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African American Students' Perceptions Of Diversity, Inclusion, And Hate Speech

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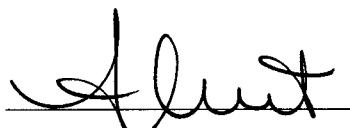
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African American Students'

Perceptions of Diversity, Inclusion, and Hate Speech

(TITLE)

BY

Andrea E. Grant

THESIS

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YEAR

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DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my Lord and Savior Jesus Christ who sustained me during my journey of educational enlightenment, to my family for their unconditional love and support, and to the participants of my study who are the true catalyst for change in the movement for the educational value of diversity.

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Abstract

African American students' perceptions of diversity, inclusion, and hate speech were explored to reveal implications for the efficacy of the university's mission and obligation to diversity. Using qualitative research methodology, six African American female undergraduate students were interviewed via a semi-structured interview protocol. Using constant-comparative analysis common categories were drawn revealing nine salient themes: Artificial Diversity between Races, Implicit Racial Lines, Efforts of Housing Staff, Missed Educational Opportunities, Encounters with Hate Speech, Subtle Acts of Hate Speech, Overcoming Stereotypes, Users of Hate Speech, and Speech Codes are Not the Solution. These findings provided African American students an opportunity to have a voice on issues that affect their educational experiences and suggested further points of discussion for Student Affairs practitioners and future researchers striving to improve campus racial diversity.

Keywords: diversity, inclusion, hate speech, african americans, college, university

TABLE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

Introduction

The racial dynamics on a college or university campus play a complex and vital role amid the remarkable increase of diverse populations over the years in higher education (Antonio, 1998; Pike, 2002). The racial climate of a campus may underpin challenges to diversity and the success of an institution. Scholarly research has supported diversity and inclusion as promulgated concepts emphasized within academic communities (Pike, 2002). Anderson (2008) contends that the undercurrent of a university system in the 21st century has to be embedded with philosophies of diversity to live up to its educational responsibilities. However, these concepts create challenging spaces in their environments, even if embraced in their values, as diverse populations bring capricious viewpoints and inevitable misunderstandings. Pope, Reynolds, and Mueller (2004) indicated the changing student body especially in terms of race and other social variables have resulted in demanding racial issues with the increase in reporting of hate crimes and discrimination on campuses. Universities have responded with their missions of diversity, cultural understanding, and multicultural competencies to address the needs of a changing campus (Pope, Reynolds, & Mueller, 2004).

Historical and modern depictions of incidents of prejudice and racial conflicts demonstrate how significant racial interactions are to the university setting striving to achieve aims of a welcoming and learning-centered environment. Although the overt racial unrests of the 1960's and prior are not reflective in the same manner in the 21st century educational structures, the transformation of the collegiate campus is still facing hurdles.

Higher education institutions acknowledge there are benefits derived from having a diverse student population (Antonio, 2001). Nevertheless, variables such as hate speech incidents can defy that value of diversity. Pope, Reynolds, and Mueller (2004) indicated "innovative approaches are needed to address the individual needs of a diverse student body and the organizational demands of changing campuses" (p. 4). This is the case especially when incidents involving hate speech and/or hate crimes loom disrupting the management of racial diversity on campuses. According to Kaplin (1993) hate speech and hate crimes have been occurring throughout university environments and continue even to today.

In 2010 at California State University of San Marcos, it was reported that hate speech was found in the campus restrooms, including racial slurs and a drawing of a noose on bathroom stall walls (Moss, 2010). In 2011 at Williams College in Massachusetts the words "All Niggers Must Die" was written on the fourth floor of a residence hall (Nesterak, 2011). Such acts penetrate equality with hatred and intimidation (Kaplin, 1993). Kaplin indicated that repeated incidents of hate speech engender in the victimized groups feelings of vulnerability, insecurity, and alienation, in addition to undermining opportunities for racial constructive dialogue. The question that must be pondered is if hate speech penetrates the walls of higher education how can the institution truly be an advocate for diversity and inclusion?

When there is discourse about race within a community it must be met with conversations about diversity. Antonio (2001) explained that dialoguing about race must be present for greater openness to diversity- socially, culturally, and politically. Hatfield, Schafer, and Stroup (2005) provided an empirical study about the effects of engaging

students in a dialogue about hate speech and determined that "when engaged in the discourse, participants are more likely to decrease their perception of appropriateness and have a more overt reaction to the hate messages" (p. 49). Arguably, race dialogues are constructive conversations about diversity, unlike the intention of hate speech. According to Kaplin (1993) the purpose of hate speech is "more to humiliate or wound than it is to communicate ideas or information" (p. 518). Knowing the threat of hate speech exists on university campuses, presents an opportunity for college students to discuss and voice their opinions on the topic, provide further insight into the campus racial environment they help create, and offer insight into the present racial situation on campus.

Garnishing support for diversity and inclusion is becoming a necessity for diverse student body populations. An exploration of the challenges of campus racial dynamics must be conducted in order to establish a meeting of the minds to better understand how campuses are transforming and how to address the different needs of that transformation. Diversity, which can be defined as the racial, ethnic, and socially stratified imprint on society, is an existing blue print for higher education. Antonio (2001) remarked "As we enter a new millennium, American higher education continues to experience rapid racial and ethnic diversification" (p. 63). Students from various backgrounds, races, and ethnicities cross paths each day from classroom settings to shared residential living spaces. By confronting issues that derive from these interactions demonstrates a commitment to positive interracial relationships and steps to eliminating any forms of exclusion.

The legal system has been a key contributor to the construction of diverse demographics of student populations as well. Identifiably the most influential landmark 1954 Supreme Court case, *Brown v. Board of Education,* blazed the trail for growing diversity in education by ultimately integrating many public school systems (Maruyama, Moreno, Gudeman, & Marin, 2000). Maruyama et al. (2000) claimed diversity optimized learning and added value to an institution. In the 1978 *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* case, Justice Powell's opinion stated that diversity was identified as "a contributor to the robust exchange of ideas" (p.8). In *Grutter v. Bollinger* (2003) the Supreme Court further supported diverse college campuses by holding that institutions of higher education have a legitimate state interest in promoting diversity.

Although diversity appears to be supported in higher education by legalist and academic scholars, responding to hate speech that disrupts diversity and inclusion is more questionable. Some universities have responded to the appearance of hate speech issues with remedies of regulations and/or speech codes. These seemingly appropriate measures by universities are contested by most courts for their resistance to limiting individuals' free speech. Kaplin (1993) asserted it is a phenomenon that presents complex problems especially when universities react with policies or student codes to combat actual and perceived hate speech issues. Kaplin (1993) defined these codes as "Various nonregulatory initiatives, not dependent on establishment of behavioral standards and punishment of violators" (p. 517). An obvious dilemma is that the values of equality and free expression are both at stake in ensuring that students and communities affected by hate speech are supported and in the same instance, ensuring that the speakers of hate speech First Amendment rights are not violated.

It must be the goal for institutions set in diverse contexts to address issues such as hate speech, diversity and inclusion to be successful in their educational missions. This study was designed to further assist in the process of cultivating developmental dialogue in regards to the challenges of racial campus dynamics by analyzing African American students' perceptions of hate speech, in addition to their perception of campus diversity and inclusion. African Americans, a historically marginalized population whom have been a targeted class of hate speech and prejudice in the United States, were chosen for this study. The researcher desired to look at how perceptions might inform the campus community on racial campus dynamics rather than reflect expectations. Students' perceptions inform the dynamics of a campus. It is important to identify students' status or understanding with diversity, inclusion, and hate speech to combat issues that have implications for future race interactions and the racial campus undercurrents.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to explore African American students' perceptions of diversity, inclusion and hate speech on a midsized, Midwestern university's campus. Its focus was to understand individual students' perceptions of diversity, inclusion, and hate speech as impacting variables on racial diversity within the campus community and ultimately revealing implications on the efficacy of the university's mission and obligation to diversity. It was to further identify what hate speech means for students within a diverse conscious context. This research was to help institutions engage in conversations about hate speech, inclusivity, and diversity by raising awareness to some of the issues affecting their African American students. A qualitative research design was used to better understand the racial dynamics of the campus environment as it relates

to these areas and to reveal the current campus status through the social lens of African American students.

Research Questions

The following research questions ignited interest in this present study.

1. What are African American students' perceptions of diversity and inclusion at their institution?

2. In what ways do African American students view the intentional support of diversity and inclusion on their campus?

3. What are African American students' perceptions of hate speech at their institution? How do African American students perceive the prevalence of hate speech?

4. What do African American students think about speech codes?

Significance of the Study

In the educational realm diversity, inclusion, and hate speech have created contentious debates on how to combat hate speech, what are the effects of hate speech, what are the benefits of diversity, how is diversity and inclusion defined, or what approach should be used to address diversity concerns. Understanding the impact of diversity, inclusion, and hate speech in regards to the campus racial dynamics will help inform higher education research as well as spear head policy implementation and education. Most research addressing issues around diversity and inclusion focus on variables such as racial intolerance, multiculturalism, self-segregation, cultural understanding, and interracial interaction (Antonio, 2001). Acknowledging that similar issues may arise, this study looked at perceptions and the reality African American

students experience with diversity, inclusion, and hate speech on a college campus through one-on-one interviews. By studying a sample of African American students, the largest racial minority at the research site, information about challenging diversity issues can be collected to better support a positive learning-centered environment around racial diversity. Altbach and Lomotey (1991) indicated universities are "at the center of the social construction of reality" (p. 80). What students perceive is real is determined by their academic environments. Furthermore, the participants' perceptions contribute to a culture of evidence in assessing the diversity fabric at their institution (Anderson, 2008).

Participants were asked questions regarding their feelings, thoughts, and knowledge of diversity, inclusion, and hate speech, as well as additional topics such as speech codes that involve the hate speech issue. Kaplin (1993) asserted that in understanding the hate speech problem, one must first research the manifestations and effects of hate. Exploring students' perception of hate speech is a step towards addressing the issue and encouraging dialogue and education. The dialogue created from African American students' perceptions of diversity, inclusion, and hate speech is invaluable in serving the community they are a part of and providing insight toward better defining and articulating what hate speech looks like on the research site's campus and better supporting diversity and inclusion as a whole.

Limitations of the Study

There were limitations to this study. The composition of the sample created one limitation. The sample of students consisted of female African American second and third year students at a Midwestern institution. The geographical location from where the students were drawn may have some bearing on their views. Students studied from

alternate geographic regions may produce different results and respectively, first-year and fourth-year students may have varies viewpoints from their experiences. Other social factors such as the exposure or victimization of hate speech may contribute to differing perceptions. And the use of only one institution and only students living on campus may not reflect an accurate depiction of hate speech, diversity or inclusion. The complexity of race as a social constructed entity cannot be generalized for all African-Americans for within the chosen population greater heterogeneity exists. However, the representation of the participants of this study reflects their reality and deserved recognition and analysis.

Furthermore, limitations of this qualitative study existed with self-reporting, interpretation of data, and the development of the research tool. Individuals' interpretations of statements differ and therefore, it was difficult to determine what a student was meaning/thinking when she answered a question. As a researcher who has experienced hate speech, it is recognized that sensitivity to this topic interjects another level of subjectivity in analysis as detailed in the subsequent researcher's personal disclosure statement.

Additionally, it is plausible that the researcher was perceived as an out-of-group member since the researcher did not attend the institution as an undergraduate. Although participants were reassured that the interview was taking place in a learning space, distrust in the environment or insecurities about the topic still may have existed. Such distrust or insecurities could result in participants hiding any damaging information from the researcher and providing what they consider safe responses. The researcher missed opportunities to ask some follow up questions with respect to certain statements that may have revealed more enriched data.

Personal Disclosure

I am a female African American. I am a student. I am an educator. I have a passion for learning and serving students. Through my personal experiences I have developed into a person that cherishes the voices of others and who wants marginalized and/or underrepresented communities to be heard. I desire for my legacy to contribute to equality and justice on college campuses. I live by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr.'s quote, *Intelligence plus character- that is the true goal of education.* Through education and advocacy, I want to build individual character not only in the students I serve and in the environments they live in, but within me.

I became interested in this topic due to my current career path targeting improving the campus climate for all students as an aspiring student affairs practitioner. Working with diverse groups from previous employment I felt charged to combat the reflection of other's negativity of minority students by empowering them to pursue their academic success and passions.

I had many wonderful and challenging experiences that introduced me to diversity and inclusion. I worked for a Historically Black College and University (HBCU) and I have worked at a private, predominately White university as a Community Director and Resident Director respectively. Both institutions were located on the east coast. I currently work at a predominately White university in the Midwest in a graduate assistant position.

From humble beginnings majoring in Sociology and Political Science, I aspired to continue my education by obtaining a Master of Science degree in College Student Affairs. I derived from a family that cares for human rights and strives for racial

equality. I believed that once someone tries to understand the meaning people attribute to their perceptions and takes the time to listen and build those relationships, they then will help build inclusive communities and demonstrate an acceptance for diversity in return; a long process undoubtedly, but a race for the one who can endure.

Having witnessed and been the target of hate speech on my undergraduate campus I found myself asking these questions: How does hate speech affect a college community? What does hate speech look like for this generation of students? Does the mission of a university about diversity and inclusion combat hate speech? Do students feel enough is done to promote diversity and inclusion and is education in the forefront of continuing the conversation?

As my personal perceptions are acknowledged here, they did not shadow or influence the participants in this study. This study was not about me, but the students I interviewed. I was not biased in my interpretation and the analyses of their thoughts were through established theoretical and conceptual frameworks.

Definition of Terms

> **African American.** This study defined African Americans as a trend of ethnic identity representing blended heritage of an African legacy and an American foundation (Larkey, Hecht, & Martin, 1993). The students interviewed in this study used African American and Black interchangeable as they described themselves and talked about their racially similar peers.

> **Diversity.** For this study diversity was the racial, ethnical, cultural, social stratification of a population (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002).

First Amendment. The First Amendment prohibited governmental interference with religion, expression (speech, assembly, or press), and petitioning the government for a redress of grievances, as long as it does not incite harm or violence (Tsesis, 2010).

Hate Speech. Hate speech, as used by the legal community, is broadly a descriptive of epithets, slurs that demean a protected class or group of people also known as racist speech (Leets & Giles, 1997, p. 261).

Hate Speech Harm. Hate speech harm for purposes of this study is harm that degrades individuals (Kaplin, 1993).

Inclusion. Inclusion is the evident representation, participation and consideration of people. For purposes of the study inclusion is also not being excluded from networks of information and opportunities (Roberson, 2006).

Perceptions and Attitudes. "Perceptions and attitudes are defined and measured in terms of a disposition, feeling, and position, with regard to a person or thing and tendency or orientation of the mind" (Murray, 20011, p. 53).

Speech Codes. Speech codes are regulations that prohibit certain types of speech (Silverglate & Lukianoff, 2003).

Summary

African American students' perception of diversity, inclusion, and hate speech provide valuable insight into the racial campus dynamics. With changing student demographics in higher education, maintaining successful and cohesive campus racial dynamics requires those who work on the campus to hear students' voices. Underlining the purpose to qualitatively research a topic to better explain the racial dynamics of a

campus as it relates to diversity, inclusion, and hate speech through the perspective of African American students, reveals deeper efforts to use student information to support or reevaluate campus diversity and inclusion programs, initiatives, and culture of the campus. Legal constraints and education administrators drive social change to a point while the student body determines if and when that shift is being instrumental in meeting the university's aims and goals.

CHAPTER II

Literature Review

Historical Background of African Americans in Higher Education

The unrest and misconceptions about African Americans have been historically rooted in the killing and beating of enslaved Africans, the Jim Crow era of segregation, and continued present day racism and discrimination permeating the institutional and social fabrics of society (Cuyjet, Howard-Hamilton, & Cooper, 2011). Altbach and Lomotey (1991) stated "through 1865, the dominate experience of African Americans was slavery" (p.72). Slavery was maintained through ignorance and illiteracy imposed on enslaved Africans through laws such as South Carolina's law of 1740, which made it a "punishable crime to teach slaves to read and write and for them to become literate on their own" (p. 73).

African Americans in higher education have been plagued with racial conflicts including race riots, murders, and church bombings over integrating schools from the 1950s to 1970s (Spring, 2010). African Americans have had to slowly overcome racial discrimination, segregation, and marginalization in higher education. These barriers limited educational opportunities and imbalanced the achievement strides and access to education for African Americans. Cuyjet et al. (2011) stated "considering the African American college student in this context is important for uncovering the truth and for analyzing qualitative ... data, historical documents, identity theories, and the latest research with a perspective that is rooted in reality and intellectual honesty" (p. 143).

"The Civil Rights Act of 1964, which prohibited the granting of federal funding to institutions that discriminated on the basis of race, was tantamount to the mandate that

colleges and universities admit students of color" (Altbach & Lomotey, 1991, p. 77). With the Civil Rights movement and affirmative action victories, the all-White campus environments had gradually transformed (Antonio, 1998). However in spite of improving conditions, culprits such as racial tension and self-segregation still seem to be present on diverse campuses (Antonio, 1998). If it had not been for the intense civil rights initiatives and significant legislation, the African American student today would be at a greater disadvantage, diversity and inclusion an afterthought, and the progress of equality and justice hindered.

Making Meaning of Hate Speech

Through the process of social change in constructing the present day reality for African American students, understanding hate speech from their perspective lends to hearing their voices and understanding their world. Although universities strive to void trampling free speech rights, their missions tend to value the equality of persons in the same manner. How then do students make sense of this problem? To understand hate speech it must not only be defined, but the context of the author, the speaker, the victim, the hearer, and the bystander must also be considered.

Slagle (2009) identified hate speech as language used to communicate demeaning, degrading and destructive ideas. It may also be described as venomous and repugnant thought. Cowan and Khatchadourian (2003) indicated that hate speech includes "spoken slurs, symbols such as swastikas and burning crosses, [and] pictures such as those that sexualize the subordination of women" (p. 300), which may incite harm to others. However, these philosophical descriptors or unethical symbols can become a catchall for any phrase or understanding viewed broadly. It is hard to define hate speech even though

most utterances target minorities (Slagle, 2009). The most obvious forms of hate speech are described as ethnic insults, which are the basis for this study.

Hate speech can take on many forms. It reaches pass the interactions of one on one intimidations, but as Kaplin (1993) explained it is the messages that can appear on clothing, message boards, advertisements, and animations. Kaplin (1993) further included:

> Hate speech may be a cartoon appearing in a student publication, a joke told on a campus radio show, an anonymous note slipped under a dormitory or meeting room door, or graffiti scribbled on walls or sidewalks. Hate speech [...] being conveyed through destruction or defacement of posters or displays; through symbols such as burning crosses, swastikas, KKK insignia, and Confederate flags; and even through themes for social functions, such as Black-face Harlem parties, jungle parties, or White history week parties. (p. 518)

The intent and motive behind hate speech is unlike any other grouping of words or symbols. Agarwal (2011) implied that hate speech should not go uninvestigated or unpunished. Failing to do so identifies hate speech as the vehicle for hate and the mask of prejudice. Racist speech falls under the auspices of hate speech as well. All too often hate speech is directed towards individuals historically discriminated against or lacking social power (Bell, 2009). The notion of hate speech has been challenged by social critics over the decades arguing that "not every message is deserving of the protection that almost every form of speech currently enjoys under the law" (Slagle, 2009, p. 238).

Conceptual Frameworks

Diversity and inclusion. Trends supporting the value of diverse and inclusive communities are paramount in higher education. The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill's Report of the Chancellor's Task Force on Diversity (2005) stated "a critical element of excellence for a 21st- century educational institution is a diverse and inclusive community" (p. 3). Court decisions as presented in the case *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* (1978) held that diversity was a *compelling state interest* and that a diverse student body yielded educational benefits. In contrast to the *Bakke* (1978) case, Gurin et al. (2002) indicated that campus environments of diverse students resulted in the racial separation on campus, which was a reflection of their lived segregation from their home community. "This segregated precollege educational background means that many students, White and minority alike, enter college without experience with diverse peers" (Gurin et al., 2002). Another point to ponder was Moody's (2001) research on friendship segregation, which discovered that mere distribution of races did not promote friendship integration.

In examining diversity climates, Roberson (2006) highlighted a small amount of research where the dimensions of diversity climates consisted of "personal value for diversity, personal comfort with diversity, organizational fairness, and organizational inclusion by employees' perceptions of issues as practices that are critical for diversity understanding" (p. 216). At the present time empirical data is limited and is still needed in supporting the optimistic or disparaging claims around campus diversity (Antonio, 2001). What is not debated is the educational objectives of the modern institution to

provide a welcoming, inclusive environment for all students, regardless of race, ethnicity, religion, and/or other protected status category (Gurin, Dey, Hurtado, & Gurin, 2002). According to Gurin et al. (2002), attention to diversity in educational institutions promotes the best learning environment for students. Lahelma (2004) was in agreement that the aim of a liberal educational institution consists of components of acceptance, social responsibility and cooperation. Institutions such as the one selected for this study demonstrated their commitment to those aims through their mission statement seeking to uphold diversity in a community free from prejudice.

The emergence of speech codes. The controversy and debate over hate speech has been a topic of great attention on college campuses in light of speech codes and the free speech dilemma (Atman, 1993). According to Kaplin (1993) changes to student codes and regulatory policies were to address actual and potential hate speech occurrences. Speech codes were defined by the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE) "as any campus regulation that punishes, forbids, heavily regulates, or restricts a substantial amount of protected speech" (Silverglate and Lukianoff, 2003, p. 2). Donald Alexander Downs (2004), a professor from the University of Wisconsin-Madison stated the trend towards higher education institutions developing speech codes has been increasing since the 1980s. Fisher (2008) contended that the allowance of verbal pollution would impede the educational process. Verbal pollution also encompassing hate speech "refers to the use of words and comments that the majority agrees are offensive, are damaging, and may lead to the deterioration of social institutions" (Fisher, 2008 p. 278). Censorship attitudes for social ills such as hate speech have been studied across diverse disciplines and have found that generally

women, conservatives, and youth were more likely to censor (Lambe, 2004). "Public

opinion surveys have repeatedly shown that while Americans strongly support free

expression in the abstract, many would impose restrictions in concrete situations"

(Lambe, 2004, p. 279). Heinze (2009) indicated that "advocates of hate speech bans

proceed on the broader assumption that hate speech *might plausibly* cause such detriment,

indeed in ways that are often subtle and pernicious, therefore not amenable to precise

empirical observation" (p. 201).

The dilemma universities grapple with is punishing speech that targets minority-

status individuals even if it is contrary to First Amendment rights and the exchange of

opposing views (Tucker, 2006). Tucker (2006) asserted his opposition to speech codes

by recognizing that universities should strive to create learning environments for open

dialogue for all students even if sustaining an inclusive environment is troubled with hate

speech. Institutions have implemented regulations that censor offensive or degrading

communication to prevent hate speech, however, many avoid calling them speech codes.

Silverglate and Lukianoff (2003) stated that speech codes are alive and well on college

campuses, even if the majority of the university population is unaware that it exists.

In place of utilizing speech codes overtly some universities have developed

"'speech zones' policies, email policies that ban 'offensive' speech, 'diversity statements'

with provisions that punish those uttering any 'intolerant expression,' and, of course, the

ubiquitous 'harassment polices' aimed at 'hostile' viewpoints and words that operate by

redefining speech as a form of conduct" (Silverglate and Lukianoff, 2003, p. 2). Downs

(2004) pointed his finger at hypersensitive administrators as the driving force behind

campus speech codes. Seemingly with First Amendment sensitivities the hate speech allowance will continue to be reported.

Hate Speech and the Legal Discussion

According to Leets and Giles (1997) "Historically, the U.S. Supreme Court precedent with regard to its First Amendment rulings is that even the most hateful opinions should be allowed to compete in the 'marketplace' of ideas" (p. 262). However, the essence of the judicial system has advanced contrasting views regarding the control of hate speech. Hatfield, Schafer, and Stroup (2005) stated there are exceptions to hate speech prevalence with speech forms such as libel, obscenity, or fighting words. As seen in *Doe v. University of Michigan* (E.D. Mich. 1989) the courts held that a hate speech policy the institution implemented was unconstitutionally vague, thereby permitting the use of words and symbols that target and victimize students of color. Similarly Jay (2009) emphasized that "bias-motivated *speech* falls under First Amendment protection; [emphasizing] prejudice is not illegal" (p. 83). On the other hand, in *Virginia v. Black* (2003) the constitutionality of a state statute prohibiting the use of cross burning, a known symbol of hate, was held to be constitutional since it communicated a *true threat.* Seen in this case, speech intended to intimidate may not be protected under the First Amendment (Jay, 2009). In *R. A. V. v. City of St. Paul* (1992) the courts continued a trend of prohibiting statutes trying to suppress messages from disfavored persons. The seventeen year old minor in this case burned a cross in a young Black family's yard. The city's ordinance under dispute attempted to criminalize the displays of symbols that may cause harm based on a protected class. The Supreme Court held that an ordinance that targeted speech on account of who the speech was directed towards, was unconstitutional.

This case set a pattern for the protection of content based speech, which was seen in higher education.

In *Wisconsin v. Mitchell* (1999) hate speech was used in a different manner. The case surrounded a First Amendment challenge to a hate crime enhancement statute that was determined to be constitutional by the Supreme Court due to hate speech being analyzed as an aggravating factor in determining motive of a crime. The defendant in this case, after conversing about the film *Mississippi Burning* with friends, instructed his friends to go beat up a *White boy*, which they proceeded to do. The courts determined that Mitchell's First Amendment rights were not violated by using the admission of his speech due to his utterance of hate speech being evidence of his thought process and not proscribing the content of his speech. The pattern seen within the courts provided few, if any, restrictions to the extent of hate speech.

The First Amendment of the United States Constitution provided an inherent right to express oneself through speech, as long as it does not incite harm or incite fear (Cowan & Khatchadouran, 2003). In *Chaplinsky v. New Hampshire* (1942) the courts noted there are words that by the mere utterance *inflict injury* or incite an immediate *breach of peace.* This case indicated "the test for whether fighting words would produce an 'uncontrollable impulse' to violence and their harm outweighs their social value [...] if people of common intelligence would understand the words as likely to cause the average addressee to fight" (Leets & Giles, 1997, p. 263). Even if trying to analogize hate speech to fighting words, the First Amendment protection against hate speech appears absolute, however, university campuses have to acknowledge and address a climate that amplifies the exchange of hate speech between its residents. Hatfield et al. (2005) indicated that

although legally no restrictions on hate speech are available through the courts, educational institutions can still respond to such incidents on their individual campuses (Hatfield, Schafer, and Stroup, 2005).

Do Words Harm?

The perception of harm inflicted by hate speech and the overwhelming legal authority protecting freedom of speech and expression present an interesting dynamic on college campuses. College campuses are considered safe havens for young adults and institutions are expected to maintain that environment. Even in a free society this dilemma is experienced when individuals use hate speech to attack individuals or groups of people from a certain class (Cowan & Khatchadouran, 2003). According to Kaplin (1993) "Hate speech is a particular concern because of the harm it causes to the victim, the victimized group, the campus community, and ultimately to society" resulting in humiliation, fear and anxiety in the victim (p. 518). Hatfield et al. (2005) stated "Hate speech is detrimental to the development of a sense of community that academic establishments strive to achieve" (p. 45).

In contrast, Jay (2009) remarked research has been indeterminate in its results/conclusions of the *effects* of harm caused by offensive words, and there is priority given to freedom of speech even over the equality or protection from harm. Cowan and Khatchadouran further indicated "harm is seen as a concrete entity, not an abstract idea," which bears on a person's empathy and knowing of the harm of hate speech (p. 301). Leets and Giles (1997) discussed how harm was problematic considering the meaning of harm may change with the different players in the exchange of hate speech from the speaker, his/her intent, the hearer, and the context of the message.

Many argue hate speech harm is real and felt by its receiver and the effects are devastating socially, emotionally, and psychologically (Jay, 2009). Mello (2008) presented a case involving a judge's public remarks that were considered derogatory towards a protected group. Even though the majority opinion in that case did not reprimand the judge for his bias statements, the dissent opinion spoke passionately on how his comments cast doubt on the judge's ability to show an objective stance on political issues. Impartiality views from this judge inflict distrust and social harm on his constituents' confidence in his judgeship. This type of harm may not readily reveal a bruise as a punch would, but similarly the impact was felt. Although Mello (2008) does not speak directly to educational settings, the same ideology from the courts was directed in all societal institutions.

Theoretical Frameworks

The theoretical frameworks presented within this study provided a foundation for analysis and guidance in understanding the perceptions of diversity, inclusion, and hate speech. One theoretical lens used was social identity development, which allowed the researcher to see the participants as unique complex individuals. Additional theoretical lenses explored were institutional and societal racism. In conversations about race it is important to understand the power struggle between the races that frames those relationships and how they influence the college environment.

Social identity development. Evans, Forney, Guido, Patton, and Renn (2010) indicated that social identity development resembled a process where people come to terms with their social identities whether racial, ethnical, etc. The individual and others make judgments on themselves based on those identities (Evans et al., 2010). According

to Torres, Howard-Hamilton, and Cooper (2003) social identity development theory helped "in understanding the perspectives of students" (p. 23). Murray (2011) researched how social identity helped conceptualize African American college students' attitude towards hate speech. Although students may interact with their social identity at various stages in their development, Leets and Giles (1997) stated "according to social identity theory, the mere categorization of people into groups induces individuals to seek a positive social identity through social comparisons between their own and other groups" (p. 266). What it means to be African American today will contribute to how the students in this study perceive the campus racial dynamics as it relates to diversity, inclusion and hate speech. Identifying how attitudes are influenced by diverse environments is vital as Hatfield, Schafer, and Stroup (2005) indicated one's race and ethnic background affects a person's perception and tolerance for hate speech. Within a diverse environment these perceptions can demonstrate conflict. Boeckmann and Liew (2002) stated "Hate speech is directed at injuring a person's social identity and thus, even when the affront is successful, it is difficult to assess its impact" (p. 364).

According to Evans et al. (2010), "Individuals social identities influence how they see themselves, how they interact with others, the decisions they make, and how they live their lives" (p. 229). The societal dynamics by which African American students live display underlying concepts of privilege and oppression as seen in social identity interpretations. Certainly diversity, inclusion and hate speech discourse are not exempt concepts from social identity analysis. Social identity development theory will not be used to label the students in this study for the fluidity of their perceptions may fluctuate between stages (Torres, Howard-Hamilton, & Cooper, 2003).

Institutional and societal racism. Racism in American higher education may be described as an unpredictable veil of smoke lingering and pervasive in nature. Bowser, Auletta, and Jones (1993) explained racism encompasses "three things: (a) a cultural presumption in one race's superiority and another's inferiority; (b) institutional practices that reinforce and fulfill the cultural presumptions; and (c) individual beliefs in the racist cultural presumption and institutional practices" (p. xii). Spring (2010) indicated racism can be difficult to define with the changing meaning of race. Throughout this study race is implied as a social construct, whether by laws and court rulings (Spring, 2010) or institutional practices. "Racism in concrete terms [is defined] as citizenship laws, education laws, and court rulings that are prejudicial toward a particular group of students" (p. 7). According to Law, Phillips, and Turney (2004) university racisms "are likely to co-exist alongside a wide range of progressive, antiracist, multicultural and inclusive ideas, programmes, practices and initiatives" (p. vii). If co-existing, the real and present manifestation of racism arguably exists on college campuses.

According to Cuyjet et al. (2011) overt discrimination during historical time periods such as laws preventing the socialization of African Americans were causes of the present day "impediment to democracy and educational opportunity" (p. 143). Torres (2009) states that "although legal and social norms in the United States have diminished overt discrimination against particular racial/ethnic/gender indicators these norms have not necessarily diminished the existence of racist thoughts or oppression" (p. 505).

Knowledge of hate occurrences has grave bearing on students' perceptions and interaction along race lines. Modern day trials as illustrated by Altbach and Lomotey (1991) discussed that racism depictions are generally covert by being subtle in favoritism

or someone's inability to penetrate White dominate systems. Torres (2009) contends that "Many minority college students have grown accustomed to the microagression (subtle verbal, nonverbal, or visual insults directed at a person because of their color; often based on stereotype) that promote exclusion and inequality; thus making it difficult to acknowledge these aggressions openly" (506). These stereotypical negative images are seen as oppressive to the targeted group through their internalizing those negative ideas assumed by those in power in the effect of stereotype threat (as cited by Steele, 1997; Torres, 2009).

Summary

The literature review for the present study encompasses the historical depiction of African American's in higher education and their plight to overcome racial and societal hindrances. The literature contends that the goals of universities and colleges to foster and develop diverse and inclusive communities must be balanced with their response to hate speech within First Amendment restrictions and with individual equality in mind.

Diversity and inclusion are valued for their educational benefits and best learning environments, however, the literature also acknowledges the challenges they create. The importance of universities to construct educational communities where they describe the expectations of the members within the community and hold their students accountable within appropriate legal boundaries resonates throughout the literature as well.

The question that then surfaces is whether a university on one hand can promote diversity and inclusion in diverse communities and on the other hand, permit harmful or offensive speech to permeate its campus? The literature showed that the harm of hate speech directed towards a targeted group affected their person, their environment, and

their community by emotional harm, racial tension, self-segregation, and social injustice. Although analyzing the *harm* done was considered complex a response by universities was still charged.

CHAPTER III

Methodology

Design of the Study

Qualitative interviewing. The purpose of this qualitative study was to explore African American students' perceptions of diversity, inclusion, and hate speech. According to Rubin & Rubin (1995), "People who live or work together or have similar racial, ethnic, or religious backgrounds develop shared understandings that are communicated to others in their group and constitute their culture" (p. 3). Therefore, to capture the perceptions of students on this topic a homogenous group of African American students were chosen (Creswell, 1998). African-American students were a representative group that has been historically targeted by hate speech (Fish, 1997). In addition, they represent the largest visual racial minority group at the research site's institution. The essences of students living on campus made them key players in providing insight into the university environment. The participants for this study were second and third year college students selected from the African American population of a Midwestern, mid-size Predominately White Institution.

By using a qualitative design, this topic is explored through students' feelings, thoughts, and knowledge as well as their perceptions and viewpoints (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006; Rubin & Rubin, 1995). A qualitative approach was appropriate for quantitative analysis would not yield the nuances of the students' thoughts and experiences. These forms of variables can be better understood through detailed descriptions, using individuals' quotes (Upcraft & Schuh, 1996). As explained by Watson et al. (2002), qualitative research is used in understanding perceptions and

meaning of college experiences, which aligns with the central premise of this study to better understand the racial dynamics at the institution through African American students' perceptions of diversity, inclusion, and hate speech.

Limitations of qualitative research. Qualitative research has great strength, however, Udinsky, Osterlind, and Lynch (1981) outlined several weaknesses with qualitative interviews. Such weaknesses consisted of the time and personal effort exerted, the skill needed by the interviewer, the chance of biases from the interviewer or participants, problems with recording responses and quantification, and restrictions to the sample size, because of lack of funds and time constraints (Udinsky, Osterlind, & Lynch, 1981). This study was conducted by a graduate student during the course of three semesters. Data collection took place towards the end of the spring 2012 semester prior to and during finals week, which reduced participant numbers. Patton (1999) reported with qualitative research designs limitations arise from the limited sample and "findings will be limited based on selectivity in the people who were sampled either for observations or interviews" (p. 1197). Unfortunately, these limitations are inherent with purposeful sampling (Patton, 1999). Although the study did not set gender restrictions, only female students participated. Additional efforts to acquire male participants were not sought due to the quality and solid themes revealed across the interviews with the female students.

Rationale for method. One-on-one semistructured interviews were conducted to acquire data through enriched verbal interaction and observation of participants' non-verbal cues. A semistructured interview allowed the researcher to introduce a topic and guide the discussion with specific questions (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). The face-to-face

interaction helped gain trust and build rapport (McMillan & Schumacher, 2006).

Udinsky, Osterlind, and Lynch (1981) indicated that semistructured interviews allowed

for standardized questions to be asked and for the interviewer to pursue follow up

questions "to explore equivocal and hidden relationships that might go undetected in a

more structured response mode" (p. 129). This method was administered by the

researcher. Interviews were the best strategy for this study under the assumption that

hate speech, diversity, and inclusion are social entities that can be perceived by students.

Participants

The six participants for this study were second/third year African American

students residing on campus. At the research site, African American students (n = 613)

residing on campus represent 21.8% of the total on-campus enrollment. To obtain

participants for this study purposeful sampling was engaged to guarantee the most useful

and promising data (Creswell, 1998). A list provided by the Office of Minority Affairs

was cross-referenced with a list provided by the Department of University Housing and

Dining Services to verify that the students met the research criteria. Patton (1999)

reported that purposeful sampling was focused "on understanding and illuminating

important cases rather than generalizing from a sample to a population" (p. 1197). The

students for this study were able to articulate their thoughts about diversity, inclusion,

and hate speech and in some cases were aware of or targeted by hate speech on campus.

During the spring 2012 semester, an email solicitation (see Appendix A) was sent

to approximately 262 on-campus African American second-year students and 158 on-

campus African American third-year students, which was a total of 420 possible

respondents, requesting their participation in the study. The email assured participants'

confidentiality and offered a $5 gift card to a local coffee shop at the conclusion of the data collection as an incentive to participate. If participants withdrew before completion of the research, they forfeited the opportunity to receive a gift card. There was no cost accrued by the subjects as a consequence of participating in the research.

After an initial email and two follow-up emails were sent, two students replied with interest in being interviewed. Four additional participants were acquired by snowball sampling resulting in four additional participants. Students who did not racially identify with being an African American, who lived off campus, and who were not second or third year students were not considered. In addition, they were selected without regard to gender. Unfortunately, no male students chose to participate. Students with second or third year class status were targeted since their matriculation through the university had exposed them to the college environment longer than their first year counterparts and were traditionally more responsive than their senior counterparts, whom were mostly preparing for graduation within the research site community.

The participants were not subjected to any known serious risks associated with the research. Any potential risks to the participants were minimized by encouraging participants to only disclose information they were comfortable with sharing. No participant revealed any discomfort with the questions or the research topic.

Profile of participants. The participants for this study were referred to by their selected pseudonym/alias to protect their identity. Participant Winter, a second year student majoring in family consumer sciences with a concentration in family services with a minor in psychology, was from Belleville, Illinois, raised in part by her mother and "granny." She grew up in predominately Black neighborhoods and was critical of how

negative African Americans were towards one another. Winter valued the role of diversity and saw race as not the only factor of diversity, but a very important one. Winter participated in the study to have her voice heard.

Lassie grew up partly in Chicago and partly in Atlanta, Georgia, when her parents separated. Her mother still resided in Atlanta. Lassie was raised in a single mother home. When she was thirteen, she went to live with an older sister. She contributed her desire to help people to this experience and her sister's unwavering support. Lassie was majoring in marketing and was a third-year student. Growing up Lassie saw being Black as not articulate. Her family said she was like a "White girl" due to her proper grammar. Lassie was motivated to participate in the study because she thought people needed to be honest about the campus climate.

Participant **Nina** responded to the first email solicitation and suggested the additional participants. Nina came from a military background. She lived mostly in Illinois in predominately White areas; however, when she moved to Alabama she experienced a cultural shock due to the overwhelming numbers of African Americans. With the exception of Alabama she had lived in predominately White neighborhoods and attended predominately White schools. Nina was majoring in chemistry with a biochemistry concentration. Nina was also a third-year student. Nina participated in this study, because she had a desire to learn more about her culture. She was comfortable with calling herself the "White girl," but she mentioned how her eyes were opening to issues that affect Black people.

Participant **Rhonda** was a third-year, first-generation college student. Her parents were from Ghana and West Africa. Rhonda struggled as a child growing up in

predominately White areas where she was picked on because of her dark skin complexion. Being African American for Rhonda was entwined with the torture of childhood name calling and the notion that "true" African Americans were the lighter skin tone African Americans she saw on television. Rhonda was a third year student studying sociology and double minoring in African American studies and women's studies. Rhonda was motivated to participate in this study because she wanted to improve the African American community.

Participant **Jennifer** was a third-year student who grew up in predominately White neighborhoods. She had a biracial mother and a Black father. Jennifer was from Chicago. She was studying psychology with a minor in health studies. Jennifer realized she was different as a child when she thought of her racial identity, but not necessarily that she was Black. Having a Black and White grandmother she noticed their differences, but only saw them as new and positive experiences. Jennifer participated in the study because she valued diversity education.

Judy was a second-year student studying psychology with a minor in family consumer science. Judy came from a two parent home and grew up on the south side of Chicago. She moved around a lot from different neighborhoods within Chicago. Judy experienced diverse neighborhoods due to the moving around from predominately White neighborhoods to predominately Black/Hispanic neighborhoods. Judy was motivated to participate in this study because she thought people do not address these topics.

Each participant came from a different background and family structure, however, it was revealed that each one overwhelmingly valued the role of diversity and inclusion

and believed hate speech was in opposition to those values, which seemed to be a motivator for participating.

Site

The site for this study was a rural, Midwestern, public comprehensive university with an enrollment of over 9,600 students at the time research was conducted. African Americans (n=1,399) consisted of approximately 14% of the student population. The university selected was regarded by students, staff, and faculty as a safe campus committed to achieving a diverse community.

Instrumentations

Interviews. Six one-on-one interviews were conducted and provided sufficient information for this thesis. Each interview was approximately one hour. Interviews were no longer conducted once new information was no longer provided (Creswell, 1998). One-on-one interviews were conducted with each participant to acquire data through enriched verbal interaction and observation of participants' non-verbal cues. The data obtained was specifically for research purposes. The participants met for one hour in a large private study room located on the main floor of a residence hall. Although other students could possibly see participants entering the room, they were not able to hear what was discussed.

Prior to the interview, each participant was asked to complete an informed consent form approved by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) that stressed confidentiality and participation procedures (Appendix B). They were reminded that their participation was voluntary, confidential, and that at any time they could withdraw from the study. Participants were asked a series of standardized open-ended interview

questions (see Appendix C). Each question was designed to address the researcher's research questions.

To ensure reliability, the research questions were asked to a pilot group of students not utilized for the actual study to work out the natural flow of the questions, revise the order of the questions, and ensure the questions were understood at the level of competency of the participants (Udinsky et al., 1981). Udinsky et al. (1981) indicated that interview questions should be organized from factual questions and simple topics to complex questions coming later. This technique was employed for this study. In addition, prompts and probes were utilized when necessary to gain clarity with responses (Udinsky et al., 1981). To ensure validity, member checks were conducted to solicit participants' feedback on the initial transcriptions. Participants were emailed the results of the transcriptions to confirm their statements.

Researcher. Patton (1999) discussed the credibility of the researcher as an instrument in qualitative inquiry. The researcher for this study was a graduate student in the College Student Affairs program that took a course and lab in Research Methods and conducted an extensive literature review on the topic. The researcher was working under the guidance of a thesis advisor who was versed in qualitative research and was a qualified graduate faculty member holding a terminal degree. Reiterated in the personal disclosure statement of the researcher aforementioned, she acknowledged her exposure to racial conflicts and hate speech; however, this exposure assisted with the researcher's ability to empathize with different points of views (Rubin & Rubin, 1995). Although the researcher was aware of what she brought to the research topic she suspended her personal thoughts to ensure the voices of the participants were heard. Patton (1999)

pointed out that the intellectual rigor and professional integrity of the researcher underlies the researcher's credibility. Therefore, the research examined the data over and over to ensure the natural phenomena of the patterns and codes made sense (Patton, 1999).

Data Collection

Data was collected in "a series of interrelated activities" (Creswell, 1998). Data was collected from audio-visual material (webcam/videotape) and a back-up recorder to capture the essence of the interview, the interaction between researcher and participant, and all non-verbal cues. Data collection involved the verbatim recording of students' responses to the interview questions. The verbatim recordings were used to obtain both hard copies and computerized files of the data in Microsoft Excel.

Upon arrival of the interviewee, consent to participate in the study was obtained. The interviewee completed the consent form for the Institutional Review Board. The use of interview protocols (see Appendix D), "a predetermined sheet on which one logs information," aided in note taking and the organization of the interviews (adopted from Creswell, 1998). During the interview, participants were encouraged to be specific or to clarify their statements (Udinsky et al., 1981). The interview questions were adhered to within the time frame specified.

Treatment of Data

Each interview was transcribed verbatim and open coded to identify overarching categories/themes and significant statements (Creswell, 1998; Crobin & Strauss, 1990). "Using the constant comparative approach, the researcher attempted to 'saturate' the categories- to look for instances that represent the category and to continue looking (and

interviewing) until the new information obtained provides no further insight into the category" (Creswell, 1998, p. 151).

A sense of the overall data was first obtained by reading through all collected information (Creswell, 1998; Tesch, 1990). Creswell (1998) indicated that looking at words used, "the research translates participants' ideas into metaphors" (p. 140). This was a technique that benefited the researcher in creating codes. Patton (1999) stated "Qualitative analysis depends from the beginning on astute pattern recognition" (p. 1191). The interviews were assessed by detail codification of specific statements through inductive analysis to identify the patterns in the data (Patton, 1999). Patton (1999) further specified that integrity in analysis is critical. Therefore, other ways to organize the data were explored to see if different explanations could be reached by using topic codes and analytical codes. The confidence within the original conclusions drawn was increased by not having strong evidence to support alternative explanations (Patton, 1999). Appropriately, information from the interviews not used was discarded (Creswell, 1998; Wolcott, 1990). With the combination of these strategies the researcher was allowed to use categories/codes generated from the interviews to construct the inclusive themes.

The validity of the study was established through triangulation. Triangulation of data sources reduced "systemic bias in the data" (Patton, 1999, p. 1197). Patton (1999) outlined methods of triangulation indicating that it provided "cross-data validity checks" (p. 1192). The two kinds of triangulation used in this study to contribute to verification and validation of qualitative analysis were theory / perspective triangulation, which used

multiple theories to interpret the data and analyst triangulation to test for consistency (Patton, 1999).

According to Patton (1999) "having two or more researchers independently analyze the same qualitative data set and then compare their findings provides an important check on selective perception and blind interpretive bias" (p. 1195). Therefore, the researcher's thesis advisor provided her feedback and analysis of the data as well. To ensure verification, peer reviews were conducted to provide an external check of the research process, meanings and interpretations.

The perceptions of college students helped shape their interactions with each other. This study provided the research site further insight into the students they serve by emphasizing the students' point of view. A better understanding of how African American students perceive diversity, inclusion, and hate speech will result in better support for diverse and inclusive communities, increased dialogued about these topics, as well as provide information to universities on departmental initiatives to foster an environment that would impact diversity and inclusion in a positive manner and encourage intolerance to hate speech without encroaching on free speech values.

CHAPTER IV

Results

This chapter presents the complex nature of African American students'

perceptions of diversity, inclusion, and hate speech. The purpose of this study was to

explore African American students' perceptions of diversity, inclusion, and hate speech

by using the voices of six African American female students. The students' interview

data provided insight into four research inquiries guiding this study: 1.) What are African

American students' perceptions of diversity and inclusion at their institution? 2.) In what

ways do African American students view the intentional support of diversity and

inclusion? 3.) What are African American students' perceptions of hate speech at their

institution? How do African American students perceive the prevalence of hate speech?

4.) What do African American students think about speech codes? Creswell (1998)

stated the importance of reducing data by codes or categories by constant comparative

method looking to see if they were revealed from interview to interview. Using constant-

comparative analysis nine themes emerged from the research questions: artificial

diversity between races, implicit racial lines, efforts of the housing staff, missed

educational opportunities, encounters with hate speech, subtle acts of hate speech,

overcoming stereotypes, users of hate speech, and speech codes not being the solution to

the hate speech issue. The themes were organized by the research questions. To

maintain the students' confidentiality identifiers such as the university's name or the

students' organization names were omitted from their statements and replaced with a

common noun.

Diversity meant something different for each participant in this study and yet there was an element of similarity at the same time. Not only did they look at diversity as encompassing race, gender, and sexual orientation, but they also communicated about the need for people to work together to foster an inclusive and diverse community. Even though they had similar cultural backgrounds many identified differently, therefore, social identity development theory was referenced to aid in understanding the diversity amongst the participants.

Winter grew up sheltered by her mother and "granny." She had to spend nights with her granny, because her mother worked late. Winter wanted diverse friends; however, she talked about being timid in stepping outside her comfort zone of being around other Black people. Winter took pride in being socially identified as an African American; however, she was very critical of how poorly African Americans treated one another and thought it was a sign of subordination to other races for not overcoming the mistreatment of one's own race.

Lassie, like Winter, grew up with an absent father. At a young age, Lassie moved in with her sister, who contributed to her success. Growing up rooted in Christian values guided her interactions with people. Lassie saw her involvement as more of a supportive role than a member in student organizations like the Black Student Union and PRIDE, an organization for the lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, questioning, and ally communities. When discussing her social identity as an African American woman, she recalled experiences of racial discrimination in a restaurant and her family teasing her for speaking proper English. Lassie had internal struggles in trying to "act Black" when her family told her she spoke like a "White girl." That incident left her unsure of herself and

how she was perceived by her own race. Lassie's experiences on campus involved two racial incidents where she was targeted by hate speech and hit by unidentified objects while walking down the street. Her experiences left her cautious about her interactions with people different from her even though she still saw value in diverse interactions.

Nina grew up around diverse groups of people. Unlike Lassie and Winter, Nina grew up mostly in predominately White areas and spoke unaffectedly about being known as the "White girl" or "Oreo" amongst her peers. Nina had the most diverse friendship groups and she felt the Black community judged her because she had more White friends than Black friends. During her freshman year, Nina had a negative experience with her African American roommate. She had this notion that they were going to get along because the roommate was African American. However, Nina said they clashed because the roommate was from Chicago and may not have met a "White girl" like her. Nina was apprehensive about being viewed as a stereotypical African American in her interactions with people different from her and in the classroom. She constantly emphasized, like many of the participants, the struggle with facing stereotypes.

In contrast to stories shared by other participants, Rhonda was ridiculed and teased growing up for her dark complexion. She grew up in predominately White areas. She did not identify as a "real" African American in her younger years. She thought of herself as *just* Black and negatively viewed being Black. College presented opportunities for Rhonda to be herself, especially around other African Americans. Rhonda felt White students did not interact with her naturally in efforts not to offend her. She saw being Black as a road block for some White students in requesting help from her as she held an executive officer position in a predominately White organization. She felt similarly to

Nina that she did not want to be the stereotypical African American, however, she found her peers pushing her into roles where she thought she may be viewed as the token Black person. She shared that her White peers would look to her to speak about diversity or about issues affecting African Americans. She would respond that we are all responsible for putting on diversity programs and we all know about diversity.

Jennifer attended predominately Black and predominately White schools growing up. Jennifer came from a diverse family in regards to having a biracial mother. She shared that having a White grandmother was not something she thought about because they never talked about it. Her memories about diversity centered on the different foods she was exposed to from her Black side of the family and her White side of the family. She felt diversity was when each person was represented. She did not think she was exposed to any racial conflict while in college, however, she shared that her hair was of curiosity to her White friends. She did not think about her hair on a daily basis and thought their questioning was funny even though some of her African American friends took offense to such inquiry from others different from them. She did not mind their questioning, because she thought it was an opportunity for them to learn, however, the intent of their interest was something she thought about.

Judy's background consisted of a lot of moving within the state of Illinois when her grandmother's house burned down. Moving around a lot provided Judy opportunities to make friends with all types of people with different ethnicities especially Latino(a) children. When talking about being African American Judy exhibited great pride in her African American history. From her grammar school memories she always knew she was Black and enjoyed the celebrations for Black History Month. She shared how her

teachers who were predominately Black emphasized the importance of Black education. Judy talked about her interactions with diverse groups as a progressing process, but she displayed doubt in what the future held. She stated, "I know I still have a long way to go, but so far so good." Judy spoke the word "attempt" often when talking about diversity. She said, "I see the many different attempts to promote diversity," which she appreciated. She saw steps moving in a direction, but she did not know whether those steps were moving in the right direction.

Research Question 1: What are African American students' perceptions of diversity and inclusion at their institution?

Artificial diversity between races. There were many similarities in the participants' statements to interview questions asking what diversity on campus looked like and how they would describe their interactions with people different from them. The notion of artificial diversity between races was recognized as participants described interactions with others they perceived to be lacking openness to learning and meaningfulness. On an individual level, participants made efforts to combat artificial diversity.

Winter described her interactions with others different from her:

I try to deal with different groups of people. I just don't stick to one group of people, because it's a learning experience. I like to learn. So if you branch out more you're going to learn more, you're going to be more open-minded to things, you could teach people new things while you are teaching yourself new things, and you can bring other people in as well. It's okay to interact with other people than your people.

Winter tried to interact with different people, because she could learn to be more open-minded and be exposed to new things. Winter saw learning from diverse groups of people as a positive aspect to diversity. There was also a desire to be unique and valued for who they were, and at the same time to be open to learning about others who were similar or different from themselves. When this type of interaction was not fostered it could be perceived conversely, especially in the residence halls as described by Winter below:

> Honestly, we don't interact at all. Not just my floor, but the whole hall as a whole. I haven't seen any bad interaction. People pretty much get along. It's either they speak or they don't speak or they are your friends or they are not friends. I mean it's just, I don't know.... We are pretty much just there. Just living.

Winter spoke to a level of complacency occurring in her residential community where some students appeared to embrace open relationships whereas others did not. Winter's description demonstrated students' contentment with drifting past each other with no direct contact. Winter perceived this as a phenomenon that just occurred.

The idea of artificial diversity between races also happened when the interactions between students were not open and meaningful. Nina talked about diversity on campus as lacking openness between the races due to people being less genuine in their interactions with people from a different background:

> I feel like [the University is] diverse, but not really. A lot of people put on a fake like they are okay with it and they are really not. They still talk about you behind your back or they will be okay with it in a moment, but then you'll hear they

really don't like to be around people like you, but they tolerate you or they have to

put up with you, because you have to work together.

When students were able to engage with one another in meaningful ways they became

open to learning from one another, thus breaking down these artificial interactions.

However, as Nina described, diversity was not really present when genuine interactions

were not occurring. Judy shared her perspective about what diversity meant to her:

Diversity on campus is basically not just recognizing that there are people with

different ethnic backgrounds, but people with different ethnic backgrounds

actually working together. Not even just working together, but being friends or

hanging out. Not just communicating with each other for class assignments, but

actually being friends or associates.

Judy's understanding of diversity consisted of a continuum of one's commitment to

diverse interactions. She described diversity as moving beyond the observation of

numerical representation of ethnic groups to different ethnic groups working together not

just towards a project, but ultimately towards a friendship.

Implicit racial lines. The interview data was vivid in how each student saw

separations along racial lines through their daily observations of programs, events, and

interactions in the residence halls. Students were provided opportunities to engage in a

variety of different and diverse programs and events on campus; however, it appeared

that students saw some of these as being geared toward one population over another and

they noticed the social self-segregation of students on campus by race, thus creating this

invisible racial line. Rhonda and Judy saw these divisions in the socialization of Greek

organizations and their programing. Lassie, Rhonda, and Winter talked about the cliques

of White and Black people seen on campus. Jennifer and Judy also discussed how programming for Homecomings and academic events furthered a racial divide because the event was associated with a predominately White or predominately Black organization.

Programming was planned for the campus community and yet there appeared to be this perception that certain programs or events were not only targeting a specific group, but that these specific groups were the only ones who should be in attendance. This was illustrated by Rhonda:

When you are on campus doing your straight walk through of the whole campus you can clearly see that there are cliques of Whites, cliques of Blacks. Even with the Greeks, we have programs, you can see the cliques of White Greeks and the cliques of Black Greeks. For freshmen for the first week of school when there are events that African American students throw some Caucasians feel like they can't go even though it's a campus wide event. But maybe they feel intimidated, I don't know. With some Caucasian events, some African Americans just won't go, because it's not an African American event. When it doesn't have to be an African/Black event for you to go. It doesn't have to in fact and vice versa. It doesn't have to be a Caucasian event for White people to go.

There was this perception that students had of events being an exclusionary event even if that was not the intention. One particular event mentioned by a few participants was the institution's annual Miss Black [University] pageant held to express pride, appreciation, and cultural awareness in the African American community. Judy who had participated in the Miss Black [University] pageant remarked it was not supported by many non-

African Americans. Winter stated, "My RA felt it wasn't fair that it was called Miss

Black [University]. She said, 'If a White person had a Miss White [University], then the

Black community would make a big deal about it.'" There was a lack of understanding

about the event and its history. The importance of knowledge about diverse events

impacted these invisible racial lines and interactions between races as seen by Judy. Judy

saw the pageant as a celebration of Black culture, but like many other participants she

saw how it created division. The idea of this invisible fence, where certain people were

not as welcome to certain events, came up as Nina described her perception of events on

campus:

> I feel like certain events are targeted more towards African Americans and they
>
> are not really open. My residents want to go to some African American events,
>
> but they don't feel welcomed, or they don't know if they're allowed to go, or they
>
> don't want to be the only ones. I'm like maybe you'll be that trend setter.

Being a Resident Assistant Nina thought students' pre-college

experience/background influenced their unwillingness to associate with people different

from them. Some of her White residents had never seen an African American before and

whether intentionally or unintentionally they sustained their limited interaction with

diverse groups. Nina stated:

> It's hard to get the different races to mix especially at first. As freshman you have
>
> people who are from a really small town who have never seen people of color
>
> before and they get to college and then you know the girl next door is colored and
>
> so they'll literally go out of their way to walk the opposite way not to be around
>
> her and then problems arise from that. Residents refusing, outright refusing, to

live with a person of color, live with someone from a different country. I feel situations that are going on now with my floor is that this resident is targeting this African American female just because she doesn't like Blacks. I don't know if its people, how people get brought up is how they perceive people from different races or they just don't want to or they just don't know, just ignorance to me. Why do you not want to get to know people?

These implicit racial lines appeared subconsciously constructed by students and not implemented by the university. It appeared to be a perceived boundary that was just there. The issue of needing this formal *welcome* to attend a predominately White or Black event was a reoccurring topic that resonated with all the participants. There was also a perception of who should get involved in which organization. It was not that they had received specific written information, or even explicit verbal information, it was as if there was an unwritten implicit policy or understanding.

Rhonda was involved in predominately White organizations/opportunities and predominately Black organizations/opportunities such as the Ambassador Program, African Student Association (ASA), and the National Society for Collegiate Scholars (NSCS). She shared her perceptions about why people behaved within these subconsciously constructed boundaries:

With social, ASA, BSU, and granted those are minority organizations, but dance, [other dance group names omitted] they are all not, race, diverse required. It doesn't say you have to be Black only, but you only see people of color on those teams. [The University] cheer team, it's not race separated, but you see only Caucasians on the team. I don't think we have a Black [cheer team member]. I

heard from someone who tried out last year that they don't- Black people don't
make it so Black people don't try out. There is no point of trying out because they
don't accept people of color so people don't try out. But, our numbers say we are
diverse.

The implicit racial lines revealed by Rhonda manifested into invisible boundaries that
restricted inclusive interactions due to a lack of a perceived welcome to attend events,
programs or join organizations. The issue of boundaries not formally drawn but
discreetly existing perpetuated a racial line between the students where they saw certain
opportunities excluded to them.

Judy who has been involved in the Miss Black [University] pageant, Unity Gospel
Choir, and the African Student Association (ASA) also noticed issues with inclusion at
predominately African American events:

We have the modeling shows, the Glam fashion shows, the pageants or you know
those type of events or the open mics, if you watch closely at what group or what
organization is sponsoring that event you notice that, say for instances if it's BSU
[Black Student Union], you notice that it's mostly only Black people who come to
that event. It's always posters and bulletins that are posted about the event, but
you notice that it's only the Black crowd that shows up. Or even vice versa, I'm
not sure of the name of the event that I saw posted up, but you could tell that
mostly White people went to the event because if you ask some of your friends,
like some of my friends that I asked, 'Are you going?' 'Nah I'm not going to
that.' But as soon as like it's a step show or like a big Union party that we're
familiar with as far as a Greek organization or basically a Black organization we

are so quick to go to it. But if it's an academic thing, the Homecoming thing, as

far as the organizations coming together Black and White, it seems like that's

what they were instructed to do rather than doing it on their own.

Judy alluded to students being knowledgeable of student groups having to be told or

assigned to work with people different from them. Judy saw these as forced relationships

that did not benefit the campus racial dynamics. In addition, as Judy has depicted,

friendship groups played a significant role as well for they were influential in creating

those boundary lines and shaping how to be involved or not be involved with diverse

events or people.

Research Question 2: In what ways do African American students view the

intentional support of diversity and inclusion?

Efforts of the housing staff. Supportive views of diversity and inclusion were

seen through the efforts of the housing staff for the participants. All participants were

selected in part because of their on-campus status, although some participants were no

longer living in the residence halls at the time of the study. The participants were asked

questions about their general perceptions of diversity and inclusion and how the

institution responded to those topics. The participants recognized that diversity and

inclusion must involve the intentional actions of their hall staff. The hall staff referred to

by participants consisted of the Resident Assistants on their floors. Most of the

participants described programming initiatives as venues of support for diversity and

inclusion. Rhonda emphasized that her Resident Assistant encouraged involvement in

diverse organizations and programs. The intentional efforts by the Resident Assistant

were instrumental for Rhonda in ensuring information about diverse opportunities taking place in the campus community was shared:

I know my RA last year would say, 'Hey you know this is here, go do it, regardless of if it was a Black event or a White event.' It was just this is what's going on, you can come and join. That is how I got involved in NSCS, because she wrote on all of our doors, if we had a 3.0 or something or higher, 3.4 or higher, we should join NSCS and I ended up being the executive vice president this year.

Diversity and inclusion were supported by hall staff connecting students to resources or acting as a referral agent. Nina described how diversity and inclusion were supported by residence hall staff with their programming. She stated, "Residence halls' diversity programs help to raise awareness. The residence hall staffs go through training to learn how to make an inclusive community." Jennifer as a Resident Assistant saw her role as part of that intentional support of diversity and inclusion through the preparation she received to perform the task of her position. Jennifer stated, "[The university], I think they strive so hard to make everyone feel included and then you know as an RA, we get taught what things not to say, what things to say." The university investing in the Resident Assistants' training on diversity was another indicator that the university supported diversity and inclusion by equipping their staff with knowledge to foster the community.

Missed educational opportunities. On the other end of the spectrum, students did not see the intentional support of diversity and inclusion by the student body when their peers did not take advantage of campus programs by diverse groups. By students

not supporting or taking time to attend diverse programs, they missed out on educational

opportunities to be culturally enriched or developed. Judy shared that there were many

different diversity opportunities available to students, but people failed to attend. She

stated:

> It's becoming stronger. Let's put it that way. People are becoming more and more
>
> aware of each other and each other's cultures and things like that. This makes
>
> them appreciate it. Basically, I feel that the campus does a good job. Whoever is
>
> over putting these events together they do a pretty go job, because I get emails a
>
> lot. I cannot think of the name. Is it [University] Diversity something? Well I
>
> see it a lot. I believe they do a pretty good job, because they host a lot of events
>
> that invite everyone. They don't exclude people. They write on the sidewalk with
>
> chalk. It's for everyone to attend, for everyone to come to. I feel they are
>
> welcome to attend, but everyone doesn't take the chance or take advantage of
>
> everything that is being offered to them.

Not only was lack of attendance impacting the perception of diversity and

inclusion support, but in some instances diversity training for student staff and

programming on campus was viewed as not as impactful as it could be. They wanted

training to establish more learning about people different from themselves, not just

cultural celebrations, but trainings that required people to talk and to be engaged with

their learning process. Jennifer, a Resident Assistant, shared her thoughts on her

diversity training:

It's not really a learning experience.... I feel like we don't learn as much about different things as we should. They should do more to teach, I guess, just to teach about the different cultures that are represented here.

When it came to diversity programming some participants were frustrated with recycled programming efforts. Lassie described her frustrations with diversity programming on campus:

They really don't try to do anything diverse. And when they do, I don't want the cliché things I feel has already been done. They kind of recycle old things, old like diversity activity things. They don't try something new. Something that would actually get people to think about how diversity or at least participate in something like that.

Additionally, educational opportunities were missed when students were not aware of diversity programming occurring on campus. Most of the participants talked about people not knowing about events on campus, because of how it was marketed. Winter shared the following experience:

There are times when I walk through the Union there are events that are going on by other races that I don't know, I guess I wouldn't know about, so maybe a lot of other people wouldn't know about, except that group of people that are maybe invited or something. Sometimes things are not really publicized. Sometimes I do walk through the Union and see events taking place in the University Ballroom I have never heard of before.

Winter described how a lack of advertisement for an event affected her attending different opportunities. Winter expressed if she had known about some events she would have attended them.

Research Question 3: What are African American students' perceptions of hate speech at their institution? How do African American students perceive the prevalence of hate speech?

> **Encounters with hate speech.** Participants were asked about hate speech in general, if they were aware of hate speech occurring on campus, how they thought hate speech affected their environment, and how they managed if they were a target of hate speech. In discussing hate speech in general everyone had heard or seen the use of hate speech in writing or in verbal communications on campus consisting of racial slurs, homophobic remarks, and catch-all words for anything demeaning to them. Words most frequently uttered across the interviews were words such as nigger (referred to by participants in many cases as the n-word), bitch, gay, retarded, ugly, and Oreo. Outside of distinct incidents most of the participants perceived hate speech less frequently than they perceived other diversity issues. When exploring the participants' perception of hate speech a few of the participants had distinct encounters or knowledge of hate speech occurring on campus. Four of the participants had not encountered personal incidents with hate speech. Lassie and Judy were directly targeted by hate speech and their behaviors seemed to change after the incident. Lassie described her encounter with hate speech:

> > I remember one time we were all in this big group, me and a couple of my friends and somebody just started throwing stuff at us. I never experienced somebody

getting stuff thrown at me or having one of my friends getting an ice cream cone thrown on her from outside of a window while somebody calling her the n-word. It was a White group just throwing random stuff at us. Do you do something or do you just like let it go? We were all heated. I had to think just let it go; we're almost to where we were going anyways. That was an upsetting time. It was the beginning of this year actually. We had all decided to go out to like one of our friend's apartment and they were in the car throwing crap at us. We couldn't really do anything, but still we were getting stuff thrown at us. And I don't even know what it was, because by that time I was just like whatever I'm over it, because I was just upset, but I know it was something hard. I don't know if it was rocks or something else. But then they came back around and threw an ice cream cone at my friend.

Dealing with this incident was difficult for Lassie. Psychologically she did not want to think about it or deal with the situation and emotionally she was upset over the whole ordeal. She stated, "And so it was just a really crazy night and a night I really want to forget it."

Lassie was open to diverse groups of people when she first arrived to the university, but as a result of this incident Lassie withdrew socially from her environment. She explained:

It's been bumpy smooth. Because my freshman year it seemed everybody was more open to talk to you on this campus. I was more sociable. I was always outside of my room. I was always meeting new people. I was always ready to talk to anybody, but when stuff started happening sophomore year, just like now,

this year, I kind of pulled back a little bit, because I've never had these problems before.

Judy shared while on campus her friends were called "Black bitches" by a couple of White males driving past as they were walking up the main street through campus. However, Judy's personal encounter with hate speech occurred in the outside community. Below was Judy's account of her off campus incident:

> I was back by some apartments somewhere and I was walking. I was walking with my fiancé and my brother and two other people. We were just walking and a car full of White boys rode past, and they throw eggs at us. Mind you, it wasn't anywhere near Halloween! That's basically when people are throwing eggs at people. But they threw an egg at us and yelled out the window. I don't remember exactly what they said, but it was basically something that was just rude and uncalled for. It was mean. I thought it was because, you see a whole group of Black people, you see a whole car full of White boys and they just roll down the window and throw eggs at us and yell out something from the window. I thought that was racist. This was the very beginning of the semester in January. But I wasn't on campus, but chances were they could have been students. And I just thought I've heard of other people's stories; that was a shock to me because I had never experienced it on-campus yet.

Those experiences were difficult for the students to talk about as their gaze steered away from my direct eye contact. What was devastating about these situations was hate speech was accompanied by an overt act of violence for both participants and they never had to deal with experiences like those before. Each student dealt internally with those

experiences and only told or discussed it with close friends. None of them expressed any contact with staff members at the institution regarding these situations.

Subtle acts of hate speech. Not all hate speech was as overt as the situations described above. Some of the incidents shared were without direct contact between involved parties and the hate speech was subtle in its recognition. Winter described what hate speech on campus looked like for her. Winter stated, "No direct wording as far as I've seen has been directed at each other face to face like, 'N-word I don't like you,' or 'cracker I don't like you.' I haven't seen that. So far ok." Although Winter did not see direct forms of hate speech, other participants discussed the subtly of hate speech when seen or heard on campus. Nina described how residents took advantage of anonymous postings as a vehicle for subtle acts of hate speech:

> Last year, on a few floors they had poster boards you could write on in the
>
> bathroom … but it was just stuff like what's your favorite food? And some of my
>
> residents put chicken and they will write, 'Oh, did the Black girl write this' or
>
> 'did the nigga write this' or just random stuff like that and they ended up taking it
>
> down.

This form of hate speech lacked ownership by the speaker and the recourse in the community was merely removing it. Rhonda described how hate speech may seemingly appear absent, but that notion was false as it only looked different from what people may be used to:

> I think if you don't have a literal Caucasian outside literally talking about African
>
> Americans some people may say, 'No, I don't visual see hate speech.' I don't hear
>
> someone outwardly saying, 'African Americans are horrible and I'm going to burn

you.' You don't see KKKs walking across campus. You don't see that so it's like

Well no, I don't think there is hate speech. I don't think people still partake in

those types of things. Well no, it's hateful slurs, there are hateful gestures, there's

a lot a hate that goes along with being a minority and people don't, people aren't

quick to agree with it, because they don't see it happening in the world the way

we've seen it before. But it definitely happens. I know even at my job, one of the

ladies, the secretary that I work with, she's a lot older, she said there were people

walking by the dining hall, and there was an African American male and there

were three African American females and they were laughing... and she's like

'Aw well I thought that he might have been saying something you know

something sexually, I thought he might have been saying something dumb, you

know how they are sometimes.' I turned my head so quick and I was like did she

forget what color I am? What did she just? Wow! What did she just say?

For Rhonda hate speech was perceived as the biases or stereotypes reflected by others on

African Americans. Within Rhonda's statement, although it was not hate speech, it

revealed that prejudices were perceived in some of her interactions. To Rhonda the

assumption held by her co-worker that the African Americans laughing were innately

vulgar or ignorant, as to reason that the cause of their laughing would be characterized as

such was disrespectful to her. Her upright demeanor and directness in tone demonstrated

her passion and concern that stereotypes were embedded in people's perceptions.

Rhonda explained that she felt her whole race at that moment was the target of hate:

I was just like Jesus, did she just come at my whole race like? She just literally, it

was so indirect, because she didn't say Black, she didn't say you know African

American. She just, her whole demeanor changed. I'm laughing; because I think what they are doing is funny. They are not yelling. They are not being too loud as in like talking. They're just laughing.... But I think because they're African Americans she associated it with either they're laughing at something bad or they're doing something they're not supposed to be doing and laughing at it. And because of that her whole attitude changed. Because I don't see how you can be around people who are laughing and not happy. But I think, because of their race and because the things that are associated with their race made her think automatically something is not right. And I don't think it registered to her that I was African American, because I think to realize that, like oh I might offend that person, they don't do it. Just out of reaction they will do it and think about it later. By impulse they will just do it. And that's what she did. And I think she thought about it afterwards, but I was leaving so whether she was going to say sorry or acknowledge that she just came at my whole race she didn't do it. I guess I had another reminder that I was African American.

Rhonda suggested that racist or hateful thoughts can be instinctive. By her co-worker not acknowledging what she had said reinforced her perception that African Americans will be targeted by hate, because of those stereotypical views held against her race.

Like all the participants the prevalence of hate speech was not as observable for them for it appeared in subtle contexts thus empirically difficult to quantify.

Overcoming stereotypes. As seen partly from Rhonda's statement in the prior section, hate speech for some of the participants' fueled stereotypes. Another theme that emerged from students' perceptions of hate speech at the institution involved the desire to

overcome these negative stereotypes regarding their race. Rhonda saw the limited
numerical representation of African Americans in certain jobs as a wall of stereotypes to
overcome. The stereotypical view she thought was held about Africans was that they did
not want to get involved in some of the prime leadership roles and opportunities on
campus. Rhonda explains:

> Even with the different roles on campus a lot of RAs, there is clearly more
> Caucasian RAs then there are African Americans. There are more Caucasian RAs
> than there is Asian even on UB (University Board), on the executive board, all the
> executive positions. I think it's getting better, because more African Americans
> are stepping up. And I applaud them to the max, because I think it is important
> for us to break that stereotype. But I also think there is more that African
> Americans can do. We don't need to conform to the stereotype. We can
> overcome it instead.

Rhonda wanted her fellow peers to get involved in leadership roles on campus in effort to
combat negative stereotypes of themselves. There appeared to be pressure to be
perceived differently than the stereotypical views of African Americans being lazy and
not getting involved on campus. When faced with those stereotypical views some
participants were discouraged in working towards different leadership positions. Nina's
sentiments were expressed equally:

> I'm not going to change their opinion so why even try. Why even try to be
> different? Why try to go out for this position? Why even try to get the job when I
> know I'm not going to get it, because of my race. Like why even try?

The constant battle to prove themselves was evident with each participant. No one wanted to be the stereotypical Black person as was described by participants as not going to class, not concerned about academics, ignorant, loud, mean, or lazy. The participants did not think they were any of those things, but that was the perception they sensed the campus held of them. To debunk those stereotypes and disassociate the negative perceptions of others from their reality appeared to be a goal for each student.

Users of hate speech. Another major focus for the students was that the speaker of hate speech was not always White. Many occurrences of hate speech in terms of racial slurs were perpetuated by other African Americans and in some instances Latino Americans. Two of the participants shared how hate speech targeted towards them was related to how they didn't seem to fit the stereotypes associated with African Americans. Lassie talked about being called an Oreo by the African American community because she used proper grammar. This made her question her social identity and what it meant to be Black. Lassie focused on the racial distinctions of the users of hate and how being called an Oreo made her feel:

Not only has hate speech come from White people it has come from Black people too. The majority of people don't get that. It's not mostly all the time, it's not just the n-word from White people. It can be other stuff from Black people. Honestly being called an Oreo used to hurt my feelings. I used to feel just as hurt as the n-word, because you're calling me Black on the outside, White on the inside and I'm just myself. So just like how White people are saying being different is bad, it's like you're bad in your own community.

The concern about African Americans holding demeaning views towards each other was provoking for some participants. The notion that one's own race was a contributor to demeaning views or vehicles for hate was infuriating, especially in light of other hurdles the participants saw to diversity. Each participant saw the use of the n-word as a term of hate that should not be used by any person. This can be seen articulated by Rhonda:

> I hate it when people say the n-word. Black, White, Mexican, I don't like it. I feel like it's so derogatory no matter what variation you're saying it. I don't care if you're adding an "a," or "er" to the end. I don't care. The n-word is the n-word and it's very degrading. Someone might not categorize that as hate speech, but what they say after that word is always negative! That word is associated with Blacks. Anything you say pass that word I'm going to take it as you're offending. I'm going to take it as offensive! Working in the residence hall I hear people passing by saying the n-word and it will be a White person. If you know what that word derived from you would never use it. As an African American you would never let that word come out of your mouth, because that word was just so, so degrading it was saying you were nothing. That was a replacement word for calling you by your first name!

Certain terms used by any race did not eliminate the impact of the word particularly in regards to the n-word for on its face it was viewed hateful and demeaning by participants and it still carried a negative connotation. The notion that hate speech could be delivered by diverse users demonstrated how it was broad in its understanding, use, and intent within the campus community. This understanding could make it difficult to address.

Additional phrases/words such as retarded used by any race enraged some participants. Even if the word was used in students' common vernacular and the intent to harm was absent, it was still perceived that there was a lack of cultural understanding and education. The lack of education about each other in regards to diversity and culture was apparent as described by Jennifer:

I think a lot of it has to do with ignorance. People don't realize what it actually means. They may mean it one way, but in all actuality it means something completely different. It may not be disrespectful towards the people around you, but when you take it out in the public I think then it kind of it can be a thing that you walk in between. You may be joking around, but it may offend somebody so any word, retarded, all those words that people use all the time. It might be in their day to day language, but they don't mean it that way or they will tell you that they don't mean it that way. In all actuality that's not what the word was created for.

Lessons learned by the students were that hate speech encompassed terms not intended to harm and also included words that were harmful by their very being. The participants saw hate speech present on campus, but rarely in face to face encounters. Hate speech appeared in indirect forms, fueled stereotypes, and at times members of the participants own racial community were the speakers of hate messages towards each other.

Research Question 4: What do African American students know about speech codes at their institution?

Not the solution. When participants were asked their views about an institution's use of speech codes to regulate hate speech the concept seemed foreign to them. One

participant, Judy responded, "I'm not familiar," and Jennifer questioned, "Is that something that's done?" The other participants knew speech codes were some form of regulation to prevent hate speech. The impression that emerged from that understanding was that speech codes had implications for free speech rights. Winter reluctantly indicated she would probably go along with some form of regulation; however, she went on to say:

> If you are not trying to get people to stop using hate speech then they are going to continue to do it. There would probably not be a major change. I don't think it's that bad here. This is a touchy topic. You're messing with the whole freedom of speech thing. I should be able to say whatever. I don't know how I feel about it.

Lassie held dissonance with this form of regulation as well. Although she thought it was interesting she stated, "Us young people always know freedom of speech so it's definitely something that a lot us would be, 'that's my words.'"

The understanding of speech codes was difficult for the participants to buy into because of their understanding of freedom of expression. Some participants had an understanding that only certain situations deserved such limitations. Nina explained, "Speech codes should be used based off specific situations. There shouldn't be a set regulation or policy because every situation is different." All the participants in some form questioned how a speech regulation can occupy the same space as diversity and inclusion. Although they wanted hate speech addressed, they were not confident that speech codes were the solution.

For Winter, addressing hate speech would not involve media attention, but a quick response by the campus. She was the only participant that asked, "We do have a Civil

Rights Department, don't we?" Winter was aware of resources on campus to address issues of hate speech unlike Lassie who was under the impression that students would not actually use those resources to report such incidents. Lassie explained:

> One time I saw where if something happens and it's a racial issue, then you can contact this office. But it's just kind of like, to be real, to be really realistic who's going to actually say, this happened? Who is going to say, 'this so and so happened or whatever.'

Lassie had experienced hate speech on campus and did not report it. She had received emails about how to report harassment on campus to the Civil Rights Office, but was skeptical that other students would use their services.

When participant Judy discussed an encounter with perceived racist behavior from a shuttle bus driver on campus she described how she did report that incident, but she did not see any follow through from the institution with addressing the situation. Judy described how there was no accountability or follow up with her report about a bus driver's actions:

> We're always having an issue with this same bus driver. We would say "thank you," you know how you say, "thank you, have a good day?" He would never respond to us. We saw how this one time a White person said, "Thank you!" And he was like, "Oh yeah, you're welcome hun." We're like, "Now when we say thank you, not even being sarcastic, just out of kindness, thank you" and he would just look at us and keep driving or let us off the bus and keep driving; never said thank you back to us. There would be times when if you're not at the actual stop, where the bus is supposed to come and pick you up, the bus driver

would look at you and literally keep driving. We've seen the same bus driver, where a group of White girls weren't at the actually stop where they were supposed to be, but he'd pick them up. So there have been times where we called and made complaints and it seemed like nothing had been done about it. We still see these same bus drivers all the time.

There are few different bus drivers that we encounter who are so nice. But these same two bus drivers just have the worst attitudes. We saw how their attitudes towards us were snotty and mean, but towards other people it wasn't like that. We've made complaints, but nothing seems to be done about it.

Although the institution may have responded in some form to the students' complaint, Judy was under the assumption that nothing had been done when she took the time to make her report. All of the participants were forbidding of hate speech; however, they had never seen it visually handled/addressed on campus and were unaware of how speech codes could regulate it. Judy who knew firsthand how hate speech made someone feel still realized that speech codes could only address a problem. They would not eradicate it. Judy explained:

I understand that they would be trying to prevent certain ideas being expressed that could possibly offend another group of people or a person individually, but at the same time, people are going to find their way to say what they need to say even if there are codes that are supposed to keep them from saying it.

Ultimately, speech codes signified a restraint on individual freedoms, but at the same time some of the students were willing to loosen the reins on their rights. This topic made majority of the students express concern with the contradictions it created. With

hate speech being so broad for the participants they saw that past the residence halls less information was provided. Even with their perceptions of hate speech regulations their values of freedom of expression although not taking a back seat to diversity or inclusion, definitely competed in the same space. Like many of the participants Rhonda saw this study as increasing her understanding:

> Participating in this interview allowed me to reflect on how our university truly views diversity, what hate speech encompasses, and how we as a campus need to shine light on such topics.

Summary of Results

The verbal data provided by the participants on the three major research focus areas of diversity, inclusion, and hate speech exposed challenges and successes in valuing and understanding diversity and inclusion on campus as well as insight into the climate around hate speech. The results ultimately resonated that the intended desire of a university's mission of diversity and obligation to diversity relied on the education and learning of various diversity aspects. The participants' perceptions revealed a desire for diversity and inclusion to represent more than surface level interactions and mere categories of diverse populations. The students wanted meaningful friendships with peers were learning could occur. On an individual level the participants made efforts to combat artificial diversity perceived as a lack of openness to others and a lack of learning about different people. When learning ensued, diversity for the participants did not appear artificial. The interaction was then viewed as genuine and reciprocal. Winter's illustration of her interactions in her residence hall was critical. There was great opportunity for learning about one another in the residence halls, but it needed to be

intentional and fostered not just by students, but by the staff in the building; otherwise students were "just living" and friendships were not developed. Judy described this by wanting diversity to be more than a conversation over class assignments, but having meaningful interactions with a diverse group of people.

Another challenge to diversity and inclusion was the implicit racial lines that cut off access to events and programming for students. The presence of social segregation was observed at certain events, programs, and in some of the residence halls. Some students did not attend events that were not sponsored by their race in addition their friendship groups influenced those decisions. Even if it was not the intention, events were viewed as exclusionary if they were attended by predominately one race. These implicit racial lines were in some cases subconsciously constructed and socially determined by the students.

The second research area regarding the support for diversity and inclusion centered on the efforts of housing staff, however, many opportunities consisted of missed educational moments when students were not taking advantage of diverse programming. Connotations of not feeling they could attend certain programs or they were not aware of it altogether were discussed. Some participants were disappointed in some of the diversity education for they viewed it as only scratching the surface in the program's diversity outcomes. The participants wanted to see more from the university in educating them on different cultures in order to be viewed as impactful programming. Additionally diversity programming was not perceived as effective if it was recycled programming from prior years.

The third research area discussing hate speech perceptions and the perceived prevalence of hate speech revealed direct encounters with hate speech, subtle acts of hate, overcoming stereotypes in the African American community, and users of hate speech. Hate speech encounters consisted of racial slurs, homophobic remarks and a catch all of demeaning words. In particular instances hate speech was accompanied by an overt act of hate or perpetuated by members of their own racial group. Hate speech issues were less frequent than other diversity issues, however, subtle acts of hate speech were difficult to observe. Participants felt misrepresented by stereotypes as a vehicle for hate speech and in some instances it reduced their interactions with people different from them. The participants articulated this notion to change people's negative views of African Americans by aligning their behaviors in opposition to stereotypes.

The last research area was designed to understand their thoughts about speech codes at their institution. The participants' views revealed that speech codes were not the solution to hate speech. Freedom of speech was a right they were well aware of and conflicted with their First Amendment rights. However, for some participants under certain circumstances speech codes would have a favorable chance. All of the participants expressed discomfort with speech codes in some form but acknowledged that hate speech should be addressed. The issue then is that speech codes cannot address problems students will not report, especially when students do not see the institution follow through on items they have reported.

CHAPTER V

Discussion, Recommendations, Conclusions

The present study provides an exploration of African American students' perceptions of diversity, inclusion, and hate speech within a campus community. These concepts are evident on college campuses and institutional practices should be able to withstand their students' perceptions. If those perceptions are not reflective of universities' missions, they must reinvent their approaches and educational methods to reflect the equality students deserve (Anderson, 2008). This research reveals areas of common ground for the participants as well as illustrates the diversity of the participants' experiences, observations, and perceptions.

Collectively, participants wanted further learning to occur about diversity and greater knowledge in combating indirect or direct encounters of hate speech that would not suppress First Amendment freedoms. Participants saw a need for the campus community to make a greater investment in diversity initiatives and education as well as build better race relations with one another. The four main research inquiries reveal challenges and successes relating to diversity issues and points of discussion to assess the efficacy of the university's mission and obligation to diversity. The discussions and recommendations of this study presented below were challenges described at one institution and are not to be prescriptive for all institutions. It is hoped that they will guide further conversations around these topics to meet the unique needs of individual campuses.

Significance of Findings

Perceptions of diversity and inclusion. Research indicates an increase in diverse populations and the changing demographics on college campuses (Cuyjet et.al, 2011; Pike, 2002). Roberson (2006) described diversity as observable dimensions protected from discrimination in the United States such as race and unobservable characteristics such as background. This study describes diversity in different terms. It recognizes findings that diversity on campus is racial diversity in addition to all differences among them that may not be readily noticeable, but it does not equate diverse populations as the only aspect of diversity. The participants in this study express a desire for meaningful interactions with people different from them. When interpreting their perceptions it was revealed that in order to embrace diversity philosophies the student body must be invested. Students must invest in learning about different people and sharing new experiences. The participants represent a few students who want to make an investment, but they did not see the buy-in from the campus as a whole. Participants state the numbers of racial minorities on campus indicate the campus is diverse, but there is separation and a lack of openness that coincides with it.

Some of the challenges this study discovered were issues with campus racial dynamics in the dimensions of ideas coined *artificial diversity* and *implicit racial lines*. Artificial diversity was captured when participants observed a lack of meaningful and genuine interactions among races. In addition, some observed sustained interracial contact occurring primarily outside the students' friendship groups. Moody (2001) commented on how having minorities concentrated at large schools did not promote integration, but friendship segregation based by race. Moody (2001) also indicated that

mere distribution of races did not result in friendships as was seen by participants' observations of students not interacting with each other in the residence hall, only interacting with different people for a registered student organization meeting, or interactions appeared forced when student group/organizations collaborated with each other. Just being exposed to diverse groups of people will not result in the meaningful and genuine relationships the participants desired. Assessable steps must be established in creating spaces where students can be educated on diverse groups and can work on becoming more accepting to one another.

Having a positive outlook towards diversity was also important in considering the understanding of diversity. The participants saw the differences amongst the student body as a positive contribution to campus that presented opportunities to learn from each other, which supports Roberson's (2006) claim that personal value for diversity was important in understanding diversity. Interestingly the participants were able to discuss diversity issues in greater detail over other topics. This reveals their understanding of diversity and the desire to communicate clearly what diversity looked like for them. Some participants had a difficult time with defining inclusion and rarely used the word when talking about diversity.

Antonio et al. (2004) discussed research findings, which revealed that racially diverse campuses have been linked with positive academic and social effects. When analyzing African American students' perceptions of diversity and inclusion another salient theme for the students was the presence of implicit racial lines. In contrast to the positive social effects of a racially diverse campus this study revealed the notion that learning was not always occurring in those diverse encounters due to social segregation

by races at programs, events, and in the residence hall. One participant suggested her residents' background growing up in a small town contributed to the resident not wanting to socialize with different people. Gurin et al. (2002) remarked that racial separation was a result of segregation at home. This could explain one participant's experience with her White resident, who had never interacted with a Black person before and outright refused to live with a Black student in the residence hall.

Looking at implicit racial lines was not perceived negatively by all participants. Winter saw it as just something that happens and to some degree an expectation that racial division would occur. This finding is consistent with Bowser's et al. (1993) notion that "For people of color to survive in America, it is necessary to….form a community by coming together to acknowledge and support one another" (p. 20). Racial boundaries not being crossed in some instances for some African Americans were not a sign of hatred towards another group, but a sign of support for one another even if interpreted differently by others.

For most of the participants the formation of racial cliques within the campus community that extended to the socialization of Greek organizations as well was seen regularly. One participant's observation of racial cliques present on campus entailed African Americans only supporting traditionally Black Greek programs or events sponsored by predominately Black organizations. Moody (2001) indicated that population integration did not mean social integration. As seen by the participants here they described these boundaries between populations they observed on campus and in the attendance at what they observed as targeted programming such as the Miss Black pageant and step shows. Another layer to this diversity issue was observed by non-

Blacks not attending programs sponsored by predominately Black organizations. These perceptions lead to implicit racial lines that appeared to be understood by the various populations on campus although they were not articulated or explicitly discussed.

The idea of implicit racial lines were seen by another participant when organizations, which did not have race indicators, such as dance or modeling groups, consisted of predominately African Americans, whereas academic or homecoming events, resulted in predominately White students. In line with Moody (2001) who focused on the effects of peer interaction as influential in students change in college, this study saw the significance of peer groups on students decisions to attend certain events or programs. For example Judy did not attend different events/programs, because her friends were not attending them either. Unfortunately racial lines were seen by some of the participants when they thought certain leadership or organizational opportunities were excluded to them. One participant provided the example that the majority of the leadership roles on campus involved few African Americans.

In addition to a desire for diversity and inclusion to address the relationships and boundaries established in diverse contexts the students considered in this study saw how significant their racial identity was to their overall identity and how it influenced and impacted how they perceived and interacted in their world. Bowser, Auletta, and Jones (1993) emphasized that in a race-conscious society the discussion about diversity is inevitably framed and takes primacy around race and other ideologies that oppress minority groups. Participants in this study wanted others to value who they were, be open to learning about them, and discard assumptions about their race, which could overshadowed potential relationships. The participants expressed that on-campus the

students were like ships in the sea, drifting past each other, especially in the residence halls. It cannot be assumed openness to diversity will just ensue. This rationale supports Altbach and Lomotey (1991) contentions that a massive societal approach is needed towards diversity where teaching, learning and guiding realities of race diversity must occur. Staff at all levels must be held accountable for creating opportunities for intentional interaction and learning to take place.

The theme of implicit racial lines represented by the students seems to be attached to a lack of knowledge about one another. For example, several participants talked about how the lack of knowledge about an event or program taking place caused attendance of events to be predominately White or predominately Black indicating a sort of division between explicit populations. Although it was not the intention of the programs to be exclusionary students described how programs targeting one particular race created this understood culture that it was intended for a particular population. The design of events was to be inclusive, but students' perceptions saw differently. The African American students participating in this study wanted individuals to invest in diverse opportunities and education. The participants in this study expressed the need for greater understanding and knowledge behind programs and how they could lead to improved diversity programming that could help others to be less apprehensive to participate.

The implicit lines drawn are culturally and not administratively drawn in their out-of classroom or in-classroom environments. As suggested by Watson et al. (2002) institutions must aid in helping minority students navigate through those experiences with challenge and support so students do not feel excluded from opportunities. It is evident

in this study that there is still more administrators can do to support diversity education and opportunities on campus.

Support for diversity and inclusion. The findings for the intentional support for diversity and inclusion revealed favorable efforts by housing staff in promoting diversity and inclusion with their programming, however, unfavorable views of support existed when diversity learning opportunities were not attended. Participants viewed Resident Assistants as agents of support for diversity and inclusion. Rhonda was encouraged by her Resident Assistant to attend *all* opportunities the campus had to offer. Some participants indicated by being a Resident Assistant they also received diversity training, however, a few participants would have liked more knowledge about cultural diversity issues on campus through their training. Whereas housing staff played a key role in the participants' positive connotations to diversity, Anderson (2008) stated that it is "the leadership team and within the team that a continuity of thinking, planning, and commitment [that] emerges" support for diversity (p. 12). Students must be able to recognize the collective efforts of each department in propelling the support for diversity and inclusion.

One issue observed by Judy was even though diversity education was appreciated there was very low attendance by non-African American students at African American programs and low attendance by African Americans at non-African American programs. This research found that a program was not as impactful when there was no diverse audience in attendance. Students revealed that events were open to all members on campus and many members of the student body missed out on events, because of the perception they were not welcomed to attend. There was a notion that because one race

was responsible for the event the invite appeared unintended for non-members. Administrators have an opportunity to utilize their influence on student interaction and attendance at events by structuring the framework around opportunities for greater support for diversity and inclusion to be manifested. Moody (2001) contended that administrators have more influence over organizational structures than on how students behave. As seen in this research Black students not attending White events and vice versa were not mandated nor prevented by the institution, thus the organizational structures of programming aided in missed educational opportunities resulting in an unfavorable view of diversity and inclusion support efforts. Antonio's (1998) research showed that students with frequent interracial interaction had a desire for cultural knowledge more so than attending a cultural awareness workshop. This study promoted similar findings. The students wanted programming that was more than just celebrations of culture. When Jennifer talked about what diversity and inclusion on campus looked like for her she mentioned, "I feel like we don't learn as much about different things as we should." As research from this study found when students are engaged in learning about diverse groups they are more likely to support diversity understanding.

Hate speech. The research from this study on hate speech perceptions revealed that the participants encountered hate speech at their institution, saw subtle acts of hate speech, had to overcome stereotypes that were associated with hate speech, and that the users of hate speech on campus consisted of various races. In efforts to constitute what hate speech was, the students used broad and specific terms that included everything from ugly to the n-word. Hate speech was transforming for the students. In comparison to the overt acts of hate and racial slurs from the past, hate speech was now more indirect in its

approach. Consistent with hate speech research, hate speech was seen as students' anonymous postings on bulletin boards (Kaplin, 1993) and in some instances words were accompanied by a physical threat or a negatively perceived interaction with staff and/or other students. Some of those interactions were perceived as being fueled by stereotypes. The students emphasized that hate speech perpetuated stereotypes and was a misrepresentation of who they were. From a social identity perspective the African American students in this study identified with factors indicative of their social group that were positive (Torres et al., 2003) not notions of laziness or ignorance they perceived as the campus view of them. Because the students identified with being African American the pressure to disprove stereotypes perceived of them was an added burden in their college experience. The perception of not seeing the visual representation of diversity with certain leadership positions was also viewed as discouraging African Americans from even attempting to seek those roles. This inevitably perpetuated a cycle of obstacles to African Americans level of participation. Stereotypes of African Americans being lazy and not getting involved can result in students feeling alienated or perceived as being less qualified (Kaplin, 1992) when in reality it may be that every Black student who applied was hired or that no one applied at all.

By focusing on the incident described by Lassie distrust towards other groups was noted. Lassie always shared with her friends that all White people were not bad, but she claimed her own incident made her out to be a liar. Judy, another participant targeted by hate speech shared how hate speech was unfair. She described her thoughts of hate speech by stating, "I think of a person's feelings or their personal inner feelings...even though we have freedom of speech, it's really not much you can do about it, but it sucks."

Altman (1993) discussed the psychological harms of hate speech stating, "Even when it involves no direct threat of violence, hate speech can cause abiding feelings of fear, anxiety, and insecurity in those at whom it is targeted" (p. 306). Even for the participants who had not been directly targeted by hate speech the observance of it or hearing it affected their psychological well-being. Most of the participants alluded to how if they were a target of hate speech it would be something to deal with individually since it was a part of life. Judy described hate speech in a way that made it the outlet for racist thought and not the creation of racist thought. Whereas Tsesis (2010) found in his research the extreme measures took by Jewish students to avoid conflict by walking the outskirts of the campus, the participants in this study however, did not take such actions to avoid contact with other populations due to racism or hate speech. Although they felt little recourse if targeted by hate speech or if they were aware of hate speech on campus, the students continued with their daily behaviors.

African Americans have been a population that charge themselves to overcome obstacles even when resources are not readily available for them to do so. This is seen by the participants internalizing their emotions and just trying to disprove any negative view of them whether in the residence halls, with their employment, in their leadership roles, and/or in the classroom without the assistance of administrators. However, it is the administrators' responsibility to ensure the welfare and development of all students whether students realize that fact or not.

Speech codes. The findings for speech codes align with the traditional debates that on one hand, speech regulations undermine freedom of speech rights, and on the other hand, speech codes preserve human dignity rights. Tesesis (2010) indicated speech

codes serve "a public good by preventing the dissemination of menacing stereotypes, symbols, and statements that deter people from enjoying the intellectual life of a university" (p. 621). Dissimilarly, the participants viewed speech codes more as a threat to their freedom of speech rights even though they viewed hate speech, as Teseis (2010) described, as menacing stereotypes. While the participants did articulate specifically other available options in absence of speech codes, it seemed that education was the undercurrent of a desired solution. Therefore, students need resources framed in a way by their institution that makes this dilemma easier to be addressed. For the participants establishing regulations to prevent hate speech would only resemble placing a *Band-Aid* on a wound, but it would not cure the infection. The students desired a strategic plan in addressing hate speech, to reduce their ambivalence towards the idea of regulating hate speech with speech codes.

This research shows that the research site campus has polices in place for addressing part of the hate speech issue. A few participants were aware of the Civil Rights Office, where reports can be made for harassing and threating behaviors by others. However, improved resources in defining what the culture of intolerance towards hate speech is at this institution, outlining for students ways to create that culture, and establishing their role in that process is still needed. When few items are reported it is still the institutions responsibility to make it clear that this type of behavior is not tolerated. Lassie's case is a perfect example for she experienced being hit with rocks while being called a racial slur and did not report her incident. She described it as an incident "she just wanted to forget." Was it shame, tolerance, fear, disappointment, etc.

that prevented her from reporting the incident? What needs to be identified is how to get students to feel comfortable in reporting these incidents in a safe environment.

Recommendations for Administrators and Student Affairs Professionals

Several recommendations to student affairs professionals are established in the study as well as for future research. These recommendations consist of professionals having the position to take specific actions toward improving racial relations on campus. When addressing diversity, inclusion, and hate speech issues with students it is important for student affairs professionals to explore their own perceptions of diversity to ensure the values stated in university mission statements are achieved. The relationship between student and student, student and administrator, and the student and his/her environment contributes to their positive and negative perceptions of the institution. In each relationship one must commit to self-reflection of her/his own personal baggage brought to the relationship. Student affairs practitioners working with diverse populations must examine their own stereotypes and assumptions about certain social groups. Pope et al. (2004) indicated that "without such self-evaluation, individuals may not realize that they hold inaccurate or inappropriate views of a particular culture in the forms of stereotypes, biases, or culturally based assumptions" (p. 15).

Sustainment of inclusive and diverse communities. Student affairs practitioners have a responsibility to create inclusive and diverse communities on their campus (Anderson, 2008). The highlights from this study center on personal value in relationships and creating opportunities to eliminate the sense of artificial diversity between races, diminishing the implicit racial division, providing education to diminish the stereotypes within the community, and developing opportunities for diverse

programming that is open and attended by all populations. Student affairs practitioners must talk with their students to understand the culture and then develop opportunities for learning when navigating through these issues. Examples of this are discussing diversity topics at staff meetings or with various student organizations. It's about every part of the institution being aware and engaging students in conversations along with intentional planning between and across campus. Additionally, it's working together to market programs to all populations and then creating an environment at each event where all are welcome. To address these diversity issues is an overwhelming task for one committee or one office, but if the specific issues students see occurring can be delegated such as having a taskforce focus on ensuring learning is occurring with programs, addressing stereotypes in the community, and another group looking at the outcomes of their efforts. Roberson's (2006) diversity management implications looked at using the strengths of each individual and aligning their expertise with focus areas they can assist with in empowering the campus community.

Addressing hate speech. As seen with the participants in the study greater knowledge about the breadth of First Amendment rights is needed. Student affairs practitioners in dialoguing about hate speech should be aware of key legislation and laws governing their state and university operations. Kaplin (1992) described the principles governing the First Amendment as 1.) an institution cannot regulate content based speech, 2.) emotional and cognitive content is protected, 3.) speech that merely offends cannot be prohibited, 4.) or regulations that are overbroad or vague are unconstitutional. However, practitioners must be aware that the courts know educational environments have unique interest within their academic communities. Kaplin (1992) stated that

colleges can "punish the intentional dissemination of intimidating racist [...] message(s) on campus [...]. College administrators need not, however, require proof of intentional intimidation because the sanctions available to them are far less onerous than criminal penalties" (p. 672). Student affairs practitioners knowledgeable of resources are better suited to inform students of not only legal implications, but continue dialogue about tolerance and respect of all persons. Most of the participants when describing the First Amendment generally referenced free speech. They did not discuss freedom to peacefully assemble or freedom of the press. Their absolute understanding did not demonstrate any of the exceptions to rules that govern them. It is the responsibility of student affairs practitioners to inform students of these details and how to address issues that surface on campus.

For Future Research

This study was limited in its scope and participation and thus there is much to further understand. While this is not an exhaustive description of further research opportunities on the topic, it does provide suggestions for next steps. This study was conducted with female Black undergraduates. Unfortunately African American males did not participate. Whether it was intentional or unintentional their lack of interest in the study is something to explore for their voices could provide additional insight into the diversity challenges on campus. Understanding how African American males may make meaning of these topics would be beneficial in comparison to their female counterparts.

Further research with various racial groups such as White students and other underrepresented populations regarding their perceptions need to be compared to explore the racial and power dynamics affected by racism. As mentioned by other researchers the

social power to change cultures is not inherent with the minority groups (Bowser, Auletta, & Jones, 1993). The racial dynamics can improve if all voices are heard and if an opportunity is presented to discuss the issues collectively with the majority group understanding their role in the change process.

Some of the participants in this study experienced racial incidents on campus and chose not to report the incident to university staff. Most institutions have policies and procedures in place when there are incidents like this occurring to protect the students and support them through these experiences. Understanding their coping strategies and why students fail to report these types of incidents on campus should be further examined. Additionally, students revealed combating stereotypes and dealing with pressures from other African Americans. Another area to explore is these pressures and their impact on college success when dealing with identity issues and hatred from one's own racial community.

While this study focused on the impact of hate speech experiences of African American students, there is much room for the exploration of social identity development as it relates to diversity, inclusion, and hate speech and analyze how it affects their college experience. Additional studies exploring the concept of harm African American students experience and who have been targeted by hate speech would be valuable. It would also be worth identifying the number of racial incidents on campus and how those incidents impacted the student experience and social identify development; and whether it results in alienation or intimidation as suggested by researchers in the literature review. The participants in this study also described active involvement on campus and identifying how campus involvement and academic achievement impact African

American student development and if it impacts their reactions to being targets of hate speech.

Campus staff and even student groups intentionally plan programs that are diverse and are intended to bring the community together and provide education, entertainment, and a way to interact with one another. The participants in this study however, talked about events being seemingly closed to some students. Further research into this phenomenon of why students attend certain programs and why students did not attend other programs would be beneficial in understanding why a racial divide exists for those events and perhaps suggestions for how to overcome the divide.

Lastly, further research is suggested by conducting an environmental study over the course of several years to explore these topics after strategic plans are implemented to examine the effects on the nine themes revealed in this study. It must be a continued commitment in research to understand student experiences and perceptions of their environments and the diversity that exists on the 21st century college campus. Whether it is African Americans or other populations the efforts of research to evaluate the efficacy of a university's mission embodying commitment to diverse populations must include how students are developing and growing and what the institution is doing to conceptualize their intents.

Conclusions

The research on African American students' perceptions of diversity, inclusion, and hate speech highlights several diversity dimensions regarding the racial diversity at the research site. One dimension was the perceived artificial diversity between the races where open and genuine relationships were not occurring. In addition the participants

saw implicit racial lines established around programming, events, and various organizational or leadership opportunities. Some programs were perceived by participants as being exclusionary events. There were positive views of housing staff in supporting diversity, however, there were missed educational opportunities when students did not attend or support diverse programming and when the objectives of diversity programming were not centered on learning about different people. Direct encounters with hate speech occurred seldom on campus; however, more telling were the subtle acts of hate speech students experienced. Part of the issue with hate speech was overcoming stereotypes perpetuated on campus. Participants observed stereotypes underpinning their interactions with others. The users of hate speech were not just White students, but anyone who used a demeaning message. In combating hate speech, speech codes were not the best solution for participants. They understood that their First Amendment rights would need to be explored when considering speech codes and that additional education about speech codes was needed.

These dimensions of African American students' perceptions of campus racial diversity suggest the importance of each of the participants' social identity in diversity conversations and education. Discourse on diversity, inclusion, and hate speech demonstrate a continued self-assurance needed by educators and student affairs practitioners to impact students in their examination of contradictions about perceived stereotypes surrounding race relations, of embedded racial inequalities in racial campus dynamics, and in tearing down walls of assumptions that are allowed to penetrate race interactions on a college campus.

By using a qualitative methodological approach in interviewing six African American female students on the research topic, rich verbal interview data provided by the African American students on their college interactions and views of diversity, inclusion, and hate speech gave a voice to their feelings and experiences. Their experiences entailed the presence of social segregation by races at programs, events, and interactions in the residence hall. Factors perceived in affecting their interactions with different people were limited knowledge about different events, for some students their pre-college background, an unwritten understanding of the social order of events to attend if belonging to a particular racial group, and perceptions that an event is exclusionary if targeted towards predominately one race.

Additional conclusions drawn from this study encompass having relationships with diverse groups of people are positively impacted when learning, openness and meaningfulness are present. Thus having genuine and reciprocal relationships improve campus racial dynamics. Discourse about interracial relationships should be welcomed. There must be a commitment by the students and practitioners valuing these relationships and cultivating opportunities for them to be enhanced.

Likewise, understanding diversity will not just happen, because of a university's mission or students valuing diversity (Anderson, 2008). Diversity approaches need to be learning-centered and not the same initiatives from prior years as seen by some participants in this study. New ideas will not only garnish attention for diversity programs, but will keep students invested in what diversity means and represents at their institution. Seeing the same programs and no new initiatives sends the wrong message that diversity does not need to be cultivated, developed, and supported in the 21st century

along with other changes to higher education such as the increase in diverse demographics.

An orchestrated effort to ensure that students are learning about the different cultures represented in their environments was desired by the participants. Although the perception of hate speech was seen infrequent, with isolated encounters and subtle of acts of hate speech it is an administrators' charge to challenge prejudices, stereotypes, and discrimination in a developmental way where the exchange of ideas is still present, but the values of that community are understood. By doing so not only supports diversity and inclusion, but helps prevent missed diversity learning opportunities where students are not taking advantage of programs. Missed educational opportunities impact the racial diversity on campus for students, because the knowledge of different groups, experiences to develop open mindsets, and explore diverse experiences is absent.

With unsettled legal constraints and social ramifications for the use of hate speech, the educational arena is a platform for addressing these issues. First Amendment rights do not have to be trampled to promote the goals and aims of a 21st century commitment to excellence in diversity. Universities foster and promote environments conducive to the sharing of differences in philosophies and attitudes and they do not have to be at the expense of the harm done by hate speech. Impactful programs can be administered as requirements similar to mandatory hall meetings and the like. Students do not know how to defend themselves against hate speech in some instances; therefore, universities have the chance to capitalize on meeting the needs of all their students. Universities must educate students not only in the classroom, but in their living and social environments and make resources more readily available to combat these social ills.

Administrators must have strategic plans on how to regulate hate speech because students are encountering hate speech in direct and indirect fashions. The racial slurs, homophobic remarks, and the catch all demeaning expressions do not add value to the marketplace of ideas on a college campus. Administrators need not proscribe a students' content to educate them on how certain messages can negatively affect the community. Therefore, administrators need to know what their response is and how their response will impact their environment for when students report incidents and for when students do not.

Hate speech creates more damage to the community when there is no response perceived in place to address it. Students should not be shielded from the discourse in resolving these issues for it aids their intellectual insight. Discourse about uncomfortable issues should be encouraged in the academic setting led by staff and faculty. African Americans are aware and affected daily by stereotypes and they feel like they have to debunk negative stereotypes with each interaction. With the encouragement of diverse perspectives in the academia there is bound to be clashes or disagreements with words and thoughts presented by students and therefore, a responsibility exists to appropriately facilitate that discourse with support. Student affairs administrators cannot become bystanders to the acquisition of diversity understanding and they cannot allow their students to become bystanders as well. The desire for diversity understanding helps African American students feel welcomed in their environment and will ultimately help them become successful in their college careers.

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Appendix A

Dear Student,

You are receiving this email requesting your participation in a research study being conducted by a graduate student in the College Student Affairs Master's program.

The purpose of this study will be to explore African American students' perceptions of hate speech and its impact on diversity and inclusion on a university campus. At this stage in the research, the perception of hate speech will be generally defined as your feelings, thoughts, and position with regard to racial epithets or slurs that demean a protected class or group of people.

Data will be collected through a one-on one hour interview with the researcher. Your identity will remain confidential as the researcher will not use actual participant names as part of the reporting of the results. Additionally any information obtained in connection with this study that identifies you will remain confidential. You can choose whether or not to participate in this study. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may also refuse to answer any questions asked as part of the study.

Data collected through this study will be used to complete a Master's thesis requirement. Results of this study will be used to identify ways to improve campus policies and enhance the student experience. Participants will receive a **$5.00 gift card** to a local coffee shop at the conclusion of the entire data collection process.

If interested email the researcher, Andrea Grant, a graduate student in the College Student Affairs program and Associate Resident Director of Pemberton Hall, at aegrant@eiu.edu.
Thank you for your consideration.

Kind Regards,

Andrea E. Grant
Principal Investigator
aegrant@eiu.edu
217-581-2579

Dr. Dianne Timm
Thesis Advisor
dtimm@eiu.edu
217-581-5327

Appendix B

March 29, 2012

Andrea Grant
Counseling and Student Development

Thank you for submitting the research protocol titled, "African American Students' Perception of Hate Speech: Implications for Diversity and Inclusion" for review by the Eastern Illinois University Institutional Review Board (IRB). The IRB has approved this research protocol following an expedited review procedure. IRB review has determined that the protocol involves no more than minimal risk to subjects and satisfies all of the criteria for approval of research.

This protocol has been given the IRB number 12-072. You may proceed with this study from 3/27/2012 to 3/26/2013. You must submit Form E, Continuation Request, to the IRB by 2/26/2013 if you wish to continue the project beyond the approval expiration date.

This approval is valid only for the research activities, timeline, and subjects described in the above named protocol. IRB policy requires that any changes to this protocol be reported to, and approved by, the IRB before being implemented. You are also required to inform the IRB immediately of any problems encountered that could adversely affect the health or welfare of the subjects in this study. Please contact me, or the Compliance Coordinator at 581-8576, in the event of an emergency. All correspondence should be sent to:

Institutional Review Board
c/o Office of Research and Sponsored Programs
Telephone: 581-8576
Fax: 217-581-7181
Email: eiuirb@www.eiu.edu

Upon completion of your research project, please submit Form G, Completion of Research Activities, to the IRB, c/o the Office of Research and Sponsored Programs.

Thank you for your assistance, and the best of success with your research.

Richard Cavanaugh, Chairperson
Institutional Review Board
Telephone: 581-6205
Email: recavanaugh@eiu.edu

Appendix C

Interview Protocol
Time of interview:
Date:
Place:
Interviewer:
Interviewee:
(Briefly describe the purpose of the study, confidentiality and consent form.)

Questions:

1. Tell me a little about yourself and your background growing up?
2. What does your involvement on campus look like?
3. What experience comes to mind when you think of your racial identity?
4. Tell me about what motivated you to participate in this study.
5. How would you describe your college experience up to this point regarding your interactions with others different from you? Provide examples that illustrate that.
6. (Researcher defines diversity for participant as the racial/ethnical/cultural/social stratification of a population.) What does diversity on campus look like for you?
7. (Researcher defines inclusion for participant as the respectful representation and consideration of all people.) What does inclusion look like at this institution?
8. What are your thoughts about hate speech in general?
9. (Researcher defines hate speech for participant as a broadly used descriptive of epithets, racial slurs that demean a protected class or group of people.) Are you aware of hate speech occurring on this campus? If so, tell me more about that.
10. How do you think hate speech affects diversity and inclusion?
11. How would you feel if someone directed a racial slur at you?
12. (Researcher defines speech codes for participants as regulations that prohibit certain times of speech.) What are your thoughts about a university's use of speech codes to regulate hate speech?
13. How do you think the institution responds to hate speech?
14. If hate speech occurred on campus, what do you think the response should be?
15. What role does diversity and inclusion play on a college campus?
16. What final thoughts would you like to share about this topic? What question didn't I ask that you can speak to?

(Provide thank you to participant and assure confidentiality of responses and potential follow up of interview.)

Appendix D

CONSENT TO PARTICIPATE IN RESEARCH

African American Students' Perception of Hate Speech: Implications for Diversity and Inclusion

You are invited to participate in a research study conducted by Andrea E. Grant, a College Student Affairs graduate student, and Dr. Dianne Timm, Thesis Advisor, from the Department of Counseling and Student Development at Eastern Illinois University. Your participation in this study is entirely voluntary. Please ask questions about anything you do not understand, before deciding whether or not to participate.

You have been asked to participate in this study because you are identified as a second or third year African American student residing on campus. An anticipated three to six participants will be sought to participate in a one-on-one interview. Students who do not racially identify with being an African American, who live off campus, and who are not second and/or third year students will not be considered. In addition participants will be selected without regard to gender.

- **PURPOSE OF THE STUDY**
The purpose of this study is to explore African American students' perception of diversity, inclusion, and hate speech through interviews to determine what students feel, think, and know.

- **PROCEDURES**
If you volunteer to participate in this study, you will be asked to:

Take part in an audio-visual recorded interview. The recorder is built into a laptop to ensure the file can be locked and secured. The interview will most likely last only an hour and you may be contacted via email to verify information collected or to respond to follow up questions.

- **POTENTIAL RISKS AND DISCOMFORTS**
There is no serious risk for participants. All interviews will be scheduled around participants' availability and participants determine what information they want to disclose. The discussion of hate speech may bring about an experience with hate speech linked to emotions that may be difficult or uncomfortable; however, the level of disclosure of information is up to the participant.

- **POTENTIAL BENEFITS TO SUBJECTS AND/OR TO SOCIETY**
The direct benefits participants may receive as a result of participating in the research are the information about perceptions of hate speech from their viewpoint, the opportunity to participate in a qualitative research study, and a dedication remark in the final thesis project.

- **INCENTIVES FOR PARTICIPATION (*Optional*)**

The participants will receive a $5.00 gift card to a local coffee shop for their participation.

- **CONFIDENTIALITY**

Any information that is obtained in connection with this study and that can be identified with you will remain confidential and will be disclosed only with your permission or as required by law. Confidentiality will be maintained by use of aliases in all documented and printed material. Data will be safeguard on a security enabled computer, where a password is required to access the data. Printed copies will be kept in a locked file cabinet inside a locked apartment. Only the principle investigator will have access to any locked files or recordings. The principal investigator is the sole occupant of the apartment, so there is no admission for others to gain access to the transcriptions of the interviews or consent forms. The transcriptions from the interview will be code for themes. The participants will be emailed the results of the themes abstracted from the interview to confirm their perceptions. The data will also be kept for at least three years. When that time lapses, all information will be deleted. Other reviewers of the codification will be given a hard copy only of the transcription and participants will be assigned aliases to protect their identity. The only person who will have access to the data or participant identifiers will be the principal investigator, the principal investigator's advisor, and the thesis committee members. If a participant decides to formally withdraw from the study they will have the choice of receiving their information (i.e. consent form and transcribed interview) or having it destroyed by the researcher. Their information will be removed from the study.

- **PARTICIPATION AND WITHDRAWAL**

Participation in this research study is voluntary and not a requirement or a condition for being the recipient of benefits or services from Eastern Illinois University or any other organization sponsoring the research project. If you volunteer to be in this study, you may withdraw at any time without consequences of any kind or loss of benefits or services to which you are otherwise entitled.
There is no penalty if you withdraw from the study and you will not lose any benefits to which you are otherwise entitled. You may also refuse to answer any questions you do not want to answer.

- **IDENTIFICATION OF INVESTIGATORS**

If you have any questions or concerns about this research, please contact:

Andrea E. Grant
Principal Investigator
aegrant@eiu.edu
217-581-2579

Dr. Dianne Timm
Thesis Advisor
dtimm@eiu.edu
217-581-5327

- **RIGHTS OF RESEARCH SUBJECTS**

If you have any questions or concerns about the treatment of human participants in this study, you may call or write:

Institutional Review Board
Eastern Illinois University
600 Lincoln Ave.
Charleston, IL   61920
Telephone: (217) 581-8576
E-mail: eiuirb@www.eiu.edu

You will be given the opportunity to discuss any questions about your rights as a research subject with a member of the IRB. The IRB is an independent committee composed of members of the University community, as well as lay members of the community not connected with EIU. The IRB has reviewed and approved this study.

I voluntarily agree to participate in this study. I understand that I am free to withdraw my consent and discontinue my participation at any time. I have been given a copy of this form.

_____

Printed Name of Participant

_____   _____

Signature of Participant   Date

I, the undersigned, have defined and fully explained the investigation to the above subject.

_____   _____

Signature of Investigator   Date