Marketing Race in Post-Affirmative Action Contexts

by

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Dedication

To the prospective college students that depend on marketing materials to inform their

decision of where to attend year after year.

Acknowledgements

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and ancestors, gracias por todo su amor, apoyo, y sacrifício. Si se pudo!

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Abstract

While there have been multiple instances of digital manipulation and mishandling of images of racially minoritized individuals by college and universities, most of the literature on higher education marketing is limited to the study of the images themselves. In this comparative case study, I consider both the racial representations found in the undergraduate recruitment materials of four selective, public institutions restricted by their use of race in admissions, as well as how marketing and communications professionals create and understand these representations in a post-affirmative action context.

A theoretical framework that engages racial capitalism, power, and the critical race theory tenets of color-evasiveness, interest convergence, and Whiteness as property, guides this dissertation. Using content and social semiotics analysis, I examined how racially minoritized individuals are represented compared to their White counterparts in 872 images gathered from print and digital recruitment materials. I also conducted interviews with 45 marketing and communications professionals to understand how they approach race in the materials they produce and whether their campuses' limited use of affirmative action influenced their work.

Regarding the representations of BIPOC and White individuals in recruitment materials, I found each institution overrepresented the racial diversity on their campus with one institution overrepresenting their racial diversity by 29 percent. Photos of BIPOC and White individuals pictured along the horizontal axis drew viewers' attention to BIPOC individuals and away from their White counterparts. In contrast, White individuals in the photography of three out of the four institutions were pictured in a greater number of roles than their BIPOC counterparts.

In terms of how marketing professionals create these racial portrayals, I found marketing professionals embraced two types of design processes and four considerations for the visual representation of racially diverse individuals: style, content, source, and use. Some participants sensitive to race and racism felt responsible for educating colleagues and guiding creative decisions on the visual representation of racially minoritized individuals, while many managers of BIPOC employees appreciated turning to them when issues regarding race arose. Overall, two thirds of participants did not view their work as being influenced by the affirmative action ban.

Given these findings, I conclude that there has been a re-evaluation of race, whereby racially minoritized individuals are prized in marketing as shown by their overrepresentation. The images of racial diversity promoted are at times stereotypical and at times models of the inclusive marketing style that seeks to reverse negative stereotypes. Moreover, the design process behind these materials revealed an imbalance in power that often centers and privileges Whiteness. As higher education institutions strive to diversify amidst a changing legal and demographic landscape, they must be more critical of how they represent themselves to prospective students while simultaneously addressing what happens once a student sets foot on campus

Chapter 1 Introduction

The U.S. system of higher education has never catered to a more racially and ethnically diverse student population than at this moment in time (McFarland et al., 2018). Amidst this demographic landscape, higher education institutions face greater societal pressure to champion the principles of diversity, equity, and inclusion and prepare students for an increasingly more diverse, global society (Smith, 2009). Colleges and universities have responded to this expectation in several ways: hiring diversity-focused personnel (Frum, 2016; Vedder, 2018), drafting strategic diversity plans and statements (Foste, Duran, Hooten, 2022), launching diversity postdoctoral programs, celebrating institutional anniversaries and histories of diverse community members (D'Onofrio, 2015), and increasing outreach efforts to historically underrepresented high schools (Nelson, 2006). Beyond the university campus, diversity is a stated commitment across American higher education. Umbrella organizations such as the American Association of Colleges and Universities (AAC&U), the American Educational Research Association (AERA), the Association of American Universities (AAU), and others defend and integrate diversity into their own organizational frameworks (AAC&U Board of Directors, 2013; AERA, 2019; AAU Board of Directors, 2015).

However, it is increasingly apparent that a stated commitment to diversity is not enough to diversify racially and ethnically some of the most selective institutions in the United States. Compositional (Milem, 2003) and structural (Hurtado et al., 1998) diversity is reportedly lower at selective institutions than at less selective, open access campuses (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013). Even at selective state institutions, where the mission includes serving the public, there is a long

legacy of exclusion and exploitation of racially minoritized individuals[1] (Karabel, 2005; Wilder, 2013). Over the past five decades, admission officers at selective institutions have relied primarily on affirmative action—the consideration of race in admissions decisions—to enroll a racially diverse student body. Yet, legal challenges to affirmative action have displaced the policy's original intent of correcting past racial injustices. It is in this context of changing demographics, commitments to diversity, historical legacies, legal retributions, and contemporary instances of racism that university marketing and communications professionals are tasked with managing the reputation of their institutions. Marketing and communications professionals are asked to raise public awareness of their institution to increase donations, research dollars, good will, and admission applications. This study considers how a post-affirmative action context shapes the work of marketing professionals and the materials they produce.

Statement of the Problem

Despite sizable support for diversity across higher education, institutions continue to perpetuate racial stratification (Lynn & Parker, 2006; Zuberi & Bonilla-Silva, 2008). Racially minoritized students are disproportionately concentrated in two-year, open access institutions compared to four-year, selective institutions (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013). In 2014, Black and Latino students comprised 52 percent of enrollments at for-profit, two-year institutions compared to 28 percent at private, four-year non-profit institutions (NCES, 2014). At selective, four-year research institutions, White students constituted 20 percent of enrolled students compared to 13 and 14 percent Black and Latino students, respectively (NCES, 2016). At state flagship

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[1] The term 'racially minoritized students' is used throughout this study to refer to students who might identify or be identified as Black, Latinx, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and/or Native American. For more information, see Appendix A.

institutions, there is a persistent disconnect between the total pool of racially minoritized students graduating high school and those who ultimately attend selective institutions. For example, at the University of California-Berkeley, 13 percent of the incoming first-year students in 2015 identified as Latino/a compared to 51 percent of that state's high school graduates, and that gap was closer to 25 points at the University of Texas-Austin (Kolodner, 2018). Moreover, researchers have found that high achieving racially minoritized students often do not even consider applying to selective institutions (Hoxby & Avery, 2013; Hoxby & Turner, 2013). The disproportionate enrollment of racially minoritized students at less selective versus more selective institutions is cause for concern as graduates of selective institutions receive additional benefits, like a higher likelihood of graduating on time (Georgetown CEW, 2016), an extensive alumni network (Reardon, Baker, and Klasnik, 2012), and for Black and Latino graduates, a higher earning advantage compared to White graduates of similar colleges (Carnevale & Strohl, 2013).

A commitment to representational diversity is not enough to address the challenge facing our most selective institutions. There have been several high-profile cases of racism, exclusion, and over-policing at selective institutions, which has raised public concern (Huelsman, 2019; Swenson, 2018; Watkins, 2016). Amidst the global pandemic brought on by COVID-19, news of the murders of Breonna Taylor, Ahmaud Arbery, George Floyd, Tony McDade and others led many higher education institutions to publish statements of solidarity with the Black community and in some cases with the Black Lives Matter movement. Similar statements were published after a mass shooting in the Atlanta-area left six women of Asian descent dead in the spring of 2021. Such statements mostly engendered suspicion and resentment with many Black students and alumni calling the statements insufficient and performative (Ellis, 2020; England & Purcell,

2020). With minimal progress in this area, several scholars question if 'diversity' efforts will ever be a suitable replacement for affirmative action, which seeks to rectify systemic inequality in access to college (Ahmed, 2012; Posselt, 2016; Berrey, 2015; Dowd & Bensimon, 2015; Goldstein Hode & Meisenbach, 2016; Jayakumar & Adamian, 2015; Ledesma, 2013, 2015; Orfield, 2015).

Background of the Problem

Challenges to Affirmative Action

For close to fifty years, affirmative action has been the target of court decisions, legislative orders, and voter referendums limiting its use in admissions (Garces, 2014). Eight states currently ban the use of affirmative action at all public institutions and two others restrict the use of race in admissions at selective public universities (McDuff & Potter, 2012). And, while the latest Supreme Court ruling on affirmative action (*Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin, 2016*) upheld the limited consideration of race in admissions decisions, there are two more cases on the Supreme Court's docket for the fall of 2022 (Liptak & Hartocollis, 2022). This rise in legal attacks comes at the heels of the Trump administration's decision to rescind prior federal guidance to institutions on affirmative action (Hoover, 2018) and after calling lawyers to engage in "investigations and possible litigation related to intentional race-based discrimination in college and university admissions" (Savage, 2017). Institutions still using affirmative action may soon see this lever for increasing racial and ethnic diversity eradicated completely or limited substantially.

Faced with ongoing legal battles and restrictions on affirmative action, the higher education institutions operating under affirmative action bans have sought tp use alternatives to race-conscious policy to promote diversity (Williams, Berger, & McClendon, 2005). Some

decline the use of legacy status in admissions, while others emphasize socioeconomic factors and rely on percent plans based on historical segregation patterns as proxies for race (Orfield et al., 2007). Institutions operating under an affirmative action ban have also boosted their outreach programming in historically underrepresented high schools and communities from one-touch events (college fairs, visit days, etc.) to long-term pipeline programs. Despite institutions' contemporary efforts, most empirical studies that examine the effectiveness of alternative admissions strategies for achieving racial-ethnic diversity in affirmative action ban contexts have found these efforts fall short of achieving pre-affirmative action ban enrollments (Antonovics & Backes, 2013; Backes, 2012; Darity, Deshpande, & Weisskopf, 2011; Espenshade & Radford, 2009; Howell, 2010; Long, Saenz, & Tienda, 2010).

Marketing and the College Choice Process

Beyond affirmative action, changes in admissions criterion, and outreach programs, there is another lever colleges and universities operating in a post-affirmative action context might choose to use to increase structural diversity. Institutional marketing efforts can play a role in recruiting a more diverse undergraduate student body at selective, four-year institutions regardless of restrictions on affirmative action. By increasing the number of racially minoritized students in the application pool and increasing their desire to enroll if admitted, institutional marketing efforts could achieve what previous post-affirmative action solutions like percent plans have failed to do on their own.

To better understand how institutional marketing efforts may influence institutions' racial diversity, it is necessary to acknowledge how these efforts fit into the greater decision-making process of prospective students. The literature on college choice presents students as rational actors engaging in a long, developmental process influenced by multiple informational inputs

such as family, friends, guidance counselors, and other stakeholders (Engberg & Wolniak, 2010; Hearn, 1984; Hossler & Gallagher, 1987; Perna, 2006; Toutkoushian and Paulsen, 2016). Chapman's college choice model (1981) highlights how messaging from and interactions with institutions are also considered by students during the selection process. In 2018, college-bound juniors and seniors listed an institution's website, online cost of attendance calculator, emails, printed brochures, and admission counselor phone calls as the top five marketing materials that influenced their decision to enroll (Ruffalo Noel Levitz, 2018b). Thus, college marketing materials are informational sources with the power to influence where students apply and ultimately enroll.

The college choice literature also suggests that institutions can influence student enrollment through the types of marketing strategies they employ (St. John & Paulsen, 2001; Bohon, Johnson, & Gorman, 2006; Slay, 2018). A 2018 survey of 45 four-year public institutions found schools used a wide range of communication channels to initiate contact with prospective undergraduates, including email (81%), self-mailer brochure or postcard (53%), and digital advertising (30%); and to follow up after a non-response (i.e., email, 83%; self-mailers, 43%; digital ads, 40%; Ruffalo Noel Levitz, 2018a). Administrators at these same institutions rated the most effective marketing strategies as video, text messages, mobile-responsive website, digital advertising, and publications. While these figures answer *what* marketing strategies institutions use, they do not answer *how* they go about the work of marketing to prospective students. Understanding the *how* could illuminate the interplay between higher education marketing and an institution's structural diversity.

Scholars who contemplate the relationship between universities and college-choice stakeholders (e.g., students, parents) believe it varies greatly from traditional consumer-business

relationships. Winston (1999) purports that higher education, much like the nonprofit sector, functions as a "trust market." In a trust market, consumers are not able to decipher what they are actually "purchasing" until it is too late for a refund or exchange. They are left trusting that what is purchased will be delivered. This relationship is made only more intense by the fact that education is typically a "one-time investment expenditure" (Winston, 1999, p.15). As leading anti-racism scholar Ibram X. Kendi notes, "part of the reason for being for any university is that relationship with the community, is that trust from the community. If that bond is broken, it's almost equivalent to the bond that has long been broken between policing forces and communities" (Ellis, 2020). During the college choice process, higher education institutions must swiftly earn and affirm the trust of prospective students by honestly communicating who it is they are and how they differ from their competitors (Anctil, 2008). That trust, however, has been breached numerous times by multiple institutions when it comes to racial diversity. There are several instances where institutions have chosen to represent racially minoritized students in questionable ways, including going to such lengths as photoshopping students to promote an image of diversity that is simply not found on campus (Prichep, 2013; Jaschick, 2019).

Racial Diversity in Higher Education Marketing

The importance of interrogating marketing materials is more pronounced considering multiple incidents of photograph manipulation and other tactics that have engendered distrust among prospective students. In the early 2000's, the University of Wisconsin-Madison and Iowa State both photoshopped Black male students into their printed recruitment materials in an effort to appear more racially diverse (Prichep, 2013). Twenty years later, there is evidence that similar techniques are still in use by other higher education institutions (Jaschick, 2019). These sorts of tactics are not only highly questionable but are ineffective in persuading prospective students to

apply (Lewis & Shah, 2019). If an institution's marketing materials have little, poor, or doctored racial diversity, prospective students of all backgrounds may feel deceived and prospective students of color may feel unwanted on campus. In the marketing world this is what the "Father of Marketing" David Ogilvy may have warned against when he said, "the wrong advertising can actually *reduce* sales" (Ogilvy, 1985, p.9) or in this case, enrollment.

So why do marketing and communications professionals go to such lengths to promote a false image of racial diversity on their campus? Results of one study suggests that students want to see themselves in marketing materials. Allen and Collisson (2020) find that prospective students of color who were shown images of White and then racially minoritized alumni at a fictitious university were more willing to enroll at an institution when presented with a role model of the same ethnicity. Most research on college marketing materials, however, rarely considers diversity broadly or racial and ethnic diversity specifically (Osei-Kofi, Torres, & Lui, 2013). When racial diversity is considered in the analysis, it is primarily quantified by counting the number of racially minoritized individuals present.[2] With minimal knowledge on the creative process associated with institutional marketing materials, this type of analysis leaves us speculating as to why university marketing professionals would go to such lengths to represent diversity in ways that compromise the trust between higher education institutions, students, and other stakeholders. This study not only questions how racially minoritized students are represented in marketing materials, but the role of marketing professionals in producing such materials. Understanding how marketing professionals make decisions about racial diversity in marketing materials is necessary because of the influence these materials have on college choice and the implications they may have on campus racial diversity. And, because including diverse

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[2] There are two notable exceptions to this consideration of race (Osei-Kofi and colleagues, 2013, 2015), which are reviewed in more detail in Chapter 2.

racial representations in recruitment materials may be more urgent at selective public universities banned from using race in admissions, this study will consider marketing materials and professionals situated in post-affirmative action contexts specifically.

Research Scope and Questions

This study contributes to our understanding of institutional factors in college choice by comparing how four selective public institutions with affirmative action bans represent racially minoritized students in recruitment materials. The comparative case study (CCS) also considers how marketing professionals decide to represent racially minoritized individuals in their materials and in what ways a post-affirmative action context contributes to these decisions. The proposed study is guided by the following research questions:

1. How are racially minoritized individuals represented in marketing materials at selective public institutions compared to their White counterparts?

2. How do marketing professionals at selective public institutions create and understand the representations of racially minoritized students?

3. How are these representations and their creation shaped by a post-affirmative action context?

To answer these questions, I collected viewbooks, social media posts, and conducted interviews with marketing and communications professionals at four institutions in states with restrictions on affirmative action. I utilized a Critical Race Theory (CRT) framework, which acknowledges the sociohistorical and legal implications of affirmative action. I also utilized critiques of power and diversity discourse in higher education, like Leong's (2013) theory of racial capitalism, to analyze the topic. A derivative of CRT, racial capitalism suggests that a re-evaluation of racial

diversity has recently taken place, making racially minoritized individuals desirable and even valuable to an institution as numerous social benefits are now associated with diversity.

Theoretical Framework

Born from critical legal studies, Critical Race Theory (CRT) provides a lens to examine the nature of racism; how it is found at the individual and structural level and can be an everyday occurrence (Ladson-Billings, 1999; Lopez, 2003). CRT acknowledges how the law has substantiated a historical racial hierarchy placing White people above people of color (Tate, 1997). CRT aims "to expose racism and disrupt racist structures, practices and discourses that maintain and perpetuate racial inequality" (Perez Huber, 2008, p. 165). Several tenets guide CRT including the idea that race is socially constructed, (Collins, 2004; Young, 1990), that events must be interpreted within their historical context (Delgado & Stefancic, 2001; Ladson-Billings, 1998), and that the idea of 'objectivity' and 'neutrality,' which is common in dominant discourse, should be challenged as life experiences vary based on one's perceived racial group (Lynn & Parker, 2006). These tenets shape the construction of this study in significant ways.

Race is Socially Constructed

The "social construct" thesis contends that "race and races are products of social thought and relations" based not on fixed, biological, or genetic reality but rather on invented categories which can be manipulated, changed, and even retired (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012, p. 8). CRT scholars, or "crits," acknowledge that physical commonalities (e.g., hair, eyes, skin tone) between people of similar origins exist (Delgado & Stefancic, 2012). However, CRT scholars and the author of this study, are concerned by how physical commonalities are used to categorize individuals, make judgements about their other traits (e.g., intelligence, personality, moral behavior), and subsequently used to apportion "differential economic, political, social, and even

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psychological rewards to groups" based on socially constructed racial lines (Bonilla Silva, 1997, p.474).

Historical Context

According to Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, and Crenshaw (1993), crits challenge ahistoricism and promote contextual and historical analysis of the law. This study explores how marketing activities take shape on college campuses banned or limited from using race in admission decisions. The historical legacy of affirmative action, its legal challenges, and alternatives play an important role in how institutions approach recruitment and how marketing professionals may decide to incorporate White and BIPOC students in marketing materials. The marketing profession's recent shift toward more inclusive marketing is another important contextual consideration of this study as this may not have been a shared or acceptable goal of earlier professionals. Thus, this study couples the historical legacy of affirmative action with the current movement toward inclusive marketing to understand how today's higher education marketers portray racially minoritized students on post-affirmative action campuses.

Challenge Dominant Discourse

Crits are skeptic toward dominant claims of neutrality, objectivity, color-evasiveness, and meritocracy (Matsuda, Lawrence, Delgado, & Crenshaw, 1993). In this study, I question the use of marketing materials as simply objective recruitment tools used to maintain a competitive enrollment advantage in a tough higher education landscape. While much of the literature on recruitment materials to date has promoted this line of thinking, I question what is being marketed, to whom, and for what reasons. I built this study on the idea that prospective White and racially minoritized students may have different reactions and needs of marketing materials and that the racial and ethnic backgrounds of the marketing professionals themselves may shape

the creation of such materials. While the tenets above are embedded in the construction of this study, the concepts of power, racial capitalism, and the CRT tenets of color-evasiveness, interest convergence, and Whiteness as property are used directly in the analysis.[3]

Significance of the Study

Higher education institutions are increasingly pressured by the public to diversify (Smith, 2009). Selective public universities facing affirmative action bans are uniquely restricted in how they can craft a diverse class and offer support once enrolled. By holding a mirror up to the creative process that attracts incoming students this study advances scholarly research on the role of institutional factors (e.g., marketing activities) in college choice, the work of university professionals in affirmative action ban contexts, and racial diversity marketing more broadly.

The findings of this study also have implications on institutional policy and practice. This study is of acute interest to the institutions themselves—admissions officers challenged by recruiting a diverse class; diversity personnel who track compositional diversity and coordinate educational programming on diversity, equity, and inclusion; and, of course, to the marketing professionals whose very work and creative process it examines. Additionally, there are professional organizations governing the marketing profession (e.g., Council for the Advancement and Support of Education, American Marketing Association) and private marketing and advertising firms that may be interested in disseminating best practices informed by the study's findings. Finally, and of highest importance, the study's implications will provide ways for marketing professionals to strengthen the trust between racially minoritized students and higher education that has been diminished through incidents of questionable marketing practices.

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[3] Definitions for these CRT tenets and racial capitalism are found in the Table of Content and examples of how they and the concept of power can be applied are included in Chapter 2.

Organization of the Study

  In this first chapter, I defined the research problem, its significance, and the related questions and scope of the study. In Chapter 2, I provide a literature review of the topics associated with this study, such as the history of affirmative action in higher education, marketing concepts with an emphasis on racial diversity, and the theoretical framework proposed for the study. In Chapter 3, I outline the study's research design and methods used. In Chapters 4–6, I present my research findings. In the final chapter, I discuss the importance and implications of this study's findings and provide recommendations for practice and research.

Chapter 2 Literature Review

The History of Affirmative Action

After years of racist practices that excluded racially minoritized groups from high-paying career opportunities, and with mounting pressure from 1960s civil rights activists, President John F. Kennedy passed Executive Order No. 10925 on March 6, 1961. The order required federally funded employers to end job discrimination and "take affirmative action to ensure" equal opportunity "without regard to race, creed, color, or national origin" (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 1996). Four years later, President Lyndon B. Johnson extended the concept of affirmative action to higher education during a commencement speech at Howard University:

> You do not take a person who, for years, has been hobbled by chains and liberate him, bring him up to the starting line of a race and then say, 'you are free to compete with all the others,' and still justly believe that you have been completely fair. (Johnson, 1965)

Moved by student protests demanding greater racial parity on college campuses, selective higher education institutions took up Kennedy and Johnson's calls to action and began considering race in admissions decisions. Hoping to remedy past racial injustices by increasing the number of racially minoritized individuals on college campuses, affirmative action was used liberally without legal or government guidance for over a decade. While affirmative action was effective in increasing racially minoritized individuals from the onset, the constitutionality of using race in admissions was soon legally contested (Sturm & Guinier, 1996). A series of court cases spanning more than a half century altered higher education's aim to correct past racial

injustices. The following section follows this transition by reviewing the legal, policy, and practical challenges surrounding the use of affirmative action in higher education and how such challenges influence professionals working in a post-affirmative action context.

Legal Cases

The Bakke Case. No court decision has influenced higher education admissions policies more than the U.S. Supreme Court's 1978 ruling on *Regents of the University of California v. Bakke* (Chang, 2005). For a little over a decade, the use of affirmative action in higher education was used to increase the number of racially minoritized students who enrolled on selective campuses. Then, *Bakke* became the first in a series of cases spanning thirty-five years that challenged the use of race in admissions decisions. Allan Bakke, a White male applicant denied admission to the University of California-Davis School of Medicine, argued the university's use of race in admissions decisions violated his rights under Title VI of the 1964 Civil Rights Act. The Equal Protections Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment prohibits federally funded programs from discriminating based on race (Kaplin, 2014). The Court chose to submit the use of race in admissions decisions to a legal standard known as "strict scrutiny." Under strict scrutiny, institutions must prove that the use of race in admissions decisions is a compelling government interest and is "narrowly tailored," or that no workable, race-neutral alternatives exist. Whereas other legal tests set a lower threshold of proof, strict scrutiny is the hardest to prove making the law more likely to be overturned. If proven, a race-based program continues to be deemed necessary.

With their decision on *Bakke*, the Supreme Court prohibited institutions from reserving a set number of spots for racially and ethnically diverse applicants, claiming the practice was not narrowly tailored. The court also claimed that diversifying higher education institutions was a

compelling state interest (*Regents of the University of California v. Bakke*, 1978). Justice Lewis

Powell established the first legal justification for race-based preferences in admissions decisions

when he argued that the educational benefits bestowed on all students through diversity was

central to the mission of higher education (Berrey, 2011). This justification is now referred to as

the "diversity rationale" (Schuck, 2003). When the Court dismissed the rationale that affirmative

action should address past racial injustices, it began to limit future legal arguments for

affirmative action to those that promote diversity for the benefit of all students.

Hopwood and Johnson. In the cases immediately following *Bakke,* plaintiffs continued

to contest whether racial diversity was in fact a compelling state interest. In *Hopwood v. Texas*,

four White plaintiffs, who were allegedly denied admission to the University of Texas School of

Law in 1992 because of their race, filed a suit against the university. When the district court

favored the university, they appealed the case to the Fifth Circuit Court of Appeals, which denied

the university's claim of diversity as a compelling interest and prohibited the use of race in

admissions decisions at all public institutions in the circuit, which included Texas, Mississippi,

and Louisiana (*Hopwood v. State of Texas*, 1996). In 1997, when the University of Houston

Chancellor William P. Hobby Jr. sought clarification on whether race could still be considered in

financial aid decisions, Texas Attorney General Dan Morales issued a formal opinion

interpreting the *Hopwood* decision. His opinion extended the decision to include the areas of

financial aid, fellowships, recruitment, retention, and other institutional policies (Letter Opinion

No. 97-001). It is unclear the extent to which this state-based guidance was followed by all Texas

public institutions and in all facets named in Morales' opinion.

Five years later, in *Johnson v. Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia*,

three White females, who were allegedly denied admission to the state's flagship in 1999 due to

their race, sued the university. Much like the Fifth Circuit Court in *Hopwood*, the District Court of Southern Georgia also found the university failed to prove how diversity was a compelling interest. In the university's appeal to the Eleventh Circuit Court of Appeals, the court disregarded the question of whether diversity was a compelling interest and rendered the university's practice of awarding bonus points to racially diverse applicants as failing to meet strict scrutiny (*Johnson v. Board of Regents of the University System of Georgia*, 2001). Although these cases questioned diversity as a compelling interest, their contributions toward crafting a legally defensible argument for affirmative action were in refining which admission practices could be considered narrowly tailored by the courts. By continuing to extend the strictest review of affirmative action, the legal arena equated an effort to address racial equality with a discriminatory practice against prospective White students (Garces, 2014), more commonly known now as "reverse discrimination."

The Michigan Cases. The diversity rationale did not become the primary legal defense for affirmative action in higher education until 2003 when the U.S. Supreme Court heard two cases against the University of Michigan's race-conscious admissions policy (*Grutter v. Bollinger*, 2003; *Gratz v. Bollinger*, 2003). In both cases, the Court upheld the diversity rationale because of an increase in educational benefits for all students. Extensive social science research and amici briefs from other higher education institutions supporting the diversity rationale were supplied in defense of the University of Michigan's use of affirmative action (Levine & Ancheta, 2013). Findings from this social science research suggest that a more diverse college population encourages civic engagement (Bowman, 2011), professional development, and leadership (Jayakumar, 2008), and elevates cognitive ability, critical thinking, and self-confidence among students (Hurtado, 2005). According to this research, diverse campus settings are also primed for

interactions between students from racially and ethnically diverse backgrounds, which can help promote cross-racial understanding (Pettigrew & Tropp, 2008) and reduce prejudice (Denson, 2009). Presented with such extensive research in support of the benefits of diversity for all students, the Supreme Court upheld that a diverse college campus was a compelling interest for the state reversing previous legal challenges such as *Hopwood* and *Johnson*. These landmark cases also saw to it that the diversity rationale successfully replaced the original intent and rationale behind affirmative action—the need to right past injustices.

The diversity rationale effectively helped the University of Michigan pass the first part of the legal standard of strict scrutiny: whether the policy is a compelling state interest. However, rulings on the two cases diverged on the question of whether each policy was narrowly tailored to meet that interest. In *Grutter*, the Supreme Court determined that the law school's use of race as a "plus factor" in making holistic admissions decisions was legally defensible. In *Gratz*, the court found the undergraduate admissions point-based system—where racially minoritized candidates were awarded 20 bonus points toward the necessary 100 for admission—was not legally defensible. The Michigan cases cemented the use of the diversity rationale as the only legally defensible one in future cases and, in the case of *Grutter*, served to identify a race-conscious admission policy that passed the narrowly tailored standard required under strict scrutiny (Coleman & Taylor, 2014).

Fisher I and II. A decade after the Michigan cases, the question of the necessity of race-conscious admissions practices emerged again and the Supreme Court once again upheld the diversity rationale. In *Fisher v. University of Texas at Austin*, a White female applicant, Abigail Fisher, did not meet the state's automatic acceptance standards and was denied admission under regular review. Because UT Austin utilizes a percentage plan and only considers race as one of

many factors on a small percentage of applicants under regular review, the court found the university's admissions practices to be narrowly tailored. Whereas some viewed the *Fisher* decision a success, reinforcing precedent set since *Bakke* (Clinton, 2016; Krislov, 2016), others viewed the verdict as having "left the courthouse door open for future litigation" (Yudof & Moran, 2016) because the court urged institutions to continue pursuing viable race-neutral strategies to achieve diversity goals (Espinosa, Gaertner, & Orfield, 2015; Garces, 2015).

     Current Cases. As some predicted, the proverbial courthouse door is again ajar as the U.S. Supreme Court is slated to hear two cases on affirmative action in the fall of 2022. The cases are against the University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill and Harvard University and will be heard by the court simultaneously.[4] Both legal challenges diverge from prior cases in that they concern Asian American plaintiffs (Hartocollis, 2018). The Harvard case is also distinct in that it is the first case against a private school and the school that Justice Powell used to solidify the diversity rationale in *Bakke*. The plaintiff in *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. President and Fellows of Harvard College* accused Harvard of engaging in prohibited "racial balancing," which pits Asian American applicants against one another for a limited number of spots. While the district court sided with the institution, many believe that a more conservative court will finally dismantle affirmative action entirely (Hartocollis, 2019).

     By alleging discrimination against plaintiffs of color rather than White plaintiffs, current cases add a level of complexity previously unseen in legal challenges against affirmative action. While only time will tell how these cases will shape the future of affirmative action, what is certain is that the history of affirmative action in the courts is foundational in understanding how colleges and universities, particularly selective public institutions, approach racially minoritized

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[4] In 2020, the Trump administration's Department of Justice raised a case against Yale, but it was dropped by the Biden administration in February of 2021.

students today. The legal muster of the diversity rationale equates the presence of racially minoritized students on college campuses with positive educational benefits for White students, rather than a rectification of the institution's past and contemporary injustices against racially minoritized students (Yosso et al., 2004). Meanwhile, the need to defend whether institutional policies are narrowly tailored promotes a culture of fear and misinterpretation of case law among institutions considering race (Posselt, 2016). Beyond the courts, the use of affirmative action has been limited by other means as well, such as voter referendum, and executive order. At the University of Georgia and Pennsylvania State University, administrators have decided to voluntary adopt a "race-neutral" admissions policy to avoid future litigation altogether. These challenges have removed race-conscious policies at several public institutions leading to a decline in enrollment gains made while affirmative action was in place. Furthermore, this decline continues even as institutions seek alternative strategies and the number of racially minoritized students graduating high school is on the rise (McFarland, Cui, Rathbun, & Holmes, 2018). In addition, new research suggests a post-affirmative action context may dampen diversity efforts on campuses and negatively affect the professionals responsible for them. In the following section, I review affirmative action bans, their alternatives, and their effects.

Affirmative Action Bans

As the courts have restricted affirmative action, individual states have significantly limited or done away with the use of race in admission decisions at their top public institutions. By invoking their 10th amendment right—any powers not specifically given to the federal government or strictly prohibited from the states by the Constitution are reserved for the states or the people—eight states so far have banned affirmative action at all public institutions, and two others have placed affirmative action restrictions at leading public universities (Potter, 2014).

The origination of each ban differs by state (Holzer & Neumark, 2006; Long, 2007) with voter referendums restricting affirmative action in California (1996), Washington (1998), Michigan (2006), Nebraska (2008), Arizona (2010), and Oklahoma (2012) and executive order and state legislation restricting its use in Florida (1999) and New Hampshire (2011), respectively. Meanwhile, the ruling in *Grutter* may have overturned the ban resulting from *Hopwood*, but Texas (1996) kept its race-neutral percentage plan and only uses race as one of many factors in holistic review for a small percentage of applicants. Despite the decision to uphold "narrowly-tailored" race-based admissions programs in the Michigan case decisions, Georgia's flagship institution voluntarily adopted a race-neutral admissions policy in 2000 out of fears of continued legal battles following *Johnson* (Potter, 2014). Despite research indicating that alternatives to affirmative action negatively affect enrollment goals, other public institutions (e.g., Penn State) have also voluntarily adopted race-neutral policies to circumvent possible litigation even as they publicly advocate for diversity (Garces, 2019). Since this trend is likely to continue, it is important to understand the implications of affirmative action bans on the students and people who work in these contexts.

Affirmative Action Alternatives. Empirical studies demonstrate how the inability to use race in admissions has resulted in substantial declines in enrollment of racially minoritized students at selective public universities (Arcidiacono, 2005; Backes, 2012; Epple, Romano, & Sieg, 2008; Garces, 2012; Howell, 2010). Marta Tienda and colleagues (2003) documented a decline in the percentage of Black and Latino students enrolled at the University of Texas (UT) Austin and Texas A&M after affirmative action bans. The authors found that enrollment dropped by about one percentage point among African Americans at Texas A&M and UT Austin, and more than two percentage points (from 15.8% to 13.7%) among Latinos at UT Austin between

1997 and 2000. Hinrichs (2012) estimated the impact of affirmative action bans on the actual enrollment decisions of students across four states using a difference-in-differences analysis. Results from the study suggested that bans have no effect on the average student and the average college, but they do decrease the enrollment of racially minoritized students at selective colleges. Banning affirmative action at a top-ranked public university was associated with a decrease in black enrollment of approximately 1.74 percentage points and a decrease in Latino enrollment of roughly 2.03 percentage points. Other studies have documented similar declines in enrollment rates in California, Florida (Colburn, Young, & Yellen, 2008; Cross & Slater, 2002), and Michigan (Stohr, 2013). The shifts in enrollment at public colleges and state flagships faced with bans demonstrate how these institutions have not fully recovered the prior structural diversity gained by using affirmative action (Tienda, Leicht, Sullivan, Maltese & Loyd, 2003). While the percentage decreases in these studies may seem insignificant, they are concerning given the historical exclusion of such groups from these institutions, the lack of parity achieved even when using AA, and demographic changes of high school graduates. Overall, this line of research shows how affirmative action bans affect both the distribution of colleges that Black, Latino, and Native American students attend as well as their overall college attendance rates (Arcidiacono, 2005; Cross & Slater, 2002).

To counter these enrollment trends and address inequitable access, persistence, and success of underrepresented students of color (Chang, 2005), most institutions affected by an AA ban formulated expansive diversity policies (Marichal, 2009; Smith, 2009). Some universities dropped legacy preferences for alumni children (Potter, 2014), altered their admission criteria to favor socioeconomically disadvantaged students and/or students from under-resourced high schools, or decreased the importance of standardized scores which disproportionately affect

Black, Latino, and Native American students (Antonovics & Backes, 2014; Brittain & Bloom, 2010; Long & Tienda, 2008). A highly acclaimed strategy that varies greatly in scope and implementation is the "percent plans" adopted in Florida, Texas, and California (Horn & Flores, 2003; Long, 2007). Statewide percent plans guarantee admission to a fixed percentage of graduates at each of the state's high schools to diversity their enrollment. This is accomplished by relying on longstanding racial segregation patterns between high schools rather than on the individual identity of any one applicant (Long, 2007).

Despite these alternatives to affirmative action, percent plans and class-based affirmative action have not been found to restore the number of racially minoritized students who would have been admitted if race were used in admission decisions (Darity, Deshpande, & Weisskopf, 2011; Espenshade & Radford, 2009; Harris & Tienda, 2010; Howell, 2010; Marin & Lee, 2003). A study of Florida's percent program found most students designated as Talented 20 in 2000 and 2001—including those who identified as students of color—would have gained admission to a top state institution based on their academic records alone, suggesting that the real impact of Florida's alternative to AA was trivial. (Marin & Lee, 2003). Harris and Tienda (2010) examined the Texas percent plan and found that Latino and Black application rates to the University of Texas at Austin and Texas A&M University fell after the AA ban resulting in even lower enrollment rates for both groups. Moreover, these alternatives ultimately leave the few minoritized students who do enroll in predominantly White, selective public institutions feeling underrepresented and under-supported once on campus (Bastedo & Jacquette, 2011; Gandara, 2012; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Milem, Chang, & Antonio, 2005).

Other research has considered the effects of affirmative action bans on yield of racially minoritized students, or the percentage of admitted students who matriculate (Brown &

Hirschman, 2006; Card & Krueger, 2005). In her study of admitted Black students at the University of Michigan—an institution that legally upheld affirmative action only to have a ban mandated by voter referendum shortly after—Slay (2018) found that students anticipated a poorer campus climate for diversity than at comparable PWIs because of the ban. The ban on affirmative action at the University of Michigan played a role in students' evaluation of their college choice set and led some admitted students to enroll elsewhere. Teranishi & Briscoe (2008) found Black students in California were also hesitant to apply to and enroll at UC system institutions up to two years after the passing of Proposition 209, which banned the use of race in admissions at all state public institutions.

Long & Bateman (2020) analyze the long-term enrollment changes associated with affirmative action bans at 19 institutions. In a subset analysis of public flagships including UC-Berkeley and UT-Austin, Long & Bateman (2020) find that — despite adopting affirmative action alternatives and experiencing increases in racially minoritized high school graduates in their state — all but one flagship (University of Washington) has plateaued or seen a decline in applications, admissions, and enrollees from racially minoritized students. The authors conclude that underrepresentation of racially minoritized students in the applicant pool is a major factor in their underrepresentation on campus, and that differences in the antecedent conditions for applying to college (e.g., household income, test scores, discrimination, segregation), which are often outside of the control of higher education administrators, cannot be ignored if issues of underrepresentation in applications are to be addressed. Moreover, the authors call for the systematic study and evaluation of admissions and recruitment practices since the results of their study directly challenge past assertions that post-affirmative action interventions produced more

racially diverse classes by showing that slight increases in racial diversity were due to demographic changes (p. 16).

Combined, the studies on affirmative action ban contexts primarily focus on structural (Hurtado et al., 1998) or compositional (Milem, 2003) diversity, meaning the numerical and proportional representation of various groups of people on campus. The literature documents long-term and widespread declines in racial and ethnic diversity at public postsecondary institutions even when alternative strategies are implemented (Garces & Mickey-Pabello, 2015; Long & Bateman, 2020). Research on student perceptions of AA bans and the weight they carry in their college choice process further clarifies the magnitude of such a policy change on student demographics. Moving beyond structural diversity, the following section reviews a handful of studies that consider how AA bans may also change the work of professionals on campus.

Diversity Efforts in Post-Affirmative Action Contexts. An emerging literature documents the effects bans have on institutional actors working to increase campus racial diversity. A handful of studies have examined the challenges institutional actors face in post-affirmative action contexts (Jones, 2014; Garces & Cogburn, 2015; Ginchuru, 2010; Glasener, Martell, & Posselt, 2019; Garces & Bilyalov, 2019). In her descriptive qualitative multi-case study of four multicultural affairs administrators in Virginia, Jones (2014) found that participants experienced increased pressure to defend their programs' focus on race in a post-affirmative action campus. Programs in student affairs were asked to embrace race-neutral language, even when their primary objective was to assist racially minoritized students. Garces and Cogburn (2015) found that 14 administrators at the University of Michigan charged with diversity-related duties felt disempowered in advocating for racial-ethnic diversity because of Proposal 2, the voter referendum that banned affirmative action at public state institutions. From 2011 to 2012,

when interviews were conducted, participating administrators perceived diminished levels of institutional commitment for racial and ethnic diversity and felt silenced in their conversations around race and racism among colleagues, claiming the affirmative action ban had made such topics too "politically charged" (p. 14). Similarly, all six Chief Diversity Officers (CDO) interviewed for a study on their duties and major challenges shared that being a CDO at a public institution had become increasingly difficult after the Michigan case rulings (Gichuru, 2010). Participants noted the extreme measures they now had to undertake in order to avoid future litigation, including editing policy and scholarship language to erase usage of the terms "race," "preferred," or other words that could suggest race entitlement (Gichuru, 2010). Findings from these qualitative studies largely reflect the struggle faced by diversity-related college administrators at institutions with an imposed "race-neutral" admissions policy.

More recent studies have found that even administrators further removed from the implementation of an affirmative action ban—either with respect to direct involvement or temporally—perceive similar challenges at institutions with voluntary "race-neutral" admission policies. In their case study of 11 administrators charged with diversity-related responsibilities at the University of Georgia, Glasener, Martell, and Posselt (2019) found professionals outside of admissions had little-to-no knowledge of the adoption of a race-neutral admissions policy in 2015, nearly fifteen years after it was adopted. Even when administrators who worked directly with racially minoritized individuals knew nothing of the ban, they described a gradual shift at the institution from diversity efforts focused on race and racism to celebrating different forms of diversity. This "watering down of diversity" to something that is more inclusive, and less race-conscious was echoed by administrators at Penn State, a campus with a voluntarily race-neutral admissions policy since 2013 (Garces & Bilyalov, 2019, p.16). The move toward more inclusive

definitions of diversity has been highly criticized by diversity scholars because it shifted the focus away from systemic race and racism—the policy's original intent—to seemingly making "diversity" mean everything and nothing at all (Ahmed, 2012; Berrey, 2015; Jayakumar, Garces, & Park, 2018; Warikoo, 2016).

Affirmative Action Summary

Affirmative action, a policy first created to correct systemic racism, has been highly contentious in higher education (Berrey, 2015). Years of organized pushback through court cases, executive orders, and voter referendums have resulted in imposed and voluntary restrictions to the use of race in college admission decisions (Potter, 2014). Selective state institutions' inability or unwillingness to use a race-conscious admission policy has diminished the gains made in racially minoritized student enrollments when affirmative action was a viable option (Tienda et al., 2003). While institutions have attempted to curb any losses in enrollments through various legally defensible, race-neutral approaches, the alternatives have not brought forth the level of racial and ethnic diversity previously achieved (Stohr, 2013). Coincidentally, the very rationale used to defend the need for a race-conscious admission policy—the diversity rationale—has derailed the intent behind affirmative action, negatively affecting the educational trajectories of racially minoritized students (Yosso et al., 2004). Moreover, professionals in post-affirmative action contexts charged with responsibility over racial diversity largely feel silenced (Garces & Cogburn, 2015), fear litigation (Ginchuru, 2010), and perceive a campus culture that privileges color-evasiveness to maintain the status quo and limit discussions of race and racism (Garces & Bilyalov, 2019; Glasener, Martell, & Posselt, 2018; Jones, 2014).

Missing from the emerging literature on AA ban contexts and its impact on enrollment and support services personnel is how marketing professionals approach their work on these

same campuses. After all, these individuals must negotiate complying with the law and producing visually appealing, informative marketing materials to attract a racially diverse student body. For institutions limited in their use of race in admissions, producing marketing and communication materials that effectively attract students of color may be used in attempts to close enrollment gaps produced by restrictions on affirmative action.

The Marketing of Higher Education and Race

As detailed in the literature on college choice, marketing materials play an early, important role in the decision-making process of prospective undergraduates (Hossler & Gallagher, 1987). Understanding the composition, production, and intent behind these materials would not only advance the literature on higher education marketing broadly, but also show how this functional area can advance or hinder racial diversity on campus. For example, producing marketing communications that effectively attract prospective racially minoritized students to the university could help counter restrictions on AA in admissions.

Currently, we know little about the intentions of higher education marketing professionals and whether raising the racial diversity of the student body is a goal they strive for or only exists in other areas of the institution. While general marketing trends show a move toward increasing racial diversity in advertisements and other external content (more on this later in this section), marketing professionals may be less inclined to include diverse peoples in the materials they produce out of fear of litigation, convenience, or negligence. The latter intent is suggested in the following quote from a participant in a study focused on the beliefs and experiences of university administrators with affirmative action:

> I believe in affirmative approaches to equity, and I believe that we have to take action to get there… We need an affirmative approach that honors our history and kind of

contextualization of reality, and that helps to nurture us forward. I will say that as long as

we have conservative folks in the Office of Legal Counsel, and the Office of

Communications, we're not going to go very far with it. (Hogan, 2019, p.113)

A study focusing on the work of marketing and communications professionals at

institutions with affirmative action bans offers greater insight into these contexts. Research on

how affirmative action bans do or do not affect the daily work of college personnel provides a

more nuanced understanding of how educational practices, structures, and discourses at an

individual and organizational level might reinforce race-based discrimination and inequality on

college campuses and beyond (Yosso et al., 2004, p. 6).

Marketing in Higher Education

Marketing has shifted American higher education institutions from selling postsecondary

education to whomever might be interested to placing the needs of their various customers (e.g.,

students, parents, society) first and actively recruiting students to campus. At its core, marketing

is the idea that "the key to achieving organizational goals consists in determining the needs and

wants of target markets and delivering the desired satisfaction more effectively and efficiently

than competitors" (Kotler, 1994, p. 16). While the adoption of marketing by higher education

can be traced back to the 1940's when institutions vied for World War II veterans with their G.I.

Bill education funds (Thelin, 2011), it intensified in the 1980s and 1990s as public funding for

higher education and student enrollment diminished and tuition-driven institutions adopted more

aggressive recruitment strategies to meet enrollment and financial goals (Anctil, 2008). Today,

there are countless examples of institutions engaging in marketing practices with some spending

as much as 20 percent of their operating budget on marketing (Katzman, 2016). The wide

acceptance of marketing in the field of higher education is reflected by the increasing

prominence of the Chief Marketing Officer (CMO) role within the university structure. A report

by the Chronicle of Higher Education (2019) observed that CMOs are more likely to serve on a

college's executive team and report directly to the President today than they were even a decade

ago.

With marketing becoming a permanent fixture in higher education, the need for a greater

understanding of how college marketing and communications professionals approach their work

is pressing. Moreover, to consider this work in the context of an affirmative action ban could

greatly expand our understanding on the effects of race-neutral admissions policies on achieving

racial diversity goals and creating inclusive, welcoming campuses for minoritized students. After

all, the ways in which marketing professionals approach the creation of recruitment materials and

portrayal of students from different racial and ethnic backgrounds could influence the college

choice process for all students. Given the limited college counseling at most schools, racially

minoritized students who may depend on these materials even more might be the most

influenced by such materials (ASCA & NACAC, 2019).

Marketing Theories. To begin to understand how higher education marketing

professionals approach their work, it is necessary to understand some of the key concepts in the

field, such as market segmentation, consumer behavior, position, product differentiation, and the

marketing mix. Each of these key concepts[5] are extensively developed in the marketing literature

and, collectively, they are seen as providing a greater competitive advantage in the marketplace

(Chamberlain, 1965; Dickson & Ginter, 1987; Doyle, 2000; Frank, Massy, and Wind, 1972;

Lancaster, 1979; Mahajan & Jain, 1978; Porter, 1976; Rosen, 1974; Smith, 1956).

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[5] These concepts are more thoroughly defined in the Definition of Terms section.

Luminita Nicolescue (2009) describes the marketing process within the business sector as sequential. First, organizations must identify different target markets (market segmentation*)*, consider what consumers want, and how they decide on what product to purchase (consumer behavior*)*. Then, organizations must position themselves effectively in the market, usually using product differentiation to stand out from their peers. Finally, organizations focus on meeting consumer demand through marketing mix activities: product, price, distribution, and promotion (Nicolescue, 2009; Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006). When marketing concepts were translated to higher education, marketing was seen as "uncovering specific needs, satisfying these needs by the development of appropriate goods and services, letting people know of their availability and offering them at appropriate prices, at the right time and place" (Krachenberg, 1972, p. 380). While marketing is defined similarly in business and education, its execution in higher education differs in a number of ways: (a) the majority of higher education institutions are non-profit and more attentive to accumulating prestige than profits (Bastedo & Bowman, 2011); (b) education is not a product, but a one-time service that remains affixed to the consumer for a lifetime; (c) there are multiple consumers to satisfy, albeit students are typically considered the primary decision makers as evidenced by the college choice literature (Nicolescue, 2009); (d) institutional isomorphism, or a tendency for institutions to present a mainstream version of their college, is more abundant than product differentiation (Hartley & Morphew, 2008), which make positioning and branding more difficult to accomplish; and, (e) the marketplace for higher education is comprised of multiple markets "defined by sets of institutional attributes that interact to define various market niches and segments of institutional types" (Hossler & Kalsbeek, p. 5).

Despite significant differences between the business and higher education sectors, marketing is widely accepted as a function of enrollment management (Epstein, 2010).

Enrollment management (EM) has been defined in numerous ways over the last forty years (Bontranger, 2002; Black, 2013; Hossler, 1984; Kemerer, Baldridge, & Green, 1982; Maguire, 2011), but Jack Maguire (1976) original defined enrollment management as "a process that brings together often disparate functions having to do with recruiting, funding, tracking, retaining and replacing students as they move toward, within and away from the University" (p.16). Under the lens of EM, marketing principles and strategies allow institutions to "formulate plans that create institutional awareness, identify student demographics, project student demand, and develop enrollment and retention plans" (Huddleston, 2000, p. 67). As an example, Zemsky's (1983) market segmentation model is a tool that institutions use to map their position in the marketplace (Figure 2.1). Zemsky's view of the marketplace places all institutions within a continuum of "name brand/exclusive/costly" and "convenience/user-friendly/affordable" and is constructed using a wide range of data points (e.g., price, type, region). Since students' choices are believed to be confined to a narrow segment of the marketplace, the model promotes a strategic, market-based approach to EM by encouraging institutions to only compete with others in their market segment (Hossler & Kalsbeek, 2008). Adopting this view of higher education, however, has implications on the recruitment of racially minoritized students. Limiting the scope and reach of recruitment activities to those that conform to one's market segment means those students outside of one's market share will not be engaged or encouraged to apply.

Figure 2.1

The Shape of the Postsecondary Market

MARKET SEGMENTS

NAME BRAND

CONVENIENCE/USER FRIENDLY
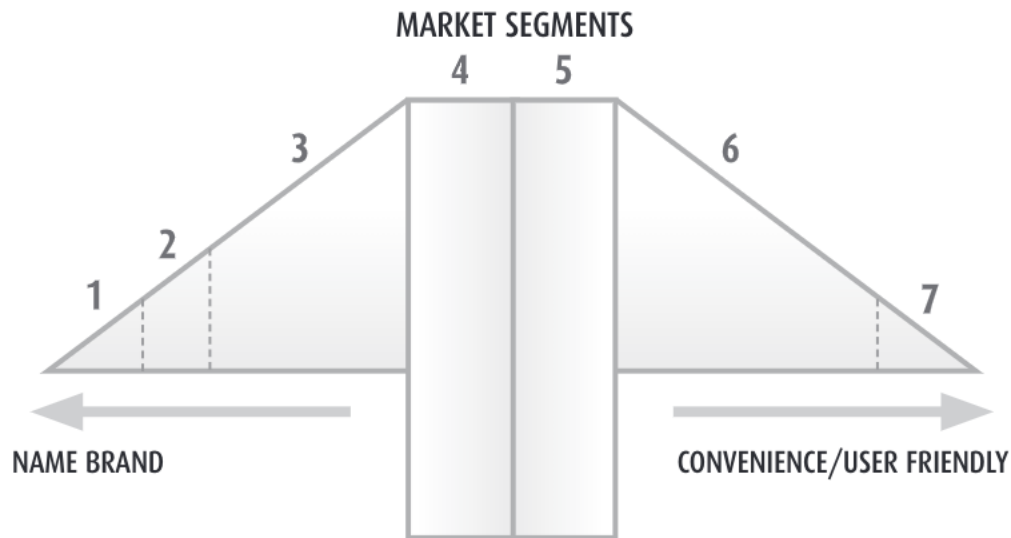
Note. The figure shows the market segmentation of higher education as described in Hossler & Kalsbeek (2008).

In setting an enrollment management strategy, an institution must also confront the inherent tension in EM—juggling the often-competing goals of "increasing net tuition revenue, enhancing the academic profile, and achieving diversity and access" (Hossler & Kalsbeek, 2008). Additionally, higher education's growing dependency on enrollment management and marketing, specifically, can push colleges and universities from acting as social institutions to organizations operating under a strict market logic (Gumport, 2002; McDonough, Ventresca, & Outcalt, 2000). Knowing how marketing has changed higher education, and how it currently functions within it, is critical to understanding the empirical research on higher education marketing.

Empirical Research. While the marketing mix for institutions includes advertising, print (e.g., postcards, brochures), verbal (e.g., college fairs, word of mouth), and digital (e.g., emails, websites), the studies reviewed in this section focus on two mediums in particular—viewbooks

(print) and social media (digital). The focus on these two mediums is strategic given the longstanding nature of the first and the growing popularity of the second.[6]

Print Marketing. College viewbooks, "the glossy, multi-page brochures sent to thousands of prospective students each year" (Hartley & Morphew, 2008, 671), remain one of the most common marketing tools for higher education institutions. A recent survey of four-year institutions found that all institutions surveyed used viewbooks to recruit students, and 85.4% of institutions claimed it was a somewhat or very effective recruitment tool (Ruffalo Noel Levitz, 2016). Unlike other marketing strategies like websites and digital advertisements—which can be quickly erased, removed, or edited—college viewbooks are permanent fixtures that capture a sliver of time in an institution's history. As such, viewbooks serve as symbolic markers of what an institution wishes to portray to the outside world in that moment. More importantly, the audience for viewbooks is strictly defined to prospective students, their purpose contained to getting them to enroll, and their accessibility does not hinder on a students' economic situation dictating their ability to access technology, an internet connection, or the campus.

Despite their proliferation, accessibility, and influence on students' college choice process, college viewbooks remain highly underutilized as units of analysis in research studies. A recent search of related literature yielded a total of 12 articles that reviewed the content of viewbooks. Most of these studies use content analysis as the primary method of analysis and have simple study designs without the application of a theoretical framework (Osei-Kofi, Torres, and Lui, 2012). Most viewbook studies attribute their importance to an increasingly competitive market of higher education and do not consider racial diversity directly (Davidson, 2015; Klassen, 2001).

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[6] Studies related to other marketing mix activities and enrollment management functions are excluded from this review, as are studies concerning graduate, professional, or continuing education.

Hartley & Morphew's (2008) study of 24 public and 24 private institutions' viewbooks did consider diversity. Like the authors, who do not define what they mean by diversity, the institutions in the viewbooks they analyzed failed to define what diversity means even as they celebrate it. They found that several institutions referenced the diversity of their student body and listed geographical association of students (e.g., hometown, country of origin), while others showed pictures of racially diverse students without any accompanying text. They concluded that students pictured are "a racially diverse and generally attractive group" creating a sense that "everyone belongs," but that otherwise "the issue of race is thereby sidestepped" in the viewbooks analyzed (pp. 677, 687). The authors also found that most colleges favored institutional isomorphism, with one college with historically strong conservative ties favoring the approach even when it was incongruent with its own history. This institution apparently "softened" its stance on affirmative action even though it had previously rejected federal funding rather than implementing a race-conscious policy to desegregate (p. 684). Had Hartley and Morphew adopted a more critical lens, they may have acknowledged this tactic as purely self-serving on the part of the institution. By choosing isomorphism over the distinctiveness of the institution's politically conservative history, the institution probably maintained or improved its market position within the market segment they occupy. However, this is accomplished at the expense of students who otherwise may not be aware of the institution's culture or history. This may be especially troublesome for racially minoritized students who put their trust in such materials and can later find themselves on a campus with a hostile climate.

Through a content analysis of over 10,000 photographs from 165 four-year institutions in the U.S., Pippert, Essenburg, and Matchett (2013) found that most institutions promoted images of racial diversity in their 2011 viewbooks that differed from their actual student body. They

found that racial diversity was often relayed through portrayals of Black students and that this group was overrepresented in photos compared to actual enrollment at 134 of the institutions considered in the analysis. The next largest gap in portrayals-enrollment was among White students, followed by Asians. Portrayals of Latino students and students in a non-White other category were limited. Given these findings, the researchers conclude that "racial diversity is being used as a commodity in the marketing of higher education" and that "presenting an image of diversity is more important than accurately portraying the student body" (p.275).

There are two studies that directly consider visual representations of racial diversity using a critical framework. In their review of 20 viewbooks from institutions rated high and low on the diversity index published by U.S. News and World Report, Osei-Kofi, Torres, & Lui (2013) engaged with the subjects of race, racism, White privilege, and White supremacy by imploring a Critical Discourse Studies framework. Like Pippert and colleagues (2013), Osei-Kofi and colleagues also found recruitment materials largely "depict a Black and White world" with limited representations of Asians, Asian Americans, and other racial and ethnic groups. Beyond promoting a Black-White binary, they found that the viewbooks in their sample were created with White audiences in mind, utilizing collages and other digital techniques (e.g., photoshopping) to include racially minoritized individuals rather than depicting genuine interracial interactions. In a follow-up study using the same viewbook data, Osei-Kofi and Torres (2015) applied Bonilla-Silva's (2012) concept of racial grammar, which "influences vision, emotion, and our sense of aesthetics in addition to the way we talk about and frame racial matters" (p. 188) in their analysis. Recognizing the waning numbers of American scientists, Osei-Kofi and Torres questioned how Science, Technology, Engineering, and Math (STEM) representations in viewbooks may be contributing to this phenomenon by dissuading applicants

of diverse racial and gender backgrounds from applying. Their content analysis suggested that White males are at the center of the STEM story, while women and racial minorities are pictured as passive, subordinate, and, in the case of women, conforming to socially accepted ideas of female beauty. These studies are exceptions in the small sample of viewbook studies as the authors consider the impetus for the work to extend beyond a market logic. This set of studies are also exemplars of how to critically consider the representations of racially minoritized individuals in print recruitment materials. These studies move beyond counts to critically consider the type of interactions between White students and those of other races and ethnicities, however like other viewbook studies, the analysis is limited to the final product only.

Across the 12 studies on viewbooks, the design process and the intent by the creators of these materials are not considered. Moreover, the context of each institution and its racial history is not considered in the analysis, which can be quite revealing as the rare mention of the conservative institution's softening on AA shows in Hartley & Morphew's (2008) study. The present study seeks to maximize this opportunity by considering both the process and intent behind print recruitment materials.

Digital Marketing. Beyond the more traditional medium of print, colleges and universities have responded to technological advances and changes in communication preferences among traditionally aged students (Howe & Strauss, 2003) by increasing their use of digital marketing. Approximately 97% of traditionally-aged college students report using social media—defined as online networking sites such as Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, YouTube, etc.—and half estimate they are online "almost constantly" (Pew Research Center, 2018). Responding accordingly, 100 percent of American colleges and universities use social media to directly engage prospective, current, and past students (Sessa, 2014). More specifically, colleges

use social media for three purposes: student recruitment, learning more about prospective students, and monitoring the 'buzz' on their institution (Barnes, 2009).

Like the research on viewbooks, social media studies use content analysis to identify what content leads to the most engagement. In their analysis of 5,932 Facebook posts from 66 top U.S. colleges and universities, Peruta and Shields (2018) found that certain topics (e.g., athletics) and formats (e.g., user generated posts) significantly increased total engagement, defined by the authors as the total sum of likes, comments, and shares. Engagement is found to be an effective means for identifying diverse types of social media users allowing institutions to adopt a market segmentation strategy on their digital platforms (Li & Bernoff, 2008). Unlike the viewbook literature, however, social media studies are also concerned with the date and time the post was published, the type of post it is (e.g., link, photo, text), and the frequency of posting (Barnes & Lescault, 2011; Chauhan & Pillai, 2013; Li & Bernoff, 2008; Peruta & Shields, 2018). A lack of engagement on social media can undermine an institution's marketing efforts as audience preferences shift from one-way to two-way communication (Barnes & Lescault, 2011).

Overall, the use of social media by colleges to recruit students is an emerging research area that—like the studies on print materials before it—rarely considers race. The empirical research in this area is focused on audience behavior defined by engagement metrics (Barnes & Lescault, 2011; Chauhan & Pillai, 2013; Li & Bernoff, 2008; Peruta & Shields, 2018) and disregards the design process behind the content or how marketing professionals' consideration of racial diversity may shape such content. This study begins to expand this line of inquiry from a focus on engagement exclusively to considering what contributes to the creation of such materials.

Racial Diversity in Marketing

The general historical arch of the approach to racial diversity in marketing can be described as going from non-existent to stereotypical representations to the present-day push for inclusive marketing. Racial diversity in marketing increased significantly between the 1950s and 1980s due to government pressure and the emergence of a more racially diverse middle class with enough discretionary funds to attract attention from national brands (Crockett, 2008). While the firsts representations of racial diversity in marketing relied heavily on classic racist appeals made for White audiences, such as Aunt Jemima in the U.S. and Bonhomme Banania in France,[7] later efforts showed racial diversity in other ways and considered White and non-White audiences alike. One such example of this approach were the multicultural ad campaigns first produced by clothing company United Colors of Benetton (Beard, 2007; D'Avila, 2001). More recently, companies are ushering in a new approach to racial diversity in marketing known as inclusive or progressive marketing. This movement calls for marketing that more accurately represents our society and pushes our thinking on the types of roles people from different backgrounds can assume.

Stereotypes. In 1957, Walter Lippmann coined the term "stereotype" to refer to the result of an ordering process by which we understand the world through a set of shared values and beliefs (Lippman, 1957). The effectiveness of stereotypes lies is in their ability to invoke consensus quickly, which allows for the transfer of ideas about members of social groups beyond one's own (Dyer, 1999). As Lippmann (1957) suggests, a pattern of stereotypes is not a neutral endeavor but "the projection upon the world of our own rights… the fortress of our tradition, and behind its defenses we can continue to feel ourselves safe in the position we occupy" (p.96).

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[7] For more examples see Jan Nederveen Pieterse's White on Black: Images of Africa and Blacks in Western Popular Culture (1992).

Thus, who gets to define and control stereotypes wields immense social power, controlling the narrative for the purposes of serving their own interests (Dyer, 1999).

For years, marketers have relied on and reinforced stereotypes to appeal to various audiences (Fuerst, 2016; Rutledge & Heinecken, 2001; Sheehan, 2013). When time, space, and attention is limited–often the case with marketing materials–stereotypes offer expedient short-cuts that communicate a greater amount of information to a viewer (Sheehan, 2013). At the turn of the 19th century, when racial stereotypes were first utilized in marketing to appeal to predominantly White audiences, the images, caricatures of people of color used were deeply offensive to the communities they represented (Fuerst, 2016). While some of these images have been taken out of circulation, their remnants are entrenched in our society's collective psyche, so much so that the stereotypes they produced remain easily identifiable:

> African Americans are dull-witted coons, violent brutes, hypersexual hoochie mamas, welfare queens, and servile mammies; Asian Americans are perpetual foreigners, asexual nerds, weaponized martial arts villains, alluring geisha dolls, and conniving dragon ladies; Latinas are spicy spitfires and docile maids, while Latinos are gun-toting gangsters and macho Latin lovers; Native Americans are sexy princesses and warmongering savages, papoose-wearing squaws, and wise elders. (Lopez, 2020)

The handful of negative depictions that racially minoritized individuals are subjected to is in stark contrast to the multitude of stereotypes that White individuals face. A single, negative representation of a White individual cannot change the social power and privilege that White people wield in our society, whereas every negative representation of a racially minoritized individual helps reinforce prior notions of inferiority and subordination (Lopez, 2020).

Stereotypes then become what Patricia Hill Collins (2022) calls "controlling images" as they justify the ongoing mistreatment, neglect, and oppression of racially minoritized individuals.

The negative effects of these and newer stereotypes are also felt directly by individuals from the racially minoritized communities they portray. Stereotypes that link these individuals to intellectual inferiority remain prevalent in our culture and contribute to stereotype threat (Schmader, Johns, Forbes, 2008). According to psychologist Claude Steele (2011), stereotype threat occurs when a member of a social group fears exemplifying a negative stereotype forced upon them, and in carrying the additional burden they fulfill the very stereotype they wished to dispel. For example, the results of one study indicated that the performance of Black students who were asked their race before a test was lower than that of comparable students who were asked to identify their race after the test (Steele & Aronson, 1995). Today, both marketers and consumers are savvier about the power of stereotypes and their effect over us, and there is growing support for marketing tactics that erase the negative stereotypes of yesterday. What is unknown is to what degree marketing professionals implore or condemn the use of stereotypes in their work as they seek to appeal to prospective college students. Or even whether there are differences between the ways racially minoritized and White individuals are being stereotyped in college marketing materials.

Inclusive Marketing. Since the 1980s, recursive advertising is a technique that has been used by marketers to appeal to increasingly wiser consumers by managing to "poke fun at other advertisers' use of stereotypes or marketing techniques" (Voegele, 2006 as referenced in Seaman, 2013, p.81). Inclusive marketing goes further than subverting stereotypes through parody. This new approach shows individuals in non-stereotypical roles, features individuals previously excluded from mass media, and has been championed for both its moral and business

imperative. Aline Santos, Executive Vice President at Unilever, an international consumer goods firm with notable brands (e.g., Ben & Jerry's, Dove, Lipton), makes the case for eradicating hurtful stereotypes from advertising from both angles:

> We have a huge responsibility in terms of how we portray people and how we put people into boxes. [It is] our responsibility to inspire people and give them the opportunity to be whatever they want to be. (Fleming, 2019)

> Our industry has worked hard to remove harmful stereotypes and must continue to do so… We know that progressive advertising is 25% more impactful with consumers, drives purchase intent by 18% and improves credibility by 21%. People are telling us that these types of adverts are 16% more relevant and 25% more enjoyable. (Vizard, 2019)

Unilever is one of many major global companies that comprise the United Nations' Unstereotype Alliance, which seeks to eradicate harmful stereotypes from media and advertising. While the effort is concerned with gender-based stereotypes, many members are now working toward removing stereotypical content based on other dimensions of diversity, like race and ethnicity.

Although spearheaded by a few key stakeholders at first, inclusive marketing looks to be a mainstay in the industry moving forward. In 2019, the Cannes Lions International Festival of Creativity, the largest gathering of the advertising and creative communications community, worked with members of the Unstereotype Alliance to ratify its judging criteria for their highly coveted awards. The new criteria asked jury members to consider "whether the work represents deep-rooted stereotypical portrayals of gender, age, race, ethnicity, disability, or other biases" in order to ensure that the winning work is "admired not only for its creative brilliance, but for its reflection of the world as a place of equality and tolerance" (Cannes Lions, 2019). Such high regard for inclusive marketing from an international standards setter such as Cannes Lions may

lead even more marketing professionals to produce more progressive content. How these changes are affecting higher education, especially institutions with AA bans, is unknown. On the outset, these entities seem to only be comprised of major business corporations not educational institutions, and their inclusive marketing efforts appear to have taken hold primarily in their marketing efforts.

Summary of Marketing Literature

The empirical research on print and digital marketing in higher education relies heavily on content analysis as a methodology, does not consider the production process, and is mostly unconcerned with racial diversity. Content analysis is an appropriate methodology for such an image-laden topic, especially as images of colleges and universities are often used to infer reputation and make quality assessments (Anctil, 2008). Or, as Weissman (1990) states, postsecondary institutions "need to keep in mind that it is the organization's image, not necessarily its reality, people respond to" (p.67). However, content analysis primarily examines *what* is being marketed not to whom or for what purposes. The singular focus on content (e.g., viewbooks, posts) over intent, production, or reception point to an area prime for research. This study, which interrogates the intent and creative process of marketing professionals within their own institutional contexts, begins to answer *why* certain portrayals are (or are not) used. Furthermore, this study, which considers both content and intent, help us understand complex organizations such as higher education institutions more profoundly. By acknowledging that marketing efforts are implemented by multiple actors through a collective creative process responsive to a myriad of institutional demands, the study at hand includes the views of marketing professionals to unearth how the creation of marketing materials may be more intricate than the two-dimensional images they offer.

The lack of theorizing on how racial diversity is represented in higher education marketing materials and the implications of those representations calls for more studies that directly center race and racism. This is especially important given the push for more inclusive marketing outside of academia and which may soon be felt even more strongly by higher education institutions, including those that must abide by a "race-neutral" approach to admissions decisions. This study considers how representations of racial diversity are included or excluded from marketing materials, complementing the work of Osei Kofi and others. The consideration of institutional context also extends the literature on professionals' perceptions of their work on post-affirmative action campuses.

More importantly, the overabundant acceptance of market logic in both research and practice of higher education marketing requires more interrogation as well, for it, like other master narratives, "is so deeply entrenched and accepted unquestioningly by larger society" (Parker & Lynn, 2002, p. 12) that it prevents us from questioning what is being marketed, to whom, and for what purpose. Solórzano and Yosso (2002) argue that master narratives often stem from White privilege, which in turn helps reinforce racism. The pervasiveness of the market logic without critical contemplation of its origins or how it might perpetuate racism may deem related research and practice 'objective' (Twine & Warren, 2000), even necessary. However, considering the real and symbolic implications it has for racially minoritized students, the market logic adopted by institutions and scholars alike should be critically interrogated. Blindly adopting a market logic is problematic in that it can limit the research questions we ask, the significance of our studies, and thus alternative ways of understanding a given topic. This kind of questioning is consistent with the theoretical framework of this study, which I explain in the following section.

Theoretical Framework

For over 25 years, CRT has helped education scholars expose forms of racial inequality in educational policy and practice (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998). For the purposes of exploring the work of marketing professionals and the materials they produce within post-affirmative action contexts, I leverage the concepts of power, racial capitalism (Leong, 2013), and the CRT tenets of color-evasiveness, interest convergence, and Whiteness as property. In this section, I define these concepts and apply them to affirmative action and marketing incidents to demonstrate how this framework is compatible with the topic of this study.

Power

In studying a multi-actor, decision making process like the one required for designing marketing materials, it is important to consider the way power has been theorized about in higher education and in critical race theory. Power has wielded the fascination of scholars across various disciplines and fields for years.[8] Balbridge's (1971) *Power and Conflict in the University* is one of the earliest, and still most cited works on power in higher education. His model of the "political university" proposed that the university is a space where rational actors motivated by their own self-interest resolve conflict by exercising their power over one another (p.16). The assumptions underlying Balbridge's model—the university as a pluralist domain—are at odds with more recent critical work that questions the role of race, gender, class, discourse, and standpoint in higher education (Pusser & Marginson, 2012). Michel Foucault's (1980) concept of "relations of power" emphasizes how people are not subjugated by robbing them of their agency, but by indoctrinating them to desired values and beliefs and allowing them to carry out these

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[8] For a comprehensive account of the study of power see Lukes (2005).

agendas voluntarily. Colleges and universities have long been regarded as sites for the reproduction of inequality, effectively maintaining existent power relations in our society (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1977). Margaret Zamudio and other critical scholars (2011) assert that schools do little to break this cycle of reproduction and, instead, legitimize inequality and racial hierarchy by championing 'neutrality,' 'objectivity,' and 'meritocracy.' Critical race scholars have also suggested that even when people of color make gains by accessing places and positions of power, they are burdened by being the only one (or one of a few) and feeling that they need to conform to prescribed norms, embody stereotypical expectations, and represent their race (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Zamudio et al., 2011).

The literature on power suggests that higher education institutions are places that maintain the status quo through indoctrination and assimilation, rather than force. If this is the case, a process like designing recruitment materials—value-driven artifacts that project how the institution would like to be seen by the outside world—will expose the subtle ways that marcom professionals adhere (or feel pressured to adhere) to status quo thinking on racial portrayals. Most marketing professionals will likely communicate the normalized ways that race is viewed on campus and by their peers. Those who offer alternative racial portrayals may receive subtle redirection messages from colleagues, perhaps by claims for neutrality, objectivity, or meritocracy. As critical scholars have suggested, if these dissenters are people of color, they may be the only ones or one of a few in a position to offer alternative racial portrayals. While the concept of power is applied in this study specifically for studying how racial portrayals are created (part of RQ2), the rest of the concepts in my theoretical framework relate to all three research questions.

Racial Capitalism

In my theoretical framework, I include Leong's (2013) theory of racial capitalism, or "the process of deriving social and economic value from the racial identity of another person" (p.2154). Although racial capitalism is not a new phenomenon,[9] Leong purports that it is systemically used by White people and predominantly White institutions against racially minoritized individuals. More specifically, she posits that there has been a recent revaluation of racially diverse identities driven by the Supreme Court's affirmative action jurisprudence. She also believes that many colleges and universities (as well as businesses) now attribute value to non-Whiteness because it signals the prized characteristic of "diversity," rather than acting out of a sense of equity, justice, or because racial diversity is a "personal characteristic intrinsically deserving of respect" (p.2155). Thus, "what was once a means to an end has become an end in itself" (p. 2169). Leong also warns that diversity efforts, at best, may lead to cross-racial interactions and inclusivity of all racial backgrounds, what she calls the "thick" version of diversity. At worst, they may lead to a "thin" or superficial version of diversity which is primarily concerned with numbers and appearances and does not actually benefit racially minoritized individuals (p. 2169).

Racial capitalism offers a unique[10] and fitting theoretical lens by which to consider the relationship between marketing professionals and the portrayals of racially minoritized students they produce. Marketing professionals may operate under a racial capitalism frame, seeking to commodify and exploit racially minoritized students for diversity's sake. They may believe that including racial diversity in marketing materials elevates their institution's status amongst their

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[9] The term was originally coined in 1983 by Cedric Robinson in "Black Marxism: The making of the Black radical tradition." However, Johnson's definition and subsequent use by other scholars concerns only the devaluing of non-Whiteness, while Leong's theory is primarily concerned with the recent increased value in non-Whiteness.
[10] To date, Leong's racial capitalism has been used in a policy review considering gentrification in Chinatowns (Naram, 2017), partially used in a critical content analysis of newspapers reporting on the Flint water crisis (Smith, 2017), and referenced in a critical discourse analysis of university diversity statements.

competitors or in the eyes of prospective students. Leong's (2013) description of the "thin" and "thick" versions of racial capitalism might also appear in the racial portrayals themselves. There may be images that show superficial or even doctored racial portrayals, or images that show White and racially minoritized individuals interacting with one another in meaningful ways. One instance of this was when the University of Wisconsin-Madison doctored the cover of its 2000 viewbook to include Diallo Shabazz, a Black undergraduate, in a group of otherwise White students cheering at a sporting event (Prichep, 2013). The admission director said his office resorted to digitally altering the photo with Adobe Photoshop after spending a summer searching for "something more diverse" as the vice chancellor for student affairs had requested (Associated Press, 2000). The university eventually issued a formal apology for manipulating the image, reprinted the viewbooks at an expense of $64,000 (Durhams, 2000), and issued Shabazz a $10 million "budgetary apology," which earmarked funds for the recruitment and support of students of color (Wade, 2009). This incident demonstrates how Shabazz's racial identity was valued and leveraged by the institution to appear more diverse, even though substantive investments in the recruitment and support of racially minoritized students were only made available after the incident was exposed.

Leong's racial capitalism argument is founded on the premise that there is value placed on race and that one's race can confer tangible benefits. Before advancing the idea that non-Whiteness has been re-evaluated, she provides support for the various ways Whiteness has been valued over time, including its multiple associations to the concept of property. Therefore, this study's framework also includes the CRT tenet of Whiteness as property, which speaks to the types of benefits Whiteness confers to individuals.

Whiteness as Property

The concept of Whiteness as property is useful in considering racial portrayals in marketing materials and marcom professionals understanding of these portrayals. In her acclaimed work *Whiteness as Property,* Cheryl Harris (1993) describes four rights of Whiteness as property: (a) the right to disposition, (b) the right to use and enjoyment, (c) the right to status and property, and (d) the right to exclude. The right to disposition is the ability to pass along rights and privileges to heirs. The second right holds people can use their Whiteness as they see fit with protection by the law. The third right protects the reputation and elevated social status of White people, and the fourth right contends that lawmakers (mostly White) decide who is protected under the law. In her examination of *Bakke* and two other affirmative action cases, Cheryl Harris (1993) concludes that "the protection of the property interest in Whiteness still lies at the core of judicial and popular reasoning" (p.1766). Harris explains that a legal system that considers Whiteness as property, or Whiteness as a kind of "status property" with superior social value, allows for claims of "reverse discrimination" against "innocent Whites who were not involved in acts of discrimination" (p.1767). In so doing, anti-affirmative action legal arguments contrast racial diversity with traditional notions of merit (Acholonu, 2013; Ledesma, 2013) and help sustain White dominance (Garces, 2014).

Despite the revaluation of non-Whiteness advanced by Leong's racial capitalism, Whiteness continues to confer privilege to White individuals. It also allows historically White institutions the ability to exclude racially minoritized individuals, police the boundaries of Whiteness, and control social goods (Leong, 2013). With this understanding of Whiteness as property, the marcom professionals in this study could showcase this CRT tenet by actively excluding racially minoritized students from their institutional recruitment materials. In doing so, they would be privileging a White "face" for their institution, rather than a racially diverse one.

A 2019 Wisconsin homecoming video offers a poignant example of Whiteness as property in higher education marketing efforts. The video—produced by a homecoming committee comprised of alumni, students, faculty, and university marketing staff—reflects the theme "what does home mean to you?" and includes images of campus events, classes, and testimonials of what Wisconsin means to different members of the university community (Bhushan, 2019). Absent from the video, however, were BIPOC people. The public outcry over the video's lack of racial diversity was vocalized primarily by racially minoritized students and alumni of the institution, most of whom felt that the university did not consider them true residents in their White peers' "home." Stated differently, students of color were denied ownership over the university the way White students were granted that property right. Moreover, members of a Black sorority on campus who had been interviewed for the video lamented that the university had "wasted their time" in recording them since their footage was not reflected in the final product (Bhushan, 2019). By privileging White over Black students in the video and, more specifically, by excluding racially minoritized students from the approval process, the White homecoming committee members privileged the voices of White community members and protected the property rights of Whiteness.

These kinds of creative projects and the media coverage that comes from their poor execution can continue to erode the trust between higher education institutions, prospective students, and other stakeholders. Whether or not study participants share this view, the recruitment materials themselves may indicate such a preference. Sparse racially diverse portrayals, however, could also be due to marcom professionals' desire to avoid race altogether. The following concept in this theoretical framework speaks to this idea.

Color-Evasiveness

Color-evasiveness, or the avoidance of race, is a CRT tenet that has direct implications for this study as well as any research that grapples with post-affirmative action contexts. Those who espouse a color-evasive[11] disposition live "in a world where racial privilege no longer exists, but their behavior 'supports' racialized structures and practices" (Doob, 2013). Their color-evasiveness facilitates racial insinuations "couched in culture and behavior" while allowing them to insist "there's no racism without an epithet or direct mention of race" (Lopez, 2015, p. 134). Bonilla-Silva (2003) argues that color-evasive racism, which depends on hidden codes to mask racist ideas and practices, can be more difficult to address than previous types of racism. He argues that subtle color-evasiveness replaced more overt Jim Crow racism, and now serves as an "ideological armor for a covert and institutionalized system" of oppression (Bonilla-Silva, 2006, p. 2). Color-evasive racism reinforces notions that racism occurs between individuals rather than at a systemic level (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Lopez, 2003), and that those who directly mention race and racism are the real racists (Lopez, 2015).

Regarding this study, color-evasiveness is an important concept to account for since all four cases operate in a post-affirmative action context, or what institutions that are typically referred to as applying "race-neutral" admissions policies. Scholars have critiqued the idea of "race-neutral" admissions policies for their ineffectiveness in recruiting racially minoritized individuals and for their promotion of color-evasiveness (Yosso, Parker, Solorzano, & Lynn, 2004). In seeking to understand how a post-affirmative action context influences the work of marcom professionals (RQ3), this study benefits from the inclusion of this CRT tenet. Marketing professionals could choose to avoid discussions of race and racism or defend "race-neutral" approaches and policies over race-conscious ones at their institution. The images they present in

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[11] Dis/ability critical race theory scholars have suggested the term "color-evasive' rather than colorblind to "disrupt ableist language which conflates blindness with ignorance (Annamma et al., 2017 as referenced in Morton, 2021).

their recruitment materials could also minimize racial differences or simply preference the use of White over racially minoritized portrayals. For instance, let us consider the Wisconsin homecoming video once more. The omission of people of color was obvious to many viewers once it aired but went unnoticed by the professionals who produced the video or the committee who approved it. Formal apologies from the homecoming committee, university marketing, and the president were issued, but only after a public petition and subsequent media coverage of the video circulated. This situation would likely have been avoided completely had race been discussed during the editing or approval process. As marketing materials aim to persuade prospective undergraduates to apply and enroll, these objects serve as symbolic markers of how institutions wish to portray themselves to the outside world in that moment in time. Promotional videos, viewbooks, and social media posts may be singular in nature but can affect a multitude of students at a time. When these items are produced in a color-evasive manner, they run the risk of defaulting to Whiteness, further marginalizing racially minoritized students.

Interest Convergence

The CRT tenet of interest convergence, or the moments when the interests of White and people of color intersect (Ladson-Billings, 1999), is the final concept in the theoretical framework for this study. Derrick Bell (1995) developed the concept of interest convergence when he explained how the 1954 decision to desegregate schools as per *Brown v. Board of Education* would not have passed if it were merely about improving education for Black children. Bell argued that the educational interest of Black people converged with the economic and political interests of White people, such as industrializing the South and enhancing the nation's global reputation post-Cold War, respectively. Several scholars have extended this view of interest convergence to explain the shift in legally defensible rationales for affirmative

action—from remedying past wrongs to providing educational benefits for *all* students (Guinier, 2015). As Tara Yosso (2004) claims, the biggest winners in *Brown* and the AA cases that use the diversity rationale are White women, not the people of color it was supposed to uplift. Under the view of interest convergence, progress for racially minoritized people occurs only when it benefits White people. Thus, interest convergence is seen as a form of incremental rather than radical change (Chapman, 2013). In general, critical race scholars believe interest convergence negatively affects BIPOC people, since it does not alter the power White people hold and ensures they benefit more from such arrangements.

The CRT tenet of interest convergence is an important concept for this study as it can help explain why marcom professionals, or the historically White institutions they work for, may try to include racial portrayals in recruitment materials. Some marketing professionals may feel compelled to utilize representations of racially minoritized students to increase enrollment understanding that appealing to historically excluded groups is necessary for their institution's survival. They may see inclusion or overrepresentation of minoritized people, mentioning of diversity efforts, or softening of historically discriminatory practices by the institution, as a necessary means to an end. In their study of college viewbooks, Hartley & Morphew (2008) suggest that pressure to increase applications and the tendency for isomorphism in higher education led to one institution's "softened" stance against federally mandated integration efforts. By choosing to embrace a theme of "independence" instead of disclosing the real reason for refusing federal aid (i.e., integration), the institution masked its historic conservative ties to attract a wider pool of applicants (p.684). By applying a critical lens and considering the concept of interest convergence, this can be considered an example of an institution hoping to benefit

from a message of independence and diversity without addressing its complicated past with race, low levels of racial diversity, and poor campus racial climate.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the history of affirmative action and its alternatives in higher education strongly suggests that diversifying a college campus is prioritized for the educational benefits it confers to all students rather than to address past injustice. The coupling of legal challenges to affirmative action with the popular adoption of the diversity rationale have created post-affirmative action contexts where conversations on race and racism are muted even as racial diversity is highly sought after. The desire to diversify college campuses is reflected in the literature on higher education marketing. Studies looking at print and digital recruitment materials, however, have mostly captured overrepresentation of racially minoritized individuals if they consider race at all. There is also a lack of research on the intent behind these racial portrayals, limiting the conclusions that can be made as to why racially diverse individuals are portrayed as they are. This study seeks to extend the work on post-affirmative action context and address the limitations in the marketing literature. The concepts of power, racial capitalism, Whiteness as property, color-evasiveness, and interest convergence come together to provide an overall theoretical framework for this study. At times, I consider these concepts distinctly to increase their individual significance, but often these concepts are intertwined and co-dependent. Together, they provide a theoretical lens by which to analyze the data collected and inform our understanding of this phenomenon in higher education.

Chapter 3 Methods

Given the research on affirmative action contexts and higher education marketing reviewed in the previous chapter, my primary questions for this study are:

1. How are racially minoritized individuals represented in marketing materials at selective public institutions compared to their White counterparts?

2. How do marketing professionals at selective public institutions create and understand the representations of racially minoritized students?

3. How are these representations and their creation shaped by a post-affirmative action context?

The first research question (RQ1) calls for the use of both quantitative and qualitative paradigms. In conducting both descriptive and interpretive research to answer RQ1, I expand on previous higher education marketing studies that evaluate print and digital sources without attention to race (three viewbook studies posed an exception). The second research question (RQ2) asks how these portrayals are created, allowing for the concept of power to be utilized. RQ2 also introduces the element of intent behind the portrayals of racially minoritized individuals and allows for the consideration of these intentions through the lens of CRT. The question offers an opportunity to consider whether marketing professionals themselves may be adopting notions of color-evasiveness, interest convergence, Whiteness as property, or racial capitalism. Or, conversely, how they may be defying these notions through their work. The third research question (RQ3) considers how institutions' inability to use race in admissions may influence marketing professionals, contributing to the emerging literature on administrators in post-

affirmative action contexts. RQ2 and RQ3 are most concerned with the lived experiences of

marketing professionals within the unique sociohistorical context of their post-affirmative action

campus, and thus are inherently qualitative in nature. Collectively, these research questions allow

for the theoretical understanding of how marketing professionals in post-affirmative action

contexts and their portrayals of racially minoritized students may perpetuate or challenge racism

and White supremacy.

The questions and aims of this study point toward mixed quantitative and qualitative

research traditions and the use of a comparative case study design. In this chapter, I expand on

the study's design, justify my case and data source selection, relay my positionality, and

articulate the data collection and analysis methods I used.

Comparative Case Study Design

To understand the way race is marketed in higher education materials at highly selective

campuses and how the marketing professionals on those campuses view these portrayals and the

post-affirmative action context they work in, I decided to conduct a comparative case study.

George and Bennett (2003) define a case as a historical instance of "a phenomenon of scientific

interest" (p. 17). Case study research is particularly fitting to this study focused on understanding

an organizational process (i.e., creation of marketing materials) within a situated real-life context

like the post-affirmative action campus (Yin, 2017). A comparative case study design allows for

the contextual nature of the questions posed to be considered distinctly from campus-to-campus,

while also allowing cross-case conclusions to be drawn. Comparative case studies allow for

refined contextualized comparisons, high levels of conceptual validity (George & Bennett,

2005), and result in greater explanatory richness for the subset of cases selected (McKeown,

1999). A case study design also aligns with the CRT tradition of incorporating history into research inquiry (Yosso & Burciaga, 2016).

The approach I took in designing this study was explanatory and sequential (Hesse-Biber, 2010). My findings from the visual analysis portion of this study (RQ1) informed the interview protocol I used to understand how marketing professional create and understand racial portrayals (RQ2) and how the affirmative action ban context might influence their work (RQ3). For RQ2, I considered the organizational process involved in the creation of marketing materials. For RQ3, I considered how the implementation of an affirmative action ban influenced the creative work of marketing professionals at each institution. This approach allowed me to discuss the quantitative and qualitative findings separately and then to use the qualitative data to expand, corroborate, or even contradict the quantitative data (Creswell, 2015; Fetters, Curry, & Creswell, 2013). This recursive process is a key component of mixed methods research (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2018).

Case study research requires the analytical methods used to help identify patterns, meanings, conclusions and ultimately theory (Patton & Applebaum, 2003). The volume of data collected for case studies and the theoretical framework used on it calls for the researcher to take on an inherently interpretive approach in the analysis (Posselt, 2013, p.44). I considered these goals and expectations in selecting the analytical methods used in this study (see Table 3.1 for a matrix of the proposed study's design and methods).

Table 3.1

A Matrix for the Study of Race in Higher Education Marketing in Affirmative Action Contexts

Research Questions	Why do I need to know this?	Sampling Decisions	Data Collection Methods	Data Sources	Data Analysis
How are racially minoritized individuals represented in marketing materials at selective publics with AA bans compared to their White peers?	Insight into the type of representations of racially minoritized students at each case	• Undergraduate recruitment materials	• Printed materials (viewbooks/brochures) • Digital materials (Instagram posts)	• Admissions Office • Admissions website • Issuu.com • Admissions or university Instagram account	• Content analysis • Social semiotic analysis
How do marketing professionals at selective publics with AA bans create and understand the representations of racially minoritized students?	Analyzing visual artifacts only shows a negotiated final product. Speaking to the creators of recruitment materials will help illuminate why colleges choose to represent students how they do.	• Marketing professionals	• Interviews • Visual aids • Memos	• Marketing and communications directors and staff	• Audiotaping • Reflective memos • Transcription • Rereading • Coding • Situational maps
How are these representations and their creation shaped by a post-affirmative action context?	Tensions between diversity and exclusivity at selective publics coupled with bans on AA produce unique working conditions for administrators, something that may also occur with marketing professionals	• Undergraduate recruitment materials • Marketing professionals • Case history of AA and enrollment patterns	• Print and digital materials • Interviews • Memos • Articles and related literature on AA bans • Institutional demographic reports	• Marketing and communications directors and staff	• Content analysis • Semiotic analysis • Audiotaping • Reflective memos • Transcription • Rereading • Coding

Case Selection

The case study design allowed me to study the marketing materials, design process, and sensemaking of professionals within and across the "bounded system" that is each institution (Merriam, 2009). There are three bases for bounding a case–commonsense, theoretical, and methodological bounding (Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2010). While I relied on institutional demarcations to bound each case along these three bases, there were also moments when social processes cut across cases (e.g., the design process). The small number of bounded cases also allowed me to interpret my findings within the historical and cultural context of each institution, which would not be possible if more cases were considered (Yin, 2017).

The four cases in this study are all selective public institutions: Texas A&M University (TAMU), University of California Berkeley (Cal), the University of California Los Angeles (UCLA), and the University of Texas at Austin (UT). I selected these institutions because of their restricted use of affirmative action, UCLA and Cal by voter referendum (Prop 209) and TAMU and UT by the courts (Hopwood, Fisher I & II). They also consistently rank in the top 10 public institutions in their state (*U.S. News and World Report*, 2022). The states served by these flagships have the greatest demographic diversity (both majority-minority), largest economies, and most residents in the U.S. — collectively they comprise one fifth of the country's population (Suich Bass, 2019). And while the political state climate these institutions are situated in are vastly different, what is decided in California and Texas can often dictate what occurs nationwide (Devore, 2018). Since the 1960s, the "California idea" or the state's Master Plan for Higher Education, which formally organized the state's public universities, colleges, and community colleges, has been replicated across the country and the world (Kurtoglu, 2018). Meanwhile, Texas' establishment of the Special School Fund in 1854 is the first case of a

sovereign wealth fund in the United States (Texas Education Agency, 2021). Today, the fund renamed as the Permanent School Fund and its higher education counterpart, the Permanent University Fund, are joined by 10 other state-run sovereign wealth funds, many of which fund public education (Firzli & Franzel, 2014).

The likelihood that states with such diverging public policy approaches would champion the use of race in admissions decisions is unlikely, and yet both states' public higher education systems have fought to defend affirmative action (*Bakke*, *Fischer I* and *II*) making the topic particularly salient at their most selective public institutions. Holding selectivity, size, institutional type, and espoused commitment to diversity (based on position in AA cases) constant, allowed me to draw comparisons between the four cases. Meanwhile the political climate of each state and institutional culture of each university provided the kind of variation necessary for fruitful comparison between cases (George & Bennet, 2005).

Data Sources and Research Participants

The case study tradition hinges on multiple in-depth data collection methods, resulting in a variety of data sources (Merriam, 2009, Yin, 2003). To answer RQ1, I used free, publicly available print and digital materials intended for prospective undergraduate students as my units of analysis. I collected a total of nine undergraduate print materials from the four institutions in the study.[12] In those publications, there were a total of 460 images of which I used 171 for my sample. I excluded photos that did not picture people (e.g., campus, dogs) or that pictured people who were undiscernible (e.g., crowds, people turned away from the camera), as I would not be

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[12] Some pieces resembled traditional viewbooks in their content with general information on the undergraduate experience and instruction on how to apply. Others focused specifically on the first-year experience. A notable exception was Cal's Community Guide, which provided information on affinity groups, spaces, and programs on campus and included a timeline of key campus events from the 1960s to 2010s focusing on inclusivity efforts directed toward marginalized groups on campus.

able to code for race otherwise. Though there were many free, publicly available digital materials to choose from (e.g., websites, videos), I decided to use Instagram posts. I chose this platform as the source for my digital materials, because it is a highly curated, visually driven, and mobile-friendly platform drawing a young audience.[13] Using my own Instagram account, I logged onto the platform and gathered images from three admissions accounts and one university account.[14] I delimited posts to the timeframe of September through December of 2019 as these months correspond with the regular application cycle for university admissions. In total, I collected 412 images from 201 social media posts across the four cases. From those images, I again excluded images that did not allow me to code for race. My final sample consisted of 273 images. Table 3.2 describes all the visual data I collected in Phase I.

Table 3.2

Marketing Materials Collected in Phase I

Case	Print Materials			Digital Materials			
	Publications	*n*	Sample	Accounts	No. of Posts	*n*	Sample
Texas A&M University	Aggie View Freshman Guide Non-Resident Freshman Guide[a]	57	12	@tamu	114	305	60
University of California, Berkeley	Admissions Brochure Community Brochure	81	56	@caladmissions	27	29	18
University of California, Los Angeles	Freshman Admissions Guide Introduction Viewbook	260	67	@uclaadmission	15	21	12
University of Texas at Austin	Viewbook	33	17	@bealonghorn	46	67	27

Note. [a]Photos in the Non-Resident Freshman Guide were not counted in final analysis as those with people pictured were reused from the Freshman Guide.

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[13] 72% of 13-17 years old use Instagram, while only 51% use Facebook, 32% use Twitter, and 69% use Snapchat (West, 2019).

[14] TAMU's admission Instagram account was inactive during a two-year period spanning my collection timeframe. According to one participant, the account became inactive due to a reduction in staffing during that time.

For RQ2 and 3, I reviewed documents concerning student demographics and the history and culture of each institution, including publicly available student demographic data, news stories on affirmative action and racial diversity incidents on campus, and materials referenced by participants during interviews (e.g., marketing pieces, strategic unit plans). While these documents are not comprehensive in scope and were not systematically collected, they provided a richer understanding of the history, culture, and racial campus climate at each institution. I relied on them to build the context for each case presented in Chapter 4. I also interviewed marketing professionals with some level of responsibility for undergraduate recruitment materials. With purposeful and snowball sampling, my recruitment efforts yielded a total of 45 participants across the four cases (TAMU, 15; Cal, 13; UCLA, 8; UT, 9).

Table 3.3 provides demographic characteristics of the participants, including how they identify by race (31 percent of participants identified as BIPOC), institutional tenure (average tenure of 8 years), and the primary responsibilities of their position. Participants' positions range from senior leadership to entry-level and cover several functional areas (e.g., social media, website, writing), which helped illuminate different perspectives in the creative decision-making process assessed in RQ2 (Patton, 2002). This kind of purposeful sampling based on job responsibilities allowed for efficient collection of rich data to increase the theoretical ties between the portrayals of racially minoritized students found in marketing materials and their understanding of why they produce them (Patton, 2002). Of particular interest was whether the participant was responsible for approving the final version of a design, and that information is also included in Table 3.3. Although I hoped to interview professionals directly responsible for the marketing materials analyzed in Phase I, to my knowledge, only three participants met this specification. Seven participants work for university-wide marketing and communications

offices. The other 38 participants are situated within a specific college or school, responsible for producing marketing and communications materials for that unit only. Also, of note, are that 40 percent of participants were alumni of their institution and females constituted two thirds of participants.

Table 3.3

Participant Demographics

Participants	Race/Ethnicity	Primary Job Responsibilities[a]				Tenure (Years)
		Visuals	Editorial	Management	Approval	
Texas A&M University						
Amy	White		☑			5-9
Annie	White			☑	☑	10-14
Ben	White			☑	☑	1-4
Bethany	White			☑	☑	5-9
Deborah	White		☑	☑	☑	20+
Heidi	White	☑	☑			1-4
Helen	White	☑				5-9
Hilda	White	☑	☑			5-9
Kristen	White	☑	☑			5-9
Kelly	White	☑		☑	☑	10-14
Minerva	White			☑	☑	15-19
Nolan	White	☑				5-9
Renna	White		☑	☑	☑	20+
Roger	Hispanic	☑	☑			10-14
Teal	Multiracial[b]	☑		☑	☑	15-19
University of California, Berkeley						
Asher	Asian	☑				1-4
Ava	White		☑	☑	☑	20+
Briella	White	☑	☑	☑	☑	1-4
Cody	White	☑	☑	☑	☑	1-4
Hillary	White	☑				10-14
Jenny	White		☑	☑	☑	10-14
Jill	White		☑	☑	☑	10-14
Lola	White		☑			5-9
Mila	Asian	☑			☑	10-14
Samantha	Asian			☑	☑	20+
Sebastian	White	☑				5-9
Susan	White	☑			☑	5-9
Vincent	Asian		☑			1-4
University of California, Los Angeles						
Alanna	Black	☑	☑			1-4
Alma	Multiracial	☑	☑			1-4
Bill	White	☑				1-4
Cheri	Asian		☑	☑	☑	1-4
Dylan	White		☑	☑	☑	5-9
Kai	Black	☑	☑	☑	☑	1-4
Liam	White		☑	☑	☑	1-4
Lorenzo	Multiracial		☑	☑	☑	
University of Texas at Austin						
Alyssa	White		☑	☑	☑	15-19
Andy	White		☑	☑	☑	5-9
Charlie	White	☑				1-4
Claudia	Hispanic	☑	☑			1-4
Elizabeth	White	☑	☑			5-9
Kierra	Multiracial	☑	☑	☑	☑	1-4
Kimberly	White	☑	☑	☑	☑	15-19
Phillip	White			☑	☑	5-9
Riley	Black			☑	☑	5-9

Note. All names are pseudonyms assigned by the researcher.

[a] Job responsibilities rather than titles are used to retain participants' anonymity. [b] Term may differ from participants' stated preference (e.g., mixed, biracial).

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Positionality Statement

Growing up in a small town on the U.S.-Mexico border, my worldview was shaped by the culture, politics, and languages of two nations. This setting taught me two distinct, at times competing ways of knowing while also birthing a third that attempts to resolve the dissonance created by the others.[15] My identity as a *Tejana*—or depending on the setting, as Native American, White, *mestiza*, multiracial, *Mexicana*, Hispanic, Latinx, American, Mexican American, Chicana—has shaped my experience as a student of and in higher education. I have navigated elite, predominantly White academic spaces with only a handful of others like me and the campus climate that comes with that fact. However, I have also witnessed how my racially ambiguous physical appearance and gender-neutral, European name have afforded me privileges denied to others.

As a marketing and communications professional my interest in this work stems from my professional experiences. The impetus for this study was an incident in a prior professional role at a K-12 school. I recall quite acutely a time when I was responsible for coordinating the production of our campus viewbook and was surprised to see resistance from key administrators on the choice of placing a young Black boy on the cover. The administration decided that the student was not the "right look" for the school — though they "loved his smile and hair" — opting for a picture of a White female student playing the violin instead. As the only person of color in the room, I found the coded remarks around race frustrating and in direct opposition to the institution's espoused commitment to racial diversity and inclusivity. And yet, as the lowest in rank at the table, I also felt powerless, silenced by my colleagues. Remaining quiet, I begrudgingly saw the boy's picture move from the cover to the corner of an inside page—

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[15] This description of my lived experience growing up in a border town is based on the semi-biographical work of Gloria Anzaldua (1987), "Borderlands/La Frontera: The New Mestiza."

literally marginalizing him in the creative process. It is these decisions and the rationales behind them that I hope to tease out through this study.

These collective experiences are congruent with raced-gendered epistemologies, which according to Dolores Delgado Bernal (2002), are systems of knowledge that "emerge from the experiences a person of color might have at the intersection of racism, sexism, classism, and other oppressions" (p.107). Epistemology concerns the nature, status, and production of knowledge (Harding, 1987) and the way we each know and make sense of the world around us. These "systems of knowing" are inextricably linked to the conditions under which people live and learn (Ladson-Billings, 2000). Scholars linked with raced-based epistemologies were among the earliest adopters of CRT in education research (Lynn & Parker, 2006). My own approach to this study is perhaps best described by the concept of 'cultural intuition' from a Chicana feminist epistemology. According to Delgado Bernal (1998), there are four sources of cultural intuition Chicana researchers draw upon during the research process: (a) personal experience, (b) sense making from related literature, (c) professional experience, and (d) the analytical research process itself. The first source of intuition draws from the researcher's background and how her personal history shapes the ways she understands and interprets events, circumstances, and data during the research process. The second source draws from her understanding of the related literature on the research topic, while the third originates from her professional experiences. The fourth and final source lies in the research process itself to "bring meaning" to the data and larger study (Perez Huber, 2008, p. 171). These intuitions can be traced throughout this study, from the questions asked to the interview protocol used.

Data Collection

Phase 1: Documents

        All data collection for the visuals in phase I took place in the summer of 2020. I first searched each institutions' websites for free print materials available for prospective undergraduates, looking at their admissions pages and utilizing the websites' built-in search bars to find relevant document links. I also searched a popular publication hosting platform used in the industry, issue.com, but found only duplicate materials when they were published on the site. I downloaded PDF versions of publicly available viewbooks for freshmen applicants from three of the four undergraduate admission websites. The University of Texas at Austin did not have a pdf brochure available for download online, so I submitted a request as if I were a prospective student. I listed a Texas mailing address and specified that the requester was a top 9th grade student at a public high school in the state. However, UT never mailed any print materials, either because they were not available, or the request was not completed. The only follow-up communication I received was multiple email invitations to upcoming recruitment events being held virtually due to the COVID-19 pandemic. In the fall of 2021, after travel restrictions were lifted for the university, I was able to secure a print viewbook at a college fair held for prospective high school students in Harlingen, Texas. While the publication was dated 2021, as opposed to 2019 like the others, I decided to include it in my analysis. This decision increased the total number of images for this case and the study overall, but it was also done with the consideration that none of the images utilized COVID-19 procedures (e.g., mask wearing, social distancing) and thus were probably taken pre-pandemic closer to the printing of the other publications.

From the institutions Instagram accounts, I collected all in-feed posts, or posts published directly in the feed of a social media account. I took screenshots capturing the image, caption, and time stamp for each post, and organized them chronologically.[16] For multi-picture posts where swiping was required, I captured each image or graphic individually and recorded them as part of a series. I only included in-feed video posts when the still frame on the feed was a clear image of one or more individuals.

Documents regarding the context of each institution were collected from June 2020 through August of 2021. Each institution's website provided ample information on institutional history, student demographics, and organizational structures. An online search for the institution and related study terms (e.g., affirmative action, race, racism) provided news accounts of the use or banning of affirmative action and other racial incidents on campus. Participants were the final source for documents as many provided additional materials to consider during their interview.

Phase 2: Interviews

In the fall of 2020, I used each institution's online directory to identify prospective participants with job titles and descriptions that suggested they worked on print or digital undergraduate recruitment materials. While conducting interviews from November 2020 through February 2021, I used snowball sampling to identify additional participants. I ultimately invited 158 marketing professionals by email to participate in the study, sending two to three reminder emails to those who did not respond within a week of the initial invite.[17] I offered every study participant a $40 digital gift card for their time and used the web-based scheduling tool Calendly

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[16] Total engagement in the form of likes was not tracked as the study was not concerned with how audiences perceived posts. At the time of data collection, the 'like' feature on Instagram was also indefinitely suspended until further notice making it impossible to collect such data without directly requesting it from the institutions themselves.

[17] At the University of California, Berkeley, I was able to personally invite over 150 university marketing and communicators by presenting at one of their bi-monthly Berkeley Communications Community meetings.

for instant booking and reminder notifications, further incentivizing participants to join the study. Research restrictions set by IRB during the COVID-19 pandemic only allowed virtual interviews in fall 2020 and winter 2021. The University of Michigan's video conferencing platform, Zoom, was used to conduct and record each interview at a time most convenient for the participant. Due to stay-at-home orders in place at the four universities, all but two participants took the interview from the comfort of their home.[18]

I used a structured interview protocol with closed- and open-ended questions with each participant (see Appendix B). Prior to commencing interviews, I refined several protocol questions with assistance from a high-level marketing professional and a social media manager at a selective, public institution. As such, these professionals helped serve the function of a "critical reference group," or individuals most likely to benefit from the research's findings (Pyett, 2003). Interview questions spanned three main broad topics of interest: their position, office processes, and campus racial diversity. I made minor modifications to the interview protocol in the span of data collection. After the first twelve interviews, I realized participants consistently articulated a major challenge as balancing the desire to show racial diversity with not appearing dishonest or inauthentic. To learn more about this specific challenge, I added two questions to the protocol that allowed participants to reflect more deeply on their motivations (and their institution's) around representing racial diversity, as well as the importance of honesty and authenticity in higher education marketing. In latter interviews, I also asked how they knew whether they had gone "too far" in terms of racial diversity in marketing materials. These new questions provide rich data into the personal and institutional motivations for racial diversity to be represented in higher education marketing materials.

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[18] Two participants were classified by their institution as essential workers and were able to participate in the interview from their office with no other employees present.

Due to the highly visual nature of their work, some participants provided a link, shared their screen, or showed me a marketing piece from their own institution on screen during their interview. The practice of using visual aids in research originated in anthropology and sociology and is now common in communications studies (Harper, 2002). An advantage to incorporating visual aids in an interview setting is that they allow participants who may prefer to express themselves visually to do so within the parameters of an otherwise verbal interview (Guillemin, 2004). The use of visual aids elicits rich data influenced by various social and cultural factors and situated within a specific time and place (Frith et al., 2005). These visual aids allowed for a deeper exploration of the creative process from the perspective of the participant, allowing them to reflect on their role in producing the item, as well as the relationship between the piece, its intended audience, and the institution (Radley & Taylor, 2003).

Audio, video, and chat message files were immediately downloaded from Zoom after each interview. I personally transcribed all audio files using a combination of the transcription platform oTranscribe (5 interviews) and the AI-powered service provider Otter (40 interviews). Transcriptions were cleaned of common filler words such as "like," "um," and "you know" and repeated sentence fragments for additional clarity. During transcription, I captured demographic characteristics that were shared during the interview separately in an Excel spreadsheet and assigned pseudonyms to participants. All files were stored in a password-protected cloud service maintained by the University of Michigan and participant pseudonyms were used in the file naming structure. Any participant named during an interview was also replaced by their assigned pseudonym, as was often the case with interviewees who were nominated my colleagues. These additional steps were taken to further protect participants' privacy.

Building Rapport. As a marketing professional for educational institutions, this study is my version of a "home study" (Kenny, 2000, p. 113), a theoretical exploration of my professional home. My "insider" status afforded me unique, contextual knowledge of the design process generally and the job duties of my participants. Being seen as an insider by participants also helped to establish immediate trust and rapport with participants (Spradley, 1979). Weiss (1995) suggests that a researcher's way of comporting themselves influences the rapport-building process. Some of the strategies I used to build rapport included drawing on professional commonalities, using active listening, and professing ignorance to elicit more information when necessary. In some interviews, participants and I even exchanged professional resources, networking opportunities, and identified common professional contacts because of the high level of rapport obtained during our time together. As a practitioner-researcher, I felt challenged by my desire to solve challenges articulated by participants even as I sought to answer my original research questions, which were primarily concerned with advancing understanding (Cox, 2012). After all, several participants shared that their willingness to participate in the research study was spurred by the hope that the study's findings would prove helpful in their work. Memoing on my professional identity and working on a insights report to share with participants encouraged reflexivity and provided an additional avenue by which to bridge the knowledge gap between research and practice (Clemens & Tierney, 2016).

As a doctoral student at a flagship institution operating under an affirmative action ban, this aspect of my positionality served as an entry point into the topic of AA and minimized its controversial nature through emphasis on our shared experience. Since many participants considered the University of Michigan a peer institution, this also added a sense of camaraderie and mutual understanding on the expectations placed on selective publics. Most participants

expressed an affinity for wanting to advance knowledge for the public good as a reason to participate in the study, stating that an unwillingness to participate in research would be hypocritical as employees at other public research institutions. Yet, the fact that U-M was considered a peer institution also provided tension in a few interviews. Some participants asked for specific information on U-M marketing and communications, which I was not able to provide. In these cases, I circumvented requests by restating my status as a student and minimizing my contributions to marketing and communications at my host institution. Reflecting on my positionality and my own racial and ethnic identity was critical before engaging in data analysis.

Data Analysis

The variation in research aims and data called for the use of multiple analytical approaches. In this section, I specify what approaches I took with the two primary sources of data, marketing materials and interviews.

Analysis of Marketing Materials

I used content and social semiotic analysis to examine the photography in the print and digital marketing materials collected. Using these systematic quantitative and qualitative analyses, I identified the number of times and central ways in which racially minoritized students are portrayed in the images collected compared to their White counterparts (Krippendorff, 2004; Berelson, 1952). The combination of content and semiotic analysis illuminates the differences in the representations of racially minoritized and White students to answer the first of the three research questions posed by this study.

Content Analysis. As a method, content analysis calls for the systematic counting of images and text and is often associated with the field of communications (Berelson, 1952).

Originally used to study the first newspapers, content analysis has evolved to consider a wide range of fields, including mass communication and personal communication (Krippendorff, 2004). Behavioral scientist Bernard Berelson and political scientist Harold Lasswell were key figures in the development of content analysis as a research method and can be credited for increasing its popularity. Lasswell (1948) increased the usefulness of the method by formulating the series of questions that researchers can explore through its use—who says what, to whom, why, to what extent and with what effect? (Lasswell, 1948). In the 1970s, scholars in departments of mass communication, journalism, and marketing adapted a more qualitative version of content analysis to investigate gender inequality within the content of print and television advertisements (Shields, 2013). This research revealed that women were portrayed in advertisements in opposing sex-roles compared to males, such as females being cast as sex objects versus men being shown as business leaders (Courtney & Whipple, 1974). The idea of stereotypes was used to demonstrate how widespread these sex-roles were in ads, and researchers hoped this work would improve the representations of women in media and society (Rakow, 1986). Sex-roles research continues to this day and is an outstanding example of how content analysis as a method can serve a political imperative.

Until now, the quantitative version of content analysis has been the predominant method used in the study of viewbooks (e.g., Hartley & Morphew, 2008) with social media studies also considering engagement numbers (e.g., likes, shares). For this study, I took a qualitative turn to the content analysis of images in marketing materials as per keeping with the approach seen in sex-roles research. I developed a codebook and coding form in Excel that allowed me to systematically count the number of images with people as the main subject,[19] whether the photo

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[19] Any photos where individuals are partially included/obscured or out of focus due to a large crowd setting or an artistic decision (the shot is far away) were not included in the analysis.

was of one or more individuals, the race of those individuals, the type of roles they assumed, and the setting in which the photograph took place (see Appendix C).

The history of race in the U.S. reinforces its socially constructed nature. In 1890, when the U.S. Census first asked respondents for their race there were 16 different racial categories from which to choose (Lee, 1993). Thus, Omi and Winant (1994) propose that racial formation–how racial categories are "created, inhabited, transformed and destroyed" (p. 55)–is more important than our ability to discern universal, permanent characteristics of different racial categories. For this study, I determined the race of the individuals pictured by considering their outward visual appearance (e.g., eyes, hair, skin tone, dress), recognizing I could be coding someone differently than what they would identify with, or which others may identify them with. My intention was never to "correctly" identify the race of the people in the images but rather to capture how they might be perceived by viewers of such materials. The racial categories I used were Asian, Black, Native American, multiracial,[20] or White. The individuals I coded as multiracial, could best be described as racially ambiguous, Latinx, or pertaining to more than one monoracial category.[21] I decided against a distinct Latinx category to acknowledge the Latinx community's racial diversity and forego coding for stereotypical representations of *Latinidad,* which have historically supported and advanced anti-Asian, -Black, and -Indigenous narratives within the Latinx community (Calafell & Moreman, 2011; Mendoza Aviña, Morales, Delgado Bernal, and Aleman, 2021; Valdivia, 2004).

As my research questions concern the comparison of racially minoritized and White individuals, it is important to note that I considered those individuals which I coded as Asian,

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[20] Considering the state demographics of the cases in the study, many individuals coded as multiracial would probably self-identify as Latinx.
[21] Racially ambiguous is a term used to describe someone whose race is not easily observed based on their phenotype.

Black, Native American, or multiracial to form the basis of the racially minoritized group. While the lived experiences of individuals in the racially minoritized category vary drastically given their different histories and cultures, they are often bound together by mutual experiences with racism, discrimination, and oppression due in part to their racialization in the U.S. context. My consideration of BIPOC individuals in relation to White individuals in this study acknowledges that the U.S. racial categories are dictated by how one, regardless of how they identify, is positioned in relation to Whiteness, and that there is a social reality that continues to benefit White individuals often at the expense of BIPOC individuals (Ladson-Billings, 2017).

To minimize my own biases and blind spots related to racially identifying others, I engaged a group of undergraduates in coding images for race to provide an opportunity for intercoder reliability checks, or opportunities to verify the consistency of coding between two or more coders (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002).[22] Every undergraduate was given a codebook and coding form to use on one of the print publications and was asked to share and discuss their answers to this first coding with the group over Zoom. At this initial meeting, we found that there was a high level of agreement on the race of individuals in the images. There were only three cases when the group was split between two non-White categories, and I facilitated a discussion resulting in an agreement within the group. Afterward, I assigned each undergraduate coder their own section of social media posts to code using the same codebook and coding form as before. I referenced this round of coding whenever I was unsure of how to code someone's race during my own coding of the same images. I also kept a running memo or journal documenting the decisions made during the coding of visual materials. This is often

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[22] Additional information on memo writing and undergraduate research team members is provided in the trustworthiness section toward the end of this chapter.

referred to as an audit trail, which Merriam (1998) states provides transparency of method to qualitative research.

After the initial round of coding for individual/group composition and the racial categories, I conducted a second round of content analysis whereby I coded the role of the individuals in the photographs and the setting in which the photos took place. To identify the setting of the photography, I focused on the lighting used (indoor or outdoor lighting) and items or buildings in the perimeter of each photo (e.g., library books, science equipment). The setting categories were developed organically through the analysis and included: athletic, cafeteria, campus, city, classroom, dorm, event, graduation, lab, library, office, protest, stage, and travel abroad. A neutral category was used for those photos that did not provide enough information to determine a possible setting or that had a neutral, blurred backgrounds or were cropped tightly to show only a person's head and shoulders. There were also three photographs that did not fit these standard categories. Two photographs from Cal I coded as 'pride' because they featured prominent pride flags in the background, while the one from UCLA I coded as 'bus' because it showed a group aboard public transit. The setting served as clues for coding individuals into their roles, many of which were deductive after a conversation with my committee (i.e., athlete, event spectator, professor, student, vanity). Roles determined inductively did not fit into the predetermined role options, and were repeatedly found in the data (e.g., artist, scientist). See Appendix E for a full list of roles.

Social Semiotic Analysis. While content analysis helps answer questions around the level of representation or structural diversity portrayed by each institution, these findings are primarily descriptive, allowing us only to *infer* meaning (Holsti, 1969) as most previous empirical studies on marketing materials have done. Social semiotic analysis allows us to

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understand how visual content represents the abstract and concrete world, engages us in some interaction, and can register in our mind as a certain kind of text (Kress & van Leeuwen, 1996). Thus, coupling content analysis with a social semiotic approach provided me with the means to *read* images for their latent, interactive, and compositional meanings (Jewitt & Omaya, 2011) in addition to representational diversity and stereotypical roles.

Social semiotics is a branch of semiotics, or "the science of the life of signs in society," as defined by linguist and semiotician Ferdinand de Saussure (de Saussure, 2011). Semiotics first applied ideas from linguistics to the study of non-linguistic communications and was developed by three different schools of semiotics: the Prague School of the 1930s and 1940s, the Paris School of the 1960s and 1970s, and a movement from scholars at the University of East Anglia in the 1970s and scholars in Australia in the 1980s (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Social semiotics expands the field of semiotics by contending that the signs which provide meaning to language and communication are formed through social processes and that as power relations in society change, so to can the meaning behind our language and accepted signs (Halliday, 1978). Social semiotics as a form of inquiry is concerned not just with text but with the gamut of channels we use to communicate (e.g., text, visuals, audio), deemed semiotic modes (van Leeuwen, 2005). These modes can also be considered simultaneously ("multimodal") as is the case with the study of film, advertisements, etc.

To infer meaning from social modes, semioticians consider the use of "resources" that content creators have at their disposal and can adapt for meaning making. According to Theo van Leeuwen (2005), resources are signifiers, "observable actions and objects that have been drawn into the domain of social communication and that have a *theoretical* semiotic potential constituted by all their past uses and all their potential uses and an *actual* semiotic potential

constituted by those past uses that are known to an considered relevant by the users of the resource, and by such potential uses as might be uncovered by the users on the basis of their specific needs and interest" (p. 4). In other words, social semiotic resources are not rigid, predetermined codes by which to interpret meaning making but dynamic products of the historical and cultural context in which they are created and the intent of the person utilizing them (Hodge & Kress, 1988). As Kress and van Leeuwen (2020) contend in *Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design*, resources are the elements of grammar that sign-makers use to express meaning in whichever medium they make signs. The present study is concerned with the semiotic mode of photographic images as they are used by marketing professionals at selective research institutions to attract prospective undergraduate students. Since the number of resources researchers have used to conduct social semiotic analysis is expansive, I list and define the resources I utilized in this study in Table 3.

Table 3.4

Checklist of Social Semiotic Resources

Resource	Description
Color	Individual colors can have associated meanings; universities use specific colors to communicate their identities; color can be interpersonal in that it makes the viewer to do something; color coordination can provide cohesion; color has multiple scales by which meaning can be inferred (i.e., value, saturation, purity, modulation, differentiation, hue).
Composition	
Light Effects	Light can signify the divine, illumination or hope, and its placement within other compositional resources can be the difference between light as mundane (center, bottom) or divine (top), granted (left) or astonishing (right).
Center-Margin	Images that emphasize an element (or absence of an element) in the center and place other elements (all identical or nearly identical) around it, can be read as the center having a sense of importance or permanence. In combination with the left-right and top-bottom resources, the center could also act as a mediator between both elements reconciling the polarizing elements in some way.
Left-Right	Images that emphasize the horizontal axis, positioning some elements to the left of center and others to the right of center, can be read as the left being what is 'Given' and the right elements being what is 'New.'
Top-Bottom	Images that emphasize the vertical axis, positioning some elements at the top of the frame and others at the bottom, can be read as the top being the 'Ideal' or 'what might be' and the bottom elements as the 'Real' or 'what is.'
Salience	Elements like people or objects are made to attract the viewer's attention either by placing them in the foreground as opposed to the background, by a difference in relative size to other people or objects, a difference in color or contrast in tone, or greater sharpness while other people or objects are blurred or unfocused.
Framing	Inclusion or exclusion of frame lines or elements in a photograph which create framing lines (e.g., white space, color discontinuity) show that certain items are connected or not, which means they belong or do not belong together.
Contextualization	When a person in the image is in focus and others are blurred, they can represent the generic or a typical example of the occurrence within the location and time of the image.
Interactive Meaning	
Size of Frame	People and objects can be depicted in different frame sizes (close, medium, or long shots), each with a different distance from the viewer. The closer the shot the more the imaginary relation between a viewer and the people in an image suggests relational proximity.
Perspective	
Offer	Images where there is an absence of gaze at the viewer. A "fly on the wall" image that is typically candid.
Demand	Images where the people in the photo gaze out and demand the viewer's attention. The image is typically staged.
Subjectivity	
Point of View	The angle from which the image is captured. There are three angles taken into consideration: a high angle that gives the viewer power over the people or elements in an image; the eye-level angle that places the viewer in an equal position as the people or elements in the image; and a low angle that marks the power of the people or elements in an image over that of the viewer.
Representation	A scale capturing maximum abstraction to maximum representation of the details in an image, which depends on both sharpness of focus and exposure to capture image details.
Reactions	There are two types of reactions that people within a frame of an image can assume. The first is non-transactive whereby the person or people are looking at something outside of the frame that the viewer cannot see. The second is transactive or when the person or people in the image are looking at something inside of the frame.
Text	Legible text inside the frame of the photo that provides further context.

Note. This checklist of social semiotic resources was derived from Kress & van Leeuwen's (2020) "Reading Images: The Grammar of Visual Design."

As an example of how these resources can be engaged, I focus on the resource of "point of view" in the rest of this section. The point of view resource suggests that people, places, and things can be depicted from above, below, and eye-level, as well as from the front, side, and back (see Figure 3.1). Depending on those depictions, viewers can describe the potential meanings that may become apparent to the object of the photograph.

Figure 3.1

The Point of View Resource
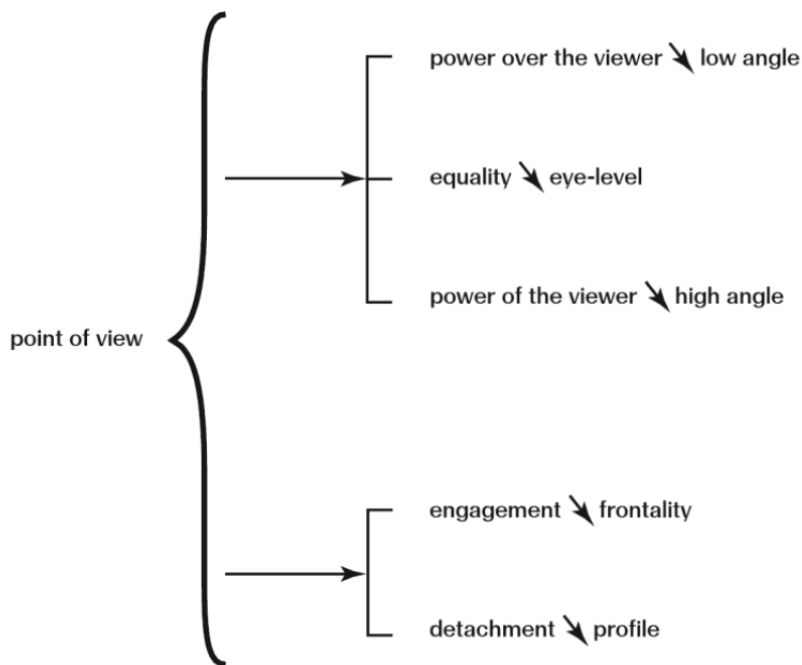
Note. This figure explains the point of view resource in social semiotic research and is adapted from Kress & van Leeuwen (2020).

If we consider the point of view resource in relation to Figure 3.2, we see that the photograph offers frontality and keeps the subject of the photo, the woman, at eye-level with the viewer. This invites the viewer to engage with the young woman pictured in a manner that promotes equality, since the viewer holds no power over the woman or vice versa. If this were in a college brochure, we could interpret it as a photograph meant to appeal to prospective students who identify with

being a woman, woman of color, or a student enjoying the outdoors. This photograph in a different mode, like a retail advertisement, could suggest to the viewer that they too need the laptop the woman is using.

Figure 3.2

Photo Example for Point of View Resource

Note. This is an open-source photograph from www.unsplash.com.

This is just one of several resources that I called upon while conducting this type of analysis. I also used other resources simultaneously, which results in greater meaning-making (Kress and van Leeuwen, 2020). Due to its more involved nature, I used a social semiotic approach only on a select subset of 45 images—those depicting White and racially minoritized

individuals in the same frame.[23] I uploaded this subset of images to version 20 of the NVivo

software and used the annotate function to conduct this analysis. The annotate function in NVivo

allowed me to select the entire image as well as specific regions to code based on the social

semiotic resources applicable to the image. I first coded these images by considering several

semiotics resources that could be applied to the image individually (see Table X for the full list).

When a resource was applicable, I annotated the presence of the resource and what meaning I

could infer from its use. After finishing my initial annotations on all 45 images, I leveraged my

theoretical framework–specifically the concepts of racial capitalism, Whiteness as property,

color-evasiveness, and interest convergence–to understand the interactions between the

individuals found in this subset of images.

Analysis of Interviews

I used a variety of methods to analyze interview data and answer how marketing

professionals create and understand racial portrayals (RQ2) and how the affirmative action ban

context influences these portrayals and their work (RQ3). To understand how marketing

professionals create marketing materials at their respective institutions, I coded and relied on

situational mapping to capture the various stages of the design process. Understanding how these

professionals think about the representation of racially minoritized individuals required me to

apply my theoretical framework more closely in coding and to consider elements not captured

within the framework. Finally, I utilized a constant comparative method to understand the

influence of the post-affirmative action context on racial representations in marketing materials

and their creation.

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[23] A similar approach was used by Osei-Kofi and colleagues in the series of viewbook studies centering race described in Chapter 2.

First, interviews were recorded (with participant permission), transcribed, and read through for clarity and understanding. Then, I began to develop a codebook; listing, describing, and providing examples of all codes used in the study and refining the codes and categories with each round of coding. The first round of coding, using version 20 of the NVivo software, was for organizational categories such as role responsibilities, marketing, affirmative action, and design process. To answer the first part of RQ2, I conducted a second round of coding on the data coded as "design process." The second round of coding involved codes developed by my situational mapping. Situational maps allow us to understand what human and non-human elements matter in the creation of marketing materials and the relationship among them (Clarke, 2005). As a postmodern method, situational mapping recognizes situated knowledges (Clarke, 2005) and addresses the complexities that may occur at the site of the creative process at each institution. Then, I compared how participants' explanations of the design process differed from others within the same case, as well as to the organizational charts obtained for case context purposes. These efforts allowed me to parcel out the various stages of the design process and draft a visual diagram to help explain the process.

In my second round of coding, I coded the sections coded initially as "marketing materials" or "racial representations" for the theoretical categories from my framework (e.g., color-evasiveness, racial capitalism). I distinguished between the four theoretical categories in the following manner:

- **Racial Capitalism**: Marketing professionals purposefully use racially diverse representations in marketing materials for the sole purpose of growing enrollment.

- **Whiteness as Property**: Marketing professionals seek to diminish the use of racially diverse representations in marketing materials. They may say it is because

they do not accurately reflect the campus or because the alternatives more accurately reflect the history or traditions of the institution.

- **Color-evasiveness**: Marketing professionals state they do not see or consider race when creating marketing materials. They avoid including racial diversity in materials.

- **Interest Convergence**: Marketing professionals recognize that including racially diverse representations in marketing materials benefit the institution *and* racially minoritized students. However, they do not recognize that imbalance of power inherent in the system.

While I relied heavily on *a priori* codes from my theoretical framework (Saldana, 2009), I also considered inductive codes that emerged from the data, describing participants' beliefs and thoughts in their own words (Maxwell, 2012). This allowed me to entertain alternative conclusions to those presented by my theoretical framework. I then compared participants within and across institutions to see if there were any patterns that emerged from the data.

To answer the third research question concerning the influence of an affirmative action ban context, I used a constant comparative approach. The constant comparative method is the ongoing comparison of data to emerging categories (Corbin & Strauss, 2014). Although it is most often associated with a grounded theory approach, which seeks to inductively generate theory where little may already be known (Glaser, 2001), it has increasingly been used in others forms of qualitative designs (Merriam, 2002). First, I open coded the data previously coded as affirmative action for one case. The three primary categories that emerged were: concerns, motivations, and strategies (actions participants took because of AA). Then, I continued coding

for those categories in the other three cases' affirmative action codes and refined the categories as I moved from case to case. Finally, I noted data that did not fit into these categories.

In summary, the flexibility in methods of data collection and analysis is a hallmark of the case study tradition and was congruent with the intentions of this research. Triangulation, or the use of multiple sources of data, is another strength of a case study research design (Yin, 2017). Denzin (1989) identified four types of triangulation, which I utilized to different degrees during the course of this study. Data triangulation, or the use of a variety of data sources, occurred through the inclusion of interviews with marcom professionals in different positions, which was particularly helpful in mapping out the design process. Investigator triangulation, or the use of different researchers in a study, occurred with my inclusion of five undergraduate coders during the content analysis portion of the study, specifically when I coded for race. Theory triangulation, or the use of multiple perspectives in the interpretation of the data, is something I strived to incorporate as I considered alternative explanations to my findings. Finally, I used methodological triangulation, or the use of multiple methods to study a single problem, as I relied on interviews, documents, and visual materials to arrive at my conclusions. The multiple methods used in combination were essential in my attempt to answer the research questions posed in this study. The predominantly qualitative nature of this study called for simultaneous data collection and analysis with the researcher being the primary instrument for both. Thus, I undertook several measures to account for my subjectivities as a researcher and enhance the overall trustworthiness of the study.

Issues of Trustworthiness

Trustworthiness is of upmost importance in qualitative research. Lincoln and Guba (2005) recommend researchers be mindful of four aspects of trustworthiness: credibility,

dependability, confirmability, and transferability. The following section provides examples of how I sought to enhance these aspects of trustworthiness.

Credibility

According to Ulin, Robinson, and Trolley, credibility is the "confidence in the truth of the findings, including an accurate understanding of the context" (2005, p. 25). From the earliest stages of this study, I maintained an audit trail using a research journal which allowed me to capture "content of a concrete nature regarding activities to be conducted and the rationale for their selection" (Birks, Chapman, & Francis, 2008). Throughout the collection of interview data, I mapped my research activities and progress daily. When I conducted the content analysis, I sought to increase the credibility of my findings by engaging in memo writing. I wrote analytical memos to increase my critical thinking and challenge my assumptions (Saldaña, 2016) on racial classifications and the process of portraying campus racial diversity.

While I originally planned to incorporate member checking to allow participants the opportunity to be co-creators of the research findings (Locke & Velamuri, 2009), the candid nature of some participants' responses to questions led me to worry about the possibility of redactions. Member checking incorporates participants' voices into the research by offering an opportunity for them to "check" the researcher's interpretation of the findings to make sure that it is congruent with their own experiences and understandings (Curtin & Fossey, 2007). There are many approaches to member checking, some which can lead to ambiguous and politically charged interactions depending on the nature of the research topic (Emerson & Pollner, 1988). As marketing and communications professionals, my participants are in the field of managing the impressions of their institution. Avery and McKay (2006) have identified several tactics by which impression management can occur, including a *defensive* approach which seeks to counter

any damaging perceptions or events associated with an organization. Given the nature of my findings and the role participants held at their institutions, I feared that member checking would elicit such a defensive response from my participants. In this instance, member checking would serve as an opportunity to redact unappealing or controversial statements made during our time together, diminishing the quality and quantity of the data. This is congruent with methodological concerns raised by researchers interested in "excavating power" (Sassen, 2000) by "studying up," or conducting research on power and responsibility at home (Nader, 1972). Wisniewski (2000) contends that higher education studies generally may be limited due to researcher's own "unspoken sensitivities" or fears of damaging their own careers by exposing the practices of the powerful within academia. For these reasons, I chose to forego member checking in this study.

Dependability

Dependability (reliability in quantitative inquiry) refers to the "whether the research is consistent and carried out with careful attention to the rules and conventions" of one's inquiry method (Uli, Robinson, Trolley, 2005, p.26). At the time when I was conducting the content analysis portion of this study, I sought to increase the reliability of my findings by engaging a team of five undergraduates. In asking these undergraduates to blind code the collected images, I pursued a measure of intercoder reliability or agreement. Blind coding, or coding without knowing the exact research questions and hypotheses, reduces bias and a desire to give the researcher what she wants, both of which can compromise validity (Neundorf, 2017). Intercoder agreement is a measure of the extent to which independent raters make the same coding decisions and is widely regarded as critical to content analysis (Lombard, Snyder-Duch, & Bracken, 2002). The use of undergraduate students, specifically students in their first year of college, was intentional as they were the most recent consumers of such marketing materials,

though none were associated with any of the case sites. The five students all self-selected into the

research team and came from a variety of racial and ethnic backgrounds. Their participation was

made possible through a career services program at their university and for which they received

monetary payment based on financial need and professional networking opportunities from their

institution. Table 3.5 provides more information about the undergraduate coders, including their

race and ethnicity (60 percent identified as BIPOC) and some reflections on the role of

marketing materials during their own college choice process.

Table 3.5

Demographics of Undergraduate Coders

Coder	Race	Gender	Region	Assignment	Perception of Recruitment Materials in their College Choice Process
Angie	Asian	Female	Northeast	Cal	"Marketing materials like pamphlets and viewbooks were not a large part…my existing opinions of colleges did change, if the pamphlets and viewbooks were very unique."
Ben	White	Male	South	UCLA	"My main idea about college was to try to get into the "best" college possible… rather than being necessarily excited about the features of various colleges.
Iris	White	Non-Binary	Midwest	TAMU	"When I began my college search, I started thinking about race early, but I don't remember why...I do look for various demographics when I look at a college campus brochure... I expect to see students of color, seeing a few darker faces in a crowd of White students does check that box in my mind."
Imaad	Asian	Male	Midwest	UT	"Being the first member of my family to attend the college in the U.S., we were pretty much clueless were to start my college search, so marketing materials were really my initial guide to the college search… the brochures, the mailings, we'd really look through them."
Manuella	Black	Female	International	TAMU[a]	"I was exposed to a plethora of advertisements and visuals... having completed my freshman year, I now realize the inconsistency between the racial and ethnic diversity represented in the school's marketing and the actuality of who occupies its campus."

Note. This table shows demographic data for the five student coders and the institutional materials they were assigned to code.

[a] TAMU images were split evenly between Iris and Manuella for coding purpose.

Confirmability

Engaging in qualitative study calls for careful reflection on one's own positionality and previous experience throughout the research process, which I engaged in through memo writing and conversations with my committee chair and colleagues. One topic that called for more reflexivity after interviews was that of racial matching, or when the racial identity of the interviewer and interviewee mirror each other (Twine, 2000). As a light-skinned woman of color with straight hair and a European surname, my racial and ethnic ambiguity appeared to be a rapport-building tool with the first few White interviewees. Thus, I continued to rely on my ability to present or appear as White throughout data collection. Meanwhile, with participants who identified as members of racially marginalized groups, I found ways to reference my hometown and Spanish-speaking background to signal my identity as a person of color. How I was being perceived by participants was a continuous source of concern for me, and my decision to strategically wield certain racial and ethnic markers spurred immense dissonance. Memos and discussions on this topic allowed me to reflect on an innate desire for racial matching and if and how the interview data collected was influenced by the interviewees' perceptions of my own race. Ultimately, I came to terms with my inability to determine how interviewees perceived me and used these experiences to reaffirm my belief in knowledge being "situated" (Phoenix, 1994 cited in Twine, 2000). In other words, by acknowledging that the data could differ based on interviewees' perceptions of my race, I dispelled internalized notions of "good" or "bad" data and learned to embrace "the world as a coding trickster with whom [researchers] must learn to converse" (Haraway, 1988). This also means that another researcher could use the same interview protocol and come up with very different results.

According to Robert Yin (2017), high-quality analysis in case study research is dependent on four criteria: relying on all relevant evidence, including all major rival interpretations, addressing the most significant aspect of your case, and bringing one's prior, expert knowledge to the case (p.124). An exhaustive review of all available evidence includes noting any disconfirming evidence and addressing it by exploring rival interpretations or proposing that future research consider the alternative interpretation further (Yin, 2017). In applying a deductive approach based on my theoretical framework, the probability for confirmation bias—or the tendency to interpret evidence to support our preconceptions rather than refute them (APA, 2022)—was particularly heightened. Thus, I tended to disconfirming evidence in a late stage of my analysis by exploring rival interpretations to my findings, which are included in Chapters 4-6. For instance, in Chapter 4, I analyze five photos to explore alternative explanations to the use of a horizontal composition in the images depicting both BIPOC and White individuals together.

Transferability

Broad generalizability is not a goal of this or other case studies. However, a "good case study" does allow for contingent generalizations or transferability (Flyvbjerg, 2006). While the participating universities are all highly selective, public institutions restricted in their use of affirmative action, the practical implications of this study should prove insightful for any institution facing an AA ban or considering voluntarily limiting the use of race in admissions decisions. Given the new and continuous challenges to affirmative action at both public and private institutions, marketing professionals at these institutions will benefit from the study's explanatory richness and conceptual validity of a complex phenomenon studied in its unique context.

Limitations

There are limitations to this study deriving from data collection methods. Due to issues with accessing Texas A&M's admissions Instagram account and recruiting participants overall, there were imbalances across cases in terms of both the number of documents collected and interviews conducted. Since participants skewed White and female, this study may not be representative of all higher education marketing professionals, as perspectives could vary by job tenure, marketing budget, and other institutional and individualized differences between professionals. Regarding the print and digital marketing materials reviewed, this data was delimited to one recruitment year only and thus provides a momentary snapshot of an institution's marketing efforts. Future studies should consider a longitudinal approach to see how or if portrayals of racially minoritized individuals change at these and other institutions over time.

Another limitation of this study arises from the content analysis and the need to code individuals' race based on visual cues alone. Racial classification can have grave practical implications—like when false eyewitness reports put the wrong person behind bars (MacLin & Malpass, 2001). However, this method was necessary to answer my first research question. Moreover, it is the foundation for the study's significance (the implication of these portrayals on students' choices). The issue arises when one considers the thesis of race as a social construct. Race is typically assessed by considering how an individual identifies, classifies, and appears, as well as their ancestry and how they are identified by others (Roth, 2016). As this study does not engage those portrayed in recruitment materials or others who may help identify them, I relied on my ability, and that of five other individuals, to code for race. Even as I embrace the qualitative research adage of "researcher as instrument," I realize the importance of grappling with my own

subjectivities around race, ethnicity, and appearances. To do so in an informed, systematic fashion, I referred to the literature on racial classification and adopted analytical memo writing throughout the research process, and while making racial classifications, to "tame my subjectivities" (Peshkin, 1988, p.20).

The process by which we determine others' race has been highly studied (Peery & Bodenhausen, 2008), but I turn to psychology for some key factors to consider for this study. In their study of racial classification based on visual, cultural, and biological information, Peery and Bodenhausen (2008) found that participants were more likely to categorize racially ambiguous individuals as either Black and/or multiracial when provided additional cultural or biological information. Participants were more likely to categorize racially ambiguous targets as White based on visual information alone. In another study, MacLin and Malpass (2001) found that participants used racial markers such as hairstyles to classify racially ambiguous faces. They also found that participants who shared the same racial group as the one they identified with the target had greater confidence in their decisions. The implication of these studies on the one proposed includes questioning my own reliance on visual markers (e.g., clothes, hairstyles), biological or cultural information (e.g., surnames, hometown), and perceived shared identification. The latter of these factors is especially poignant given the fluidity of my own racial and ethnic identity.

Conclusion

In this chapter, I supported my decision to adopt a comparative case study approach, explained my process for data collection, and recounted the quantitative and qualitative methods implored to analyze the data. I also explained my epistemology and positionality as it relates to the present study, and shared trustworthiness issues and limitations of the study. In the following three chapters, I present the findings resulting from my analyses of recruitment materials and

interviews with marketing and communications professionals. In Chapter 4, I introduce the sociohistorical context of each institution as it relates to race, undergraduate enrollment, and affirmative action, and present the findings from the content and social semiotic analysis I conducted of the print and digital materials. In Chapter 5, I share the findings from the rest of my participant interview data that speaks to the process for designing undergraduate recruitment materials and how they approach and understand racial portrayals. Finally, in Chapter 6, I present the findings from the interviews with marketing and communications professionals that speak to their views on the affirmative action ban and whether they believe it influences their work.

Chapter 4 The Re-Evaluation of Race in Higher Education Marketing

There is a long history of assigning value to race. Since around 1450, when Portugal and Spain first sailed across the Atlantic, racism and capitalism have been inextricably entwined; beginning through a worldwide slave trade and more recently through persisting inequalities in poverty, unemployment, wealth, and education (Kendi, 2019). Historically, Whiteness has provided value by allowing one to both own property and not become it. Whiteness also provided a "status property" or reputational interest, which conveys certain societal benefits solely based on one's perceived racial identity (Harris, 1993). Alternatively, non-Whiteness served to justify why White people could derive value from non-White individuals. The term "racial capitalism," defines the intersection between racism and capitalism. Specifically, Leong (2013) defines racial capitalism as the recent increase in the value of non-Whiteness driven by a greater legal and social interest in diversity in America (p. 2158). Decisions such as *Bakke* and *Grutter*, she argues, have reframed diversity into a social good and non-Whiteness as a desirable "commodity to be pursued, captured, possessed, and used" (p. 2155).

In this chapter, I argue that there has in fact been a re-evaluation of race as evidenced by the treatment of BIPOC individuals in higher education marketing materials. This re-evaluation comes after institutions have stated a greater commitment to racial diversity and more concerned efforts to recruit racially minoritized students to each campus. First, I present the sociohistorical context of each institution, including enrollment changes and campus climate issues over the years, as an introduction to the challenges marketing professionals face as they create undergraduate recruitment materials. Then, turning to the marketing materials themselves, I

highlight findings from the content and social semiotic analyses in support of this recent re-evaluation and discuss some of the unintended consequences of this change.

Changes in Institutional Commitment to Racial Diversity

Texas A&M University (TAMU)

Established as a military college in 1876, Texas A&M University takes great pride in its military history. TAMU is one of six senior military colleges, and its Corps of Cadets has produced more officers than any other institution apart from the national academies (Texas A&M University, 2021c). This rich military history is embedded in the culture of the institution to this day with the Cadets serving as the "keepers of the spirit" and its century old traditions. Some of these traditions, like the senior Elephant Walk and greeting others with a "Howdy," help foster a sense of community on campus according to the official Texas A&M traditions website maintained by the university (Texas A&M University, 2021b). The university website also notes that traditions like wearing an Aggie ring or showing one's adoration for "Miss Rev," the beloved mascot, establish bonds between Aggies anywhere in the world. As one marketing professional put it, "at an institution like Texas A&M, we are built on tradition."

Since the 1960s, TAMU's College Station campus has experienced rapid change forcing it to confront those traditions and who they benefit. According to several study participants, the student body grew exponentially in the 1960s when women and Black students were allowed to enroll and participation in the Cadets was deemed optional. However, like other institutions, TAMU saw those initial gains in enrollment drop after the adoption of a voluntary "race-neutral" admission policy (Long & Bateman, 2020). From 1995 to 1997 when the policy first went into effect, admission rates for Black and Latino students at TAMU fell by 30 and 15 percentage points, respectively, (Card & Kreuger, 2005); and their collective enrollment rate declined by 37

percent (Bucks, 2004). By the fall semester of 2020, about 40 percent of the 71,109 students

enrolled at the research-intensive flagship identified as students of color (Texas A&M

University, 2021a).[24] The effects of the school's changing demographics materialized in different

ways. For example, Aggieland, as the 5,200-acre College Station campus is known, is divided

into two primary areas separated by a railroad track. West campus houses the veterinary college,

business school, agriculture school, and the Bush Presidential Library; while Central Campus

houses departments and schools that are traditionally more diverse, such as liberal arts,

education, and engineering. The distinction between the campuses was remarked on by

participants who were both employees and former students. As one participant stated, "if you

look at the two different campuses in terms of race or ethnicities of students, Central Campus I

think is very diverse. Then you go to West Campus, and it is mostly just White men and some

women."

Beyond a physical divide, there is a tangible tension between former students, or the "old

Ags," and an increasingly diverse student body. Most Texas A&M participants reflected on this

tension as they recounted the heated debate over a campus statue. "Sully," as the statue is

colloquially called, honors Lawrence Sullivan "Sul" Ross, a former Texas A&M president and

governor of Texas credited as "the embodiment of Aggie Spirit and tradition" (Texas A&M

University, 2021d). For years, students have left pennies at the base of Sully for good luck on

exams. Now students have argued that Sully's ties to the Confederacy and orders to murder

native peoples while serving as a Texas Ranger (Martinez, 2018) make his statue a constant

reminder of systemic racism and are calling for his removal. In June of 2020, the debate grew

even more heated when Sully was defaced with red graffiti and a rainbow wig, leading several

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[24] In 2020, students on the TAMU College Station campus self-identified as 55% White, 23% Hispanic, 9% Asian, 3% Black, 3% Multiracial, .2% Native American, .06% Native Hawaiian, 7% International, 1% Unknown.

old Ags to physically guard the statue until the administration put a fence and surveillance cameras around its perimeter (Justin, 2020). As protestors on both sides showed up by the hundreds and petitions for and against the statue were circulated[25], then President Michael Young formed a commission to review all campus statues, buildings, and symbols. In January 2021, a report by the Commission on Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion titled "Stronger Together" was publicly released, declaring the issue of Sully as unresolved (Commission on Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, 2021). Two days later, Interim President John Junkins declared that Sully was staying put, citing a previous communication by System Chancellor John Sharp that the statue could only be removed by an act of the state legislature who originally commissioned it.

The university's website and study participants agree that Texas A&M University at College Station is steeped in tradition. This notion is what stokes pride in the heart of old Ags and new Aggies alike, but it is also what complicates the process of recruiting racially minoritized students and ensuring their sense of belonging once there. The traditions uplifted by the institution often serve to further marginalize and oppress the diverse set of students they hope to attract. In their attempts to cater to both factions—typically favoring the older, more conservative, Whiter faction—the administration fails to appease either one but continues to try anyway as the Sully statue case suggests.

University of California, Berkeley (Cal)

The California constitution includes a vision of a university that would "contribute even more than California's gold to the glory and happiness of advancing generations" (The University of California, Berkeley, 2021). The University of California is the result of this vision. The 1,232-acre Berkeley campus, founded in 1868, is the state's flagship and consistently

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[25] 23,000 students signed the petition for removal. 24,000 students signed the petition to keep the statue.

classified as most competitive (Barron's Educational Series, 2019). The University of California at Berkeley enrolled 42,347 students in 2021, of which 30,799 were undergraduates, making it the third most populous institution in the state (University Development and Alumni Relations, 2021). Berkeley, along with all other public institutions in the state, is prohibited from considering race in admission decisions after the passing of Proposition 209 in 1996. Since the implementation of the affirmative action ban, the diversity of the student body has declined even as the state's high school graduates have become more diverse. The number of Black and Latino applicants who received offers of admission to Cal decreased from 45-55 percent in 1995-1997 to 20-25 percent form 1998-2001, after Prop 209 went into effect (Card & Kreuger, 2005). From 1997 to 1998, the number of Black and Latino students enrolled fell from 22% to 12% (Card & Kreuger, 2005). Moreover, the gap between admitted students and those who enroll has substantially widened in the decades since the ban–from 11% points in 1995 to 34% points in 2015–demonstrating the difficulty in yielding such students in the post-affirmative action context (Long & Bateman, 2020). In the fall of 2020, Californians once again voted against a ballot proposition to appeal the affirmative action ban set by Prop 209—this time with a slightly larger margin of defeat, 14 versus 10 percentage points (Koseff, 2020). That same year, Berkeley announced that its incoming classes was one of the most diverse in recent history with close to 62% of Cal students identifying as students of color[26] (Office of Planning and Analysis, 2021). However, when this figure is compared to the 77% of students of color in grades K-12 in California, the question of who's "glory and happiness," referenced in the state's constitution, comes into sharp relief.

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[26] In 2021, Cal students self-identified as 39% Asian, 22% White, 18% Chicanx/Latinx, 4% African American/Black, 0.4% Native American/Alaska Native, 0.2% Pacific Islander, 12% International, and 4% declined to answer.

The culture of Berkeley is shaped by the legacy of the Free Speech Movement that began on the campus in the fall of 1964. Thousands of Cal students protesting the right to advocate for political causes marked the first mass act of civil disobedience on an American college campus (The University of California, Berkeley, 2021). The Free Speech Movement, related also to the Civil Rights and Anti-Vietnam War movements of the 1960s, continues to shape discussions on free speech and academic freedom in higher education. The influence of these events is felt deeply on the Berkeley campus to this day, with one participant stating that "there is a genuine culture at Berkeley…we have the progressive badge on us." During this study, Berkeley responded to criticisms from its student body over campus buildings named after White supremacists. Several participants discussed the renaming of two campus buildings—LeConte and Barrows Hall. LeConte Hall was named after brothers and early faculty members John and Joseph LeConte, who served in the Confederacy and came from a slave-holding Southern family. Joseph LeConte used science to advance racist ideology such as racial purity, once writing that he perceived "the light-haired blue-eyed Teutonic and the negro as the extreme types, and their mixture as producing the worst effect" (Dowd, 2020). Barrows Hall was named after former UC President David Prescott Barrows, a colonizer of the Philippines, who once wrote that "the White, or European, race is, above all others, the great historical race" (Kell, 2020). The renaming proposals were evaluated by a university committee comprised of students, faculty, and staff, and the campus community's approval rates for renaming were 87% and 95% for LeConte and Barrows Halls, respectively (The Building Name Review Committee, 2020a, 2020b).

The University of California at Berkeley is "the shining jewel" of the California public higher education system, according to Chancellor Carol Christ (Bahr, 2018). Its "progressive

badge" forged through the Free Speech and Civil Rights movements of the 1960s attracts thousands of students to its campus every year (Office of Planning and Analysis, 2021). However, the campus' racial diversity—while much improved in recent years—continues to be of upmost importance to an administration wishing to reflect the ever-diversifying population of its state (University Development and Alumni Relations, 2021) even as a statewide restriction on affirmative action persists.

University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA)

In 1919, the University of California opened a southern branch campus in Los Angeles (The University of California, Los Angeles, 2021a). Located on 419 acres in the Westwood community of Los Angeles, UCLA is now a highly ranked research university within one of the most diverse cities in America (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021). As one participant described the campus' home, "Los Angeles has always been a place for invention, reinvention, and fresh popular culture." Perhaps for those reasons, UCLA is now the most applied-to university in the country. For fall of 2021 admission, UCLA received just under 168,000 applications—83% from prospective first-year students and 17% from prospective junior-year transfers (The University of California, Los Angeles, 2021b). In 2021, the student body was comprised of 31,636 undergraduates, 61% whom identified as students of color (The University of California, Los Angeles, 2021b). The racial and ethnic composition of the student body does not mirror the number of people who identify as other than only White in the city (72%), county (74%), or state (64%) the university resides in (U.S. Census Bureau, 2021).

After the passing of Proposition 209 in 1996, which banned affirmative action at all public higher education institutions in California, the decline in Black and Latino enrollment at

UCLA mirrored that of Cal (Card & Kreuger, 2005).[27] By 2006, only 96 of the 5,000 students

admitted that year were Black (Long & Bateman, 2020). When students voiced their concerns

over the decline, the university instituted holistic review (Boyarsky, 2012). Each application

would subsequently be evaluated based on 14 criteria, including non-academic factors such as

parent educational attainment, family income, and presence of significant personal or familial

challenges. While race remained a non-factor, the number of racially minoritized students

gaining admission slowly increased once more with this new approach.

In 2012, the university's admissions practices were again questioned by one of their own.

Richard Sander, a UCLA law professor, released a report and co-authored a book that suggested

UCLA's new admissions practices could be violating Prop 209 (Boyarsky, 2012). Sander

reviewed six years of admissions data from before and after the implementation of holistic

review (2004-2009) and found that Black and Latino students with mid-range holistic scores

were accepted at a higher percentage than other students with the same scores (Sander, 2012). He

argued that affirmative action led to a mismatch between students and colleges, negatively

affecting the very students it was meant to help by setting them up to underperform and question

their abilities. The "mismatch theory" was cited during oral arguments in the *Fisher v. University*

of Texas argued later that year and piqued the interest of Justice Antonin Scalia and Justin

Clarence Thomas, who cited the theory in a concurring opinion (*Fisher v. University of Texas*,

2013).

Throughout its history, the University of California at Los Angeles has seen significant

changes to its recruitment of students identifying as BIPOC, especially those who identify as

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[27] Notably, systemwide acceptance rates only saw a roughly 7% drop for Black students and 4% drop for Hispanic students, indicating that affirmative action had a greater impact on the enrollment patterns of California's most selective public universities.

Black and Latino. External and internal deterrents have played a role in the unpredictability of its enrollment figures. It is in these troubled waters that the marketing and communications professionals in this study produce their work, hoping that the administration's collective efforts are enough to buoy the vestiges of racial diversity on campus.

University of Texas at Austin (UT)

The University of Texas at Austin is a research-intensive flagship university located in Texas' capitol city, Austin. Several study participants compared the culture of UT as mirroring that of the city where it resides, with one describing Austin as "politically and progressively, it's a different sort of setting than other places in Texas." However, UT has a highly public racist past and recent incidents have forced the institution to revisit how it reckons with race on campus.

Since its founding in 1883, UT has found itself in court over race more often than any of the other institutions in this study. UT began admitting Black students after it lost a Supreme Court case in 1950, the third attempt at desegregating the campus. The *Sweatt v. Painter* (1950) case became the precedent for *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954), which ended the policy of "separate but equal" and sparked mass desegregation efforts in American public education. The university now publicly recognizes its exclusionary past, claiming that because of its "history of segregation, UT understands the profound benefits of creating an inclusive environment in which students can learn from one another" (The University of Texas at Austin, 2021b).

After losing the legal battle on desegregation, the university has championed racial diversity in court on three different occasions: *Hopwood v. Texas* (2005)*, Fisher v. University of Texas* (2013; 2016). The state limited the use of race in admission decisions and implemented a percentage plan relying on de-facto segregation in public high schools to increase diversity in

state public higher education institutions. UT only considers race in admissions through holistic review of a small subset of applicants not accepted under the state's percentage plan (The University of Texas at Austin, 2003). Despite the limited use of affirmative action, the gap between the number of Black, Latino, and Native American students admitted and enrolled at UT and those graduating from a high school in the state has only widened since *Hopwood* (Long & Bateman, 2020). While yield rates remained stable after *Hopwood* (Tienda et al., 2003) and there was only a 6% decline in admission rates for Black and Latino students (Card & Kreuger, 2005), UT saw a 20% enrollment decline from these groups after the ban (Bucks, 2004). The use of a state percentage plan and the reinstitution of affirmative action on the few applications not accepted through the plan are alternatives the institution uses to correct the decline instigated by the *Hopwood* decision. As of 2021, the campus served 51,000 students with slightly more than half (51.8%) identifying as students of color (The University of Texas at Austin, 2021a).[28]

Beyond the spotlight casted on race through the legal system, racist incidents on UT's campus have also garnered national attention. In 2013 and 2016, as the hearings for Fisher I and II were scheduled, the Young Conservatives of Texas held an 'affirmative action bake sale.' With the intention of protesting race-based admissions, the student group matched the price of the items to the buyer's race and gender, sparking student protests and intensifying racial tension on campus (Samuels, 2016). An official university statement urged the UT community to look beyond "the provocative nature of the YCT's actions" and consider how their actions "create an environment of exclusion and disrespect among our students, faculty and staff" (Blair, 2016). During this study, there was a highly public debate over whether to do away with the "The Eyes

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[28] In 2021, UT students self-identified as 20.2% Asian, 38.9% White, 23.4% Hispanic, 5.3% African American, 0.1% American Indian/Alaska Native, 0.1% Native Hawaiian/Pacific Islander, 8.3% International, 1.2% Unknown, 2.7% Multiracial (excl. Black or Hispanic).

of Texas," the school's alma mater which many believe has ties to the "lost cause" ideology (Martinez, 2021). When several UT football players protested having to sing the song, played by the band at every sporting event, UT assembled a committee to review the song's origins and usage. The committee discovered the song first premiered in campus minstrel shows with White students in blackface and determined that it is set to the tune of "I've been working on the railroad," a popular song with its own racist origins (The University of Texas at Austin, 2021c). Ultimately, UT decided to keep the song as its alma mater but committed to educating students on the song's history moving forward (The University of Texas at Austin, 2021d). Several participants referenced this debate and spoke about the continued unrest over its use, including how UT created a second band so students who declined to play it could still participate (Seltzer, 2021).

At the University of Texas at Austin, racially minoritized students have not merely been underrepresented, they have been systematically excluded and subjected to a negative campus climate since its inception. The university has publicly recognized its past wrongdoings and tried to right them, while struggling to put an end to present-day instances of racism and become more inclusive. It is under these constraints that the administration seeks to attract more BIPOC students to the flagship campus.

Summary of Institutional Contexts

Higher education institutions in the United States, and public ones in particular, have a mission to educate an increasingly more diverse citizenry. Demographic trends and societal scrutiny place pressure on state institutions regardless of selectivity to attract, retain, and graduate more diverse students. The four cases in this study are no exception. Each has shown an increasing commitment to diversity, and racial diversity specifically, throughout the years, even

as they struggle with campus climate and historical legacies of exclusion. The complex web of race relations, legal battles and constraints is the context every marketing professional works within as they attempt to create recruitment materials for their university. How race is presented in marketing materials is influenced by this very sociohistorical context and is the topic I turn to next.

Race Portrayals in Marketing Materials

To consider how racially minoritized individuals are portrayed in the recruitment materials of selective public institutions as compared to their White counterparts, I used content analysis to review 269 images collected from 202 Instagram posts and 9 undergraduate recruitment publications across the four cases. After identifying 45 photos featuring BIPOC and White individuals together, I used social semiotic analysis to systematically compare how the two groups were portrayed when placed together in the same frame. Findings from these analyses revealed the following: (a) BIPOC individuals were overrepresented in university marketing materials compared to actual campus demographics; (b) Whiteness was presented as the default in photos, non-Whiteness as something new; (c) BIPOC individuals are responsible for teaching their White counterparts; (d) BIPOC individuals were used as props or tokens; and (e) BIPOC individuals who assimilate through campus traditions are welcomed. Collectively, these findings relate to Leong's (2013) theory of racial capitalism, as well as the CRT tenets of color evasiveness, interest convergence, and Whiteness as property.

Overrepresentation of Racial Diversity

The initial number of photos collected from each case ranged from 100 images for UT to 362 images for TAMU. Of the 853 photos collected, I retained 269 of them for my final sample after I accounted for photography that depicted campus buildings, crowds, inanimate objects, and

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digital illustrations or graphics. Across the four cases, BIPOC individuals were present in 71% of these photos on average. Photographs of BIPOC students were more likely to be found in the recruitment materials of the University of California-Berkeley (91% of all images),[29] and least likely to be seen in those of Texas A&M University (40% of all images). Considering individual racial categories, Native American individuals were the least represented racial category, appearing in only 3% of Cal's photography. Looking specifically at group photography, BIPOC and White individuals were represented together at a higher percentage than groups of only BIPOC individuals for three out of the four cases (Cal being the exception). Table 4.1 shows the frequency of portrayals by race for individual and group photography across the four cases.

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[29] The high number of BIPOC photos for the University of California-Berkeley could partly be attributed to the inclusion of their community brochure–a multi-page brochure that showcased the diversity of the campus community across factors like race, gender, and sexuality–in the sample. While the brochure may have been intended for a more diverse subset of prospective undergraduates, its inclusion in this study is warranted as it was made public to all prospective undergraduates via the university's admissions webpages.

Table 4.1

Comparison of Photos of People in University Recruitment Materials by Race

Case	*n*	Photos of Individuals				Photos of Groups		Photos of Both	
		Asian only	Black only	Native American only	Multi-racial only	BIPOC only	BIPOC and White	White only	Total % of BIPOC across photo types [2 thru 7]
	[1]	[2]	[3]	[4]	[5]	[6]	[7]	[8]	[9]
Texas A&M University	72	6%	7%	-	4%	1%	22%	60%	40%
University of California-Berkeley	74	22%	20%	3%	27%	11%	8%	9%	91%
University of California-Los Angeles	79	21%	16%	-	11%	15%	18%	19%	81%
University of Texas	44	9%	16%	-	16%	7%	25%	27%	73%

Note. BIPOC refers to Black, Indigenous, and people of color. Dashes denote 0 percent or no photos in the category.

When the figures above are compared to actual campus demographics (see Table 4.2), it is evident that every case overrepresented racially minoritized individuals in their marketing materials albeit to varying degrees. Texas A&M was the closest to visually depicting their reality with only a 1-percentage point difference, while the University of California-Berkeley overrepresented their structural diversity by 29%. The overrepresentation of racial diversity in marketing materials compared to campus demographics suggests that the four institutions are compelled to show a racially diverse campus even when the on-campus reality for racially minoritized individuals may differ. In the rest of this chapter, I present individual case findings,

comparing the types of photography (individual versus group) and the types of roles assumed by individuals pictured in the photographs of the four cases.

Table 4.2

Difference Between Actual Racial Diversity and Racial Diversity in Materials

Case	% BIPOC in photos	% BIPOC on campus[1]	% Point difference
Texas A&M University	40%	39%	1%
University of California-Berkeley	91%	62%	29%
University of California-Los Angeles	81%	61%	20%
University of Texas	73%	52%	21%

Note. BIPOC refers to Black, Indigenous, and people of color. Enrollment percentages were collected during the review of official university documents, including the 2021 TAMU Student Demographics, 2021 Cal Facts, 2021 UCLA Fast Facts, and the 2021 UT Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.

Case-Specific Photography

TAMU's Photography. The former military college had the lowest number of overall photographs of BIPOC individuals across the four cases. As Table 4.3 shows, individual and group photography was comparable at 34 and 38 photos, respectively. Comparing both types of photographs, White individuals were two times more likely to be pictured in individual portraits than BIPOC (at 71%). While 16 of the 72 photos in the sample showed both BIPOC and White individuals together (22%), only one photograph showed a group of BIPOC individuals only. Of the four cases, portrayals of BIPOC individuals and interactions between both groups were less likely in the imagery put forth by Texas A&M. These figures suggest that TAMU is hesitant to make BIPOC individuals the focus of their photography whether by centering them in their own individual photos or by picturing them with other BIPOC members of the campus community (and excluding White individuals).

Table 4.3

Type of Photography by Race at Texas A&M University

Race of Individuals	Individual Photos (*n=34*)	Group Photos (*n=38*)	Full Sample (*N=72*)
Asian	9%	3%	6%
Black	11%	3%	7%
Native American	-	-	-
Multiracial	9%	-	4%
White	71%	50%	60%
BIPOC only	-	3%	1%
BIPOC and White	-	41%	22%

Note. BIPOC refers to Black, Indigenous, and people of color. Dashes denote 0 percent or no photos in the category.

Looking at the types of roles the individuals in TAMU's photography depicted, Table 4.4 shows that the 103 White individuals depicted assumed a greater variety of roles (8 out of 10 possible roles). Black and multiracial individuals espoused the least number of possible roles, 6 and 5 out of 10 possible roles, respectively. The variety of roles White individuals at TAMU assumed in marketing materials alludes to the diversity of possibilities and experiences available to prospective White students if they chose to attend TAMU. The campus experience depicted for prospective Black and multiracial students is more limited, as they are not able to see themselves as the artists, parents, or faculty, that their White counterparts can assume. While the role with the highest percentage across racial categories for this case was that of a student, the second most popular role for Black, multiracial, and White individuals pictured was that of a cadet. In fact, TAMU was the only institution were cadets or uniformed armed forces were pictured, further highlighting the institution's origins and the prominence of the corps of cadets on campus to this day. While only about 3% of students are cadets, the group is heavily represented in the institution's photography and showing Black, multiracial, and Asian individuals in cadet roles could be this institution's way of showing the progress they have made in diversifying the once White-only military campus.

Table 4.4

Type of Roles for Individuals by Race in Texas A&M University Photography

Type of Role	Race of Individuals in Photographs			
	Asian (*n*=13)	Black (*n* =16)	Multiracial (*n* =14)	White (*n* =103)
Artist	-	-	-	2%
Athlete	-	6%	-	-
Cadet	8%	25%	29%	25%
Event Spectator	8%	6%	21%	22%
Graduate	8%	6%	7%	7%
Parents/Family	15%	-	-	1%
Professor/Staff	-	-	-	2%
Scientist	8%	-	-	-
Student	45%	44%	36%	39%
Vanity	8%	13%	7%	2%

Note. Native American individuals were not pictured in Texas A&M University's photography. Dashes denote 0 percent or no photos in the category.

Cal's Photography. Alternatively, the University of California–Berkeley, had the highest percentage of BIPOC photography across the four cases (91% of images included BIPOC). As Table 4.5 shows, BIPOC were present at higher rates across individual and group photography for Cal, except for Native American individuals who were only pictured in two individual photographs from the sample. Altogether, White individuals were depicted in 7 out of 74 photos, or 9% of the photos for this case. These findings suggest that, perhaps more than the other three cases, Cal holds a vested interest in projecting the image of a diverse campus. Alternatively, they are the campus with the highest percentage of BIPOC students (62%) and thus the overrepresentation (and inclusion of Native Americans) could be an attempt to include every type of student on campus. Also of note, was that the highest percentage of group photography was that of photos showing BIPOC individuals across monoracial categories together in the same frame (36%). This number suggests that Cal is an incredibly diverse place racially, albeit cross-

race interactions between White and BIPOC individuals may be lacking. This same lack of interracial interactions in photography was found by Osei-Kofi, Torres, & Lui (2013) in their study of 20 viewbooks.

Table 4.5

Type of Photography by Race for the University of California-Berkeley

Race of Individuals	Individual Photos (*n*=52)	Group Photos (*n* =22)	Full Sample (*N*=74)
Asian	29%	5%	22%
Black	19%	23%	20%
Native American	4%	-	3%
Multiracial	35%	9%	27%
White	13%	-	9%
BIPOC only	-	36%	11%
BIPOC and White	-	27%	8%

Note. BIPOC refers to Black, Indigenous, and people of color. Dashes denote 0 percent or no photos in the category.

Turning to the types of roles that individuals in Cal's photography assumed (see Table 4.6), I found that multiracial individuals had the greatest number of possible roles available to them (6 out of 10 roles), while White individuals had the least number of possible roles (professor/staff and student). Asian and Black individuals were depicted in 5 out of 10 roles. In contrast to TAMU, the diversity of experience available to White individuals was extremely limited compared to their BIPOC counterparts. Native American individuals, who were evenly split between the artist and professor/staff roles, were only pictured in the images for this case. The inclusion of individuals that were easily identifiable as Native Americans, even when their population on the campus remains small, suggests that Cal might be interested bolstering their recruitment efforts for this group. Also of note was that this is the only case where the artist role spanned all racial categories and was the second most popular role assumed by Black individuals. Asian and multiracial individuals were the only ones who assumed the role of

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scientist. These findings suggest that roles like artists and scientists could still be falling on more traditional stereotypical lines. In America, art and entertainment have been areas where the Black community has found success (often due to being excluded from other opportunities) but the role is often viewed as an anti-intellectual stereotype which is hard to move away from and can pose negative challenges for students inside the classroom (Carey, Polanco, & Blackman, 2022). In contrast, Asian American stereotypes skew toward the intellectual as they continue to be linked to academic subjects like math and science and the professions that use them (McGee, 2018).

Table 4.6

Type of Roles for Individuals by Race in the University of California-Berkeley Photography

Type of Role	Race of Individuals in Photographs				
	Asian (*n*=17)	Black (*n* =24)	Native American (*n* =2)	Multiracial (*n* =24)	White (*n* =6)
Artist	18%	21%	50%	4%	-
Athlete	-	-	-	-	-
Cadet	-	-	-	-	-
Event Spectator	-	-	-	-	-
Graduate	-	8%	-	4%	-
Parents/Family	-	-	-	-	-
Professor/Staff	6%	8%	50%	17%	17%
Scientist	11%	-	-	4%	-
Student	47%	46%	-	46%	83%
Vanity	18%	17%	-	25%	-

Note. Dashes denote 0 percent or no photos in the category.

UCLA's Photography. The University of California–Los Angeles, followed Cal with the second highest percentage of BIPOC portrayals across all four cases (81% of images included BIPOC). As Table 4.7 shows, the racial category most represented in this case was Asian with 21% of the 79 photos showing Asian individuals present, followed by White individuals (19%). UCLA seemed to favor individual photography over group photography, with

about 87% of individual photos featuring BIPOC individuals. Asian and White individuals were equally depicted in individual photography (at 30% each). When group photography was used, only one out of the 32 photographs depicted a group of all White individuals, most group photography showed White and racially minoritized individuals together in the same frame. Of the full sample of photography for UCLA, 14 photos (18%) showed BIPOC and White individuals in the same frame. While these findings show that BIPOC were also overrepresented in this case, they differ greatly from those at nearby Cal in that the Asian and White populations on campus appear to be numerically comparable or that their inclusion in marketing materials is of equal importance.

Table 4.7

Type of Photography by Race for the University of California-Los Angeles

Race of Individuals	Individual Photos (*n*=47)	Group Photos (*n*=32)	Full Sample (*N*=79)
Asian	30%	6%	21%
Black	21%	9%	16%
Native American	-	-	-
Multiracial	19%	-	11%
White	30%	3%	19%
BIPOC only	-	38%	15%
BIPOC and White	-	44%	18%

Note. BIPOC refers to Black, Indigenous, and people of color. Dashes denote 0 percent or no photos in the category.

In UCLA's photography, there were six types of roles that individuals portrayed, including artist, graduate, professor/staff, scientist, student, and the vanity category (see Table 4.8). Perhaps because of UCLA's location in the city of Los Angeles, the artist and athlete roles were assumed by members of all racial categories except for Asians, who were only cast as artists and not athletes. This finding suggests that any prospective student, regardless of their racial identity, can attend UCLA and become an artist. Meanwhile, the scientist role was assumed by all racial categories but multiracial individuals, suggesting that there are still limits

to who can be typed as a scientist. Notably, the only graduate depicted in the photography for this case was a Black graduate. This finding suggests that prospective students may not be as concerned with graduating as they are with seeing themselves as artists or any of the other roles. Like the preceding cases, the most popular role across racial categories was that of student. The second most popular role coded for was that of a vanity shot, meaning that this case had more photography that depicted individuals without a setting for context, utilizing more posed rather than candid photography in its marketing materials.

Table 4.8

Type of Roles for Individuals by Race in the University of California-Los Angeles Photography

Type of Role	Race of Individuals in Photographs			
	Asian (*n* =59)	Black (*n* =32)	Multiracial (*n* =28)	White (*n* =38)
Artist	2%	3%	7%	5%
Athlete	-	6%	4%	3%
Cadet	-	-	-	-
Event Spectator	3%	-	14%	16%
Graduate	-	9%	-	-
Parents/Family	-	-	-	-
Professor/Staff	7%	6%	4%	8%
Scientist	2%	6%	-	5%
Student	58%	42%	46%	39%
Vanity	28%	28%	25%	24%

Note. Native American individuals were not pictured in the University of California-Los Angeles' photography. Dashes denote 0 percent or no photos in the category.

UT's Photography. As Table 4.9 shows the University of Texas at Austin had the third highest percentage of BIPOC representation in their photography across all four cases (73% of images included BIPOC). The split between individual and group photography was close with 24 photos of individuals compared to 20 of groups. Looking at representation across race, Asians were the least represented racial category at 9%, while White individuals were represented the most at 27%. Black and multiracial individuals were represented equally across UT's

photography, although multiracial individuals were pictured in individual photography at a higher percentage rate (25%) than in group photography (5%). These findings suggest that, even as BIPOC individuals collectively are overrepresented, White individuals continue to be the dominant racial category in marketing materials at UT given their representation in the full sample and the share of individual photos where they appear. Of the four cases, UT had the highest percentage of photos where both BIPOC and White individuals were in the same frame (55%). These data suggest that when group photography is used by UT, the institution favors showcasing racially diverse groups together perhaps to signal learning or interactions across race.

Table 4.9

Type of Photography by Race for the University of Texas at Austin

Race of Individuals	Individual Photos (*n* =24)	Group Photos (*n* =20)	Full Sample (*N*=44)
Asian	17%	-	9%
Black	21%	10%	16%
Native American	-	-	-
Multiracial	25%	5%	16%
White	37%	15%	27%
BIPOC only	-	15%	7%
BIPOC and White	-	55%	25%

Note. BIPOC refers to Black, Indigenous, and people of color. Dashes denote 0 percent or no photos in the category.

The photography of the University of Texas at Austin showed individuals in six different roles: event spectator, graduate, professor/staff, scientist, student, and vanity. Black and White individuals were cast into the most roles (5 each out of 10 possible roles), indicating that the diversity of experience for these groups was widest on this campus. Comparatively, Asians appeared to be the most limited in their experience with only the roles of scientist, student, and vanity being portrayed. Unlike the other cases, UT's most popular role was not the student role

but the vanity one. This data suggests that UT favors a style of photography that highlights people more than the interactions they may have with one another or the context of their experience on campus. Another departure from previous cases was the high number of multiracial individuals included in UT's photography (67) compared to Asian (16), Black (18), and White (45) individuals. This high number is probably attributable to the large Latinx community in the state of Texas, though it is notable that they were not represented to the same degree at nearby TAMU.

Table 4.10

Type of Roles for Individuals by Race in the University of Texas-at Austin Photography

Type of Role	Race of Individuals in Photographs			
	Asian (n =16)	Black (n =18)	Multiracial (n =67)	White (n =45)
Artist	-	-	-	-
Athlete	-	-	-	-
Cadet	-	-	-	-
Event Spectator	-	6%	-	-
Graduate	-	6%	-	2%
Parents/Family	-	-	-	-
Professor/Staff	-	6%	4%	9%
Scientist	13%	-	2%	2%
Student	19%	11%	9%	38%
Vanity	69%	72%	85%	49%

Note. Native American individuals were not pictured in the University of California-Los Angeles' photography. Dashes denote 0 percent or no photos in the category.

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Overall, the results of the content analysis suggest that each of the four cases overrepresents racially minoritized individuals in their marketing materials, but to varying degrees. The data also suggest that the number of roles available to members of different racial groups differs from case to case but does not adhere to predetermined stereotypes. For example, at UCLA, Black individuals were just as likely to be depicted as scientists or graduates as they were to be depicted as athletes. At TAMU, multiracial individuals were just as likely to assume the role of student as were their White peers. At Cal, a Native American professor and a White professor were depicted the same number of times. At UT, Black and White individuals had the same number of options for possible roles (5 each). The one point of disconfirming evidence found in this data was that of Asian individuals falling prey to a version of the model minority myth that places them at the top of the STEM educational and career hierarchy (McGee, 2018). Across all four cases, Asian individuals were cast into the scientist role without fail. In the second part of this chapter, I present the findings of the social semiotic content analysis I conducted on group images that had both White and racially minoritized individuals present. These findings build on my content analysis findings by clarifying how both groups are portrayed beyond the types of roles they assume.

Whiteness as Given; Racial Diversity as New

From the 269 photos depicting identifiable people in the sample, 45 photos captured both BIPOC and White individuals together. I conducted additional analysis of this subset of photos using my theoretical framework and resources from social semiotics to better understand how BIPOC students were portrayed compared to their White counterparts. Table 4.10 lists the resources found in the data and the frequency of occurrence by case.

Table 4.11

Social Semiotic Resources Per Case

Resource	University of California-Berkeley (*n* =6)	Texas A&M University (*n* =15)	University of California-Los Angeles (*n* =14)	University of Texas at Austin (*n*=10)
Color	5	7	9	8
Composition				
Light Effects	-	1	1	1
Center-Margin	-	5	6	3
Left-Right	4	6	6	3
Top-Bottom	2	3	4	3
Salience	1	-	2	1
Framing	-	1	1	2
Contextualization	1	3	1	2
Interactive Meaning	1	1	4	-
Perspective				
Offer	1	-	-	3
Demand	2	4	5	5
Point of View	4	5	5	1
Representation	1	-	-	-
Reactions	1	-	-	1
Text	-	1	1	1
Total Resources per Case	22	37	46	34

Note. Description and examples of each resource can be found in Table 3.4.

Collectively, the resource of spatial composition was particularly prominent in this subset of photos with 56 of the 139 total annotations being allotted to this resource.[30] According to social semioticians Kress & van Leeuwen (2006), the spatial composition of a photograph is believed to use three interrelated systems—information value (light effects, center-margin, left-right, top-bottom), salience, and framing—to communicate meaning to the viewer. For example, the placement of elements in various zones of an image (left-right, top-bottom, center-margin) endow them with a specific informational value. The meaning conveyed by the left and right

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[30] The second most referenced resource was that of color (29 out of 139 annotations), which suggests that these institutions relied on the use of their school colors heavily in the marketing materials.

composition was particularly insightful for analyzing how BIPOC individuals were portrayed compared to their White counterparts. As the authors describe:

> For something to be Given means that it is presented as something the viewer already knows, as a familiar and agreed-upon point of departure for the message. For something to be New means that it is presented as something which is not yet known, or perhaps not yet agreed upon by the viewer, hence as something to which the viewer must pay special attention. Broadly speaking, the meaning of the New is therefore 'problematic', 'contestable', 'the information "at issue"', while the Given is presented as commonsensical, self-evident. (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006)

Kress and van Leeuwen's suggested interpretation for the left and right of images was not specifically tailored for photographs depicting racial diversity, but instead is a social semiotics resource than can be applied to any image that utilizes the horizontal axis in its composition. In my analysis, I found that 19 images made significant use of the horizontal axis, positioning people to the left and right of center, and three quarters of them could be read through the meaning of left as Given and right as New. These photographs appeared to substantiate the idea that White individuals were familiar on the campus, while people of color embody the new or unknown.

Across the four cases, 14 of the 19 photographs suggested this Given-New interpretation. In one UCLA photograph (see Figure 4.1), an older White woman stands to the left of center looking down at a young Black woman seated at the right edge of the photograph. Both women wear blue coats and are seen behind a counter with yellow lab equipment. They appear to be engaged in a scientific experiment or discussion. The shelves in the back of the lab are bright and blurred, demarcating an empty center with either woman to the left or right of this area, reinforcing the composition of the photo along the horizontal axis. The composition of this photos suggests that the White woman—occupying the top space of the photograph and looking

down at the other woman—is the ideal and in a position of power over the younger Black

woman. Her placement to the left of center suggests that her position there can be taken for

granted by the viewer.

Figure 4.1

Left-Right Composition Example for the University of California, Los Angeles

Source. University of California, Los Angeles 2019 Undergraduate Admissions Viewbook

A UT photograph shows two students in White coats and protective gear in a lab setting, with the

White student on the left and an Asian student to the right (see Figure 4.2). This photo also has

an empty center with just the white lab wall and a computer screen in the background splitting

the center of the image to show the two individuals on either the left or right of center. While

these two individuals appear to be equals (the photo does not make use of the top-bottom

resource), their positioning along the horizontal axis appears to reify the Given-New interpretation.

Figure 4.2

Left-Right Composition Example for the University of Texas at Austin

Source. University of Texas at Austin 2021 Undergraduate Admissions Viewbook

In another example from TAMU, a White man in a cadet uniform occupies the left zone of a photography and a Black man in a cadet occupies the right zone (see Figure 4.3). The center is marked by blurred cadets in the background, suggesting that the Black and White cadets who are in focus represent a generic example or regular occurrence (as per the contextualization

resource). The Black cadet holds in his hand a bright red corps flag, which serves as an additional framing line between the left and right of the photo.

Figure 4.3

Left-Right Composition Example for the Texas A&M University

A photograph taken in Cal's Transfer Student Center shows a White woman to the left of a multiracial woman (possibly Latina) in a transfer student t-shirt (see Figure 4.4). Both women sit on a sofa facing the camera with the White woman on the cushioned seat and the multiracial

woman sitting atop the arm rest. Like the previous images, their left-right positioning corresponds with the Given-New interpretation. However, the use of the vertical axis in the composition also suggests that the multiracial woman (top) represents 'what might be,' while the White woman (bottom) represents 'what is.' In the background there are print resources for transfer students and the Transfer Student Center signage, the unfocused nature of the background allows viewers to focus on the individuals pictured while the rest serves as context. The salience of the Berkeley colors in this photo (even the multiracial woman's nails are yellow) conveys school pride to the viewer, perhaps more important in the transfer space than elsewhere on campus where students are simply meant to feel a sense of belonging by being present.

Figure 4.4

Left-Right Composition Example for the University of California, Berkeley

Source. University of California, Berkeley admissions Instagram account, @caladmissions (September 30, 2019).

This finding suggests that non-Whiteness is valued enough to call viewers' attention to the racially minoritized individuals depicted, which supports Leong's theory of racial capitalism and may be driven by interest convergence. By suggesting that White individuals are the traditional college demographic and BIPOC the new reality on college campuses,

Review of Disconfirming Evidence. While the informational value presented by the left-right resource is ideological and can be challenged by any viewer, the overall preponderance of this composition in the subset is notable, weakening alternative interpretations. However, quality

case study research should include alternative interpretations (Yin, 2017). Thus, in this section, I analyze five photographs composed along the horizontal axis that could not be interpreted by the left-right resource (given-new). Figure 4.5 shows all five images.

The first image on the top left corner of Figure 4.5 shows three students sitting on a sunny green lawn, looking directly at the camera. The inclusion of three distinct subjects along the horizontal axis allows this photo to be read as a triptych. Social semiotics ask us to view the center object or image in a triptych as the connector between the objects or images to the left and right of center and at times the main object of focus from the compilation (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). In this image, a multiracial female either acts as a bridge between an Asian male and a White female (connector) or her multiracial identity is privileged over the monoracial identity of her peers (object of focus). Increasingly since the 1990s, multiracial people have been used to market to mass audiences by serving as "bridges of racial harmony and unity" (p.163) and their inclusion in marketing materials has been found to evoke positive feelings for various audiences regardless of racial background (DaCosta, 2007). The positioning of a multiracial individual in the center of this image draws viewers' attention and can result in either of these two interpretations. In other words, multiraciality functions as an attractive marketing tool by which to appeal to prospective BIPOC and White students alike by invoking positive feelings regarding race on UCLA's campus.

Figure 4.5

Examples Defying the Given-New Interpretation

Sources. 1) University of California, Los Angeles Instagram account, @uclaadmission (November 29, 2019); 2) Texas A&M University 2019 admissions brochure; 3) Texas A&M University 2019 admissions brochure; 4) University of California, Berkeley 2019 admissions brochure; 5) University of California, Los Angeles 2019 admissions brochure.

Images 2 and 3 are from TAMU and appear to signal inclusion and school pride. Both images show a racially minoritized student to the left of center and a White student to the right of center. Both images show students smiling, looking directly at the camera giving a thumbs up hand gesture, an Aggie tradition meant to symbolize pride and affinity with the institution. Image

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2 shows a White male in cadet uniform smiling as he stands over a seated man of color whose hair he has apparently started to shave off. Image 3 shows a Black male student slightly behind a White female student, both wearing clothing with the university's colors and logo. As a vanity shot, the viewer is left to interpret only what is readily visible from the identity of the people in the image, which beyond race would include gender. When both the race and gender of the students pictured is considered, we see that this photo includes both categories of individuals– women and BIPOC–who were previously excluded from attending the institution. In their own way, both images can be interpreted as images that convey belonging and pride in one's school culture and traditions.

Image 4 from Cal and image 5 from UCLA both place darker-skinned BIPOC students in positions of educating their lighter-skinned peers. Image 4 shows a south Asian woman using her hands to explain something to a White female classmate who passively rests her head on one hand. Image 5 shows a Black male student pointing and explaining something just beyond the frame to a group of east Asian students and one White female student who is at the center of the image. Both images show individuals from different races coming together on campus to learn from one another. Along with race, these photos appear to differentiate the role of individuals in the images by skin tone. Even when marketing to consumers of the same racial category, lighter skin tones have historically been used to appeal to mass audiences, leading to colorism and skin color stereotypes in the workplace and other facets of society (). Future research on university marketing materials should consider the use of skin tone within and across racial categories more intently as this was beyond the scope of this study.

Collectively, these five images move beyond the simple new-given interpretation of the other 14 images that use the left-right resource by introducing additional interpretations for the portrayals of BIPOC individuals as compared to their White counterparts. In the next section, I

include the rest of my findings for the subset of 45 photos which I analyzed using social semiotics.

Re-evaluation Does Not Mean Equality

Beyond the composition resource, I used other social semiotic resources (see Table 3.4) in combination with four theoretical concepts from my framework (color evasiveness, interest convergence, racial capitalism, and Whiteness as property) to evaluate the 45 photos in the subset. The following sections present the most prevalent concept found in each of the four cases along with examples images for support.

Color-evasiveness at TAMU. The 15 TAMU photos in the subset I analyzed presented a campus where White and non-White individuals live in racial harmony as they partake in the school's many traditions (only three photos were not of a campus tradition). One social media photo showed three White men in overalls on the left side of the image looking happily at a Black woman in a TAMU sports jacket to the right of the frame as she holds up a microphone and participates in the midnight yell (see Figure 4.6). Yell sessions are a tradition that date back to 1913 and consists of male yell leaders, typically White, leading crowds in yells and singing the *Aggie War Hymn* the night before every football game (Texas A&M University, 2021). By showing a BIPOC woman engaging in a long-standing tradition that has mostly been relegated to White males, the photo conveys the sense that regardless of color or gender anyone can be an Aggie if they simply uphold time-honored traditions. The two previous TAMU photos discussed offer additional examples. Image 2 in Figure 4.5 shows a White male cadet overseeing a multiracial cadet (probably Latino) have his hair shaved off. The process of shaving a man's hair as he becomes a cadet may not be out of the ordinary, however, the symbolism of hair, especially within BIPOC communities cannot be overlooked (Sherrow, 2006). In the U.S., Black, Asian, and Native American people have had their hair policed in schools (Essien & Wood, 2021) and in the workplace (Dawson, Karl, Peluchette, 2019). The inclusion of this photo in the school's

viewbook then suggests that a willingness to strip one's identity for the institution is highly valued. Similarly, image 3 in Figure 4.5 shows a Black male student and a White female student–both previously excluded groups until the 1960s–wearing clothing branded with the university colors and logo as they hold up their thumbs in a sign of Aggie pride. Like the other images, this image also signals inclusion at the price of assimilating to the campus culture and traditions.

These photos depict TAMU as an institution that places tradition over everything else, including race. TAMU's photography suggests that all students, White or BIPOC, should assimilate to the primarily White and historically exclusionary institution's traditions to be welcomed. Bonilla-Silva's (2011) theory of racial grammar invites the critical reflection of what it means to have the primary images of BIPOC individuals in TAMU's recruitment materials be those that depict traditions since historically White institutions "have a history, demography, curriculum, climate and a set of symbols and traditions that embody, signify, and reproduce Whiteness" (p. 10).

Figure 4.6

Example of Color-evasiveness in Texas A&M University Photography

Source. Texas A&M University Instagram account, @tamu (October 26, 2019).

Interest Convergence at Cal. The 6 Cal photos depicting White and BIPOC individuals

together suggest that, despite racial differences, everyone can come together over mutual

interests and learn from one another in a richly diverse campus. In one photo a BIPOC man and a

White woman take a selfie as they hold up a Pride flag. In another, an Asian man and a White man hold up t-shirts in Cal colors that read "Voldemort went to Stanford." Both photos show students from different racial backgrounds coming together over a shared identity (i.e., LGBTQIA) or interest (i.e., rallying against a rival campus). While these photos show White and non-White individuals as equals, other photos in this subset depict White individuals learning or directly benefiting from the presence of non-White peers on campus. One photograph exemplifies this relationship. In a viewbook photo, an Indian man in a blue polo shirt and turban wraps a green turban on the head of a White man. The position of the White man is closer to the viewer, suggesting that he is the subject of the photo and the one the viewer should identify with primarily. The Indian man is clad in university colors so that it is clear he is also a student at the university, and a potential peer that the viewer can learn from. The background of the photo is blurred, a tactic suggesting that this is a typical occurrence (Kress & van Leeuwen, 2006). Collectively, these photos suggest that the White and non-White individuals share common interests and that those interests can converge for the benefit of White people.

Figure 4.7

Example of Interest Convergence in University of California, Berkeley Photography

Source. University of California, Berkeley 2019 admissions brochure.

Whiteness as Property at UCLA and UT. Of the 14 UCLA images in this subset, more

than a third foreground or center a White student, making them the subject of the photo, and

show BIPOC students in the background or margins of the photograph. These photos show racial

diversity on campus but visually marginalize racially minoritized individuals having them serve

as props or color for the setting. Similarly, the most prevalent concept I found in the 10 UT photos in this subset was Whiteness as property, which was shown by the continuous centering of White individuals in photographs. One social media image shows an older White male admissions officer surrounded by a group of Latinx high school students. Most students are either seated or kneeling below him, increasing his importance. In another photo from the campus viewbook, a White female student, shrouded in light from a nearby window, is surrounded by a diverse group of classmates and their Black professor. From her center position and intense lighting, she is the subject of the photo and our primary focus. She, like the White lab student and admissions officer in the other images, is privileged over her racially minoritized peers who are kept at the margins. These photos indicate that at UT, like at UCLA, non-Whiteness is valued through inclusion, but Whiteness nonetheless remains at the core of the campus experience.

Figure 4.8

Example of Whiteness as Property in University of Texas at Austin Photography
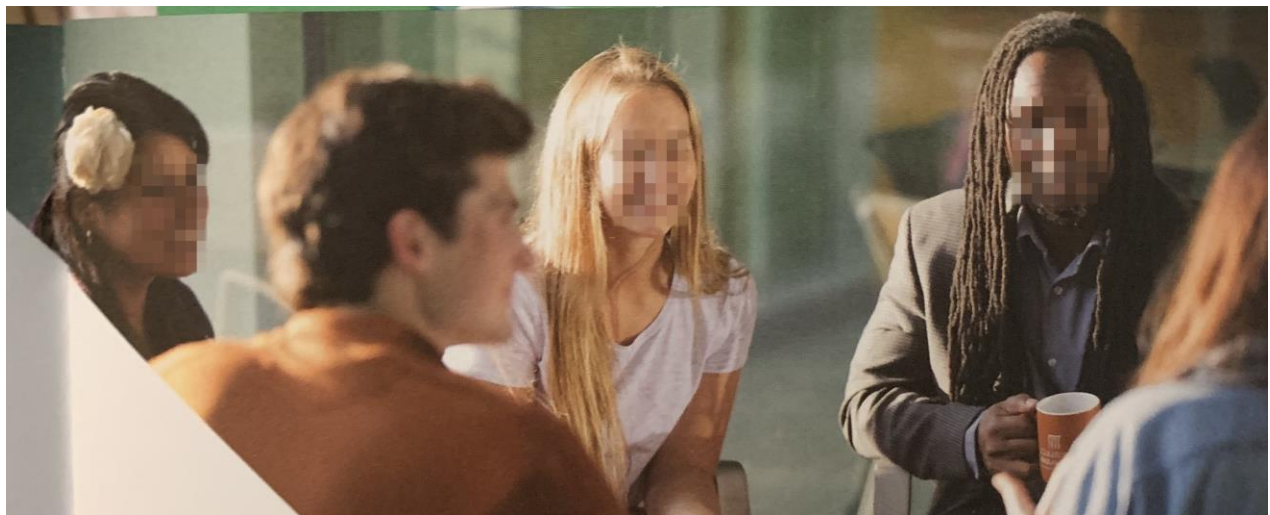
Source. University of Texas at Austin 2021 admissions brochure.

Racial Capitalism at UCLA. There were two instances of racial capitalism—specifically what Leong (2011) calls the "thin" version of racial diversity that is merely interested in superficial inclusion—in the UCLA subset. Both photos depict a group of attractive

students from different racial backgrounds looking straight into the camera and smiling. With only their head and shoulders showing, these photos show racial diversity, but provide no additional context for the students included. They are mere representations of what is readily visible (e.g., race). These were the only photos of this type in the entire subset of 45 photographs showing White and BIPOC individuals together. These types of "vanity" photos showcase diversity but do little to support a "thick" version of diversity which would show White and racially diverse individuals interacting in meaningful ways (Leong, 2013).

Figure 4.9

Example of "Thin" Version of Diversity in University of California, Los Angeles Photography

Source. University of California, Los Angeles 2019 admissions brochure.

Discussion of Visuals

In this chapter, I presented the findings from the content and social semiotic analyses I conducted on university recruitment materials at four case sites. There were three primary findings: (a) racial diversity is overrepresented in the recruitment materials of all cases; (b) Whiteness is commonplace, and racial diversity in new and unknown; and (c) racially minoritized individuals were portrayed in ways that aligned with the concepts of color-evasiveness, interest convergence, racial capitalism, and Whiteness as property.

The finding of overrepresentation is consistent with most previous studies that have used content analysis to consider race and ethnicity in university marketing materials (Holland & Ford, 2021; Hartley & Morphew, 2008; Pippert, Essenburg, Matchett, 2013). Like those studies, I conclude that the overrepresentation of racial diversity is indicative of the additional value non-Whiteness has gained as a recruitment tool for all applicants. For White individuals, seeing images of a racially diverse organization translates into numerous opportunities to interact and learn from others different than them. For BIPOC individuals, these images can increase organizational attractiveness as well, suggesting that they are welcomed (Perkins et al., 2000). The findings from considering the spatial composition of images, especially along the horizontal axis, bolster this re-evaluation argument. The reality of the gap between enrollment figures and marketing images, however, is that the very students universities are trying so hard to recruit are the ones who ultimately suffer. In their case study of a psychology department's efforts to recruit more diverse graduate students, Slay, Reyes, and Posselt (2019) found that the initial influx of BIPOC doctoral students spurred by emphasizing diversity in recruitment materials, left these students feeling deceived once on campus. The expectations set up by these diverse materials did not match their lived reality in the department both in terms of structural diversity and behavioral and psychological dimensions of campus climate, including their interactions with faculty. This "bait and switch" resulted in many of these students transferring and others remaining at the institution but dissuading future applicants of color from enrolling.

Moreover, BIPOC individuals may be doubly impacted if depicted in recruitment materials, since they may go on to see their own image used repeatedly to peddle a false narrative of racial diversity and harmony. In their case study exploring the experiences of Black undergraduates at a PWI, Lewis and Shah (2019) found that several participants felt Black students were used to position the university as more diverse, working toward an artificial form of diversity rather than making any structural changes. One participant recounted how a

university marketing professional asked her and her three Black friends for permission to take their photo, and upon agreeing a White student was inserted in the middle of them. The photo of their "fake" interaction was then prominently featured on the school's diversity and inclusion website, leaving her feeling tokenized by her own institution (p. 7). When seen through a CRT lens, the subset of photos showing both BIPOC and White individuals in this study relay that despite the re-evaluation of non-Whiteness that has occurred, the value of and privileges afforded to Whiteness remain untouched. Thus, the people of color in these images can be left feeling marginalized and tokenized, while simultaneously having their campus expectations for diversity and inclusion shattered.

If institutions truly seek to recruit, retain, and graduate more BIPOC, they must acknowledge the unintended consequences of a diversity strategy that puts marketing ahead of real organizational changes which can impact their experience on campus. In the following chapter, I extend previous research on recruitment materials by turning to the question of how university marketing professionals create these very images. To my knowledge, at the time this study was conducted, no other study considered interview data from university marketing professionals on the creative process and racial portrayals.

Chapter 5 The Inherent Imbalance of Power in the Creation of Marketing Materials

After considering the marketing materials, themselves, I turned to data collected from participant interviews to understand how marketing professionals approached creating marketing materials in general and the racial portrayals within them more specifically. Understanding the process behind the creation of these racial portrayals offers a unique opportunity to expand the literature on higher education marketing, which has focused primarily on the finished product. As the incidents at the University of Wisconsin and other institutions show, a critical examination of the design process can also illuminate practical solutions for preventing or remedying negative racial portrayals.

In this chapter, I present three significant findings: (a) all participants engaged in two types of design processes with varying levels of review; (b) most participants considered four key factors with visuals; and (c) a few participants sensitive to race and racism felt responsible for educating colleagues and guiding decisions on these portrayals. Together, these findings highlight the inherent imbalance of power in the creation of marketing materials. Throughout this chapter and the rest of the dissertation, I refer to participants by their pseudonym followed by their institution and race in parentheses.[31] For example, Alma, who identifies as multiracial and works at the University of California-Los Angeles, is referred to in the text as: Alma (UCLA, M).

The Design Process

To investigate the creation of racial portrayals in higher education marketing materials, I first asked study participants to detail how they went about creating marketing materials for their

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[31] Racial categories are: Asian (A), Black (B), Hispanic (H), multiracial (M), and White (W).

institutions broadly. Asking participants about the design process allowed me to understand where racial portrayals and their creation fit into their overall work. Through these step-by-step accounts of their design process, most grounded in past projects they described in detail or showed me on the screen, the marketing professionals in this study highlighted how it was really in the selection of visuals that discussions of race took place. Before delving into the discussions and creation of racial portrayals, let us understand the overall design process.

All participants in the study reported engaging in two different design processes to create marketing materials for their institutions (see Figure 5.1 for an overview of both processes). In the first process, a formal request is made of the marcom team,[32] which launches the discovery phase, or when the team gathers additional information to execute the request. Then comes the creation phase where the marcom team sources photography, text, and/or audio to draft one or more concepts to present to the requester during the presentation phase. If the initial concept requires revision, the marcom team engages in an editing cycle to again seek approval. Once a concept is approved, the marcom team moves forward with the publication phase, which is when the final product is available for viewing by the public. Finally, some marcom professionals engage in an evaluation phase reviewing the final product based on how it was received by the intended audience(s) and making changes as necessary through a learning cycle.

In the second process, the marcom team either seeks to produce a material without an explicit request or they are struck by inspiration to create something on behalf of the institution. All participants mentioned engaging in the creation and publication phases, as described previously, with this process, but some also went through the presentation and approval phases within their own team before reaching publication. Like the first design process, few participants said they participated in the evaluation phase and learning cycle either because of time or

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[32] 'Marcom' refers to marketing and communications. The term 'marcom team' is used here for ease of readership. There were a few participants who were the sole marketing and communications professional in their unit on campus and thus did not have a marketing and communications team.

capacity constraints. This has implications for understanding how these materials are received by their intended audiences, addressing any mishaps, and learning from previous mistakes. In the following sections, I argue that the level of review differs by process and that this distinction can produce very different finished products. I use two hypothetical recruitment materials (A and B) to ease with the explanation of this finding.

Figure 5.1

Comparison of Design Processes for Higher Education Marketing Materials

REQUEST

Discovery
Ask questions about audience, intent, distribution, and timeline

Creation
Draft creative concept, source photography and text as needed

Presentation
Show a draft of the piece to the requesting party

Approval
Seek approval from requesting party and all pertinent individuals and units

Publication
Send final version to printer for publication or upload to web

Evaluation
Evaluate piece, make changes to this or future editions if needed

Edit Cycle

Learning Cycle

INSPIRATION

Creation
Execute creative concept, may include photography and/or text

Presentation
Show a draft of the piece to the supervisor or team

Approval
Seek approval from supervisor and other individuals/units as needed

Publication
Send final version to printer for publication or upload to web

Evaluation
Evaluate piece, make changes to this or future editions if needed

Edit Cycle

Learning Cycle

Note. This figure shows the two design processes described by participants. Each process begins in the black shape and progresses through the arrows to different stages. The dark gray boxes represent steps described by all participants, while the light grey boxes represent alternative steps taken by a few participants. The dashed lines mark those alternative paths.

"We don't create these things in isolation": Design Process by Request

Marketing professionals may receive the request for Recruitment Material A through an informal channel—an email rather than a formal online form—which participants reported happened frequently. If the request form is used, the discovery phase for Recruitment Material A begins right away, because as Ben (TAMU, W) explained, "we don't create these things in isolation," the marcom team tries "to get as much information as we can through that form." As part of the discovery phase for Recruitment Material A, the marcom team holds an initial meeting with the requesting party and anyone else who may benefit from the successful execution of the request. For example, when creating a recruitment piece for her unit, which had a goal of recruiting more women, Kristen (TAMU, W) said she invited the directors of recruitment, inclusion, and women to "hash out a plan" together, as opposed to inviting the recruitment director only. The combination of people invited to this initial meeting is important because they will be solicited for input throughout the design process and will typically give final approval. During discovery, the marcom team tries to determine what the requesters "actually want, what content, what they need to say," as Annie (TAMU, W) explained. Specifically, for a recruitment material request, the following types of questions may be asked:

> First, what is the need? Are we trying to recruit a certain type of student? Is it a Ph.D.? Is it bachelor's? Whatever it is, understanding what they need to hear, what our offer is, what the benefit of that offer is, and how we demonstrate or communicate that visually. So, understanding the typical schedule of admissions and enrollment marketing, what are the touch points that we need to hit to get our critical mass of applicants? Who out of that mix do we want to carry forward through yield? And how do we court them in a really compelling and interesting and sticky kind of way, so that they come here, and they do well. (Kai, UCLA, B)

This line of questions mirrors the initial stages in the marketing process within the business sector, which is first concerned with identifying potential consumers, what they want, and how they make their purchase decision (Nicolescue, 2009). It also demonstrates that, despite the multitude of potential consumers for higher education, recruitment materials identify the student as the primary decision maker and seek to appeal to them directly (Nicolescue, 2009).

Once equipped with the additional information for the request, the team will move forward in the design process, drafting one or more potential versions or concepts of Recruitment Material A to solicit feedback from the requester.[33] As Kimberly (UT, W) stated, "the audience for recruitment materials is much narrower" and the creative phase often includes taking a "look at examples of peers… to get some inspiration for kind of how you want to design this and what you want it to look and feel like." This approach differs from the business sector where differentiation would be pursued (Nicolescue, 2009) but aligns with previous research on higher education marketing that found universities favor similarity rather than differentiation (Hartley & Morphew, 2008). If the request is like one submitted previously, the marcom team may also choose to use the prior final product as a starting point for the new design:

> A lot of our stuff has just been around for a while… And so, it's kind of, some things are the same every year… it's just getting the information together, handing it over to the graphic designer, and, you know, selecting photos. And having that approved and then just sending it off to the printer. (Jill, Cal, W)

The first opportunity for review happens during the presentation phase when the marcom team presents the concept for Recruitment Material A to the requester. This can lead to quick edits or comprehensive changes to the concept presented depending on how well it matches the requester's vision and goals for the request. For a recruitment piece, this often entails a

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[33] Depending on the complexity of the request or capacity of the marcom team, some participants said an outside marketing firm or graphic designer could be contracted. The design process described would only change in that the contracted individual or group may also be present, the stages themselves remain as if the work was done internally.

negotiation between the requester and marcom professional on the number of times racially

minoritized individuals are represented before approval for publication is granted. As Amy

(TAMU, W) described:

> There was a lot of back and forth of, we want it to look like this, we need to make sure
>
> this is covered, we need to make sure that we see you know, more men, more minorities,
>
> more things like that, which is very difficult in our college, because… most of our
>
> students are young White women. And so, it's very hard to make sure that we cover all of
>
> those bases when it comes to race and ethnicity… it was a good six-month process,
>
> making sure that that was good to go.[34]

Returning to Recruitment Material A, let us assume the original requester approves the concept

as first presented, but would like additional input from others on campus before giving final

approval for publication. This added step increases the level of review placed on the final

product once more, which most participants reported occurred with requests. Most of the

additional reviewers named were other administrators, staff, and occasionally faculty. On rare

occasions, student feedback was solicited for these designs. When solicited, participants

explained that the student feedback was typically from student interns on the marcom staff or

from an established student group that the marketing professionals relied on repeatedly:

> I also try and have a student intern… I know how much like value that adds in terms of
>
> like, having an authentic voice when you're communicating directly with students.
>
> (Elizabeth, UT, W)

> Oftentimes, when it comes to… something that we know is going to be
>
> immediately student-facing, we have a…sort of group of undergraduate students…
>
> representative of their class… we often work with them directly to run ideas and run

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[34] These conversations about racial diversity in images are critical to this study and are addressed directly in the second part of
this chapter.

mock-ups and designs and stuff by them to get their response because they're always

going to have really, really valuable feedback about how things should look, how things

should be phrased or not phrased, what is accessible and approachable for students versus

what other people think is approachable and accessible. (Asher, Cal, A)

When approval for Recruitment Material A is granted, the marcom team publishes it, knowing

that the final product reflects input from the many involved in the design process but that any

mistakes found once published becomes their responsibility.

We have a pretty rigorous sort of process that works its way up at the appropriate levels

to the very top. I mean, at the end of the day, if there's anything wrong with it, that's on

me, that's my job to make sure my team has it correct.

(Minerva, TAMU, W)

Many participants indicated that their designs underwent multiple levels of review before

publication. The number and diversity of reviewers depended on the project. Despite the rigorous

review these participants cited, there were other participants who stated there was little to no

review for their materials they produced.

"Here's this thing that I made": Design Process by Inspiration

Some recruitment materials originate from a marcom professional's own inspiration.

"Sometimes we have a lot of unexpected content" Kelly (TAMU, W) shared, "people will just

say here's this thing that I made…they'll have an idea and want to go do something." When I

asked participants, whose primary responsibilities included graphic design or content creation, to

trace where they found their inspiration, they cited several sources (see Table 5.1).

Table 5.1

Sources of Design Inspiration

Source	Participant Support
University Community	"It almost always comes from the subject… a lot of it just really comes down from having those personal interactions." (Bill, UCLA, W)
Other Academic Institutions	"I was seeing what our fellow Colleges of [field] were doing... And I was seeing the really engaging visuals they had, and they were getting engagement from…their audiences... I was like, I want that for us." (Heidi, TAMU, W)
The Institution's Brand	"A lot of my inspiration just comes from those sort of guiding… cultural principles of this is who we think Berkeley is. This is who we want Berkeley to continue to be seen as, and so we need to continue to tell stories that define that image." (Sebastian, Cal, W)
Internet Culture/Trends	"I kind of keep tabs on…just specific trends in social that I noticed. (Elizabeth, UT, W)
Non-academic Brands	"Following all sorts of brands across industries who you think are doing a good job on social media or in marketing in general or in advertising." (Nolan, TAMU, W)
Professional Development, Associations, and Conferences	"I did go to a conference…talking to other people in the same roles as me in different states, and what was successful for them. And what was successful for me and swapping those ideas and networking." (Hilda, TAMU, W)
Other	Lifestyle magazines, stock image websites, national news outlets, nature, human experience, emotions

Note. Participants are listed by pseudonym, institution (Texas A&M University (TAMU), University of California, Berkeley (Cal), University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA), University of Texas at Austin (UT)), and race (Asian (A), Black (B), multiracial (M), and White (W)).

These sources also help support the claim that higher education marketing is mostly focused on isomorphism rather than differentiation (Hartley & Morphew, 2008). For example, Heidi replicating what other colleges are doing and Hilda swapping ideas with colleagues at professional conferences, points to both the desire for marketing professionals to represent their institutions like others and the way in which isomorphism is facilitated within the field. As Elizabeth and Nolan's tracking of internet trends and non-academic brands suggests, universities may be extending their isomorphic approach to marketing beyond higher education in efforts to increase their mainstream attractiveness further.

This alternative design process for recruitment materials offers far less opportunities for review before the final piece is made public. For example, let us assume that Recruitment Material B originates from walking around the campus one day and stumbling upon a great

photo opportunity. The marcom professional snaps a photo recognizing that it speaks to the racial diversity of the campus. At this point, it is the sole discretion of that marcom professional to figure out what to do with this new visual asset. They may ask their fellow marcom colleagues what the best avenue to share the photo is and their supervisor may question whether a photo featuring majority BIPOC students is the best representation of their school. They may try to anticipate the kind of reception their various audiences may have for this photo by showing it to a colleague on campus that shares the racial identity of the people in the photo. In describing the design process initiated by inspiration, several participants mentioned that no marketing and communications professional can publish something without the approval of someone else on the marcom team. As Deborah (TAMU, W) stated, "nobody ever on my team, nobody ever creates and then makes it public. Usually at least two other people look at it." Similarly, Hilda (TAMU, W) mentioned how they "double, triple, quadruple check everything" making sure that the final piece has "at least three sets of eyes" on it. However, in stark contrast, a few participants stated that they would simply follow through with their own idea for the photo and make it public, citing little to no review outside of their own team if any.

> I've never really had to run anything by anyone, which has been nice. Of course, if there's like, something particularly sensitive, which doesn't happen too often… I will definitely like ask for the opinion of my co-workers on it. (Elizabeth, UT, W)

> Luckily on our team, we don't have much oversight, or I guess an approval process. Normally, if I like it, [my supervisor] likes it, we're good to push it out... for I don't know maybe 75% of our content, we can have the final approval. (Nolan, TAMU, W)

The level of review afforded to Recruitment Materials A and B varies greatly. While the first invites numerous contributors and reviewers and solicits feedback at multiple stages of the process, the second allows for one person to drive the entire process at times unchecked or

relying only on feedback from other marcom colleagues only. Those on smaller teams and responsible for digital content creation were most likely to cite less oversight in the inspiration-initiated design process. Those on larger teams or who were responsible for producing more traditional, often more expensive recruitment materials (e.g., viewbooks, fliers, newsletters) cited greater oversight even when the design process was initiated by inspiration. This difference in level of review is important because the more people review a piece before it is made public, the higher the likelihood that the final product will reflect a diversity of thought and experience, especially if those reviewing hold a diversity of perspectives and experiences with race. By engaging in a more inclusive design process, marketing professionals increase the likelihood that they will not represent racially minoritized individuals in questionable and hurtful ways.

Visual Considerations

Regardless of the design process undertaken, most participants communicated specific challenges and considerations they face when considering how to visually represent the racially minoritized individuals present (or not present) on their campus. There were four primary considerations that participants articulated when represent racially diverse individuals through graphics, photography, and video: (a) style of imagery, (b) content of imagery, (c) the sources used to procure the imagery, and (d) the application of that imagery. Each one of these considerations can be seen as having two opposite ends that marketing professionals adopt as preferences, with most participants falling somewhere in the middle because of restrictions placed on them (e.g., time, budget, enrollment). Figure 5.2 captures the four considerations. I discuss these four considerations and the tensions they bring forth in participants in the following sections. It is important to consider these tensions, since how they are resolved influences the racial representations participants publish.

Table 5.2

Key Considerations Relating to Representing Racially Diverse Individuals Visually in Marketing Materials

STYLE		CONTENT	
Staged Photos ●———————● Candid Photos		Individuals ●———————● Groups	

SOURCE		USE	
Indirect Ask ●———————● Direct Ask		In Context ●———————● Out of Context	
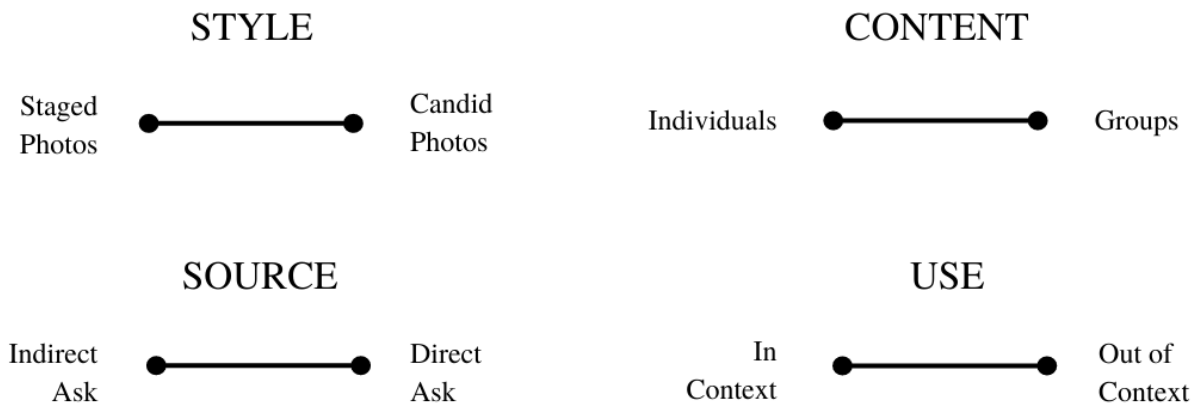
Note. This figure shows the key considerations relating to representing racially diverse individuals in visual materials with those on the right side as the preferred (though not always enacted) way expressed by participants.

Style

Style was the most prevalent consideration, with 13 participants referring to the tension between using staged or candid photography to represent the individuals on their campus. Staged photography is when the participants know they are being photographed in a controlled setting and often are recruited for this purpose or they answer a volunteer call-out for a campus photoshoot. On the other hand, candid photography is when the photograph captures "what's actually happening," as Mila (Cal, A) said. Participants identified two challenges associated with staged photography: 1) the photoshoots themselves did not garner a diverse pool of volunteers, and 2) the photography felt forced or fake. Jill offers both reasons as rationale for why her institution moved away from the use of staged photography:

> Logistically, it was a huge pain. And it had that feeling like I was saying, super false, because you're trying to get this group together that somehow represented all of these

different students and to have them in one photo. We kind of gave that up after a few

years, it was like, this is crazy that they have to all be in one photo. (Jill, Cal, W)

Those participants who favored candid photography preferred how it could show interactions

amongst diverse students that felt more real. Jill elaborated on what candid photography did for

her institution:

It's like people actively doing something… I think having a photographer on staff who

could just go to events as they come up on campus just meant that, okay, now we actually

have a huge number of photos to choose from, of students actually doing things…they

tend to be what I would call that "real real." (Jill, Cal, W)

However, some participants mentioned how their candid photography sometimes came from

campus or unit-wide events. For example, Helen (TAMU, W) shared that most of her photos of

racially diverse individuals tended to come from one campus event at the beginning of the year

where students were given free pizza. Given the lack of opportunity for candid photography with

diverse individuals on her campus otherwise, she would use the photos of that event "as long as

it's not obvious that they've got like, a giant piece of pizza in their hands." Helen's comment

speaks to a typical lack of compensation for the use of a student's image. While some may argue

that the student did receive compensation (i.e., pizza), their one-time form of compensation pales

in comparison to the kind of social or economic benefits the already well-resourced university

will gain from using the student's image (potentially) in perpetuity. Helen's comment also

speaks to the second most prevalent consideration among participants, sourcing visuals.

Source

There were 11 participants who spoke directly to sourcing photography and the tension

between doing it yourself (direct ask) and relying on others to procure racially minoritized

individuals (indirect ask) to include in marketing materials. Those who relied on direct asks fell

into two camps, (a) asking strangers or (b) relying on their own network. Hillary (Cal, W)

mentioned often having to walk around campus asking people whether they want to participate in a photoshoot. On the other hand, Briella (Cal, W) mentioned how her student interns would often tap into their own network to create student features. Whereas the first approach requires little to no connection to racially minoritized individuals on campus, the second approach requires marketing professionals to establish and retain strong connections to communities and groups they may or may not identify with themselves:

> One of the things that I've worked with my team on is like, we can either keep complaining that we're not getting the stories that we need to tell a full story, or we can be active in searching out those stories… I've asked my team to go out, find those stories, maintain relationships with these groups. So, they're always feeding these stories… And so that's where I found that we've been able to balance is like we have to actively engage with our Hispanic community, our Asian community, all of our communities to pull this in and make it part of our repertoire… but I think the biggest thing is level setting to a higher level of incorporating diverse stories, and that becomes your benchmark. (Riley, UT, B)

The kind of relationship building that Riley describes above is not always feasible for marketing professionals, and thus there are those who rely on other institutional actors to provide access to racially diverse individuals. One group of institutional actors most often cited by participants as sources for indirect asks were faculty:

> It's hard… because obviously, I can't know all 9,000 students that we have. So, I rely a lot on, our office relies a lot on advisors and professors to find the students and to find the people that we highlight. (Helen, TAMU, W)

> We rely on faculty to help get students from their classes that they know will be a good face for the college, a good face for the university, and really show what the range of people in our college is. (Amy, TAMU, W)

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The other group cited by participants were staff members from student support offices and programs on campus. Several participants mentioned relying on DEI teams and program staff for introductions to racially marginalized individuals. As the institutional actors most likely to have gained the trust of diverse students, these DEI professionals offer marketing and communications teams invaluable access to the very people they wished to represent and help recruit.

Only one participant mentioned relying on a student organization for support in sourcing photography. Liam (UCLA, W) described a racially diverse student leadership group that was convened by the former head of his unit with the intention of creating a space for their voices to be heard regarding DEI efforts within the unit. He described having the "opportunity to tap them" for advice and honest feedback on their design and editorial work as well as taking pictures of them, "an easy way to get some visuals that show non-White faces." This marketing professional's relationship with this student group is unique not only because of the access to photography it generates, but because it allows these select students to voice their opinions on the artistic and editorial direction taken by the marketing professional. This is perhaps the most reciprocal relationship identified by participants in sourcing, even as professional staff and students remain on different footing.

Content

Six of the 45 marketing professionals in the study shared how the content of the photo, specifically the number of individuals featured, was something they actively considered. Although this was the least frequently cited consideration, participants who spoke on their preferences between individual and group photography overwhelmingly preferred the latter. Group photography felt less restrictive to these participants and came with the additional benefit of showing other community values like collaboration and learning from others. As Jill (Cal, W) put it, solo photography may only prompt the viewer to see one aspect of the person (e.g., race),

while group photography is "not just about being this person, it's about…the experiences you'd be having with other people."

Moreover, the single versus group factor weighs heavier on projects where only one image can be used. The challenge with portrait photography is that it rarely meets the approval of all involved in a project. As Mila (Cal, A) shared, the last time she designed a brochure, she placed a portrait on the cover to make it "more impactful," but the requester asked that she add more photos for a collage look, since one photo was not "diverse enough." In their study of university viewbooks, Osei-Kofi, Torres, and Liu (2013) found institutions used collages to superficially depict racial diversity without needing to have actual interracial interaction across race on campus. According to the authors, the use of collages suggests "celebrating diversity, rather than substance, takes center stage" (p.395). The preference for collages promotes what Leong (2013) calls a "thin" version of diversity determined by numbers and appearances, rather than a "thick" version of diversity which requires meaningful interracial interactions. By presenting a thin version of diversity to prospective students through collages, institutions and the professionals behind their use may be setting expectations for limited cross-racial interactions even before students arrive on campus.

Another participant shared her experience with designing a billboard campaign, a similar project where only one photo could be selected. While her first draft featured a Black student, she was asked to run the campaign with a picture of a White student instead:

> I took it up to our public affairs group, and the woman's like, "No, you can't use that
> person because…there's not that many Black people here anyway. And he can't be the
> sole representation of the university." So that causes me concern…I do try to be
> cognizant that I just can't hang the university brand on one race. It just doesn't quite work
> that way. Because that's an oversell. But then, it's also an antiquated, antiquated point of

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view. It's like, but that's his experience. He's a student…why can't he be the

representative face of the University of Texas at Austin? (Riley, UT, B)

Riley and her colleague had very different visions of who could represent the university in such a

highly visible campaign. While sensitive to the issue of "overselling" the racial diversity of the

campus, Riley voiced her discomfort with how easily the Black student's experience could be

negated as the institution centered the White male student experience instead. This incident

shows how, even if there has been a recent re-evaluation in the value of race in higher education,

as Leong (2013) hypothesized and as demonstrated by institutional commitments to appeal to

non-White students, Whiteness still draws a higher value in university marketing. It also speaks

to the unwritten rules behind our country's racial grammar (Bonilla Silva, 2011) that dictate a

Black students' experience cannot represent a historically and majority White institution.

Use

The fourth consideration that participants shared most often was whether the imagery was

used to represent its original context or not. Recalling the example that Helen (TAMU, W) gave

of using photos from a back-to-school pizza event to show diversity, 8 out of 10 participants that

spoke to this consideration would not agree with this tactic. These participants were adamant

about using photography of their own students in the original setting or context in which the

photograph was taken. Jill (Cal, W) articulated that they are "not just plucking people from like a

campus database" but using their own students to represent their campus unit. Asher (Cal, A)

commented on how some university photos of students of color can easily be used out of context

repeatedly:

From our image collection of our stock images that we use, often there's not a lot of

Black and Brown students in those images, because they're not here currently…so…

were often going back to those same pictures, over and over… so that same image gets

recycled, you know, from a brochure to a billboard, to a catalog to whatever.

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Kristen (TAMU, W) recalled a time she chose a photo of diverse students for a unit-wide publication and opted not to use it after realizing the photo was taken during an access and inclusion program:

> Every student in that picture is a person of color. And that's not an accurate representation of your college. And that would be a great photo for a brochure about that program. But not for the college as a whole. And so, I think just always having that lens on and looking through that lens is really important.

In contrast to those participants who preferred the use of photos in context, there was at least one participant who advocated for using high quality photography regardless of context. Deborah (TAMU, W) recounted a time she struggled to identify imagery of diverse students for a recruitment publication requested by a faculty member. Eventually, the faculty member selected his own photos which she said were "great" but dated, showing students who had graduated years before. The discussion that ensued between the marketing professional and faculty member was soon settled after she shared her personal approach to the use of photography:

> If they're good pictures, it doesn't matter if they graduated 10 years from now because our audience are the prospective students, not the faculty who know that they've graduated 10 years ago. For us, it's partly doing what we believe will produce the best outcome for our institution.

Deborah easily rationalizes the use of older photos by noting that the intended audience for the project (i.e., prospective students) would never be able to identify the students pictured anyway. Overall, she is willing to place the needs of the university, in this case seeming attractive to diverse students, above those of the very students she is trying so hard to enroll. By using the images of diverse alumni years after they have left the institution, Deborah and others who engage in this practice perpetuate the commodification of race. In using the image and likeness of past students in marketing materials, institutions continue to benefit from racial commodities

long after those individuals gain to benefit from the institution. This is what Marxism by way of Leong's (2013) theory of racial capitalism defines as "surplus value" through exploitation in a relationship of unequal power. This approach to photography is in stark contrast to the sensitivity expressed for current and former students by marketing professionals who prefer photos remain in context. The difference in approaches to these key considerations at times seems to be a byproduct of the third finding in this chapter. Those participants most sensitive to race and racism indicated feeling responsible for educating their colleagues and guiding creative decisions around the use of images of racially minoritized individuals.

Educating Colleagues

While all participants in the study expressed interest in showing racial diversity in recruitment materials, a small group of them indicated a need to advocate on behalf of those pictured. These participants specifically stated that they felt a responsibility to speak up and challenge colleagues—whether team members, requestors, or others at the institution—when they observed racial diversity being represented in ways that negatively affect prospective, current, or former racially minoritized members of the campus community. For example, Lola (Cal, W), who is often asked to include diverse imagery in her requested projects, will ask several follow up questions regarding the goals of the ask and the reality of the program or unit represented in the project. She believes that if you see something that's not right, the marketing professional should be able to "come back and say 'no,' we're not going to do it that way. And this is why." Personally, she feels it's the moral thing to do as well as complying with what she has learned as a marketer about "truth in advertising." The most helpful tool she has found for these types of conversations, however, is fear of public embarrassment. She will refer her colleague to a Twitter conversation where several colleges were "called out" for using dated photos of students in recruitment materials:

I had already felt that way before I saw that chain of posts, but then it kind of gave me

that background that I was like, I could use that if somebody was like, 'No, no, no, it'll be

fine.' I'm like, 'actually, it's not fine. Let me show you my actual proof of the people

who have been used in that way.' So, I hate that it's happened to people and that you're

like, no, look, I have examples for you. But um, it's nice to have something to back you

up.

One need only to look at recent media accounts to find proof points like those Lola describes.

The repetitious use of BIPOC students' photos, especially Black students, is a well-documented

phenomenon. One participant shared how his institution took responsibility for this practice to

shed light on the need to diversify STEM professions. Without prompting, they included an

article in their annual magazine where they spoke openly about an alumnus whose college photo

the institution had used for recruitment purposes for years and publicly apologized for the

transgression. This example, however, is a rare occurrence.

At times, having these challenging conversations with colleagues left participants feeling

like their efforts were fruitless. One participant shared a story of a marketing team meeting when

a BIPOC intern agreed with Black students on campus who resented the overrepresentation of

Black students in recruitment materials. Despite the intern's concern of overrepresentation, the

manager remained steadfast on the approach. According to Briella (Cal, W), the manager felt

that aspiration was more important than authenticity and that by overrepresenting BIPOC, in this

instance Black individuals, the institution could obtain higher levels of racial diversity. These

types of situations left some professionals, like Annie (TAMU, W), feeling defeated:

It's really just… this.. defeating conversation. Like, I've got to be the one to bring this

up? Because they desperately want this. Because they want their program to stand out,

like, "hey, look, we're not all just what you think. We're not just all White..." But

oftentimes, the faculty member would say, 'No, I want this. (whispering) You have to do it.'

However, the potential for defeat did not deter these individuals completely, as they viewed not speaking up in these moments as a cause for greater concern. For example, Asher (Cal, A) warned his colleagues over the dangers of relying solely on photos from a campus database:

I think people see right through that. And, on top of that, the actual students who are in those images, they see their own image getting pushed out there as well. And I think that can build a sense of resentment on their part, rightfully because they say, look, the university is using my image. It's pushing an image of itself, that isn't true. And they're using me, using my image to do that and that's not fair, and it's not representative. And so yeah, by striving to be more diverse and be more welcoming, the university is actually harming the folks who need the most help, who are here right now.

When asked how frequently these types of discussions occur, Asher said they happen more often than he would like, pointing to the historical and ongoing legacy of racism on campus as the catalyst:

I would say that in the past, those conversations haven't happened, again, purely because it's been all White folks here historically… most folks are receptive and understanding…I realized that it's gonna take some folks time, but there are still a few people who just don't get it…it's that entrenched institutional White liberal racism, at its core is what it is. When I think of the folks who are resistant to having these sorts of conversations with me, they are you know, older White ladies who are super liberal…but…liberals can be racist too. They're racist in their way. And I think it speaks to who has power… they think they're doing the right thing... But they don't want to recognize that it's racist. To them, being a racist means wearing a hood and burning a

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torch on someone's lawn. They don't recognize these smaller levels of racism that can

exist within the institution.

Asher's view of his liberal colleagues reflects CRT scholars' critique of liberalism as a social

philosophy that supports equal opportunity but does not adequately address racial inequalities in

society (Harris, 1994; Delgado & Stefancic, 2013). Liberalism views racism as an exception to

the norm rather than an "endemic feature of society" (Baber, 2017, p.188). As "*that* person on

the team," representing the voice of people of color, this participant felt it was his "burden" to

challenge others' intentions with the use of diverse imagery, which made for a work environment

where he felt "isolated" and "not always comfortable." When asked what he believed could be an

antidote, he stated that the current condition could probably be alleviated by an increase in the

number of people of color within the marketing profession itself. Several participants agreed that

higher education institutions could stand to benefit from a more racially diversity marketing

profession. After acknowledging that marketing and communications professionals at his

institution skewed White and female, Kai (UCLA, B) shared his experience attending an industry

conference and career fair titled "Where are all the Black People?" The annual event's title is

ironic, noting the demographic reality while trying to address it. For example, according to the

American Marketing Association (2021), of the doctoral degrees in marketing that were granted

between 1983-2005, African American, Latino, and Native American students earned 151, or 5%

of the 2,999 degrees conferred. For many of these years, there were only a handful of students

pursuing a doctoral degree in marketing and for some years there were none. While a doctoral

degree is not necessary to work in the field, those who pursue a doctoral degree in this applied

field come from within its ranks. Moreover, a study on Chief Marketing Officers' (CMO) tenure

by Spencer Stuart showed that just 15% of new CMO hires in 2021 identified as BIPOC, up from

11% in 2020 (Welch & Sanderson, 2022).

Some participants noted the value of having coworkers with diverse perspectives as they relied on them to navigate everyday decisions related to race as well as advice during communications crises related to race. Ava (Cal, W) explained that when her college recognized diversity as a stated value and she realized her "entire team was middle-aged White women," she offered an interview to a diverse candidate. This candidate was someone who she would not have otherwise granted an interview to "because her background wasn't quite what I would want, ideally," but was someone who "just blew [them] all away in the interview." Ava explained that the candidate did not possess the professional experiences she considered prerequisites for the position, but the additional context the candidate provided during her interview allowed the committee to see she possessed the necessary skills for the job. If it were not for Ava's reflection on the lack of diversity on her team, the differential access to professional opportunities reflected in the diverse candidate's resume versus that of her White peers would have been reproduced once again. Instead, Ava now views her diverse colleague as "a great resource" on the team who "provides interesting perspective on topics like tokenism or over representation or how you deal with things." Similarly, Kimberly (UT, W), who recognizes that her communications team is lacking in racial diversity, will typically recruit students from diverse backgrounds to work as interns. She recognizes that she and her team have come to "depend on our diverse students to help us tell stories from their perspectives." Intern positions are typically seasonal, temporary, and hourly, if paid at all. As such, they have the least amount of power. Most participants mentioned having interns on their teams, who were often more racially diverse than full-time marcom employees, therefore potentially placing the burden of speaking up on the people with the least amount of power.

Regarding race-related crisis communications, Dylan (UCLA, W) saw having a person of color on his team as a "huge help." According to him, the audience places importance on not just the content, but also "the messenger when it comes to this stuff." According to him, he can "do

everything in the world to get out of the way and like, let the other voices shine through," but "it's still like, 'who's the author? Oh, it's this White guy?'" Participants who valued diverse perspectives were more likely to be managers, while the marketing professionals providing the diverse perspective were more often in entry- to mid-level positions or student employees. This differential suggests that those in power vis-à-vis management positions are more likely than not to be White, and they lean on their racially diverse colleagues for support without having to forego power by promoting them to higher level management positions or, in the case of interns, hiring them for full-time roles. It also signals that an understanding of race is not necessary for management positions, nor does it have to be a shared responsibility if someone on your team fulfils this requirement.

While the task of educating colleagues on the use of diverse imagery often fell along racial and ethnic lines, there were also White participants who chose to initiate such conversations. As opposed to experiencing isolation or backlash like their BIPOC colleagues, White marketing professionals who chose to have conversations over race were received with gratitude by their peers. When Lola (Cal, W) reflected on a recent conversation about racial representations in images, she was excited by how "everybody was teaching the lesson" and not just the people of color "having to step in and explain why something was like problematic." Furthermore, White participants who challenged notions of racial representations in imagery did not see these challenging conversations as a "burden," but rather something they could opt in or out of doing. For example, Heidi (TAMU, W), who showed gratitude for her former supervisor's approach to imagery, stated she chose to keep up this approach after her departure and despite her colleagues' lessening concern with racial representation:

I think now that she's gone, it hasn't been as big of a push for that. I don't know that everyone else cared about it to the extent that she cared about it, and that I care about it. But I feel very lucky that I do have such a hold on how we're represented visually. So,

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I'm very glad that it's something that I'm aware of, and that I have the power to choose

those images and choose…the most visual content that we're putting out as a college... at

the end of the day, it is just up to me. And I don't know if that's because people don't

really notice if I don't use diverse imagery, or if they either don't care or just understand

that we don't always have diverse imagery to use.

According to Heidi, she is free to decide whether she wants to include racially minoritized

individuals in her university's materials. She does not feel a "burden" to do so and, if she

stopped, she would not be penalized for her actions. Ultimately, she has the power to include or

exclude racial diversity whereas some of her BIPOC colleagues feel they must challenge their

peers for the power to make such a decision.

Discussion of Process Findings

In seeking to better understand the design process, I first saw it as a space where different

individuals come together to negotiate the institution's norms, values, and image together. What

we might call a pluralist view of power, akin to Balbridge's (1971) "political university." The

value of Whiteness seemed normative, perpetuated by who is present, who is heard, who

approves and who does not. While their efforts were not always fruitful, some participants chose

to challenge conventional desires to overrepresent racial diversity in marketing materials serving

as disrupters of the status quo. This pushback on the design process at times felt like a burden for

BIPOC participants who chose to speak up leaving some feeling isolated in the workplace. While

their White counterparts, for the most part, had their challenges met with praise by colleagues.

This finding is congruent with other critical race scholarship that suggests that even when

racially minoritized individuals are in a position of power, they are often burdened by being the

only ones and feeling like they must represent their entire race or live up to preconceived racial

stereotypes (Crenshaw et al., 1995; Delgado & Stefancic, 2012; Zamudio et al., 2011). That this

burden regularly fell on those with less formal power (e.g., student interns) while those in formal

positions of power (i.e., managers) could deflect this responsibility, bolsters the idea that higher education institutions are sites for the reproduction of inequality and existent power relations in our society (Bourdieu and Passeron, 1977).

One point of contrast to this notion came from the BIPOC individuals in the images themselves and their role in the process. After rounds of analysis, I became increasingly aware that some actors with less official power—those who critiqued the finished products—could disrupt the design process. Though not physically present in design meetings and editing cycles, the people of color captured in the images themselves at times voiced their discontent indirectly. Such as in the case of the participant who used the stories of alumni resentment at a different institution to persuade a faculty member to reconsider their own inclination to use images of former students. This is still a rare example, though something that could be achieved more frequently if marcom professionals prioritized the evaluation phase and learning cycles as much as other stages of the design process.

Chapter 6 The Shift from Racial Justice to Brand Equity

Affirmative action, as it was first imagined, was intended to address past wrongs by providing people of color who have historically been systematically excluded from employment opportunities (U.S. Equal Employment Opportunity Commission, 1996) and subsequently higher education access to such privileges and rights previously enjoyed by White people (Johnson, 1965). However, as this intention, commonly referred to as the "remedial rationale," became legally indefensible, it was soon replaced by the "diversity rationale" (Schuck, 2003). The diversity rationale maintains that diversity is a compelling state interest and that higher education institutions must diversify to bestow the educational benefits of diversity to *all* students. In this chapter, I argue that there has been a shift away from the initial aim of racial justice toward one of "brand equity" substantiated by the diversity rationale. Brand equity is the social value ascribed to a brand name, regardless of the quality of the product or service rendered (Rosenbaum-Elliott, Percy, & Pervan, 2018).

To explore how marketing and communications professionals understand the portrayals of racially minoritized individuals they create and how an affirmative action ban may influence their work, I turned once again to the interview data collected from 45 participants. Every participant in the study articulated or agreed that there was a clear tension in their work. They described this as the "fine line" between being authentic and aspirational in how they present racial diversity at their institution to various audiences, but especially to prospective students. They worried about overrepresentation and tokenism of racially minoritized groups, as well as depicting their institutions as exclusionary and fake. This tension between authenticity and

aspiration exists because of a deep desire to show racial diversity in materials often despite the true structural diversity found on their campus. Four primary rationales undergirded their desire: (a) to extract educational benefits from diversity, (b) to mirror their state's increasingly diverse population, (c) because it was the right and morally just thing to do, and (d) to compete with their peers. Overall, the majority of marketing professionals did not view the limited use of affirmative action by their institution as influencing their work. The few who drew a connection between their work and the affirmative action ban had prior experience with a legal challenge at their institution and viewed the ban as a constraint on their own editorial creativity and control.

"It's a very fine line": Racial Portrayals as Authentic and Aspirational

Trapeze artists balance hundreds of feet above onlooking crowds, depending only on a thin rope to support their weight. One faulty step and they can plummet to their messy demise. Similarly, marketing and communications professionals spoke candidly about their constant struggle for balance. As Kelly (TAMU, W) put it, "it's a very fine line in being able to represent yourself authentically and also to craft your marketing materials in a way that can…make a student that you really, really want…be able to see themselves at your institution." All participants identified the pressure to represent their campus' racial diversity in both authentic *and* aspirational ways. This pressure was described as difficult to bear and nearly inescapable:

> It's hard to show prospective students what we don't have. And then at the same time, it's hard to get what we want, if we can't show them why they should come here… it is kind of a catch 22 that we deal with. (Helen, TAMU, W)

In relation to racial diversity, professionals defined authenticity as numerically accurate representations of race in their materials, while aspiration was perceived primarily as over-representing people of color. The authenticity-aspiration line they struggled to balance on was this idea of racial diversity as under- or over-represented compared to campus demographics.

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Overrepresentation

Many participants understood that leaving racially minoritized individuals out of their imagery was a major failure and yet balancing inclusion without bordering on overrepresentation proved elusive, as Ava (Cal, W) describes:

It's a… constant juggling act…It's a constant battle. And there are still people in our school like within the last year, who would put up a website or turn out a brochure that is all White people you know and you're like, "Hello!?" Or all men, like "Haven't you learned anything after what we've been through?" And then, at the same time, there are people who are complaining that we've gone overboard by focusing too much on diversity… so you're never going to make everybody happy and it's like a constant "What do I do? Is this right?" I'm doing my best and there's no right answer to it that we have found. And we just kind of talk through it and do our best with what we have and hope that it lands well.

Participants made decisions hoping for the least possible damage. On one hand, participants saw White-only imagery as promoting an alienating environment for prospective BIPOC students. On the other, overrepresentation was seen as marketing "false goods" as one participant put it. According to some participants, like Ben (TAMU, W), overrepresentation had the potential to hurt BIPOC students once they arrived on campus and found a very different reality than what was marketed to them:

I wanted to go through our magazine… and just looking… let's say that there is a Black student that's a prospective, and he gets a magazine that has four out of five people that are featured in this magazine are Black, and he's like, 'that's what I'm going to experience, that's going to be awesome, there's going to be so many people like me there.' That is a terrible thing. That is such a lie to tell… we have to just continue to

evolve and make sure that we are representing in the right way…in an authentic way. Overrepresentation was seen as being both aspirational and potentially inauthentic, but many participants still preferred to overrepresent racial diversity than to fall short. The desire of some marketing professionals to show racial diversity despite the dangers their actions could inflict on racially minoritized populations suggests that diversity is being pursued for diversity's sake and vested White interests, rather than to address past or current discrimination.

Tokenism

Representing racial diversity in materials, however, came with another challenge: tokenism. Of the 45 participants, 14 discussed the dangers of tokenism. Participants from California-based cases were particularly sensitive to this issue, with 10 of the 14 being from either University of California campus. Tokenism was defined in several ways by participants. The most common definition was as a verb, or tokenize, the act of featuring the same person in photos or stories repeatedly due to a lack of racial diversity on campus. The second most common definition was as an adjective, as in having a "token" student of color in an otherwise all-White image. There were two participants who defined tokenism differently than the others. Dylan (UCLA, W) used the term to refer to stories that highlighted structural diversity. Helen (TAMU, W) used the term to rationalize an effort to enroll more BIPOC students who were not athletes:

> There's been kind of a more concentrated push to get more students of color admitted
> that are not athletes. Because we don't want to tokenize them. We don't want to be like,
> "oh, here's our Black students, but oh, they're all football players." You know? Like,
> they're people that have more to offer other than their bodies and athleticism.

Some participants, like Sebastian (Cal, W), offered examples of how they approached situations where someone could feel tokenized:

Frank conversations have been had with professors or students to make sure that they are

currently not feeling tokenized. With this video that featured four researchers, and one of

them was Black... she's the only Black professor in that department. And to just say, up

front, 'we're not trying to tokenize you, we think that your research is the most

interesting from this selection that we want to tell.' And, you know, 'you need to tell us

when we've sort of tapped into you too much to talk about your work.' And with students

too. I've maybe had a couple conversations over the years to check in on that sensitivity

to make sure that they're not at least for them to know, to be aware that I'm not trying to

tokenize them.

While the participants who spoke of tokenism primarily identified the harm it could cause

the individual, some did reflect on how their intended audience may perceive the practice. They

either speculated or had proof that prospective students did not care to see tokenized individuals

in university materials. As one participant mentioned:

Focus groups have told us, 'I don't want to see that same one African American student,

you have on every single thing you've got. And he's always there, even though it's the

Anglo Female Association.' (Minerva, TAMU, W)

For these participants, tokenism was neither good for the university's image nor for individual

members of the university community.

The Rainbow

Two TAMU participants used the term "rainbow" to describe photography that they

considered particularly inauthentic, while others alluded to such photography when contrasting

their own approaches. Rainbow photos were described as a group image where each individual is

of a different race, and sometimes of a visibly different culture, religion, ability, or sexual

preference. These participants viewed rainbow photos as inauthentic, overly aspirational, and an

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outdated form of portraying diversity. While they acknowledged the continued use of rainbow photos at other universities, they considered their own approach to representing racial diversity as superior and more advanced than the meticulously staged rainbow photo. They also believed today's prospective students to be more nuanced consumers of marketing materials than those in previous generations, seeing right through such calculated photography. Renna (TAMU, W) was of this view:

> One of the things that we like to do is, ask the students tell your viewer, what it's like, what do you see when you walk through campus, what do you see, what's your field feeling for where you are, that's a real important thing. It's to be honest and be honest with the viewer. And not try to just make the campus look like this glorious rainbow.

While the use of rainbow photos was not favored by any participant, there were examples of creative techniques to show racial diversity in a single image. One Cal participant described a time when her team chose an illustration of people of different colors (e.g., pink, green) to show racial diversity and "get away from the brown shades of skin." This kind of digital manipulation even among illustrations underscores the deep desire that marcom professional have for showcasing racial diversity in the materials they produce. This participants' preference for atypical skin color, however, suggests that her need to represent racial diversity does not equate with valuing individuals with brown shades of skin, but perhaps more palatable, race-neutral colors.

The fine line participants traverse is steeped with challenges from overrepresentation to tokenism, exclusivity to artificial rainbows. Between finding the right mix of authenticity and aspiration lies an overwhelming desire to show greater racial diversity than what campus enrollment figures may support, sometimes taking vast measures to do so. Whereas previous research on university recruitment materials supports the first set of findings in this chapter, the

following section expands on this knowledge by presenting the primary rationales undergirding their apparent desire to show diverse imagery.

"This is important, and I need to showcase diversity":[35] Rationales for Racial Portrayals

All participants in this study felt strongly that racial diversity should be included in university marketing and communications materials. When participants were asked to reflect on why this was important to them, they stated one or more of the following reasons: (a) to have an educational environment full of diverse perspectives, (b) because it was the right and morally just thing to do, (c) to uphold their mission as a public institution, and (d) to remain competitive with their institutional peers. Examples of each rationale are provided in Table 6.1 in order of most to least referenced.

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[35] Annie (TAMU, W) reflecting on the value her colleagues place on increasing racially diverse representation in marketing materials without reflecting on their motivations for doing so.

Table 6.1

Rationales for Including Racial Portrayals in Marketing Materials

Rationale	Participant Support
Educational Environment	"It's excellent, like, you need to have a range of opinions, and you need to have people with different backgrounds to make your educational experience richer." Samantha (Cal, A)
Right Thing to Do	'We need to do what we can to open up all facets of society, to all people… I mean, that is the ethical and moral… thing to do, and something, in my opinion, that history's been calling for us to do for God knows how long and we've gotten better and failed both hand in hand with it. This is just the part I can have some control on, so I need, I need to do that." Andy (UT, W)
Public Mission	"For our team, I think it's what is the mission of a… public state-funded institution. And I think one of those obligations is ensuring that your school even as much as you can, within whatever facet, your level, your instruction is, represent who you're serving." Lorenzo (UCLA, M)
Market Competition	"Definitely a desire to compete with…our main competitor. So, I think A&M wants to say, 'Oh, yeah, we're… we… conservatives come to us, because we'll provide you that conservative foundation. But even if you're not, you should come because we're, we have that same diversity and culture [as our largest competitor],' which we don't. So, I definitely think that's strategic to kind of pull students from that other top tier school and get them to us." Hilda (TAMU, W)

Note. 'TAMU' refers to Texas A&M University; 'Cal' refers to the University of California, Berkeley; 'UT' refers to the University of Texas at Austin; UCLA refers to the University of California, Los Angeles; 'A' denotes an Asian participant; 'W' denotes a White participant; and 'M' denotes a multiracial participant.

While some participants expressed only one rationale behind their work, some referenced multiple rationales at a time. One participant even managed to touch on all four:

The history of Texas as a state, University of Texas at Austin doesn't have really a great racial past…And so, the university has long recognized that we have to address this past. But if we're going to be a flagship university, if we're going to be the number 16, or 14, public university in the country, you have to deal with your racial differences, your past, but then commit to moving forward and being that great, because we know that diversity lends itself to successful educational experiences and outcomes. (Riley, UT, B)

One way to consider these rationales is by understanding who benefits from them the most. For instance, all students benefit from the first rationale, but especially those students with

little to no exposure to racially diverse populations prior to entering college. The second rationale emphasizes the benefits racially minoritized individuals may gain and acknowledges the past wrongs committed against them. The third rationale benefits the state through increases in workforce diversity and their technological or societal contributions. The fourth rationale emphasizes the benefits gained by the university relative to their direct competitors. However, as selective public institutions, each of these rationales directly speaks to the mission of the institution, except for the second rationale. As institutions operating under affirmative action bans, every rationale except the second one is legally defensible. Thus, another way of understanding these rationales is by looking at affirmative action jurisprudence and the influence it may have had on their development. For example, the educational environment rationale provided by participants parallels the educational benefits argument presented in past AA cases. The educational benefits argument in AA cases has been used to define racial diversity as a campus attribute that contributes to the learning of *all* students, especially those who would not otherwise have exposure to people different from themselves. The public mission rationale is aligned with one of the two prongs for meeting strict scrutiny in AA cases, the idea that having a racially diverse campus is a compelling state interest. Diversity is thus commodified to serve as an asset for increasing state economic gains (Baber, 2017). Even the market competition rationale can be traced to AA jurisprudence as the pursuit of racial diversity by institutions, corporations, and other facets of our society has been spurred on by the importance AA decisions placed on the benefits of diversity and society's imperative to cultivate it. Seen from this lens, the second rationale or the idea that it is the "right thing to do" is thus the lingering remains of the remedial rationale at work. Despite its defeat in the courts, there are still those working in higher education who remain steadfast in their pursuit to remedy past injustices despite the many

legal restrictions placed on them. In the next section, I turn to the question of how these professionals perceived the affirmative action ban influenced their work.

"There's always that specter behind the scenes": The Affirmative Action Ban Context

Of the 44 participants who spoke on the topic of affirmative action,[36] most had not previously considered how or if the ban on their campus influenced their position. Upon further reflection, these 30 participants did not view their current work as being influenced by the ban or how future work would be influenced by lifting the ban. Some of these participants believed they were too far removed from the work of admissions to be impacted by this policy:

> My team has nothing to do with admissions… we're kind of on the other sort of recruitment side, and sort of communicating more of our specific value systems… So yeah, affirmative action, not something I can really speak to having much experience with. (Minerva, TAMU, W)

> What we talk about in our office and what I talk about with my peers across campus, is how do we attract more racial diversity to apply to UT. Because we don't have the control over whether or not they get in. (Kimberly, UT, W)

A few believed the topic of affirmative action had been replaced by more general discussions over diversity and inclusion on their campus. Those who suggested this shift in language, generally felt positive about the change:

> [AA] has really been replaced by inclusion and diversity, and in the more positive, rounding out the university's culture and commitment and how we work and interact with one another. Affirmative action almost had a sort of a negative connotation, you know, negative understanding, and I think I can still probably find mentions of that in some of the published online stuff, but it's been replaced by a much more positive set of goals, a

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[36] One participant was not comfortable speaking on this topic and chose to skip this question.

vision, a mission that I think is much healthier. (Renna, TAMU, W)

No, we never really talked about that… We just try to make sure that you're

treating everybody fairly and that sort of thing. But yeah, we've never really talked about

affirmative action. (Amy, TAMU, W)

Of the 30 participants that did not believe the ban influenced their work, six of them did

recognize its presence on their campus and how the policy might operate in the background. One

participant described its presence on campus in this way:

I think there's an acknowledgement widely within or whether it's public or not, that the

UC's probably had greater diversity when affirmative action was in place. And we

probably saw a precipitous decline in African American students when racial background

was removed as a considering piece of an application. And so, I think it's there. I don't

know that it comes up regularly for me in this role at the current moment, but there's

always that specter behind the scenes. (Lorenzo, UCLA, M)

Fourteen of the 44 participants that reflected on their institution's affirmative action ban

believed it did influence their work and offered one or more examples of how it had directly

influenced their work previously. Some examples related to fundraising projects, hiring

decisions, and drafting responses to student demands for increased racial diversity. Others,

including eight Cal participants, cited legal challenges as examples. Two participants referenced

a lawsuit brought against their university for allegedly breaching Title IX by offering gender-

specific summer programs. The incident prompted a review of all marketing materials for the

program, and, as Samantha (Cal, A) describes, the team now proceeds with extra caution when

advertising it:

We have to be careful when we write up something that you know, that, um, it doesn't

kind of want to get us into any legal trouble… we have to sort of be cognizant about the

programs that we highlight in a way, and, in the writing of it in a way, that doesn't make

it sound like it's, you know, excluding, you know, any group.

Like Samantha, those who recognized the ban's influence on their work saw it as restrictive,

something that had to be worked around. Reflecting on the change in admissions policy brought

on by California's Proposition 209, Ava (Cal, W) said the university's commitment to attracting

and supporting people from different backgrounds did not waiver, although it now required

"passionate people still try to do what they could, with both arms tied behind their backs."

Discussion of Meaning and Post-Affirmative Action Findings

This study adds to the emerging literature on work in post-affirmative action contexts.

Previous studies have shown that administrators beyond admissions can feel the detrimental

effects of affirmative action bans (Garces & Cogburn, 2015; Glasener, Martell, Posselt, 2018;

Jones, 2014; Slay, 2016). By considering marketing and communications professionals'

perceptions of post-affirmative action contexts, this study extends the literature which to date has

primarily focused on admissions professionals and those tasked with campus diversity efforts.

One of the negative consequences of these bans has been how they serve to "mute"

conversations on race and racism (Glasener, Martell, & Posselt, 2018). Similarly, the marketing

and communications professionals in this study who had experience with legal challenges saw

the ban as limiting their creative voice. The limitations were immediate—through the need to

edit past work. They were also reoccurring—through the restriction of their editorial approach on

new projects around race and ethnicity. Like Penn State administrators who changed scholarship

wording to avoid potential litigation (Garces & Bilyalov, 2019), participants recognized their

efforts were to avoid litigation through the creation of neutral, legally defensible materials.

Most participants, however, did not see the ban as influencing their work at all. Many felt

that conversations on affirmative action had been replaced with more "positive" terms like

diversity and inclusion, which they considered an improvement. This is in line with what diversity scholars have found, which is that the term "diversity" is now so ubiquitous on college campuses that it is devoid of all meaning (Ahmed, 2012). The reframing of race and how it is discussed on these four college campuses affects our personal actions and sets institutional policy and practice (Kumashiro, 2008). Moreover, when "diversity" is separated from race and racism, it garners greater cross-campus support but conceals persistent racial inequality by serving as a co-opting tool that promotes color-evasive ideology (Bonilla-Silva, 2006; Jayakumar & Garces, 2015) and curbs discussions of race and attempts to address racism (Berrey, 2015; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002). This shift from talking about race and racism to celebrating "diversity," which can include everything and everyone, allows institutions to forego the kind of systemic changes that can adequately address racial equity and discrimination (Jayakumar, Garces & Park, 2018; Warikoo, 2018). In disregarding affirmative action and the effects of its absence on campuses faced with AA bans, marketing professionals can just as easily disregard the absence of racially minoritized students at some of our nation's most selective institutions or (Orfield, 2015; Ledesma, 2015). At the very least, one of the implications of the shift from AA to diversity on the work of marketing professionals could be that they feel less pressed to focus on race and opt to highlight other facets of diversity (e.g., gender, sexuality, geography) or forego critical reflections of the ways that individuals from different racial backgrounds are depicted. In other words, the replacement of the remedial rationale with the diversity rationale of affirmative action leaves the status quo intact, enabling the permanence of racism. This preoccupation with diversity goes beyond conversations and preferred terminology – it gets to the very work that participants produce.

The ways in which participants thought about racial portrayals in marketing materials centered on what they defined as a "fine line" or "juggling act" between aspirational and

authentic representations of race. This tension and subsequent challenges of overrepresentation, tokenism, and rainbow photography, all support a tendency to focus on structural diversity. The obsession with what at times, was merely a symbolic numerical representation of race in imagery, was quite prevalent. Rare was the participant that acknowledged how increasing racial diversity on campus should go together with improvements in campus climate, programs, and policies that support racially minoritized students. The few participants who were concerned with what happened to BIPOC students once on campus knew the limitations of their work and understood the need for a more concerned effort by their institution to ensure these students' success. Most participants were more concerned with sustaining (or increasing) their institution's brand equity than they were with ensuring that racially minoritized students had a positive campus experience and persisted through graduation. This concern with brand equity manifested in a deep desire to maintain the trust between the brand and prospective students. Once again, the fear of engaging in "false advertising" was driven more by the desire to sustain a positive image of the university than by a desire to expand college access and success for historically excluded populations.

In the next and final chapter, I bring together the findings for each case across institutional context, design processes, and marketing materials considered in the study. I also re-engage relevant literature and my theoretical framework and provide future practical and research recommendations.

Chapter 7 Conclusions and Recommendations

The mixed methods approach to this comparative case study calls for data integration, or the combining of the quantitative and qualitative data presented in Chapters 4-6. Data integration is essential in mixed methods studies generally, but integration that supports the broader CRT framework in a critical study is even more so (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2019). In this final chapter, I synthesize my quantitative and qualitative findings, reflect on the study's contributions, and provide recommendations for practitioners and scholars. To conclude, I reflect on the salience of the study for CRT and in the temporal context in which it was written.

Overrepresentation and the Commodification of Race

In Chapter 4, my findings showed that the inclusion of racial diversity was valued in marketing materials across the four cases as it was overrepresented across all four institutions, but especially at Cal (29%), UCLA (20%), and UT (21%). By overrepresenting the diversity of their student body in recruitment materials, these institutions commodify racial diversity for their own gain rather than merely presenting a snapshot of racial diversity that can inform prospective students' college choice process (Pippert, Essenburg, & Matchett, 2013). In Chapter 5, some marketing and communications professionals shared conversations between colleagues around the issue of overrepresentation. For example, Briella (Cal, W) recalled a time when her manager decided that overrepresentation of Black individuals was necessary for obtaining higher levels of racial diversity even as a student intern raised concerns over the practice. The findings from Chapter 6 stressed this point further as participants expressed their dilemma with creating marketing materials that struck a balance between authenticity and aspiration. For many, overrepresentation was seen as preferable to falling short of representing their campuses' racial

diversity. However, in seeking to appear even more diverse in marketing materials than what their campus demographics demonstrate, these institutions appeared to chase after what Leong (2013) calls the thin version of diversity, one that is only concerned with appearances. The overrepresentation of BIPOC individuals in campus images confirms that a re-evaluation of race has occurred, with racially minoritized individuals appearing more "valuable" for marketing purposes (Leong, 2013). This value is gained from what Patrick Shin and Mitu Gulati (2011) identify as the practice of showcasing, or when an organization places racially diverse individuals in visibly, prominent positions to signal to those outside of the organization that they: 1) are an attractive option for members of that individual's racial group; 2) do not openly discriminate against members of that racial group; and 3) are aware of the significance of racial diversity in society. By showcasing racially diverse individuals at higher levels than their campus demographics, the institutions in this study attract racially diverse individuals as well as individuals who care about diversity and believe they will benefit from attending a diverse institution (Warikoo, 2016). Thus, attributing value to non-Whiteness and overrepresenting it in marketing materials provides these institutions with direct economic benefits in the form of enrollment dollars.

In addition, the reframing of diversity as a stated value in the field (AAC&U Board of Directors, 2013; AERA, 2019; AAU Board of Directors, 2015), means these institutions also benefit from the legitimacy that comes from the showcasing of racial diversity. Looking at diversity efforts at three highly selective state flagship universities, Lipson (2007) found that an isomorphic pressure in the field to appear "legitimate" drove marketing strategies used to appeal to high achieving, racially minoritized students. These strategies were meant to draw attention away from Asian students and toward Black and Latinx students. Likewise, other research has found recruitment materials to largely "depict a Black and White world" with limited

representations of Asians and other racial and ethnic groups (Osei-Kofi, Torres, & Lui, 2013).

The findings from this study suggest that the overrepresentation of BIPOC individuals in

marketing materials may be providing these institutions with legitimacy within their

organizational field, however, the diversity of representation differs from previous studies

predominant representation of Black and White individuals. TAMU was the only case that

operated primarily under a Black and White paradigm, though the difference in representation

was large, 103 White individuals versus 16 Black individuals represented. Otherwise, Cal

primarily pictured Black (24) and multiracial (24) individuals evenly. Asian (59) and White (38)

individuals were predominantly pictured in UCLA's materials, while UT pictured multiracial

(67) and White (45) individuals the most.

Perhaps more than profit and legitimacy, higher education institutions are concerned with

accruing prestige (Bastedo & Bowman, 2011). Using Zemsky's market segmentation model

(1983), which places institutions along the continuum of "name brand/costly" and

"convenience/affordable" (see Figure 2.1), the four institutions in this study appear to be in the

same segment if not direct competitors.[37] While they are all public institutions, they are the most

selective public options in their states, placing them closer to the name brand part of the

continuum. More selective institutions have been found to use their racial diversity to signal their

prestige and maintain their position (Berrey, 2011; 2015; Stevens, 2007; Stevens & Roska,

2011). In their analysis of 278 admissions webpages of institutions across selectivity levels,

Holland and Ford (2020) found that more selective institutions use strategies that de-emphasize

their White populations and call attention to their BIPOC populations. These strategies included

featuring figures, tables, and narratives of a campus' racial diversity, which often omitted White

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[37] Participants in the study corroborated this idea by referencing other institutions in the study (often the other institution in their state) as benchmarking institutions for their work.

students. Similarly, a finding from Chapter 4 suggests that these four selective public institutions relied on the social semiotic resource of composition—specifically the placement of individuals within the horizontal axis—to draw viewers' attention away from the White individuals in the frame and toward the BIPOC individual pictured. This finding is from a small subset of photos, 19 out of the 45 photos picturing BIPOC and White individuals utilized the horizontal axis and only 14 of these photos suggested such a meaning. Given the small sample for this finding, additional research is necessary to investigate this possibility further.

From maintaining their competitive advantage within their market segment to direct financial gains, higher education institutions appear highly incentivized to commodify racial diversity for their own gain. The evidence of overrepresentation in the marketing materials of these four selective public institutions suggests that—despite attempts from a handful of participants to educate their colleagues to the dangers of overrepresentation—the practice will continue because the alternatives (accurately or minimally depicting racial diversity) do not offer additional benefits to the institution.

Straddling Stereotypical and Inclusive Racial Portrayals

In Chapter 2, I traced the historical arch of racial diversity in marketing as one that spans non-existent or racist portrayals to inclusive portrayals that challenge ingrained stereotypes (Crockett, 2008; D'Avila, 2001). The inclusive marketing movement of today calls for marketing and advertising that more accurately represents our society *and* pushes our thinking on the kinds of roles people from various backgrounds can assume (Cannes Lions, 2019). While some companies have adopted this new 'inclusive' or 'progressive' approach to racial diversity (Fleming, 2019; Vizard, 2019), the higher education institutions in this study appeared to straddle stereotypical and inclusive representations in their marketing materials.

These institutions in this study (over)represented our diverse society but fell short of representing racially minoritized individuals in diverse roles. The inclusion of racially minoritized individuals in marketing materials meets the first requirement of inclusive marketing. However, they did not meet the second requirement for inclusive marketing, the ability for marketing to challenge pre-existing stereotypes. Instead, three of the four university marketing materials showed White individuals in the highest number of roles, with two of them having Black individuals in a similar number of roles. The 103 White individuals in TAMU's materials were shown in 8 out of 10 roles. At UCLA, the 38 White individuals in their marketing materials appeared in 7 roles, the same number of roles as the 32 Black individuals pictured. Meanwhile, the 45 White individuals pictured in UT materials were shown in 5 out of 10 roles, as were the 18 Black individuals pictured. Cal was the exception showing the 24 multiracial individuals pictured in the greatest number of roles (6 out of 10) and White individuals in only 2 roles. My Chapter 5 findings include a list of criteria marcom professionals in this study used for choosing images (style, content, source, use). Notably, the emphasis was placed on whether racially minoritized individuals were pictured rather than how these individuals were pictured.

In his original definition of stereotypes, Lippman (1957) noted that a pattern of stereotypes in not neutral, but the "fortress of our tradition" where "we can continue to feel ourselves safe in the position we occupy" (p. 96). Thus, the variety of roles that each race is pictured in is important because these images are not neutral, but a glimpse into what these four historically White institutions believe are possible roles for individuals of different races. That White individuals were cast in as many roles as they were despite their lower representation in some cases suggests that the options for prospective students from racially minoritized backgrounds remain limited on these campuses. In the case of Asian individuals, the stereotype of the smart Asian who is good at STEM (McGee, 2018) was reinforced by the photography of

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all four cases in this study. While not a negative stereotype, it nonetheless can act as what

Patricia Hill Collins (2022) calls a "controlling image" that serves to restrict the interests,

careers, and overall possibilities for members of the Asian community. For example, once on

campus, Asian students who do not have an interest in or aptitude for STEM can be negatively

impacted by stereotype threat by failing to live up to this preconceived notion placed on

members of their race (Steele, 2011). As Briella (Cal, W), who has a split marcom and academic

advising role, put it, once enrolled these students can feel like they are not having the "brochure

experience" they were promised, leading them to feel like they "don't belong" or are "unworthy"

of attending. Beyond the impact this stereotype has on an individual level, its collective impact is

in excluding Asians from a more diverse set of roles in our society's psyche. This subtle process

of "differentiation" between people of different races upholds the racial status quo (Donnor,

2017, p. 147) even as their mere inclusion in marketing materials is used to signal the

institution's commitment to racial diversity and inclusion.

Those who define and control stereotypes wield immense social power (Dyer, 1999). The

institutions in this study, and their peers in the field, control the narrative for individuals in

higher education. Adopting the inclusive marketing movement's imperative of showing

individuals in ways that debunk long-held stereotypes is one way marcom professionals can

change the narrative for BIPOC individuals at colleges and universities.

A Power Imbalance that Tips Toward Whiteness

The images reviewed in the first phase of this study showed an overrepresentation of

BIPOC individuals even as White individuals were represented in a greater number of roles,

suggesting that non-Whiteness is valued but those who control the university's image tend to

default and privilege Whiteness. Data from the second phase of the study corroborate this claim.

Marketing professionals engaged in two different processes in designing recruitment materials.

Because of this, some materials were not subjected to a rigorous approval process that incorporated a diverse array of institutional actors. One implication of this finding is that whether racially minoritized individuals are included in marketing materials and in what ways is up to individual actors who may vary in their approach and overall sensitivity to race and racism.

The group of BIPOC participants that was particularly sensitive to race and racism believed it was their duty to educate colleagues on these issues, and at times felt isolated and burdened by this responsibility. This is akin to what sociologist Amy Jones Haug calls "the unseen burden of diversity work" that requires people of color to provide the educational benefits of diversity onto others (2021, p.3). On the other hand, their White counterparts were more likely to view these teaching opportunities as optional and as being well-received by colleagues. Due to this difference in treatment, BIPOC professionals may feel silenced by the fear of professional retaliation for their actions. These feelings are reinforced through incidents that demonstrate that speaking up does not guarantee being heard.

Several participants with management responsibilities viewed the opportunity to learn and be guided by their diverse colleagues as an added benefit of their employment. However, these expectations could also increase the burden on BIPOC marketing professionals, many of whom were the only racially minoritized individuals in their office. Thus, BIPOC marketing professionals, like those in the photos of the materials they produce, might feel marginalized and tokenized in the workplace themselves. The negotiations between those in the design process and the dynamics of educating colleagues illuminate the inherent imbalance of power in the creation of marketing materials. This imbalance of power in the four cases in this study tips toward Whiteness. The actors with the least say in dictating the "face" of the university remain those who were never meant to occupy its walls.

If we re-engage the concept of Whiteness as Property, as presented by Cheryl Harris (1993), we can see how the White marketing professionals in this study held on to their rights (a) to disposition, (b) to use and enjoyment, (c) to status and property, and (d) to exclude. The right to disposition, or to pass along rights and privileges to heirs, was best exemplified by the way marketing managers primarily spoke about hiring practices or lacked awareness of the racial composition of their teams. The second right, which holds people can use their Whiteness as they see fit with protection by the law, is like how White marketing professionals had the freedom to choose whether they learned about racial portrayals in marketing materials or simply relied on their BIPOC colleagues to educate and guide them in such matters. The third right protects the reputation and elevated social status of White people, which was embodied by the way White marketing professionals in this study could choose to educate their colleagues on issues of race and were only received positively. The fourth right contends that lawmakers (mostly White) decide who is protected under the law. Similarly, marketing professionals (mostly White) decide what racial portrayals to include or exclude from university marketing materials. In this way, the design process showed how the concept of Whiteness as property is maintained. As these institutions continue to grapple with their historical shortcomings and seek to include more racially diverse individuals—both students and employees—they must be intentional about how they bring them into the fold.

A Return to Racially Just Outreach is Just Out of Reach

In Chapter 6, I present the findings from interview data that suggests there has been a shift from racial justice to brand equity across the four cases. Given that the diversity rationale used to defend affirmative action in the courts is firmly rooted in how higher education institutions consider race (Yosso et al., 2004), a return to racial justice seems highly unlikely at this time or in the future. Like other professionals in post-affirmative action contexts (Garces &

Bilyalov, 2019), 14 of the participants in this study also felt silenced and limited in their discussions of race and racism on campus. These participants feared their work may spur future litigation and thus took active measures to diminish that possibility. This could only serve to move discussion on campus even further away from centering race and racism or remedying past wrongs.

Most participants, however, did not articulate feeling silenced or restricted in their consideration of racial diversity. Some participants preferred the move their institution had made toward a broader definition of diversity as opposed to one that focused more intently on race or referred to the term affirmative action. As Renna (TAMU, W) mentioned, the term affirmative action has "been replaced by a much more positive set of goals, a vision, a mission that I think is much healthier." This preference for an ambiguous sense of diversity is a prime example of color-evasiveness, or the racial ideology that avoids discussions of race and blames subtle, institutional, and nonracial phenomenon for racially inequality (Bonilla Silva, 2006). For example, past affirmative action cases with White plaintiffs have primarily argued for the adoption of race-neutral admissions policies to tackle claims of reverse racism that defy equal opportunity and re-center "White people, White logic, and White methods as the norm" (Zuberi & Bonilla Silva, 2008 as referenced in Donnor, 2017). In the case of the latest affirmative action lawsuit to go before the U.S. Supreme Court, the plaintiff claims she was discriminated against because lesser qualified BIPOC candidates were admitted even though she worked hard in high school and earned good grades (*Fisher v. University of Texas*). The objectivity that Abigail Fisher calls on for her argument is one that appeals to the "master narrative of White besiegement and White credential inflation" which ignores past and current racial inequality and justifies the exclusion of racially minoritized individuals from institutions such as the University of Texas at Austin (Donnor, 2017, p. 155). This subtle, more refined version of racism can be

even more difficult to dispel than overt racism as it purports notions of equality, fairness, and meritocracy (Guinier, 2015).

The preference of many marketing professionals in this study for the "race-neutral" term, diversity, over affirmative action shows their aptitude for masking White privilege and upholding White supremacy. By using a term that is no longer bound to race, institutions cater to what Robin DiAngelo terms "White fragility" (2020), or the discomfort and defensiveness felt by White people whenever race and racism are discussed. Simultaneously, by stigmatizing and retiring affirmative action, a term many associate with unfair advantages for people of color (Baber, 2017), institutions uphold the myth of the meritocracy embedded in our education system which maintains that the positive educational outcomes of wealthy, often White students are due to their hard work (Carnevale, Schmidt, & Strohl, 2020).

Individual Cases

The small number of cases in this study allows for the discussion of the quantitative and qualitative findings to be considered within their sociohistorical and enrollment context.

Texas A&M University

From the annual bonfire to greeting visitors with a "howdy," Texas A&M University is a campus that values its traditions. These traditions could be viewed throughout the imagery for this case, with the former military college being the only institution in the study to have individuals pictured in the role of a cadet. Since the university did not integrate until the 1960s, most of these longstanding traditions were created by and for White individuals. Despite initial gains using affirmative action, the institution became less racially diverse when the AA ban was adopted after the *Hopwood* decision. Today, about 39% of its undergraduates identify as a person of color, and of the four cases in this study, it came the closest to accurately representing this structural diversity in its marketing materials (40%). However, even when BIPOC individuals

were pictured, the photos were of a color-evasive nature with BIPOC individuals partaking in campus traditions amidst their White counterparts.

Of the 15 marketing professionals from Texas A&M that decided to participate in this study, all but two individuals identified as White, and of those two, one described herself as appearing White. During data collection, these participants expressed that their interest in participating in a study on race in marketing materials was spurred by recent national and campus-wide events which occurred over several months, such as George Floyd's murder and protests to remove the statue of a Confederate sympathizer on campus. The historical legacy of exclusion and present-day challenges with inclusion where the conditions under which these marcomm professionals created and understood their institution's marketing materials. Like the physical separation between the new and old parts of campus or the ideological divide between new and 'old Ags, participants were split across key characteristics for choosing photography with some feeling strongly about using quality photographs regardless of their original temporal or physical context (e.g., Deborah, Helen) and others wanting to maintain the integrity of the photos used and the audiences depicted (e.g., Kristen).

University of California, Berkeley

Consistently classified as one of the most selective public institutions in the country, California's flagship institution, the University of California, Berkeley, serves just over 30,000 undergraduates. Of these, about 61% of students identify as students of color. Their marketing materials suggests a higher percentage of racial diversity on the campus, about 81%, with all racial categories being represented at least twice. The individuals pictured in the photographs were artists, professors, students, and other roles. Overall, the images in Cal's marketing materials for undergraduates showed a diverse group of people that was brought together by common interests.

The birthplace of the Free Speech Movement was represented in this study by 13 marketing and communications professionals from across the university. Regarding their race, four participants identified as Asian and nine identified as White. Most Cal participants expressed a personal interest in issues of race and racism and were eager to speak of these topics and reflect on how they intersected with their work during our interview time together. Many were grateful to be on a campus that consistently took a progressive stance on such issues (e.g., recent renaming of campus buildings) and to work alongside colleagues with similar values. This was the case with the greatest number of participants that believed their work was influenced by the ban on affirmative action. However, one participant delved deeper into what it means to be a person of color in this type of institutional context. Asher remarked on having to be "*that* person on the team" who consistently must educate colleagues on the dangers of overrepresenting race in marketing materials for instance.

University of California, Los Angeles

The most applied to university in the country, the University of California, Los Angeles, has an undergraduate enrollment of over 31,000 students of which 61% identify as students of color. Faced with Proposition 209 that banned the consideration of race in admissions at all public institutions in the state, the numbers of Black and Latino students declined. These enrollment figures improved after the introduction of holistic review in 2012 but that tactic was soon scrutinized by one of their own professors, which led to the development of the "mismatch theory" that was used to argue against AA during *Fischer* II. The internal and external challenges to affirmative action at UCLA make for an unpredictable enrollment season and campus racial climate. This is the context that the eight marketing professionals that participated in this study face when they set out to create marketing materials for their institution. While this group of

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interviewees was the smallest across all four cases, it was also the most racially diverse one with one Asian, two Black, two multiracial, and three White individuals participating.

UCLA's images were the second most racially diverse across the four cases, second only to Cal. Asian individuals were the most represented in their photography with a total of 59 out of 157 individuals in UCLA's photography identified as Asian. Beyond the student and vanity categories, artists and athlete roles were popular with this case. UCLA was also the case where I annotated the most accounts of of social semiotic resources, and the most uses of the left-right/Given-New resource specifically. Overall, the images they presented seemed to value racial diversity through its heavy representation, but those portrayals were surface-level when compared to their White peers.

University of Texas at Austin

Finally, the University of Texas at Austin situated blocks from the state's capitol, has a highly public and tangled legal history with race. After fighting desegregation efforts in the 1950s, it has since fought for the use of affirmative action on three separate occasions and continues to use race as one of many factors in a small subset of applicants not admitted through the state's percentage plan. The campus currently serves 51,000 students with more than half identifying as students of color, but the images the university promotes in its marketing materials include BIPOC individuals at about 73%. The role that was most depicted in these images was not the student role as with the other three cases, but the vanity one, suggesting that the style of photography at UT leaned toward being staged. The center-margin resource proved helpful in comparing the portrayals of White and racially minoritized individuals and determining that Whiteness as property was the theoretical concept most represented in UT's photography. Their photography showed the physical centering of White individuals and marginalization of BIPOC individuals inside the frame.

The eight marketing professionals that participated in this study identified as Black (1), Hispanic (1), multiracial (1), and White (6). Riley was the only participant in the study who identified all four rationales for wanting to include race in marketing materials: educational environment, right thing to do, public mission, and market competition. She also recounted an example of a time when she questioned her supervisor's choice for removing a Black student as the "face" of an institutional campaign and replacing him with a White student instead.

Recommendations for Practice

Recommendations for Creatives

Marketing and communications professionals should consider shifting their approach to creating visual assets to include *how* racially minoritized individuals are represented, not just *if* they are. Photography that shows interpersonal interactions and engagement, or that provides additional context for the people pictured should be prioritized. Group photographs should show interaction between subjects, capturing the "thick" version of diversity that engages and benefits people of color as well as White individuals. For example, a photograph with a racially minoritized student and White student conversing, both equally centered and focused within the frame. Or similarly, having the students engaging in an academic activity (science experiment, painting, etc.) where both students are engaged in the activity equally. When individual people of color are captured in photographs, these images should be accompanied with additional context (e.g., name, major, quote). The additional context helps humanize the subject for the viewer, whereas a lack of context forces the viewer's focus on immediately accessible traits like race. In terms of style, marcom professionals should aim to have candid photography over staged photography. Staged photos should be used sparingly for specific instances like announcing award recipients or new faculty.

How photography is sourced is another area marketing and communications professionals can revisit. Most participants who spoke of sourcing relied heavily on institutional actors closest to students (e.g., faculty) for access. While initial contact could be established in this manner, marcom professionals should attempt to maintain and grow these new relationships beyond the first introduction. Getting to know the campus community and fostering relationships with BIPOC individuals specifically would allow marcom professionals to make photo requests directly. More importantly, this kind of meaningful interaction could result in greater empathy for the subjects in their photos. For example, marcom professionals may be less willing to use a photograph out of context if they knew the subject of the photo personally. They might come to ask themselves, if this were my photo how would I feel about seeing myself in this piece? In general, marcom professionals should move away from the use of photos out of context altogether. Placing limitations on the use of campus stock photography and the number of times an image can be used are two ways by which to accomplish this goal. Photography that is sourced across the institution can still be helpful when it comes to procuring images of events, the campus, and inanimate objects. However, photographs of people should come from and stay within their own section of campus. Establishing an asset management system can help marcom professionals track the number of times a photograph has been used, by whom, and for what purpose. This type of system can help limit the number of times one photograph (or even one individual's image) is used across materials. If photo sharing across units remains common practice, asset management systems should be linked or the marcom professional looking to use a photo should confer with their colleagues to gauge how many times the photograph has already been used.

Recommendations for Marketing and Communications Administrators

Marcom administrators and others responsible for approving materials (e.g., requesters), should understand and seek to remedy the inherent power imbalance in the design process. There are several measures that can be put in place to assist with this. First and foremost, seek input from a greater number and diversity of individuals during the design process. Smaller marcom teams should consider implementing at least two levels of review, so no one individual has the power to create and publish without input from another person at the institution. All designs created for external audiences, however, would benefit from input outside of just the marcom team. They should consider seeking feedback from campus DEI professionals if not doing so already. Another great source for feedback is students, especially since the primary audience for recruitment materials are the students themselves. Students can be included in all facets of the design process, from initial concepts to evaluating past materials. Their input should be solicited regularly, and the exchange should be mutually beneficial. If payment for this assistance is not possible, then other forms of compensation should be pursued. Consider the example mentioned by Liam (UCLA, W) where a group of diverse students is solicited for feedback on communications often but also engages in programming and policy reviews with the school's leadership as part of a student advisory board. These types of opportunities develop students' leadership skills and resumés. Their recommendations can also enhance the overall student experience on the campus for all students.

Another way to address the power dynamics in the design process is to diversify marcom teams to cultivate a diverse set of perspectives and backgrounds internally. While the limitations brought forth by affirmative action do not allow race to be considered in hiring decisions, administrators in post-affirmative action contexts can work toward having a more diverse pool of interviewees. As one Cal participant explained, she would never have hired a candidate of color based on her resume alone since she lacked the traditional experiences often required for the role.

However, when she considered diversifying her interview pool by offering an interview to a diverse candidate, the hiring committee was unanimous in their choice to offer her the position. The interview provided a space for the candidate to address what the employer considered shortcomings on her resume. The experience also helped the hiring team, and this participant, reassess the value placed on certain professional experiences and how they might be biased toward certain populations. This small but significant change in the hiring process has been implemented by other industries. In 2003, the National Football League (NLF) implemented the "Rooney Rule" to address the lack of African American representation in top coaching roles. Within three years, the percentage of Black head coaches in the league jumped from 6 to 22 percent, though the effects have since receded (Collins, 2007). The policy's initial impact led to its expansion to other top NFL positions and in some cases the rule includes women applicants. Outside of professional sports, companies like Pinterest, Facebook, and Patreon have their own version of the policy (Pinterest, 2021; Feloni, 2016; Patreon, 2019). In 2017, law firms adopted the "Mansfield Rule"—named after the first woman lawyer in the United States, Arabella Mansfield—which requires at least 30 percent of the candidate pool for governance roles, partner equity promotions, and lateral positions be comprised of historically underrepresented lawyers (Pearlstein, 2020). The Mansfield Rule is voluntary and based on incentives to encourage compliance. By having more inclusive interview pools and unearthing unconscious bias in the hiring process, marcom administrators can help diversify their teams and the profession. However, this initiative to diversify must be earnestly pursued to be effective. Recently, the legitimacy of the Rooney Rule's application has come into question in the NFL with some claiming interviews for Black candidates are merely a formality, or checklist item.[38]

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[38] Former Miami Dolphins Head Coach Brian Flores filed a class action lawsuit against the NFL for allegedly offering him a chance to interview after a White coach had already been offered the position (Louis-Jacques, M, 2022).

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Diversifying the marcom profession is just one side of the equation. Marcom administrators should be engaging their team in critical discussions over *how* race is included in imagery, not just whether it *is* included. Rather than waiting for a moment of crisis to bring race to the forefront, marcom administrators can engage their team in regular conversations around race and racism. This can counteract BIPOC employees' feelings of tokenization or feeling like they must speak on behalf of their race or all people of color. If these conversations are to be effective, marcom administrators must cultivate supervisor-supervisee trust and psychological safety in the workplace for all employees. Coined by organizational behaviorist Amy Edmondson, a team's "psychological safety" speaks to the level of interpersonal risk-taking employees feel they can take without consequences (Edmondson & Lei, 2014). By building (or rebuilding) trust with BIPOC employees, especially, and addressing their team's psychological safety, marcom administrators can have difficult discussions around race and racism despite discomfort. The importance of trust and psychological safety was highlighted by a BIPOC participant at Cal who welcomed his supervisor's request to write a personal reaction to the renaming of school buildings even as his supervisor apologized for asking him as the only Asian member of the department. The trust they shared was something the participant found lacking in prior workplaces. but he also recognized that he would not be penalized for declining the request. If embarking on such discussions seems daunting, marcom administrators should recognize their limitations in this space and opt to hire experienced professionals to facilitate this practice. As one UT participant shared, the diversity workshops and bias training her unit's leadership provided significantly helped her team approach the topic of race more honestly, frequently, and with the same vocabulary.

Recommendations for Research

The findings of this study and its limitations open several avenues for future research. In this section, I share four recommendations for future research that could continue to advance our understanding of higher education marketing, race in marketing materials, and affirmative action contexts. First, future studies utilizing content analysis on higher education marketing materials should consider disaggregating data by race and ethnicity. While disaggregating by race and ethnicity may present coding challenges, there is much diversity across and within racially minoritized communities. In this study, treating racial categories as homogenous entities was necessary given the limited number of images considered in the analysis due to the comparative case study approach I undertook. However, future research should consider how individuals of different races, ethnicities, and phenotypes, are portrayed. This is especially important considering allegations of anti-Asian discrimination in the affirmative action cases the Supreme Court will hear in fall of 2022. In grouping all Asian and Asian Americans in the U.S. together, these cases flatten the rich diversity of this community (Zhou, 2021) and negate the experiences of Southeast Asians (e.g., Cambodian) who experience healthcare, education, and economic disparities that differ from other Asian ethnic groups (Budiman, 2021).

Second, future research should expand our understanding of the design process. The global pandemic brought on by the COVID-19 virus prevented me from traveling and meeting with research participants. It also limited my ability to gain access to meetings and interactions on the four campuses where I could observe the design process as it unfolded. Future studies can build upon the design processes findings in this work by including observational data. Some participants also indicated working with outside vendors for design projects. As such, future research can consider how the design process differs when outside marketing firms and vendors are engaged.

Third, future research should explore the experiences of marketing professionals by race more intently. This study underscored differences between racially minoritized marketing professionals and their White colleagues in the workplace. These differences included diverging understandings of how to portray race in marketing materials and whether they could challenge their colleagues on these portrayals. A quantitative exploration of these differences by way of survey design could confirm the extent of these differences and whether they occur at other institutions. Findings from this research could have implications for the marketing profession at large and racially minoritized marketing professionals specifically.

Fourth, future research can shift from studying the process and product of higher education marketing to considering how university marketing materials are received by their intended audiences. In other words, future research should consider how prospective students perceive university marketing materials. Some participants indicated conducting internal focus groups limited to their prospective or current students. Other participants referenced market research conducted by professional organizations or marketing firms that spoke to students' perceptions of recruitment materials. However, students' perceptions of undergraduate recruitment materials are found in a handful of peer-reviewed qualitative studies which are not specifically focused on marketing materials. Engaging experimental design could be one way of accounting for this gap in the literature. An audit study that provides one group of students with a marketing piece that overrepresents racial diversity on a campus and one that does not could illuminate how overrepresentation is perceived by prospective students.

Importance of the Study

This study makes empirical contributions to the literature on higher education marketing and post-affirmative action contexts. The explicit focus on race in marketing materials offers

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new insights into how racially minoritized individuals are portrayed and why.[39] The findings from this study moved beyond observations of whether racial diversity was present in materials to consider what those portrayals might indicate about White and racially minoritized individuals, a departure from previous viewbook and social media studies in higher education (Barnes & Lescault, 2011; Chauhan & Pillai, 2013; Hartley & Morphew, 2008; Li & Bernoff, 2008; Pippert, Essenburg, & Matchett, 2013; Peruta & Shields, 2018). The qualitative findings from this study contribute to the emerging literature on administrators in post-affirmative action contexts and provide rationales behind the overrepresentation of racial diversity in marketing materials (Garces & Cogburn, 2015; Garces & Bilyalov, 2019; Ginchuru, 2010; Jones, 2014). By considering the intent behind portrayals of racially minoritized individuals, this study builds on previous work that has only critically reviewed the racial portrayals found in the materials themselves (Osei-Kofi, Torres, & Lui, 2013, 2015; Osei-Kofi & Torres, 2015).

This study also makes theoretical and methodological contributions to the higher education literature. Current critiques of the CRT scholarship in higher education are that there: 1) is a limited connection between the CRT framework and data presented; 2) is a lack of integrative, interdisciplinary approach toward data analysis; and 3) is a lack of method variety (Baber, 2017). The use of a theoretical framework that utilizes the individual CRT concepts of color-evasiveness, Whiteness as property, and interest convergence for analysis as opposed to presenting numerous general CRT tenets helps advance our theoretical understanding of these concepts in higher education marketing. The integration of these concepts with that of racial capitalism, which has been situated firmly within the law until now, provides the interdisciplinary approach to the analysis. The comparative case study approach provided the

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[39] To my knowledge, only three viewbook studies and one website study have looked at race in marketing materials specifically.

means to consider the historical and present-day context of each institution, while the incorporation of power helps answer Pusser and Marginson's (2012) call for a greater application of the analysis of power in higher education and organizational studies. By combining content analysis and social semiotic analysis, this study also departs from previous marketing material studies which relied primarily on content analysis as a method and helps answer the call to embrace the use of visual methods in CRT scholarship (DeCuir-Gunby & Schutz, 2019).

Finally, this study is also important for the practical changes it can prompt in higher education marketing and the benefits this would have on the lives of racially minoritized individuals. The recommendations I propose for practice stem directly from the findings of this study. By adopting some of these suggestions, institutions like those in this study (e.g., selective, historically White) can reduce the likelihood of putting forth negative or unrealistically aspirational racial portrayals as well as starting to address the unequal treatment experienced by BIPOC employees who challenge the status quo. In doing so, prospective BIPOC students may find recruitment materials that are more authentic to the lived experiences of those on campus. This would also mean that BIPOC individuals featured in recruitment materials would be compensated for their contributions to their institutions and not have to worry about their image being used out of context and in perpetuity. If applied earnestly, the study's recommendations could help build back the trust that has been lost between BIPOC individuals and universities due to past racist incidents at institutions like the University of Wisconsin.

Researcher's Final Reflections

The world has changed greatly since I began to work on this study. The "dual pandemics of COVID and racism" (Endo, 2021, p.216) re-centered discussions of race in our society like only large external shocks to a system appear to do (Walker et al., 2012). I believe these events certainly helped in my recruitment of participants, most of whom seemed eager to speak on this

topic and at times referred to our conversation as therapy. Then, as I proceeded through layers of data analysis, it became clear to me that the very framework guiding me through this work was leading others to question its existence and dissemination in schools. The debate over whether CRT should be taught in schools is far from over. As of February of 2022, 14 states have banned the teaching of CRT at the K-12 level and a total of 37 states have proposed some form of legislation to ban it (Education Week, 2022). The urgency of this work became even more poignant when news of the Supreme Court's plan to hear two AA cases in the fall of 2022 was released (Liptak & Hartocollis, 2022). The idea that AA could be dismantled altogether, leaving more institutions to operate under an AA ban context, made the findings from this work seem more necessary than before. Finally, the latest allegations raised against the NFL by a Black former head coach spoke directly to the findings regarding some of the BIPOC marketing professionals' workplace experiences (Louis-Jacques, 2022). Altogether, these events elevated the need for this work and its contributions.

The initial catalyst for this work may have been my involvement in the design process of one institution's viewbook, but since then, I have been involved in the creation of several other educational marketing materials. With each project, I have personally experienced the practical and moral constraints that come with this work. While this study was never intended to be a panacea for the challenges of designing recruitment materials, I hope that it provides additional guidance and fodder for reflection to marketing and communication professionals. Moreover, I hope that by asking how race is marketed in higher education, racially minoritized individuals can benefit from more inclusive representations in the future.

Appendices

Appendix A: Definition of Terms

A. **Branding** The creation of an attractive image of an institution in the marketplace (Stensaker & D'Andrea, 2007)

B. **Consumer Behavior** A series of steps that explain the decision-making process of consumers when they buy a product.

C. **Enrollment Management** A comprehensive and integrative process concerned with the recruitment, retention, and graduation of students. The primary functional areas of EM are admissions, financial aid, marketing, institutional research and planning, student orientation, registrar, retention and advising (Huddleston, 2000).

D. **Marketing Mix** Includes, product, price, distribution, and promotion policies (Hemsley-Brown & Oplatka, 2006). Branding is part of product policy. Price policy refers to how much a product is worth on the market compared to the price of producing it, and from the consumer's perspective what the perceived worth of that product is. Distribution policy considers how and where products reach consumers. Promotion policies deal with communication between the organization and its customers (Nicolescue, 2009).

E. **Market Segmentation** The recognition that the market is comprised of smaller groups with varying wants and demand schedules (Dickson & Ginter, 1987). A marketing segmentation strategy is one that targets different groups of prospective consumers and understands that they have distinct wants and needs.

F. **Positioning** skillful advertising that distorts consumer demand by differentiating products in the marketplace without changing the actual composition of the product itself (Galbraith, 1967; Lancaster, 1979).

G. **Product Differentiation** The meeting of human wants more effectively than competitors resulting in greater demand for a product (Shaw, 1912) accomplished by distinguishing goods and services from competitors on any basis that leads to a preference by the buyer (Chamberlain, 1965), whether those difference be real or perceived (Porter, 1976; Samuelson, 1976).

H. **Racially Minoritized Students** The term 'racially minoritized students' is used throughout this study to refer to students who might identify or be identified as Black, Latinx, Asian American, Pacific Islander, and/or Native American. The terms 'students of color' and 'traditionally/historically underrepresented students" may be used interchangeably, but not primarily so as to recognize that race is socially constructed and context dependent. The term is informed by Benitez's (2010) use of 'minoritized' (verb) over "minority" (noun) to highlight the "process of student minoritization" (p.131) and reject the subordinate position inherent in the definition of the word minority. I also use the term to remind myself and readers that part of the data collection for this study depends on my own racial categorization of students, which may not be in accordance with how they would personally identify or how they may be identified by others.

Appendix B: Interview Protocol

Introduction
- Thank participant.
- Describe the goals of study.
- Go over IRB document.
- Remind them of incentive for interview.
- Confirm consent to audio record the interview

There will be three main topics I would like to discuss: your current role, your office's design processes, and how you and your colleagues think about racial diversity in recruitment materials. You can feel free to skip any questions you prefer not to answer. Do you have any questions? We'll go ahead and get started then.

1. To start, I'd like to learn a little bit about your current role. How long have you worked in this capacity? And what are your primary duties and responsibilities?
   Probe: How are you involved in the creation of printed recruitment materials?
   Probe: How are you involved in the creation of digital recruitment materials?

2. How did you become involved in this work?
   <u>designers/creatives</u>
   Probe: Where do you find inspiration for your work?
   Probe: What is the best part of your job?
   Probe: What are the biggest challenges for someone in your position?
   Probe: What does success look like for someone in your position?

   <u>managers/admin</u>
   Probe: How do you and your team strategize around content?
   Probe: What are the biggest challenges you face regarding marketing the institution to undergraduates?
   Probe: What does success look like for someone in your position?

3. Can you walk me through the design process for a print piece/social media post?
   Probe: who would you consider are the main stakeholders in the design of undergraduate recruitment materials? Who's involved in the process?
   Probe: who ultimately approves the design?
   Probe: do you always design in-house? If not, can you walk me through what that design process looks like?
   Probe: How often do you re-design the viewbook? / How often do you attempt to post on social media? Is there a goal?

4. We are constantly bombarded with marketing images and messages. It takes a lot to "break through the noise" and grab someone's attention or connect with an audience. I asked that

you bring a piece you and your colleagues have produced that you think/know may have "broken through the noise"?

       <u>If so:</u>
       Probe: Can you walk me through how that piece was produced?
       Probe: What do you think this piece conveys about the institution?
       Probe: What is so special about this piece?
       Probe: Do you think others in your office feel the same way?
       Probe: What do you think led to its creative success?
       Probe: Would you change anything about this design? If so, why?

5. Sometimes we create designs that are instant hits. More often than not, we may need to edit and redesign to meet others' needs. Tell me about a time when a design lacked consensus.
       Probe: why do you think it was difficult to reach a consensus?
       Probe: what changes were made in order to reach a consensus?
       Probe: how did you feel about this experience?
       Probe: do you think this experience changed the way you approached future design projects? If so, why?

6. COVID-19 has changed a lot of how we do even the most basic things like grocery shopping and meeting friends and family. Did your work change due to the coronavirus? If so, how?

Transition
So far, we've discussed your position and the process your office utilizes to design undergraduate recruitment materials. However, I'm also interested in understanding how you and your colleagues approach racial diversity in these materials and what influence (if any) the restrictions on affirmative action in your state and this institution may have on your work.

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7. How would you describe your university's commitment to diversity?

8. How would you describe the level of racial diversity to someone whose never been on your campus before?
       Probe: Has racial diversity on campus changed since you began working here?

9. How would you describe the level of racial diversity in your office? In the profession?
       Probe: Has racial diversity in your office changed since you began working here?
       Probe: Have you seen a greater awareness of racial diversity in your profession since you entered?

10. How do you and your colleagues think about representing racial diversity in recruitment materials?
       Probe: Would you say your institution's recruitment materials accurately reflect the racial diversity of your campus?
       Probe: Do you think they should?
       Probe: Have representations of racial diversity at your institution changed over time? If so, how?

Probe: Do you see them changing in the future? If so, how?

11. Is accurate racial representation in marketing materials something you think higher education institution should strive for? Why or why not?

12. What are some of the challenges you have encountered in depicting students of color in recruitment materials?

13. This summer, racial unrest surrounding the murders of several Black people across the country led many higher education institutions to publicly acknowledge these events. Your institution (did/did not) publish an official statement in solidarity with the Black community. Was your own work affected by these events? If so, how?

14. The use and restriction of affirmative action on college campuses has garnered a lot of national media attention over the last few decades. Would you say this topic is often discussed in your office?
    Probe: Can you describe any conversations you've had in your office about affirmative action?

15. Do you believe your own work has been impacted by the decision to ban affirmative action on your campus? If so, how?

16. As we near the end of this interview, I'd like to know, if you had a magic wand, what changes would you make to the profession or your position in particular?

17. Is there anything else you would like to add or expand upon?

Closing Script

This has been such an insightful interview. Thank you again for being so generous with your time. Before we wrap up, is there anything else you' would like to add?

If you have any questions about the project or what I discussed today, feel free to contact me personally at martellc@umich.edu. As a token of my appreciation, you should expect to receive a $40 Amazon gift card within the coming week. If you wish to receive a copy of the transcript or my notes, please let me know. There is also a chance I may have to contact you again after today's interview to clarify a comment or ask additional questions. Is that okay?

Appendix C: Coding Form

All Photos

Q1 List publication date in standard mm/dd/yy format.

Q2 What is the subject of this photo? (1) One or more people (2) crowds, objects, campus scenes, graphics, video

If the answer to Q2 was 1, then proceed with Q3-24. If not, move onto the next photograph.

Photos of Individuals

Q3 0) No
    1) Yes

*If the answer to Q3 was 0, answer '0' for Q4 and proceed with Q5-19. If the answer to Q3 was 1, answer Q4 **only** and move onto the next photograph.*

Photos of Groups

Q4 0) Not applicable (only an option if Q3 equals '0')
    1) Asian/Asian American
    2) Black/African American
    3) Indigenous/Native American
    4) Latinx/Hispanic
    5) Racially Ambiguous (non-White individual, but unsure of specific race/ethnicity)
    6) White
  Does this photograph contain a group of people?
    0) No
    1) Yes
Q6 What is the racial/ethnic composition of the group of individuals in the photograph?
    0) All white
    1) All BIPOC
    2) Both

Q7 How many Asian/Asian American individuals are pictured? _____ (include actual count)

Q8 How many Black/African American individuals are pictured? _____ (include actual count)

Q9 How many Indigenous/Native American individuals are pictured? _____ (include actual count)

Q10 How many Latinx/Hispanic individuals are pictured? _____ (include actual count)

Q11 How many racially ambiguous individuals are pictured? _____ (include actual count)

Q12 How many White individuals are pictured? _____ (include actual count)

Q13 What best describes the role of the individual or individuals in the photograph?

Q14 What is the setting of the photograph?

Appendix D: List of Context Documents

University of California-Berkeley
- 2021 Cal Facts
- Social Media Accessibility Checklist
- Unit Holiday Mailer to All Constituents
- Unit Social Media Account Post
- University Development Impact Report
- Berkeley News Article on Renaming Campus Buildings
- Unit High School Summer Program Promotional Materials

University of California-Los Angeles
- 2021 UCLA Fast Facts
- Marketing Video for Annual Impact Awards Dinner
- Unit Branding
- Black History Month Social Media Campaign for Unit
- Unit Annual Report

University of Texas at Austin
- 2021 UT Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion
- Enrollment Management Annual Report
- Enrollment Management Guiding Principles
- Enrollment Management Student Success Journeys
- Enrollment Management Financial Aid Overview
- Unit Editorial Content Strategy
- Seal of Excelencia Advertisement in Diverse Issues
- Unit Alumni Magazine
- Campus COVID Response Website
- Unit Alumni Magazine
- Unit Commencement Video
- Unit Viewbook Website

Texas A&M University
- 2021 TAMU Student Demographics
- Unit Diversity One-pager for Students
- Unit Alumni Magazine
- Video of Alumni Ring Return
- Unit Donor Brochures for Diversity Initiatives
- Unit Recruitment Viewbook
- Video of Unit Photography

Note. The use of the term 'unit' in this table is to keep individual colleges, schools, and units within case sites, and thus the marketing and communications professionals in them, confidential.

Appendix E: List of Roles

Artist	Individuals are acting, dancing, painting, or pictured with musical instruments or other art equipment.
Athlete	Individuals pictured with sports equipment or uniforms, found in athletic fields, courts, pool, or other athletic setting.
Cadet	Individual is wearing a military uniform.
Event Spectator	Individual is in or near an athletic/artistic setting but is clearly watching or cheering on athletes/performers.
Graduate	Individuals wears a cap, gown, or other graduation regalia.
Parents/Family	Individual is of non-traditional college age and standing closely to or embracing a traditionally aged college student.
Professor/Staff	Individual is of non-traditional college age and shown teaching, meeting with students, or conducting other university business function.
Scientist	Individual is shown in a lab or classroom setting and has a white coat, latex gloves, or other science gear on or equipment near.
Student	Individual could be in a variety of settings on a college campus or city (e.g., dorm, cafeteria, library, quadrangle) and has books, college gear, or other items that indicate they attend the institution.
Vanity	Individual(s) pictured looks directly at the camera, typically smiling or laughing, and can be cropped or set against a neutral background.

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