmm I have people who are more introverted. I have people who are extroverted and ahhh to me it's just respecting those differences and understanding that they all have some value and not looking negatively upon one just because that's not something that you, yourself may exhibit or subscribe to.

Similar to Monique, Reggie, a black Regional Zone Operations Manager, also explained diversity very broadly. Reggie explicitly made sure to de-emphasize the importance of race in his remarks by claiming that other people may think of diversity in those terms, but he does not:

I, I, being a person that's set on a national diversity team for the company for about five and a half years ahhh, to me it means a lot. It means differences, it means ahhh, people are different and most companies should embrace diversity. Diversity means ahhh, when people, let me back up, when people think of diversity, they always of ahhh race and to me it doesn't always mean race, it means gender, it means economic differences, it means religion, you

know and, and to me I, I just think that the world's better because of diversity, cause I just think about myself. I wouldn't want to work around a lot of people like myself. I like to, I enjoy people that are different because it brings about value of, of other experiences that I haven't experienced. And I think that's the beautiful thing about diversity because you get a chance to learn about other cultures, other experiences, other backgrounds that I clearly had no idea un, until I really started to say wow, this is a good thing.

The fact that minority managers have similar definitions of diversity as their white counterparts is not a startling finding. Previous studies have indicated that minorities who are promoted to higher-levels within the corporate structure tend to have similar political, economic, and social mentalities as white managers (Zweigenhalf and Domhoff 2003). This does not mean that minority managers who have similar political and social views as their white counterparts will be successful in the business world. It does, however, imply that given a choice, whites will tend to support minority managers who are of like-mind rather than those who threaten their dominant and privileged status in the company.

The Vagueness of Diversity

My second finding is much more direct and to the point compared to the first finding. It speaks volumes to the insincerities many corporations have to issues of diversity and provides a clear indicator while some companies may claim they are interested in diversity, the likelihood that any "real" effort has been made to ensure (or enforce) diversity in the workplace is minimal.

Corporate websites are notorious for publicizing its take on diversity. Few companies are willing to admit that they are not interested in diversity. In fact, most companies include a diversity and inclusion mission statement on their internet websites. For example, Sara Lee (global manufacturing and marketing company) has the following text on its website:

- Sara Lee will be the benchmark for attracting, developing and retaining a diverse workforce and leadership team.
- We will create and sustain an inclusive environment where all people regardless of race, gender, age, ethnicity, religious beliefs, physical ability or sexual orientation are challenged to achieve their full potential.
- We will aggressively provide meaningful responsibility and development opportunities to our employees worldwide.

Fewer still are managers willing to admit that their companies are not diverse, or not interested in diversity. This is one reason why it is so hard to find accurate data on whether or not companies are really interested in diversity or are merely selling a favorable public image. Everybody says that her or his company is diverse. In my interviews with 40 middle-to-upper and executive level managers, 75 percent of the respondents answered yes to the question asking whether or not their company currently had a diversity policy or set of practices in place⁵³ (76.8 percent of the women and 74 percent of the men; see Table 5). Even the few respondents who responded angrily or negatively to the question asking them to define diversity said their company had a diversity policy. Fifteen percent of the respondents replied that they did not know if their

company had a diversity policy in place (15.3 percent of the women and 7.5 percent of the men). And 10 percent of the respondents said their company did not have a diversity policy (7.9 percent of the women and 18.5% of the men).

Although the importance of diversity in the workplace is often stressed by company managers and executives, excluding those respondents that claimed their company did not have a diversity policy or set of practices, 70 percent did not know, or could not explain their company's policy or practices to me. To break it down further, of the 75 percent of men and women who answered yes to the question of whether their company had a diversity policy, 60 percent were unable to describe or elaborate upon their company's diversity policies or practices (61.5 percent of the women and 59.2 percent of the men).

Table 5. Respondents' Knowledge Regarding their Company's Policy on Diversity, by Gender

Gender	Did Not Know	Ans. No	Ans. Yes- Could Explain	Ans. Yes- Could Not Explain	Total
Male	2 (7.5%)	5 (18.5%)	4 (14.8%)	16 (59.2%)	27 (67.5%)
Female	2 (15.3%)	1 (7.9%)	2 (15.3%)	8 (61.5%)	13 (32.5%)
Total	4 (10%)	6 (15%)	6 (15%)	24 (60%)	40 (100%)

N = 40

One might understand how workers, uninterested in reading company policies or perhaps not yet exposed to diversity workshops, might not be able to elaborate on such policies. However, I find it quite alarming when higher-level managers are unable to do so, especially if they are working for companies that claim to be concerned about diversity. Most of the respondents who did not know whether their company had a diversity policy or set of practices had very short answers that were similar to the answer that JoAnn, an Operations Manager for a large accounting firm, gave:

I don't know.

Brooke, a Supervisor of Loan Production who has been at her company for 11 years, came up with an excuse as to why she could not explain whether her company had a diversity policy:

You know, we just got bought out by a larger company and ah, I regret to say, I really don't know. That's something I'm going to have to look into.

In a couple of instances, discrepancies were found in regards to the answer that the respondent gave and what was found on the respondents' company website. For example, Ralph, a white Department Manager in his early thirties, remarked that his company did not have a diversity policy, although the company's website clearly indicated that it did. Ralph's answer:

No, they're supposed to be allegedly colorblind.

Following up on Ralph's answer, I asked if he believed his company was colorblind. He replied:

Uhhmm, yeah. Yeah I do, because there is so many different managers that go through there.

It is pretty clear that Ralph was unconcerned about diversity in his company. What is disturbing about this answer and answers similar to it is that it reflects the inefficiency of many companies who might have company policies on diversity, but lack the enforcement needed to produce results.

Respondents who could elaborate on their company's diversity plan were quick to answer, could highlight a number of important points on the policy, and tended to have clear, concise answers. An example of such an answer is the one given by Ashley, the Vice-President mentioned earlier:

We weren't allowed to ask questions, like they had a lot of training it terms of hiring, you know, what questions you were allowed to ask what you weren't, we certainly were not allowed to ask about sexually orientation, they did, on the application, HR definitely asked about race and things because they ah, because they did keep an index, they did track that how they did in terms of hiring um, in terms of sexual orientation, they did offer domestic partners um, benefits and thins, um, you know we weren't allowed to ask that. In terms of policies they wanted to have, they had certain goals for different offices like the London office ah, the, I should back up, the chairman of the board made it a company goal a few years ago to have x percentage increase, it wasn't like a set percentage per office, but what he wanted to do was have each office increase their diversity index to reflect the place they were in and like I said, San Francisco was already there and we didn't have to change or improve like that, we as other offices around the world, particularly our London and

Boston office really had to, the managers had to make an effort to increase diversity so, they did a lot of things like recruiting at historically black colleges and um, having, holding focus groups with those, with those groups and trying to figure out why they necessarily weren't interested in publishing and that kind of thing.

On the other hand, it was apparent when managers could not explain or elaborate on their company's diversity policy. More commonly, these respondents produced answers similar to John's, the white manager mentioned earlier. In his reply, John mentioned that his company did have diversity classes but that he had never been to one:

Yes, they do have a diversity policy, as far as they talk about it. It's in the book, the book, you know, the manual that says they pride themselves on that. They have classes but I haven't been to one yet [laughs]. So, haven't been to one yet, but the people I've seen it on email where they send people to them. I haven't actually been to a diversity class yet.

Asked if he could elaborate on his company's diversity policy, John remarked: Probably not.

Sometimes the answers were unclear, such as in the case of Kyle, a Regional Director who has been working 19 for a major airline:

Oh, yeah, I mean I couldn't pull it to you chapter and verse, we have, we make sure we have posters about it, plastered pretty much everywhere ah, ah, they promote it regularly, I don't know if I could say it's always adhered to, and a lot of that, I don't mean that in a negative way, a lot of

times, because of the skills mixed I guess that's required for the kind of work we have left.

What makes these remarks so interesting is they clearly illustrates one way in which many corporations are able to appear as if they are genuinely concerned about equality, yet have practices that clearly are inadequate, lack general enforcement, or are non-existent.

Black and other minority respondents were also often unable to explain or elaborate on their company's diversity policies or practices (approximately 66.7 percent; see Table 6), although all of them insisted that their company had one. For instance, Rita, a Hispanic area manager in her mid-thirties, gave an answer very similar to JoAnn's:

I believe so but I don't know exactly what that is.

Table 6. Respondents' Knowledge Regarding their Company's Policy on Diversity, by Race

Gender	Did Not Know	Ans. No	Ans. Yes-Could Explain	Ans. Yes-Could Not Explain	Total
White	4 (11.7%)	6 (17.6%)	4 (11.7%)	20 (59%)	34 (85%)
Minority	0 (0%)	0 (0%)	2 (33.3%)	4 (66.7%)	6 (15%)
Total	4 (10%)	6 (15%)	6 (15%)	24 (60%)	40 (100%)

N = 40

As discussed in the previous section, *Including Diversity, Excluding Race and Gender*, the fact that blacks have similar views as whites on diversity is not unusual. Because ideologies become normative, they are likely to affect, albeit in an indirect way, those it tries to subject. As Bonilla-Silva (2003:152) has argued, “...an ideology is not dominant because it affects all actors in a social system in the same way and to the same degree. An ideology is dominant if most members of a social system have to accommodate their views vis-à-vis that ideology.” Thus, in order for the diversity ideology to work, a segment of the minority community must also buy into its language.

Table 7. Respondents’ Knowledge of Whether their Company Had an AA Policy

Company’s Policy on Affirmative Action	Number	Percentage
Had an Affirmative Action Policy	5	13.2%
Did not have an Affirmative Action Policy	21	55.3%
Respondent Did Not Know	12	31.5%

N = 38

The Myth of Corporate Affirmative Action

One of the more memorable instances of the diversity conference I attended in Houston was the discussion on the myths of affirmative action. Among the myths debunked were the notions that affirmative action is a quota system, that affirmative action is not good for business, and that most companies wholeheartedly reject the idea of

affirmative action. Considering the speaker and I were pretty much in agreement with the first two myths, I was not prepared for the last myth. Indeed, I had always believed that corporate America disliked affirmative action and was unaware that a large number of corporations had sided with Michigan in the law school case, *Grutter v. Bollinger* (see Green 2004). Considering the number of studies that have been done on whites disapproval of affirmative action and affirmative action programs (Bonilla-Silva 2006), this seemed to be welcome news for women and minorities who wanted to achieve upward mobility in the workplace. However, the data I collected from 38 of the informants⁵⁴ was not consistent with the notion that companies were still interested in affirmative action policies in the workplace (see Table 7). Only 13.2 percent of the companies in my dataset had affirmative action programs. However, 55.3 percent of the companies did not have an affirmative action program. To make matters worse, 12 of my respondents did not know if their company had an affirmative action policy. Although respondents were not asked to elaborate on their company's affirmative action policies, the fact that middle, senior, and even executive managers were unable to give me an answer to this question is disturbing. It also points out the reality of corporate interest in racial and gender equality in the workplace.

Table 8. Respondents' Stand on Affirmative Action, by Gender

Gender	For AA	Against AA	Unsure	Total
Male	2 (7.5%)	18 (66.6%)	7 (25.9)	27 (67.5%)
Female	1 (7.7%)	7 (53.8%)	5 (38.5%)	13 (32.5%)
Total	3 (7.5%)	25 (62.5%)	12 (30%)	40 (100%)

N = 40

Respondents' stand on affirmative action- Unfortunately, the idea that major corporations welcomed affirmative action did not match the views of most of my respondents (see Table 8). Of the 40 respondents that were interviewed and asked how they felt about affirmative action, 25 (62.5%) were against it (66.6 percent of the men and 53.8 percent of the women), 12 (30%) were unsure how they felt about affirmative action (25.9 percent of the men and 38.5 percent of the women), and three (7.5%) responded favorably to affirmative action (7.5 percent of the men and 7.7 percent of the women).

Respondents who said they were for affirmative action programs usually referred to fairness as an explanation for their answer. Respondents who said they were against affirmative action tended to say the opposite, that is was not fair that minorities got advantages over whites or that women got advantages over men. A clear example of this type of mentality is the answer given by Joseph:

I completely disagree with them. I do not believe that companies should seek out minorities and hire someone who is not as qualified for the job as

someone else just because they are a minority. I know that when I was in school, we had several companies come and talk to us about their companies and many had a diversity in it and it became very apparent that it was seemingly much tougher for white males to get a job than it was for minorities. They were specifically seeking out minorities and so it was very small pool of minorities that were in our degree and large pool of white males and the jobs were being readily given to minorities because the companies were seeking out minorities than seeking the person who was best qualified for the position.

Some of the explanations given, such Frank's long explanation of the airline industry, assume that women and minorities do not have the experience or qualifications necessary to do most jobs, much less be hired at all:

Well, you know in my business technical qualifications are everything. There's very little touchy feely that goes on with what we do. So, I guess I, in the aviation industry I have, I have a big problem with affirmative action but if you're trying to hire someone that can definitely can fix an airplane or that can definitely fly an airplane or definitely, you know, run a jet-way, I just don't see that it has much, much, you know much place. Because there are entry levels, we hire from smaller airlines and we hire from corporate operations and so the people we hire already have experience from somewhere else. And, and I have seen it personally that we have hired people that, you know, there's a stated minimum qualification and these people met that, but they were so far down from the other 90 percent of the people that

were hired and they had much, their qualifications extremely exceeded the minimum that it took twice the amount or three times the amount of training to get these minimally qualified people up to a minimal, you know up to a level where they can do some work for us, ahhh other than what we get hired, you know just straight qualifications. I have seen the aviation industry it's a shortcut that a twenty-five year old woman or a twenty-five year old black or Hispanic says, 'hey, you've got to give me a chance,' when what we're hiring is three thirty-five year old white males who have slugged it out in a commuter airline for 10 or 12 years. I mean, the people who want hiring under affirmative action aren't willing to wait the extra six or eight years. They say, 'ohhh you have to give me a chance.' Well, you know, all these other guys got in there, worked for very low wages, worked for crappy hours, you know did what they had to get the, the qualifications, you know, at a very competitive level. So I see it, at my airline it's a shortcut to, you know, to getting a job and the sooner you get the job, the sooner you get the seniority number, sooner you get the seniority number, you know the better your life is.

Table 9. Respondents' Stand on Affirmative Action, by Race

Gender	For AA	Against AA	Unsure	Total
Male	1 (3%)	25 (73.5%)	8 (23.5%)	34 (85%)
Female	2 (33.3%)	0 (0%)	4 (66.7%)	6 (15%)
Total	3 (7.5%)	25 (62.5%)	12 (3%)	40 (100%)

N = 40

Minorities' stand on affirmative action- Unlike their white counterparts, no minority respondents answered that they were against affirmative action. Two out of four respondents mentioned they were for affirmative action, the others were unsure if they were for or against affirmative action (see Table 9). Although the sample size for minorities is relatively small, it is worth noting that the majority of minorities in the sample were unsure of their stand. Again, the fact that minorities may have similar views as their white counterparts is not so unusual. Because the diversity ideology makes it seem that corporations are fair and non-discriminatory to all of their employees, minorities usually do not want to take the chance that they may be seen as a token hire, rather than someone who has been hired because of their experience and skills.

Conclusion

In this chapter I presented several reasons why corporations' preaching of diversity is inconsistent with their practices. First, I illustrated that while many companies may have a few women and minorities seated on the board of directors, when taking into account the executive managers, those who run the day-to-day operations of the company, and even the middle-to-senior level managers of a company, the number of women and minorities are almost non-existent. Considering these are the gatekeepers for the next generation of upper-level managers, unless there are dramatic changes in the structures (i.e., more practice and less talk) of many companies to address the need to promote and mentor more women and minorities, white males will continue to dominate these corporations.

Second, I discussed the impact of the media on helping many corporations to project an image of them as equal employment employees who are interested in having a diverse work force, even when they are not. Last, I presented three findings from my data that suggested that many large companies were not as interested in promoting racial and gender equality and they publicly claim. In the first of these findings, I illustrated that managers were excluding, intentionally or otherwise, race and gender from their definitions of diversity. Because race and gender are not discussed, these issues get ignored, leading to policies that do not address the racial and gender discrimination that still occur in the workplace.

In the second finding, diversity vagueness, I found that many managers, including executive and HR managers, could not effectively elaborate on their company's diversity policies or practices, even while insisting that their company had such plans. This is a

clear indication that many companies are not concerned with ensuring equal opportunity in the workplace so much as their portrayal as equal opportunity employers. In the last finding, the myth of corporate affirmative action, I revealed that even though there is a public sense that many companies are advocates of affirmative action, few companies have affirmative action policies in place. Furthermore, and consistent with the views of most Americans, most managers claim to be either against affirmative action or unsure of where they stand on the issue. This is important because even were more companies willing to implement affirmative action policies, managers might be unwilling to enforce these policies based on their feelings regarding affirmative action.

Corporate tactics alone are not enough, however, to perpetuate the diversity ideology. Similar to Bonilla-Silva's (2003: 26) argument that frames are a "central component of any dominant racial ideology," a number of frames have emerged to explain woman and minorities' consistent exclusion from the upper-levels of the corporate hierarchy. I elaborate on the frames in the next chapter.

CHAPTER VI

RACE AND GENDER INEQUALITY IN BIG BUSINESS:

COLOR- AND GENDER-BLINDNESS IN CORPORATE AMERICA

Speaking like this doesn't mean that we're anti-white, but it does mean we're anti-exploitation, we're anti-degradation, we're anti-oppression.

~ Malcolm X (U.S. civil rights activist, 1925-1965)

Malcolm X spoke these words at a time when the Civil Rights Movement was pushing for changes in the unequal treatment of women and minorities in America. Today, although women and minorities are doing undeniably better compared to their lives in the pre-Civil Rights era, racial and gender discrimination has not gotten better. Rather, new interpretations (or frames) have emerged to explain and rationalize existing racial and gender discrimination. So, the fact that there are few women in the upper-levels of corporate America is explained by arguing that women are less competitive, less status oriented, and less competent with science and mathematics compared to men [see Randle (1999) for an example of this kind of argument]. Similarly, blacks and other minorities' over-reliance on welfare programs instead of hard work explain why many are unable to be successful in business [see Murray (1984) for an example of this type of rationalization]. These arguments are "common-sense" stereotypes rather than actual facts and they misrepresent the real reasons why women and minorities continued to be denied access to better positions in many companies.⁵⁵ By blaming the victim, the social and structural elements that explain women and minorities' status in the U.S. is ignored.

Ideological frames (see Snow and Benford 1988) are developed as justifications for the current inequalities that occur in society. They help sustain ideologies and work to maintain the status quo. In order for an ideology to be effective everyone (or the majority of people in a given society) must believe the frames that sustain it. And, in order for the dominant group to effectively control those who are being oppressed, they must get the oppressed to not only understand their rationalization of the current societal order, but they must also get them to accept that logic as their own.⁵⁶ Indeed, according to Lefebvre (1968: 76), “it is the role of ideologies to secure the assent of the oppressed and exploited.”

Eduardo Bonilla-Silva, in his 2003 book, *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality*, has elaborated quite extensively on his understanding of how frames work to reproduce the dominant racial ideology in post-Civil Rights America. According to Bonilla-Silva, the frames of color-blind racism explain racial phenomenon in ways that minimize or neutralize the seriousness of racism in today’s society. Thus, whites are able to continue to discriminate against minorities (most often in subtle and non-apparent ways), yet shrug off accusations of racism by remarking that segregation is a “natural” occurrence, that culture best explains why blacks are economically less well-off compared to whites, or that blacks are just playing the race card.

Bonilla-Silva’s assessment of the ideology of color-blind racism is right on track in regards to how racism works in today’s society. However, one shortcoming of his argument is that gender is largely ignored. Considering that it is usually white men, rather than white women who dominate the political, economic, and social spheres of

U.S. society, it only makes sense that gender should be examined⁵⁷. This is especially true in corporate America where women and minorities both face barriers in the workplace.

Central Frames of the Diversity Ideology

The frames of the diversity ideology are only slightly different than the frames discussed by Bonilla-Silva (2003) to explain color-blind racism. However, the frames of the diversity ideology are specific to explaining or justifying the inequalities present in many corporate environments. Specifically, corporate managers and executives use these frames to explain why minorities and women have not been as successful as their white male counterparts in the business world. For the most part, the frames used by managers to explain women and minorities' situation in corporate America are similar. Analysis of the interviews I collected with 40 middle-to-senior and executive level managers in *Fortune* 1000 companies reveal three main frames that are used. I label these frames *time*, *education*, *avoidance*, and *stereotypes*.

Explaining Why Few Minorities Are Successful in Corporate America

In my interviews with corporate managers I asked three questions that were geared to assess their thoughts and reasoning behind the fact that few blacks and Latinos were successful in the higher levels of corporate America. In the first question, I presented data showing that although large numbers of blacks and Latinos occupied lower management positions in major companies, they were less likely to achieve upward mobility compared to their white counterparts. The respondents were asked to provide

their thoughts on this fact. The second question asked them to explain why so few blacks occupied CEO positions in the *Fortune* 500 companies. The last question asked their opinion of what would need to happen to get more blacks into top corporate executive positions.

The Time Frame of the Diversity Ideology

The *time* frame is used to argue that it was not too long ago that women and minorities faced discrimination in the workplace. Respondents who use this frame claim that we are still in an in-between stage leading toward racial and gender equality, and it will just take time to get to the stage where discrimination. Twenty-five percent (10 out of 40) of the respondents used this frame to explain blacks' and Latinos' current situation in corporate America. What is interesting about this frame is that it is completely opposite of a common argument used by many mainstream whites who claim that racial oppression is long behind us, what Bonilla-Silva (2003: 77) refers to as "the past is the past" storyline⁵⁸. Whereas the mainstream rationalization regarding inequalities in society is to suggest that racism (and even gender discrimination) is a "thing of the past," in the corporate world, the rationalization of why so few minorities make it to the top is that there has not been enough time. Joseph, the white Director of Software Development mentioned in the previous chapter, noted that it would take another ten or twenty years to resolve the dilemma:

Um, I think it's time. I think we are honestly not that far out of the civil rights movement. There is large corporations that have been around for quite a while and you have to stick with the company for along time to

climb up the corporate ladder and just because the civil rights movement happened in the 60's doesn't mean that that didn't stop the discrimination, so I think that, in the more recent years, ah probably, I have no idea, cuz honestly I'm not a minority and haven't really faced much discrimination so I'd say maybe in the past 10 to 20 years maybe discrimination has gotten less um, and then it will take time for those people to move up into a higher position.

Similarly, Chris, a white Territory Manager for a company that produces chemicals, said the following:

Ah, in my opinion, it's just most CEO's that I see and know or heard about have come up through that company and ah, most companies if you look at the CEO's there are older people, guys, in there you know, 60's, 50's, late 50's you know, like that and they've been with the company. These African Americans haven't been with the company long enough to kind of move up through out he chain of command to get that position and everything.

Chris assumes that since most CEOs tend to be older guys who are ready to retire, this may open up doors for blacks who are ready to move up. The problems with Joseph's and Chris's statements are three-fold. First, they fail to mention that racial barriers preventing upward mobility are still common in many companies. In many cases blacks continue to be denied promotions that are ultimately given to white males who may have less job experience and less education (Stith 1998; Travis 1991). Second, according to Collins (1997), an unprecedented number of well-educated blacks took advantages of

opportunities opened to them in major corporations. In her article titled “Black Mobility in White Corporations: Up the Corporate Ladder but out on a Limb,” Collins (1998) argued that many of the up and coming black managers from her earlier research project did not end up as successful as their white counterparts. For the most part, these managers were promoted to glass ceiling positions (e.g., Director of Affirmative Action, Human Rights Manager, etc.) rather positions that would allow them greater upward mobility in their company. Finally, the likelihood that blacks, even given the opportunities, would be able to occupy the seats of ready-to-retire white CEOs is slim given most upper level corporate positions (especially those on the board of directors) are gained through networks, rather than promotion. According to Zweigenhaft and Domhoff (2006, 2003), few minorities are privy to the overwhelmingly white male elite networks that corporate board members belong to. In addition, black and other minority corporate board members are unlikely to come from within the corporate structure. Rather, the few minority board members of *Fortune* companies tend to be high-profile media celebrities who excelled in sports, politics, or in the entertainment industry (see Domhoff 2005).

The Education Frame of the Diversity Ideology

Only 12.5 (5 out of 40) percent of the respondents used the *education* frame. The *education* frame argued that blacks’ and other minorities’ lack of education better explained why they were not as successful in business compared to white males. Usually, the *time* frame is used to reinforce this type of argument by claiming that it was just the other day that blacks were allowed into higher education. In a few examples, the

respondents followed their answers with remarks that given time, positive change will occur. The *education* frame seems practical because it not only provides an explanation for why blacks are not doing very well in corporate America, it also suggests a possible solution to the problem—in the form of education. Autumn, a Store Manager of a high fashion retail conglomerate, responded in a way that was typical of respondents who used this frame:

Well, historically, it seems like there hasn't been as many African Americans finishing with college, but I think that's definitely changing and that's probably why. We're just having more people that are of the African American origin actually getting degrees and being able to obtain those positions, and I'm pretty sure it will change as time goes on.

In some cases, lack of education was also linked to the poverty typically associated with blacks. An example of this type of comment can be found in Brandon's, the white Service Director mentioned in the previous chapter, answer:

Ah, for those *Fortune* 500 companies, I believe the majority of the reason is because ah, those specific industries, the reason why they are so productive or so profitable, is most of those industries do not reach out to ah, lower economic areas, where there's maybe more predominate group of African American or Hispanic people. For instance like Chemistry jobs, somebody who is in an inner city school or urban area may not have the access to be able to learn about these jobs that are available and therefore when they graduate high school they think there is no other opportunities for them to go outward and it really seems unfortunately to

be a vacuum where there is only a certain amount of people who knows how these jobs work, ah, whether they can do it, um, and such there is a huge drop off um, in that area, specifically, in the industry I work in, there are some people, some people give the reason in the industry why there's not a lot of different races is because there is no interest, which is untrue, there's just no interest because there is no understanding is that an option and avenue that they can go past. Most of the people that I've worked with, if not all of them learned about it from people that they were friends with or they had to go to school to be able to learn those things and unfortunately just a lot of time, there is just a large segment of African American that can not afford to go to college and pursue these actives as such. They are relegated as doing lower management or just hourly labor work and don't think there is any other way for them to get higher up.

Brandon presented a typical argument explaining why so few blacks occupy CEO positions in *Fortune* 500 companies. His explanation helps to perpetuate a version of the culture of poverty argument that presents the majority of blacks as poor and uneducated. In addition, this type of argument allows whites to make assumptions about the educational and experiential legitimacy of blacks and other minorities who are presently in managerial positions.

The Avoidance Frames of the Diversity Ideology

In a number of instances, respondents tried to avoid the question by stating that the data I presented to them did not coincide with the racial composition of their

company, by claiming they needed more information to adequately address the question, or by going off topic completely. Rita's answer was typical of many of the seven (17.5 percent) respondents who used this frame to explain why few blacks occupied CEO positions in *Fortune* 500 companies:

I couldn't answer that. I, I would need circumstances. I would need to see, you know, what the process was for promotion. I think that's hard, that's hard to, to gauge for another company. Uhhmm, I don't know. I have no idea.

Rita's answer allows her to avoid suggesting that racial discrimination might be a good reason to explain why blacks were not doing well in *Fortune* 500 companies. Jason, an Executive Vice-President of a commercial real estate corporation, was less articulate in his answer:

Well, I don't know. I don't know that I can explain it. Um, I don't know. I mean, I would like to see more. Am, I troubled that there aren't more? Sure. Do I understand a little bit, why there aren't more? Ah, I think I do. Do I think we're making progress? I think we are. The question is, is it fast as some would like and if it's too fast for others? Probably true for both counts.

When pressed as to what he would do to increase the number of blacks in top corporate positions, Jason reverted to the *education* frame, being very clear to also mention that we were in a free market society and implying that blacks have the opportunity to be successful and just needed to work harder (notice the last sentence in Jason's response—that it has to be “ingrained in how people behave):

Well, I know one thing it wouldn't be, it would never be legislative and it would never be policy driven. Because that's not how free market society works, that's not how, it's not a meritocracy necessarily. Ah, and the country is largely built on being a meritocracy. I would never do that. I think it would have to be, ah, if you're going to emphasize it and try to continue to see it improve, to levels ah, beyond where it is today, and it does need to improve beyond levels where it is today. Ah, you are going to do it through education, ah, I call it advertisement, but however you want to characterize on, national basis from the government some awareness program, that's much like a commercial if you will, but something along those lines, where it's more widely seen, understood, known, and recognized that it has to be on the forefront of everybody's mind that's how I think it has to be done, should be done, and probably the only way it should be done. When you force anybody to do something, ah, it's not any different than forcing an economy to operate a certain way, that ultimately won't work. It's gotta be, ingrained in how people behave, and that takes time and sometimes generations and patience.

The Stereotypes Frame of the Diversity Ideology

Eighteen of the respondents (45 percent) used the *stereotypes* frame to explain why blacks were not doing well in *Fortune* 500 companies. The *stereotypes* frame allows folks to use commonly recognized stereotypes to “blame the victim” for otherwise structural or institutional causes of minorities' predicaments. The most common

stereotype used was the portrayal of blacks as lazy, such as in Jarred's, a white General Manager of a general service company, answer:

Well, um, I don't like this question, but I'll answer it. I think um, African Americans can be a little bit more lazy, not really lazy, but there's not that many out there striving for those positions, and I think the ah, that there's more white people going for the CEO top position and in the past it's been, I mean, 200 year or 100 years, I don't know I'm not that good with history, but it wasn't that long ago, where they couldn't even work in these top positions and now they're going for it and it's just hard to get started. In the end I think there's going to be more African Americans in these top CEO positions, but it's just going to take some time.

Notice that Jarred also uses the *time* frame in his answer, suggesting once again that it is too early for blacks to be in those top corporate positions. Also note that Jarred ends his answer on a positive note by suggesting that things will get better for blacks given time. Some of the respondents were pretty clear in their answer that blacks were lazy and this explained their situation. When asked why so few blacks were ranked CEO, Heather replied:

Those six people did what they needed to do, they prepared themselves, they went to school, got their education, they worked hard, did a good job on the job and that's why they're CEOs. And anybody who wants to be a CEO whether they're Mexican, Korean, Japanese, African American, can be a CEO their own self if they knew what they needed to do.

When asked what would need to happen in the corporate world to get more blacks into top corporate executive positions, Heather answered:

I guess they just have to work harder, that's the only thing I can think of.

For the diversity ideology to work, managers must provide frames that explain the racial and gender inequalities that occur in the workplace, and they have to also make sure that no blame is placed on the company. White respondents recognized to some extent that there were not many blacks in their company's managerial ranks.⁵⁹ However, few were willing to suggest that this was due to their company's lack of effort. For example Sam, a white executive manager in his sixties, when asked how many minorities were in higher level managerial positions in his company, responded:

A few. There are some, I know there are some. But again, you might say they are a spare portion, you know, are minorities, you know. But these are, you know you're talking about top positions and that's not unreasonable to expect that.

Sam's remark, while light, is typical of many white respondents who do not see it odd that there are few blacks in high managerial positions. When asked about his company's efforts to achieve diversity, Sam was also quick to point out reverse discrimination:

...yes the effort is made. By the same token there is, when you start tracking affirmative action and start tracking the hiring and promoting of minorities at some point you start having what you might call reverse discrimination where now you're pushing, you know to, to promote minorities where they might not have been promoted under other circumstances.

When asked why there continued to be so few blacks moving up the corporate ladder, Sam's response was as follows:

I think a lot of it is what the employees make of it. They have to, you have to make the effort to excel themselves. I think if, whether it be Latino or black or whatever, I think if they demonstrate that they have the ability and the, the drive, desire to be promoted and they achieve the necessary results to do so, I think they will get promoted. Every effort, you know, in the corporate world, I believe, you know is to promote an employee, particularly a minority where, where it's warranted, whereas that employee has proven that he or she has the ability to handle more responsibility.

Sam emphasized that companies make special effort to promote minorities. Thus, the issue for Sam wasn't that his company didn't have opportunities for minorities to rise up in the ranks, but rather the insinuation that blacks did not put forth as much effort as whites.

Frank, a white Senior Manager for a major airline in Colorado (mentioned in the previous chapter) remarked that because his company was unionized it had a very diverse workforce. Frank added that in his company, promotions and pay were based off of seniority. However, Frank admitted that blacks seldom made it to managerial positions in his company. When pressed as to why many blacks weren't achieving upward mobility, Frank had this to say:

When you're running a company or when you have a position of authority and you're looking for people to, to do things, most of us find people like

ourselves. You know this guy thinks like me, he talks like me, he looks like me, that's that guy I'm gonna groom and have come in and help me. And so when you have African Americans or Hispanics, especially if they, I gotta say this, if they stay in their own culture, ok. I think it's very hard to take an intelligent black man who still speaks, I hate to say speaks black but I don't know any other way to say it, talks in a Black manner using black euphemisms and, and 'dems' and 'dose' and doesn't speak correct English, he may be a good manager but the boss will say, I don't want this person to represent me and he's certainly not like, you know like me. So the one's I've seen that have gotten promoted, if they, if, if they can, the more they can I'd hate to say mimic, but you know, the more mainstream American they are and the less black they are, the better they do.

Unlike Sam, Frank does give a viable reason to explain why few blacks make it up the corporate ladder, that, as Collins (1997), Smith (1996) and others have argued, white executives will often mentor other whites if they can get away with it. However, similar to Sam's remarks and what I find most interesting is that Frank doesn't really mention why this may be problematic. Instead, he follows through with the typical stereotype that blacks are culturally different from whites—in his case, not even “mainstream American,”—and places the burden of responsibility on blacks. These views reflect similar findings in Nancy DiTomaso's (2003: 193) work that whites tend to ignore “larger patterns of racial inequality in society by placing the responsibility for life outcomes on blacks themselves.” The fact that institutional racism continues to exist in corporations is minimized or ignored.

How Minorities Responded

How did the views of minority respondents differ from that of whites? Whereas most of the white respondents felt that minorities were given more opportunities in the workplace—even to the point of reverse racism, black respondents felt that minorities still faced discrimination⁶⁰. However, all of the black respondents were quick to point out how “diverse” their company was, as opposed to other companies. For example, Reggie, the Regional Zone Operations Manager—a position just below Vice President, when asked about the effectiveness of diversity policies in many corporations responded as follows:

...sometimes companies put on a, a front to say ohhh, we're very diverse, look what we have. But when you go behind the scenes that's not really the message, that's the message out front. And I think, sometimes they call it window dressing.

When asked about diversity in his company, Reggie answered that his company was different:

I think our employees that work for us are very smart and they understand when companies are very serious about doing what's right for everybody and giving everybody a fair chance and, you know one of the things that you have to look at is, you know when people don't see people that look like themselves, they don't see the, I guess the hope or the dream that they can be in that position. When they don't see it, sometimes people that have not walked in those shoes don't relate to that. And they're like, well

why not, I mean, and I did it. Well you did it because you saw a lot of people that looked like yourself and you had a lot of support along the way. But folk like...me, when I came aboard it was nobody really looked like me in a leadership position so I was really like, can I do this, you know, am I really gonna be accepted and you know, I, the company delivered on everything they said. You know, but I worked hard and did what I needed to, to get promoted.

Reggie was very aware that corporations still had a long way to go in terms of racial equality, especially in the top managerial positions. However, the opinion he held about his company suggested that he believed it to be one of the few places where meritocracy was really valued over issues such as skin color or gender, even as he pointed out, accurately so, that he was part of the 1% of blacks holding a major executive position in his company.

Although Monique suggested that things might be better at the lower-levels of corporate America, her answer was similar to Reggie's when it came to the success of women and minorities at the upper-levels:

I think lower levels companies by and large have done an excellent job. I think when you get up to mid-level still excellent, maybe some industries may not be as good as others. I think that when you get up to the upper levels is when, you know, for females they talk about the glass ceiling. I think that's when it basically falls on a lot of minorities and females when you get to the upper levels.

When I asked whether she thought her company was diverse, Monique replied that they were and offered an explanation to justify her answer:

I, you know what, I think that they are. And I think that I have to qualify that. When you are in a union environment you have contract. And so people have a right to file grievances so if it's not followed, you, you will be made to follow it if you did not follow it initially. And I think we know that our employees are savvy enough to when something's not being followed, so I, I have not encountered one leader who tried to do something because they know that it's gonna come back on them. You know, they know somebody's gonna file a grievance and somebody's gonna ask, ohhhh what was the rationale behind this decision, especially when we have a contract that specifically spells out in terms of seniority who gets what. So it hard to kinda get around those, who qualifies, you know, the criteria that has to be taken into account. Its hard to get around that, I think, in a union environment. Now when you deal with non-union employees I think that that's when you have more of an opportunity for supervisors and managers to go with whatever their personal ahhh opinions favorites, uhhhh friendships, all that stuff that may cloud the decision. Uhmmm, I have not had, you know, out of the, out of the hundreds of complaints that we got this year, I think we've had two that related to something like that...

Explaining Why Few Women Are Successful in Corporate America

The questions I asked respondents in regards to women in *Fortune* 500 companies were similar to the questions I asked about blacks and Latinos. In the first question I mentioned that although a number of companies have large numbers of women working for them at the lower management levels, current research suggests that the likelihood of these workers achieving upward mobility compared to male workers is small. I then asked them to provide their thoughts on this research. In the second question I presented data to the respondents that showed that although women make up half of the U.S. workforce, they only hold 2.6 percent of the top corporate executive. The respondents were then asked to provide their thoughts on this finding. Finally, the last question asked their opinion of what would need to happen in the corporate world to get more women into top corporate executive positions.

The Time Frame of the Diversity Ideology

Five of the respondents replied to these questions using the *time* frame, one-half the number of respondents who used it to address the issue of blacks in top corporate positions. For the most part the use of the *time* frame for justifying women's predicament in the corporate world was similar to the explanations provided for explaining blacks' corporate situation. Brandon's answer clearly reflects this point:

Ah, I think it's similar to the main reason for African American CEO statistic a while ago. Um, is the same reason a lot of the women predominately um, only if you really only look over the last 40 years um, have women begun to start to work towards equal rights as far as work

goes and even in the century have earned the right to vote so on a scale of learning, rather on a scale of trying to earn their right not just to vote, but earn their right as ah, dominate sect in the workplace and ability to take over this position it's slowly going to get there overtime but unfortunately there is so many other, ah, it's when you have one group dominate an area, they typically don't want to give that up to people unlike them. If it's a white male they would tend to want to give their job over to a white male and unfortunately that's just something we see and maybe throughout time it will kind of whittle down, but I think what will happen is, it will be more minorities and more women in CEO's because as those women and minorities get a CEO positions, they will want to give other minorities and women opportunities because they realize how hard it was for them to get to that point and so hopefully, it will start to do some of these unhealthy trends we have in the nation.

Ralph, the Department Manager mentioned in the previous chapter, is another example of how the *time* frame is used:

...we're gonna see a lot more, more change now that there's been a lot more single families, single parents, stuff like that changing cause a lot of people that are in the age group now where they are in the CEO level grew up with two parents, they grew up with, you know, their mom staying home and doing that and a lot of them are still used to that way. But as more of these people that grew up, you know, single moms or single dads, they're gonna, a lot of those things are gonna change.

When Ralph is asked to provide his thoughts on why women do not achieve upward mobility in the many companies compared to their white male counterparts, however, he resorts to the use of a *stereotype* frame and suggests that women's goals may be different from that of men's (i.e., they're comfortable with where they are at):

That's, they get comfortable. Once, you know, a woman who is making five dollars an hour goes to school while she's doing that, she get out and she gets a job, you know, middle management where she's making, you know 2 to 3 hundred thousand dollars a year, she's gonna like that. She's not gonna rock the boat and she's gonna be happy just to try and maintain that where she's making, you know she's making the bill payment, she's buying this nice new house. I mean, they, women when they get, when they go from, when you take people that are making a little bit or are barely feeding themselves and then you give them all, you know, they're, they're, they're eating, they're taking vacations and stuff like that, they get comfortable there, they tend to lose sight of what's up here.

The Education and Avoidance Frames of the Diversity Ideology

Unlike the answers given regarding issues of race, only four (10 percent) respondents used *education* and *redirection* frames to explain why women were not doing well in *Fortune* 500 companies. The two respondents who used *education* frames offered the same arguments given by respondents who addressed the issue of blacks in corporate America. Stephen, a white Executive Vice-President, made the following remarks:

I don't think it's any different than any question about ethnicity. And why, or Latinos' aren't at the top of the companies or why African Americans aren't. It's awareness, it's education, it's ah, it's an on-going process that has to continue, to effect that change over time. And I think that explanation for women is the same as it is for any ethnic biased at the top management level. To answer your question, I think it's the same for any other group that may hold a less than appropriate percentage at the top.

When asked to elaborate, Stephen reverted to the *time* frame to make his case:

I think it depends on what you're benchmarking on the timeline, really on the time line of life, what you're benchmarking, in terms of when it's effective or ineffective. If we're talking about, really what we're talking about is, we are probably just now finishing possibly the, ah, or maybe we are half way through the second generations of managers, since the civil rights act. And so, I think that what happens is, we just haven't had enough time to go by to allow the evolutionary change that occurred in diversity, causing people to becoming more aware of being diverse particular in the workplace since the 60s, ah we just haven't had enough of generational change to were that's become a natural fabric of our society. We're getting there, so I think we have made progress um, when you benchmark it against where we were 200 years ago. I think it's going to take longer than, than probably some want it, but I think will get there.

Justin's, a white Supervisor of Human Resources at a large ad agency, remark is an example of someone using the *redirect* frame. Justin's answer to my question was that gender discrimination did not occur in his company compared to other companies:

Um, that's not true in our company (laughs). As I mentioned earlier in our board of directors, I believe currently, two of them are females. This is in *Fortune* 500 companies, I'm not sure why. Um, once again, having a different set point of view, sometimes is extremely valuable in some situations. You look at an employee and sometimes it's a lot easier to have a female supervisor go speak to an employee than a male counterpart.

The Stereotypes Frame of the Diversity Ideology

Judith Lorber (1994) argues that equal rights for women failed because men and women are viewed as different from one another. In order for women to be treated equal to men, then, they have to be 'like' men. This notion fits quite well the sentiment of most business persons who often dismiss women who must miss work because of family related issues as unfit workers, while at the same time praising men who do the same as "new age" fathers. Overwhelmingly, respondents argued that the main reason women were not doing as well compared to their white male counterparts was that women had the urge to raise families, take care of their families, and have a home life. Because women are seen as nurturers, they are less concerned with the welfare of the company and more concerned with the welfare of their families. Thirty-one respondents (77.5

percent) answered using the *stereotypes* frame. Typical of the responses given can be illustrated with Sam's remarks:

Ahhh there's still the ahhh, the, many women, and I'm not trying to paint a, a broad brush, but many women are still ahhh, ahhh, family oriented that many of them do not want, you know, the high level pressure or high level positions that some men want. You know, that may be a sexist attitude on my part, but ahhh I think it's still viable.

Brook's reply was more elaborate. In the beginning it appears as if she is critical of companies who rarely hire women who want to both raise a family and have a career. However, toward the end of her explanation she produces excuses to justify why women are not making it to top positions in corporate America:

Just women in general? I would have to say that, if you look at the stats, I would say that most women, I think it's a mixture of everything, the lack of education, up until recently I think there's more girls going to school than boys, but ah, I think that education has a lot to do with it, and I think that home wise has a very large basis on that, because I know a lot of women that have PhDs, but they also have children and they won't get hired on companies because they have children and a lot of these bigger companies, um, if you have a home life they're not interested, because they want you to be totally dedicated to that company, a lot of travel involved, and it's very, very difficult to keep, to raise children, you know to have a home life, and I contribute most of that reason to that there. I don't think it's the double standard issue, or anything of that nature, but

It's simply because a lot of women are single moms, or the home life situation is not compatible with the career.

Sometimes the stereotypes used to justify why few women were making it to top corporate positions were that they were not aggressive enough, that they were too nurturing. Frank started his reply that women were not "hard-nosed" enough to get the managerial jobs. He ended his remarks by saying that women "take off for babies:"

Ahhh, I think a lot of women aren't cutthroat enough to ahh, to get there.

And back to the same kind of argument of, you know, when you've got a bunch of hard driven men running the show and they're looking for people that they are gonna interact with and who are gonna take over from them afterwards, you know, they have to say ahhh, you know do I want this, this, you know set of guys over here that I can pick from, I can pick two or three of those. Or, you know, are there any, you know, are the women gonna get in there and be hard-nosed about, you know to take this job. And then, the ancillary stuff as far as middle management stuff ahhh, women take off for babies, women are more nurturing types where guys are hard-nosed SOB's. I think companies look at that and they want hard-nosed SOB's running the company.

How Women Responded

Women's response to the questions regarding why few women make it to top corporate positions were similar to men's. Women were just as likely as men to use the

time and stereotypes frame to answer my questions. For example, Heather invoked the stereotype of women being too emotional:

I don't personally believe that women function as well as men do, because men have more of a black and white mentality and can make decisions without their emotions getting involved and I think that prevents a lot of women from being managers, top managers actually, because they're not able to think with a business mind.

Another example is from Rita, the self-proclaimed Hispanic mentioned earlier:

Oh easily. Top executive positions that I've, I've found in just talking with people that have them are very high stressed positions. Uhmmm, and I truly feel like, for the most part, it takes a special woman to do those. I do believe that women feelers uhmmm, and cannot either handle the stress or rule, or manage with their heart maybe versus their mind. And I think that that comes really, really hard for a lot of people to do, especially women because we are, we are ruled by emotions. I don't care what anybody tells you, we are. So, I think it makes it a little bit hard and for those women that can overcome that, I feel like those are the women that are in those positions that you just said.

In a few cases women who were interviewed purposely dismissed arguments that evoked gender-based discrimination, substituting instead the notion of meritocracy. Brianna begins her answer by saying that since men are typically the ones making the decisions to promote women most likely they are going to promote other men. However, she then

begins a lengthy discussion about how she has never really been discriminated against because of her gender.

I think it's primarily a bunch of guys making those decisions and I think sometimes guys just like to work with guys and, ah, you know, I think that obviously I would be a person to who that would be offensive, but it's not offensive to me, again I feel like I've had every opportunity to achieve and to perform like all my male counterparts do, and so, ah, I should be able to do well enough, perform and achieve well enough, to qualify me for the next position I want or have ambitions for. So, as long as I have the same opportunities than it's kind of up to me to qualify me for the next level of positions. So, I certainly feel like I've not been, again, in a very male dominated environment, I'm not sure that I feel like I've ever experienced discrimination or an unfair promotion environment based on my gender. I do feel like I have been based on my age, I feel like being very young when I got into management, I think that was much more of an obstacle than me being a female and in my industry...

Brianna's decision to emphasize meritocracy and avoid discussing issues of gender discrimination is typical of women in higher managerial positions. According to Lipman (2006), women want to avoid being seen as feminist by their companies who often associate that term with being troublemaker. As mentioned in the earlier part of this chapter, in order for ideology to be effective, all parties must be willing to buy into the frames used to construct the illusion that racial and gender discrimination are all but gone.

Conclusion

In this chapter I discussed some of the central frames used by managers to justify the racial and gender inequalities that still occur in many corporations. In my data analysis, I found four major themes that help promote the diversity ideology: *time*, *education*, *avoidance*, and *stereotypes*. The *time* frame allows white males to claim that there has not been enough time for racial and gender progress to have been made. The *education* frame helps to explain racial and gender inequities as the lack of educational training that women and minorities have compared to their white male counterparts. The *redirection* and *avoidance* frames allow white males to shift the discussion of racial and gender matters to other subjects, thereby avoiding these sensitive topics. And finally, the *stereotypes* frame allows white males to bring up apparently common-sense stereotypes (still deemed viable by the mainstream public) to address issues of racial and gender inequities.

For the most part, the *time* and *stereotypes* frame was used to explain why few women were making it to top corporate positions. In contrast, respondents used all of the frames to explain the situation of blacks in higher-level corporate positions, with *stereotypes* being the most used frame. I ended each section by illustrating how minorities and women also buy into the diversity ideology and by doing so, engage in frames used by white males to justify and maintain white male privilege in the corporate world.

In the next chapter, I provide a summary of the findings I have discussed in this and the previous chapters. This is followed by a short discussion section that focuses on

what needs to be done to expose the diversity ideology for what it is, an illusion that perpetuates racial and gender inequalities in society. I end this dissertation by discussing some of the shortcomings of my dissertation and note some of the current projects I am engaged in that will expand my dissertation research.

CHAPTER VII

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSIONS

A little knowledge is a dangerous thing. So is a lot.

~ Albert Einstein

Summary

In this dissertation I argued that a diversity ideology has emerged since the late 1960s and early 1970s. It is an ideology that is not limited to the corporate world. The diversity ideology is found on many campuses, where Joe Feagin (1996), William Smith (1995) and others have observed that universities and colleges continue to be highly racialized environments. The diversity ideology can be found in the U.S. Armed Forces, where Earl Smith (1996) and more recently Segal and Segal (2005) have argued that diversity is limited to the ranks of the enlisted rather than officers. That is, women and minorities tend to occupy working class “grunt” positions in the military as opposed to positions of leadership. And as I have suggested, the diversity ideology has been a welcoming boon to corporate America as it allows many companies to espouse notions of racial and gender equality and egalitarianism while maintaining highly inequitable work environments.

I have made a number of observations that I believe support my argument. In Chapter V, I argued that women and minorities were not only far and few between in board of director positions (Zweigenhaft and Domhoff 2003), they are also severely under-represented in senior and executive level company positions (Fernandez 1998). Since these gatekeeper positions tend to be occupied by white males, the chances that

women and minorities will find mentors to help them navigate the murky waters of the business world are slim (Stith 1998). I also discussed how corporations use the media (mostly newspapers and magazines, but also television) to help project their image as diversity conscious employers. This tactic allows many companies to claim that while they may have had a few setbacks in their workplaces, they are doing whatever it takes to make diversity a priority issue. Finally, I presented three main findings illustrating that many corporations might not be as sincere as they claim to be when it comes to diversity and diversity-type issues. I labeled these findings *Including Diversity, Excluding Race and Gender* (here I found that managers had a tendency to ignore issues of race and gender when explaining their definitions of diversity), *diversity vagueness* (I found that managers were unlikely to elaborate on their company's diversity policies or practices even though they claimed it had one), and *the myth of corporate affirmative action* (I debunked the myth that corporations are really interested in affirmative action policies and plans).

In Chapter VI, I discussed some of the central frames used by managers to justify the gender and racial inequalities that still occur in corporate America. I listed four major themes that emerged from my analysis of the data: *time, education, avoidance, and stereotypes*. Using the *time* frame, managers are able to make the argument that there has not been enough time for minorities and women to reach the same economic, political, and social status of white males. The *education* frame allows managers to claim that women and minorities lack the necessary education to get into higher corporate positions. People who use this frame often (wrongly) assume that women and minorities have less education compared to whites. Women and minorities who *do* occupy top corporate

positions are sometimes viewed as having been promoted to those positions because of “affirmative action,” rather than ability. The *avoidance* frame allows managers to shift the discussion of racial and gender matters to other subjects, thereby avoiding these sensitive topics. And finally, managers use the *stereotypes* frame to bring up apparently common-sense stereotypes (still deemed viable by the mainstream public) to address issues of racial and gender inequities.

A Preliminary Look at Other Data

This is an ongoing project. In the future I hope to be able to gather more interviews from white and minority senior-level and executive managers of *Fortune* 1000 companies to strengthen my claims regarding the diversity ideology. In addition to the interviews, I am currently gathering and analyzing two other sources of data that I hope to add to this project in the future. The first is a content analysis of women and minorities featured in three prominent business magazines (*Forbes*, *Money*, and *Fortune*) going back 15 years (from 1992 to 2006). In these magazines I ask myself four questions. First, how many women and minorities have articles featured on them that relate to business? Second, how many women and minorities are pictured in each issue of the magazines, to include the advertisements? Third, what, if any, stereotypes are attached to women and minorities who are pictured in these magazines (e.g., picturing women in laundry ads, or picturing black men in aggressive poses. And fourth, who are the audience members reading these magazines? That is, what percentage of managers, executives, CEOs, etc. not only subscribe to these magazines but also thoroughly read them?

If businesses are truly interested in creating a more diverse workforce, especially at the higher managerial levels, this goal should be reflected in business magazines that are usually subscribed by, and sometimes even sponsored by major corporations. My preliminary analysis from *Forbes* magazine (going back 5 years thus far) revealed that women and minorities are still not represented equally in business magazines. Most of the pictures were of white men and few were of women and minorities (although it is interesting to note that there were more pictures of white women than black men or women). When blacks were pictured in *Forbes*, they were typically pictured for their athleticism, rather than their intellect or business savvy. For example, one of the latest issues of *Forbes* magazine prominently featured a cover page, as well as a centerfold, of black males. However, that particular issue was a special topic issue covering black athletes (i.e., boxers), rather than black managers.

The second data comes from survey questionnaires (see Appendix C) that were sent to each of the *Fortune* 500 companies. Two surveys were sent to each company, one to the human resources office and another was sent to the CEO's office. The survey instrument contained questions dealing with respondents' general opinions on diversity and affirmative action. For example, on the questionnaire I asked whether respondents believed their company was diverse, whether their company had diversity based policies or practices, or if diversity is about racial and gender equity. To date, I have only received 70 out of 500 surveys (about 14 percent). I have plans to send follow-up surveys (either by regular mail or via e-mail) to the companies who have yet to respond and will probably begin coding these surveys sometime within the next year or so. While I have not analyzed every question on the surveys that were returned to me, I would like

to point out a few things that are consistent with my findings from the interviews I conducted. First, almost every respondent answered strongly agree or agree to the questions asking whether their company thought diversity was an important issue and whether their company had a diversity policy. Although I do not have the luxury of asking these respondents to elaborate on their company's diversity policy, their answers were consistent with the answers of the respondents I interviewed. Another interesting finding is that most of the respondents answered agree or slightly agree to the statement, "Hiring specialists to create diversity in the workplace does not work. Hiring people based on their merit will better determine a company's long-term success." This is consistent with my finding that although managers may claim they are interested in diversity, they are unwilling to enforce practices that will ensure diversity.

Shortcomings of This Dissertation

No study is perfect. My study is no exception. Two major points have come to my attention during my research on the diversity ideology in corporate America that need to be addressed. First, I have a relatively small sample size (less than four percent of the *Fortune* 500 companies are represented). This is not unusual for qualitative studies. Nonetheless, more interviews with managers from different *Fortune* companies would enhance my findings. In my defense, however, I did target interviews from managers whose companies were consistently recognized by the business world as "diverse" or otherwise interested in diversity. Since these companies' claims of diversity did not match their practices on diversity, I believe it unlikely that other companies less visible in their attempts to advertise their beliefs in diversity would be much different.

Second, my sample of minority managers is small. As Marx (1970) has made clear, ideologies work best when everyone buys into their rhetoric. Blacks and other minorities who believe that their companies are diverse and who use diversity ideology frames to justify women's and minorities' status in corporate America are less likely to be sympathetic to the causes of racial and gender equality. Although the minorities I interviewed did buy into the diversity ideology, a larger sample of minority managers would help to strengthen my argument.

Conclusions

Few business scholars make the claim that diversity does not make good business sense. Indeed, there is evidence that developing policies aimed at giving minorities and women opportunities in the workplace benefits companies (Rice 2003, 2005; Rice and Arekere 2005). However, the issue here is not whether diversity practices work, but rather why they are *not* working. If corporations are as interested in preventing discrimination in the workplace as they claim to be, we should be witnessing fewer lawsuits filed against companies for racial and gender discrimination. But individual and class action lawsuits filed against companies such as *Best Buy*, which was sued in December 8, 2005 for violating federal and state laws against racial and sex discrimination in employment⁶¹, seem to be on the rise. If corporations are as interested in creating and encouraging diversity as they say they are, then we should find more women and minorities in positions of power. Yet, 43 years after the Civil Rights Act of 1964, women and minorities continue to be denied access to the higher echelons of the corporate world.

There are several ways to explain why most people in America would buy into the idea that corporations are interested in diversity. First, most mainstream Americans assume that discrimination has largely disappeared. They think that discrimination in the workplace is unlikely in most cases because it is illegal. Corporations who are caught discriminating against women and minorities face stiff penalties for breaking federal or state laws that prohibit racial and gender inequities in the workplace. But, are companies really scared of breaking the law? In many cases, companies are able to settle discrimination lawsuits filed against them and avoid (most of the time) media attention. Often (though rarely told to the public), corporate diversity programs are used as part, if not all, of the settlement process. The media then highlights these diversity programs thereby minimizing the fact that just the other day a racial or gender lawsuit was filed against this particular company.

Next, many people assume that discriminating against women and minorities is an irrational act on the part of corporations. Why would businesses allow racial and gender inequalities to continue in the workplace if they stand to gain more than they would lose by enforcing diversity policies and practice? Also, considering that women make up (at least if not more than) half of the labor force in the U.S. and that minorities represent a rapidly growing customer base, why would many companies not engage in practices that are in their best interest? However, in a racialized and gendered society it *is* in the best interest of white males to maintain the status quo, even if this means that their companies might not make as much money, or might have to settle a few lawsuits. By limiting the number of women and minorities who get into upper-level positions in the corporate

world, white males are acting in a very rational manner to secure their privileged status and control in society (Bonilla-Silva 2006; Feagin 2006).

Today diversity has become a hot topic in the business world and almost every company website has clear-cut links to their diversity policies and practices. However, diversity has mostly been a shell without substance. Diversity, like multiculturalism, has become an ideology that evokes the notion of equality and egalitarian practices, yet there is often no practice by corporations to match what they often preach. Thus, many corporations can '*be* diverse' without really '*being* diverse.'

What are the implications of my research? First, the diversity ideology helps preserve and maintain a normative white male structure. Second, it helps to keep the corporate world dominated by white men. And, finally, it pushes the myth of equality, which in turn helps to reproduce the status quo. These have serious implications because until we acknowledge that there is a diversity ideology that benefits white males and oppresses women and minorities, it will be hard for changes to be made toward a more egalitarian society. If diversity has become an ideology...we need a better understanding of this ideology before we can move forward. We need to crack this shell that holds no substance before any real progress can be made toward racial and gender equality.

ENDNOTES

¹ This quotation is taken from Martin Luther King Jr.'s *Letter from Birmingham Jail*, April 16, 1963.

² The six African Americans who hold the title of CEO in a Fortune 500 company include, in alphabetical order: Kenneth I. Chenault (American Express), Alwyn Lewis (Sears), E. Stanley O'Neal (Merrill Lynch & Co.), Clarence Otis Jr. (Darden Restaurants), Richard Parsons (Time Warner), and Ron Williams (Aetna).

³ "Screamer" refers to someone (in this case higher-level managers and executive) who communicates vocally in a very loud voice. It also refers to someone who ballyhoos (i.e., advertises sensationally or clamorously in public).

⁴ The other nine, according to CNNMoney.com (2006) are: Claire Babrowski (Radioshack), Susan M. Ivey (Reynolds American), Andrea Jung (Avon Products), Anne Mulcahy (Xerox), Paula G. Rosput Reynolds (Safeco), Patricia F. Russo (Lucent Technologies), Mary F. Sammons (Rite Aid), Marion O. Sandler (Golden West Financial), and Margaret C. Whitman (ebay).

⁵ The U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission (EEOC) filed a lawsuit against Morgan Stanley on September 10, 2001, alleging that Morgan Stanley discriminated against women in its Institutional Equity Division (IED). On July 12, 2004, Morgan Stanley and the EEOC agreed to a settlement of \$54 million dollars. For more information, see the website of the U.S. EEOC: <http://www.eeoc.gov/press/7-12-04.htm>.

⁶ See O'Donnell, Jayne and Chris Woodyard. 2006. "Toyota's Sex-Harassment Lawsuit Could Set Standard." *USA TODAY* (August 7).

http://www.usatoday.com/money/companies/management/2006-08-07-toyota-settle-usat-_x.htm.

⁷ A jury awarded Janet Orlando (former employee of Alarm One) \$1.7 million dollars on April 28th, 2006. See Wiscombe, Janet. 2006. "Lawsuit Reveals Team Building Gone Berserk." *Workforce Management* (May 4).

<http://www.workforce.com/section/00/article/2/35/90.htm>.

⁸ By racialized space, I mean stereotyped positions in a company that are overrepresented by minorities.

⁹ McAllister, Grady. 2004. "Diversity Training Sessions Reexamined: Training Encounters of the Controversial Kind." <http://www.vasthead.com/Diverse/diverse.html>.

This article was presented November 21, 1996 at the University of Houston, College of Technology.

¹⁰ O'Donnell, Ryan. 2003. "The Corporate Diversity Scam." *FrontPageMagazine.com*. January 27: 1-5; <http://www.frontpagemag.com/Articles/Printable.asp?ID=5753>.

¹¹ According to a number of researchers, new covert ways of engaging in racial and gender practices and discrimination emerged after World War II because of the shifting ideology regarding racism and sexism in the U.S. For more information on how racism works in contemporary America, see Bonilla-Silva 1997, 2001, 2003; Hughes 1997; Kinder and Sears 1981; McConahay 1976, 1986; Sears 1988; see also Smith 1995. For

more information on how sexism and gender discrimination works in current U.S. society, see Benokraitis and Feagin. 1995.

¹² This quote taken from Henri Lefebvre's 1966 book, *The Sociology of Marx*. New York, NY: Vintage Books, pp. 68-69.

¹³ Brown, C. Stone and Mark Lowery. 2006. "Who is Worst for Diversity?: The United States Senate." *DiversityInc Top 50 Companies for Diversity*. Vol. 5 (5): 170-180.

¹⁴ Feagin, Joe R. 2006. *Systemic Racism: A Theory of Oppression*. New York, NY: Routledge.

¹⁵ For more details on combating the racialized social system see chapter 9 of Eduardo Bonilla-Silva's book, *Racism without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the United States* (2nd ed.). Boulder, CO: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.

¹⁶ The "Melting Pot" theory suggested that as immigrants began to take on more identifiable characteristics (e.g., speak English, lose their accents, become middle class, etc.), they would eventually shed their ethnic identities and become accepted as "Americans."

¹⁷ See pg. 95 in Michael Omi and Howard Winant's 1994 book, *Racial Formation in the United States: From the 1960's to the 1990's*. New York, NY: Routledge.

¹⁸ See the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission's website for a complete description of the Civil Rights Act of 1964:

¹⁹ The Equal Pay Act of 1963 outlawed sex-based discrimination in wages where work was essentially the same.

²⁰ A full text version of this reference can be found on the internet: http://books.google.com/books?id=t7q3_uNi570C&dq=Civil+Rights+Movement+%2B+Internations+Opinion+of+the+U.S.

²¹ The term “Affirmative Action” was first used by President Kennedy in his Executive Order 10925 to refer to measure designed to achieve non-discrimination.

²² Although West although notes that affirmative action was a weak and imperfect response to the lasting legacy of white supremacy. For more information see West, Cornell. 1996. “Affirmative Action in Context.” In pp. 31-35 of *The Affirmative Action Debate*, edited by George E. Curry. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc.

²³ The title of the speech was “To Fulfill These Rights” and was given by President Lyndon B. Johnson on June 4th, 1965.

²⁴ Signed March 6, 1961 by President John F. Kennedy, Executive Order 10925 established a President’s Committee on Equal Employment Opportunity that was charged with ensuring discrimination did not occur in government jobs based on race, creed, color, or national origin.

²⁵ Executive Order 11246, signed by President Lyndon B. Johnson Sept. 24, 1965, was established to set EEO and Affirmative Action Guidelines for Federal Contractors Regarding Race, Color, Gender, Religion, and National Origin. The charges of Executive Order 11246 was placed in the care of OFCCP.

²⁶ An example of such a case would be the January 1973 settlement between the Equal Employment Opportunity Commission and AT&T, a prominent communications

company. Although AT&T did not admit a plea of guilty to the charge of racial and sex discrimination against its employees, it did sign a settlement agreement calling for millions of dollars of back pay as well as the implementation of company goals calling for increased attention to multicultural practices in the workplace.

²⁷ See Williams, Linda Faye's 1996 article "The Politics of Affirmative Action" for more information on corporate support for affirmative action in the 1960s and 1970s (Pp. 241-257 in *The Affirmative Action Debate*, edited by George E. Curry. Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley Publishing Company, Inc.).

²⁸ In 2003, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in support universities who wanted to use affirmative action to achieve diversity in the admissions process. The *Grutter v. Bollinger* case was seen as a setback to the Bush administration that publicly opposed affirmative action.

²⁹ Destutt de Tracy's *Elements d'ideologie* was a four-volume set that he worked on from 1801-1815. The volumes are: *Éléments d'idéologie I - l'Ideologie proprement dit* (1801); *Elements d'ideologie II - Grammaire* (1803); *Éléments d'idéologie III - Logique* (1805); *Elemens d'ideologie IV & V – Traite de la volonte et de ses effets* (1815).

³⁰ See John Lye's commentary on ideology ("Ideology: A Brief Guide." Department of English, Brock University; <http://www.brocku.ca/english/jlye/ideology.html>; 1997).

³¹ Michel Foucault (1979) referred to this notion as "ideological neutrality," where the dominant ideology is seen as "neutral" by the majority in society.

³² See also Bonilla-Silva's 2001 book, *White Supremacy & Racism in the Post-Civil Rights Era* (Boulder, CO: Lynne Rienner Publishers) as well as his 2006 book, *Racism*

Without Racists: Color-Blind Racism and the Persistence of Racial Inequality in the USA (Boulder, CO: Rowman and Littlefield Publishers, Inc.) for more details on “new racism” since the Civil Rights Era.

³³ Examples include limited access to good education, or outright racial discrimination because of the prejudice of many white employers.

³⁴ See the AFL-CIO website for more information on wage earnings between men and women from 1983-2000: <http://www.aflcio.org>.

³⁵ See also Pamela Perry’s 2002 book, *Shades of White: White Kids and Racial Identities in High School* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press), for more information on how whiteness affects students of color.

³⁶ See also Villalpando and Bernal (2002) and Scheurich and Young (2000) for more information on barriers that impede the success of women and minorities or on notions of White racism in academic settings.

³⁷ By “White habitus,” I refer to a racialized process that shapes, and limits whites’ perceptions, tastes, etc. on racial matters (For more on this notion, see Bonilla-Silva 2003).

³⁸ Employee satisfaction can be translated directly into employee retention, which decreases overall training costs for most companies.

³⁹ By mid-to-high level I am referring to positions within the corporate structure that are responsible for enforcing company policies as well as delegating and overseeing the day-to-day operations in the workplace. Examples of these positions include store, branch, regional, area, and senior managers or directors. By executive level I am referring to the

highest ranked positions within the corporate structure. Examples of these positions include vice-president, president, comptroller, any of the chief executive positions (e.g., CFO-Chief Financial Officer), or any of the corporate board positions.

⁴⁰ This quote is taken from Judith Lorber's 1994 article, "Dismantling Noah's Ark" in *Paradoxes of Gender*. New Haven: Yale University Press: 282-302.

⁴¹ This quote is taken from John Dollard's 1937 book, *Caste and Class in a Southern Town*. Garden City, NY: Doubleday Anchor Books.

⁴² In his famous 1978 book, *The Declining Significance of Race: Blacks and Changing American Institutions*, William Julius Wilson argued that class, rather than race, was becoming the new predictor of Blacks' socioeconomic status in the US. Wilson, however, has since moved away from this thesis minimizing racism in the U.S.

⁴³ For data on racial attitudes in the U.S. see Howard Schuman's 1997 book, *Racial Attitudes in America* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press) or Sniderman and Carmine's 1997 book, *Reaching Beyond Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press). For data on gender attitudes in the U.S. see Blau's 2006 book, *The Declining Significance of Gender?* (New York, NY: Russell Sage Foundation).

⁴⁴ "White male solidarity" refers to the tight knit bond that white males have developed that enables them to be more effective at creating and maintaining white male privilege in the workplace. Thus white male managers back up white male workers at the lower levels whenever possible and at the upper level company positions, white males have developed practices that exclude minorities and women from being included in their group. Thus minorities and women are kept out of the loop in regard to office politics,

discretions, and other inside information that are beneficial for success in the business world. See Thomas Jr.'s 2006 article, "A Path to a Seat On the Board? Try the Fairway" (*New York Times*, March 11) and Burk's 2005 book, *Cult of Power: Sex Discrimination in Corporate America and What Can Be Done about It* (New York, NY: Scribner), for examples of how white male solidarity keeps women and minorities out of the power structure of big business.

⁴⁵ See Johnson's 2005 article in the February 10 issue of the *San Francisco Chronicle*: "Black CEOs Gaining in Corporate America, Numbers Growing: 18 Join Magazines List of Top Execs."

⁴⁶ The two African American CEOs were Richard Parsons (Dime Savings Bank of New York) and Clifton R. Wharton Jr. (TIAA-CREF). Further information can be found in the January 21st issue of *Black Enterprise* magazine (2005).

⁴⁷ See Ramstack's 2005 article, "Hewlett-Packard ousts Female CEO" (*The Washington Times*, February 10), for more information on this.

⁴⁸ For more information, check out the website of the U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission: <http://www.eeoc.gov/press/8-11-05.htm>.

⁴⁹ The backlash by Whites angry at the thought of increased diversity on Texas A&M University has led to an increase in the number of hit-and-run physical attacks committed by Whites against minorities.

⁵⁰ In their talk at a sociology workshop at the University of Minnesota, Bell and Hartman (2005) similarly found that the majority of their respondents were defining diversity in

very general and broad terms and were often inarticulate when it came to topics dealing with diversity.

⁵¹ I should note that just because a respondent identified race and gender as key components in their definitions of diversity, this did not necessarily mean that their company had a diversity policy or set of practices, nor did this mean that companies who had diversity policies or practices enforced them.

⁵² The responsibilities of a Service Director are equivalent to that of a Director of Sales, or Regional/Zone Manager. Managers who occupy these positions are usually responsible for overseeing a department in a company or a region or zone where the company has a number of branches set up.

⁵³ A preliminary analysis of a survey addition to this project also indicated that only two of the returned survey questionnaires had answered no to the question asking whether or not their company currently had an official diversity policy or set of practices in place. 500 surveys were sent out to each of the *Fortune* 500 companies. Thus far, over 70 have been returned for a response rate of 14 percent.

⁵⁴ I interviewed 40 managers from 38 different *Fortune* 1000 companies. In two of the companies I interviewed two managers. In each case, the respondents' answer on whether their company has an affirmative action policy matched.

⁵⁵ See Kirp's 2006 article, "After the Bell Curve" (*The New York Times*, July 23), for a current look at data disproving the arguments of genetic determinism, typically used to explain why women and minorities are not as successful and white males.

⁵⁶ For a really good book on how ideology and social control work, see Mary Jackman's 1994 book, *The Velvet Glove: Paternalism and Conflict in Gender, Class, and Race Relations* (Berkeley, CA: University of California Press).

⁵⁷ Here I am not saying that White women do not gain advantages of being White in a racialized social system. What I am saying, however, is that in the corporate world, White male solidarity create a situation where women and minorities are both seen as threats to White male privilege. The frames of the diversity ideology work to justify racial and gender inequalities that occur in the corporate world.

⁵⁸ Bonilla-Silva (2003) defines storylines as underdeveloped and generic arguments that provide a short narrative (often story like) to make sense of inequalities in society.

⁵⁹ In most cases, respondents tended to over-estimate the number of minorities and women that worked in their company.

⁶⁰ My findings are similar to Jennifer J. Hochschild's who argued in her 1995 book, *Facing Up to the American Dream*, that most minorities are aware of the racial obstacles they still face in the U.S.

⁶¹ According to the class action lawsuit, Best Buy stores nationwide allegedly assigned less desirable positions to women and minorities, who were paid less, worked fewer hours, and were denied transfers more often than compared to white males. According to the plaintiff's attorney Bill Lann Lee, Best Buy hires and maintains a disproportionately white male sales force. When women and minorities are hired, they are not usually permitted to work on the sales floor, one of the areas that lead to managerial promotions.

More information on this lawsuit can be found on the internet at:

<http://www.bbdiscrimination.com/websys94.pl>.

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<http://www.fortune.com/fortune/careers/articles/0,15114,368860,00.html>

APPENDIX A**INTERVIEW QUESTIONNAIRE***Part 1- Background*

1. Let's start with your background. Where did you grow up?
2. How would you characterize your family's socioeconomic standing when you were growing up? Would you say it was lower, middle, or upper class?
 - a. Please describe what your neighborhood was like when you were growing up.
 - b. Do you remember what the racial makeup of your neighborhood was like?
 - c. What about the socioeconomic characteristics of your neighbors, were they mostly similar to your family's?
- 2a. How would you characterize your current socioeconomic standing? Would you say that you are lower, middle, or upper class?
 - a. Please describe what it is like living in your current neighborhood.
 - b. What is the racial makeup of your current neighborhood.
 - c. What about the socioeconomic characteristics of your neighbors, are they mostly similar to yours?
3. What is your educational background?
4. What are the educational backgrounds of your parents?
5. What is your official title in the company you work?
6. Could you please provide a short description of your job duties and responsibilities?
7. How long have you been with the company you are presently working?
 - a. What other jobs or careers have you had before this one?
8. What is your ultimate goal in the company you are presently working?
9. What characteristics do people need to have in order to be promoted to the position you currently occupy?
 - a. What about the position above you?
10. Do you socialize with your co-workers?

- a. (If yes) Could you describe your friends for me? (PROBE: Are any of your friends minorities? Are any of your friends workers in non-managerial or executive positions?)
- b. (If yes) What kinds of things do you do with your friends outside of the workplace?

Part 2- Diversity

11. What do you think about when you hear the word diversity?
12. How does your company define diversity?
 - a. Is this different from how you would define diversity?
 - i. Please explain how you envision diversity in the workplace.
 - ii. What changes would you make, if it were up to you, in regards to diversity in your company.
13. Does your company currently have a diversity policy or practices?
 - a. Could you elaborate a bit about your company's diversity policy or practices?
 - b. Do you believe that your company's diversity policy or practices are enforced throughout the company?
14. Do you believe it is essential for today's companies to have a more diverse workforce?
 - a. Why do you believe this is (or is not) the case?
15. Do you believe that your company's policy on diversity is effective?
 - a. What is (or is not) effective about it? How is (or is it not) effective?
16. Do you believe that your company has achieved diversity?
17. How many minorities are in managerial positions in your company?
 - a. Of those minorities, how many would you say are in top executive positions (Vice-President and above)?
 - b. If you were to include only African-Americans and Latinos, how many would you say are in top executive positions (Vice-President and above)?
18. How many women are in managerial positions in your company?

- a. Of those women, how many would you say are in top executive positions (Vice-President and above)?
19. Do you believe that your company could serve as a model of diversity to other companies looking to become more diverse?
- a. What unique things is your company doing, in terms of being diverse? That is, what unique things are your company doing compared to other companies?

Part 3- Affirmative Action

20. How do you feel about affirmative action programs?
- a. Do you believe affirmative action programs are necessary to increase racial or gender diversity in corporations?
 - b. Do you believe affirmative action programs are necessary at the upper levels of the corporate world, that is, at the higher managerial and executive levels of a company?
21. Does your company have an affirmative action program?
- a. (If yes) Would you please tell me a little about this program?
22. Do you believe that affirmative action and diversity are the same things?

Part 4- Diversity and Race/Gender

23. Although a number of companies have large numbers of African Americans and Latinos working for them at the lower management levels, current research suggests that the likelihood of these workers achieving upward mobility compared to White male workers is small. Could you provide your thoughts on this idea?
24. Currently, there are only four African American CEO's in the *Fortune* 500 list of U.S. corporations. How would you explain why so few African American's are ranked CEO?
25. What would need to happen in the corporate world to get more African Americans into top corporate executive positions?
26. Although women make up half of the U.S. workforce, they hold only 2.6 percent of the top executive positions at *Fortune* 500 companies. How would

you explain why so few women are making it to top executive positions in the *Fortune 500*?

27. Although a number of companies have large numbers of women working for them at the lower management levels, current research suggests that the likelihood of these workers achieving upward mobility compared to male workers is small. Could you provide your thoughts on this idea?
28. What would need to happen in the corporate world to get more women into top corporate executive positions?

Part 5- Diversity as ineffective

29. Current research suggests that while many corporations have pushed for diversity, their policies have been largely ineffective. Do you agree or disagree with this assessment?
 - a. Why do you agree (or disagree) with this assessment?
30. Is there anything else that you would like to add in terms of this interview on diversity?

APPENDIX B

CONSENT FORM

I, _____, understand that I will participate in a research study and hereby acknowledge and allow David G. Embrick, a doctoral student in the Sociology Department at Texas A&M University, to conduct an interview with me for his research project. I understand that the purpose of this study is to examine and analyze issues of diversity within various corporations in the United States.

I understand that this interview will be tape-recorded and that I have the right to request that the tape recorder not be used. I also understand that I have the right to refuse to answer any questions that may make me feel uncomfortable or that I feel is inappropriate. I am also aware that I may stop the interview at any time.

I understand that this interview will be for the sole purpose of Mr. Embrick's dissertation project and is strictly confidential. Therefore, my identity and the identity of the company that I work for will be safeguarded and known only by Mr. Embrick. Additionally, Mr. Embrick has made me aware of the repercussions that follow a violation of the Code of Ethics according to the policies set forth by the Texas A&M University review board and the American Sociological Association. If I have any further questions, I can contact Mr. Embrick or his committee advisor at the numbers listed below.

I understand that this research study has been reviewed and approved by the Institutional Review Board-Human Subjects in Research, Texas A&M University. For research-related problems or questions regarding subjects' rights, I can contact the Institutional Review Board through Dr. Michael W. Buckley, Director of Support Services, Office of Vice President for Research at (979) 458-4067.

I have read and understand the explanation provided to me. I have had all my questions answered to my satisfaction, and I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I have been given a copy of this consent form.

David G. Embrick
4351 TAMU
Department of Sociology
College Station, TX 77843
(979) 862-4650

Dr. Eduardo Bonilla-Silva
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4351 TAMU
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College Station, TX 77843
(979) 845-5012

Signature of Subject _____

Date _____

Printed Name of Subject _____

Signature of Principal Investigator _____

Date _____

APPENDIX C

DIVERSITY IN MODERN U.S. CORPORATIONS

RESEARCH QUESTIONNAIRE

Questions 1-29

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements (Please **circle** the number that best fits your answer):

1. Diversity is an important issue for my company.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Slightly Agree (3)	Undecided (4)	Slightly Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strongly Disagree (7)
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2. My company has a diversity policy.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Slightly Agree (3)	Undecided (4)	Slightly Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strongly Disagree (7)
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3. My company has yet to achieve racial diversity.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Slightly Agree (3)	Undecided (4)	Slightly Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strongly Disagree (7)
--------------------------	--------------	--------------------------	------------------	-----------------------------	-----------------	-----------------------------

4. Corporations need to do more to increase the number of minorities in the upper executive levels.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Slightly Agree (3)	Undecided (4)	Slightly Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strongly Disagree (7)
--------------------------	--------------	--------------------------	------------------	-----------------------------	-----------------	-----------------------------

5. At the top levels of administration (i.e., higher level managers, executive officers, board members, etc.), my company is racially diverse.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Slightly Agree (3)	Undecided (4)	Slightly Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strongly Disagree (7)
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6. My company has yet to achieve gender diversity.

Strongly Agree	Agree	Slightly Agree	Undecided	Slightly Disagree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
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(1) (2) (3) (4) (5) (6) (7)

7. Corporations need to do more to increase the number of women in the upper executive levels.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Slightly Agree (3)	Undecided (4)	Slightly Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strongly Disagree (7)
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8. Diversity is about gender equality.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Slightly Agree (3)	Undecided (4)	Slightly Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strongly Disagree (7)
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9. Women represent between 40 and 50 percent of the upper executive positions in my company.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Slightly Agree (3)	Undecided (4)	Slightly Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strongly Disagree (7)
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10. Diversity and affirmative action are essentially the same terms.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Slightly Agree (3)	Undecided (4)	Slightly Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strongly Disagree (7)
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11. Diversity and multiculturalism are essentially the same terms.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Slightly Agree (3)	Undecided (4)	Slightly Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strongly Disagree (7)
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12. The only way diversity can be achieved is if it is initiated top-down (i.e., from managers to workers) in a company.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Slightly Agree (3)	Undecided (4)	Slightly Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strongly Disagree (7)
--------------------------	--------------	--------------------------	------------------	-----------------------------	-----------------	-----------------------------

13. Although many companies agree that diversity is important, few have implemented policies necessary to make real changes.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Slightly Agree (3)	Undecided (4)	Slightly Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strongly Disagree (7)
--------------------------	--------------	--------------------------	------------------	-----------------------------	-----------------	-----------------------------

14. Diversity is about racial equality.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Slightly Agree (3)	Undecided (4)	Slightly Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strongly Disagree (7)
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15. My company is strongly committed to diversity training.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Slightly Agree (3)	Undecided (4)	Slightly Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strongly Disagree (7)
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16. I know what the diversity policy is in my company.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Slightly Agree (3)	Undecided (4)	Slightly Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strongly Disagree (7)
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17. Although corporations stress the importance of diversity, many have yet to achieve it.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Slightly Agree (3)	Undecided (4)	Slightly Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strongly Disagree (7)
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18. Minorities comprise less than 10 percent of the executive officers in my company.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Slightly Agree (3)	Undecided (4)	Slightly Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strongly Disagree (7)
--------------------------	--------------	--------------------------	------------------	-----------------------------	-----------------	-----------------------------

19. Comprehensive training programs related to diversity issues are not necessary to bring about achievements in diversity in the workplace.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Slightly Agree (3)	Undecided (4)	Slightly Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strongly Disagree (7)
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20. Current research indicates that women and minorities continue to be underrepresented in the upper executive levels of major U.S. corporations. Do you agree with this research?

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Slightly Agree (3)	Undecided (4)	Slightly Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strongly Disagree (7)
--------------------------	--------------	--------------------------	------------------	-----------------------------	-----------------	-----------------------------

21. Minorities continue to be unrepresented in the upper executive levels of major U.S. corporations largely as a result of corporations' failure to implement effective diversity policies.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Slightly Agree (3)	Undecided (4)	Slightly Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strongly Disagree (7)
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22. Women continue to be unrepresented in the upper executive levels of major U.S. corporations largely as a result of corporations' failure to implement effective diversity policies.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Slightly Agree (3)	Undecided (4)	Slightly Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strongly Disagree (7)
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23. Overall, diversity is a business issue that affects the company's ability to compete with other companies in the marketplace.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Slightly Agree (3)	Undecided (4)	Slightly Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strongly Disagree (7)
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24. Affirmative Action programs are the best way to ensure that women get access to higher-level managerial positions in a corporate business.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Slightly Agree (3)	Undecided (4)	Slightly Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strongly Disagree (7)
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25. Companies that emphasize diversity policies are more likely to experience increased tension, hostility, and resentment in the workplace.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Slightly Agree (3)	Undecided (4)	Slightly Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strongly Disagree (7)
--------------------------	--------------	--------------------------	------------------	-----------------------------	-----------------	-----------------------------

26. Hiring specialists to create diversity in the workplace does not work. Hiring people based on their education will better determine a company's long-term success.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Slightly Agree (3)	Undecided (4)	Slightly Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strongly Disagree (7)
--------------------------	--------------	--------------------------	------------------	-----------------------------	-----------------	-----------------------------

27. Hiring specialists to create diversity in the workplace does not work. Hiring people based on their merit will better determine a company's long-term success.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Slightly Agree (3)	Undecided (4)	Slightly Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strongly Disagree (7)
--------------------------	--------------	--------------------------	------------------	-----------------------------	-----------------	-----------------------------

28. Whereas in the past African Americans were underrepresented as CEO's in *Fortune* 500 companies, they currently represent 10 percent of the population.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Slightly Agree (3)	Undecided (4)	Slightly Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strongly Disagree (7)
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29. Affirmative Action programs are the best way to ensure that minorities get access to higher-level managerial positions in a corporate business.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Slightly Agree (3)	Undecided (4)	Slightly Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strongly Disagree (7)
--------------------------	--------------	--------------------------	------------------	-----------------------------	-----------------	-----------------------------

30. My company has an affirmative action program (or policy).

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Slightly Agree (3)	Undecided (4)	Slightly Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strongly Disagree (7)
--------------------------	--------------	--------------------------	------------------	-----------------------------	-----------------	-----------------------------

31. Diversity is an issue that will only be solved with time.

Strongly Agree (1)	Agree (2)	Slightly Agree (3)	Undecided (4)	Slightly Disagree (5)	Disagree (6)	Strongly Disagree (7)
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Questions 31-35

Please provide the following background questions about yourself:

31. What is your age range?

- less than 20
- 20-29
- 30-39
- 40-49
- 50-59
- 60 and over

32. What is your gender? Male Female

33. What is your family or household yearly income?

- below \$20,000.00
- \$20,000 - \$39,999
- \$40,000 - \$59,999
- \$60,000 - \$79,999

- \$80,000 - \$99,999
- \$100,000.00 and above

34. How many years have you been with this company?

- less than 2 years
- 2-5 years
- 6-9 years
- 10-14 years
- 15-19 years
- 20 years or more

35. What is your official title in this company? _____

This concludes the survey questionnaire. Please mail this questionnaire, using the included return envelope, as soon as you are able. Your input in this matter is extremely valuable to our research project.

Thank you for your contribution and for your time.

APPENDIX D

RESPONDENTS' DEMOGRAPHIC CHARACTERISTICS

Int #	Name	Race	Gender	Company Position	# Yrs with Company	Edu
1	John	Asian	Male	Branch Manager	4	BS
2	Reggie	Black	Male	Regional Operations Zone Mgr	15	BS
3	Rita	Hispanic	Female	Area Manager	4	BS
4	Ryan	White	Male	Regional Director	21	S College
5	Chad	Black	Male	Branch Manager	4	BS
6	Ralph	White	Male	Department Manager	4	S College
7	Monique	Black	Female	Senior Manager of Employee Relations	1	JD
8	Colby	White	Male	District Manager	25	BS
9	Frank	White	Male	Training Director	15	BS
10	Sam	White	Male	Comptroller	34	BS
11	Jack	White	Male	General Manager	1.5	MS
12	Justin	White	Male	Supervisor of Human Resources	13	BS
13	JoAnn	White	Female	Operations Manager	9	BS
14	Jason	White	Male	Executive Vice President	1	MBA
15	Lily	White	Female	Branch Manager	4	HS
16	Jacob	White	Male	Warehouse Manager	3	HS
17	Kyle	White	Male	Regional Director	19	S College
18	Ashley	White	Female	Vice President of Marketing	18	MA
19	Brooke	White	Female	Supervisor of Loan Production	11	S College
20	Thomas	White	Male	Software Developer Manager	8.5	BS
21	Autumn	White	Female	Store Manager	4	BS
22	Stephen	White	Male	Executive Vice President	20	MBA
23	Jarred	White	Male	General Manager	4.1	BS
24	Brianna	White	Female	General Manager	1	BS
25	Chris	White	Male	Territory Manager	26	BS
26	Joseph	White	Male	Director of Software Development	2	BS
27	Brandon	White	Male	Service Director	5	BA
28	Heather	White	Female	Human Resources Manager	1	BS
29	Carl	White	Male	Human Resources Supervisor	6	MS
30	Greg	White	Male	Project Director	2	MS
31	Carrie	White	Female	Store Manager	10	BS
32	Louis	White	Male	Area Manager	5.5	BA
33	Erika	Hispanic	Female	Store Manager	3	MA
34	Larry	White	Male	Director of Sales	7	BS
35	Fred	White	Male	Director of Human Resources	21	BA
36	Steven	White	Male	Chief Operations Manager	11	BS
37	David	White	Male	Senior District Manager	14	BS
38	Jackie	White	Female	Regional Manager	17	S College
39	Susan	White	Female	Senior District Manager	20	BS
40	Harry	White	Male	Vice President of Operations	17	MA

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MOST RECENT PUBLICATIONS:

- 2007 (IN PRESS] Embrick, David G., Carol S. Walther, and Corrine M. Wickens. "Collective Practices of White Male Solidarity: Attitudes towards Gay Men and Lesbians." *Sex Roles: A Journal of Research*.
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