DePaul University

College of Education

In the Name of Freedom: Racist Hate Speech on Campus, Institutional Whiteness, and Neofascism

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With a Concentration in Curriculum Studies

by

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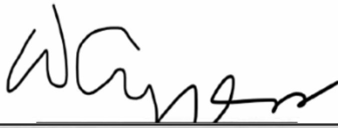

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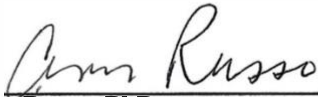

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Certification of Authorship

I certify that I am the sole author of this dissertation. Any assistance received in the preparation of this dissertation has been acknowledged and disclosed within it. Any sources utilized, including the use of data, ideas and words, those quoted directly or paraphrased, have been cited. I certify that I have prepared this dissertation according program guidelines, as directed. Author Signature ____Karlee Johnson____Date____01/21/2022____

Abstract

Administrative language surrounding racist hate speech on campus is rooted in abstract interpretations of the liberal values of freedom and equality. Consequently, these color-blind discourses remove racist hate speech from its historical context of racial violence and discrimination and view it as merely another point of view that is deserving of tolerance in the "free marketplace of ideas." As a result, this Critical Discourse Analysis project argues that 1) the administrative discourses surrounding hate speech on campus contribute to the maintenance of institutions of higher education as white institutional spaces, and 2) they also bring institutions of higher education into the folds of neofascism. The primary significance of this project lies in the connections it forges between the administrative responses to racist hate speech on campus and the current ascendance of neofascism. It aims to locate these discourses and interrupt them, making space to reimagine the ways that institutions respond to incidents of racist hate speech on campus—a crucial task for both the pursuit of equality within institutions of higher education as well as the struggle for democracy in the United States.

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Chapter 1: The Arrival

Introduction

Sara Ahmed (2012) says that every project has an arrival. I arrived here at this project in the spring of 2016 when my campus was set ablaze with outrage after provocateur and self-proclaimed "Dangerous Faggot," Milo Yiannopoulos, a purveyor of misogynist and racist rhetoric, spoke on campus at the student union. While on my way to the same building for a different event at the end of my workday, I passed a colleague on the sidewalk who asked me if I had heard about the "Trump rally" at the student union set to take place that evening. I had no idea what he was talking about, and when I entered the building, there was no sign of any such rally. I figured that nobody had shown up because I thought it unlikely that such an event would draw a crowd at what I thought to be a peaceful and inclusive campus.

As it turns out, I could not have been more wrong. After my event, I took the elevator back down to the main level, and when the doors opened, it was as if the student union had been transformed into one of the raucous Trump rallies that I had seen on TV. Young and middle-aged white people, mostly males wearing red hats, shirts, and suspenders embellished with the slogan "Make America Great Again," noisily piled into the lobby. These supporters of then-presidential candidate Donald Trump had successfully penetrated the liberal force field surrounding the urban campus to hear Yiannopolous affirm their disdain for "political correctness." The student union seemed like an unlikely space for the formation of this post-modern alliance between a crowd that embodied traditional white masculinity and an openly gay provocateur, clad in a shiny, red, sleeveless t-shirt and sparkly bracelets. However, it was clear that with his often self-deprecating defense of traditional white masculinity and supremacy, Yiannopoulos had found a following in

both the conservative student group that invited him and the unruly crowd of Trump fans. And perhaps more importantly, the university aligned itself with this message by passively allowing an event aimed at the dehumanization of marginalized groups of people (namely women and people of color) to take place on campus.

The event quickly turned ugly, and by the next day the videos of the brazen interactions between protestors and Yiannopolous had gone viral. Shortly after Yiannopoulos began speaking, two Black students, blowing whistles and chanting, stormed the stage and grabbed the microphones from both Yiannopoulos and the student moderator, rendering it impossible for the event to continue. As the two Black student protestors took over the stage and expressed their outrage at the racist presidential campaign, both Yiannopoulos and the white, male moderator from the conservative student group sat in the background and smirked at each other—visibly annoyed by the inconvenience that the protestors were causing by standing up to the racist messages being hurled against them on their own campus. A few moments later, a fair-skinned, blonde, female member of the conservative student group approached the podium and urged the audience to remain seated. Yiannopoulos then chimed in, “I give it [the protest] twenty minutes—the statistics for Black incarceration are about to go up.” The crowd then proceeded to chant, “CPD, CPD,” the acronym for the Chicago Police Department (Colonial Broadcast, 2016).

The event, although cut short, sparked a series of retaliatory threats, including the placement of a noose near the student union—a clear and chilling threat of violence against students of color who would dare challenge white authority on campus. In the days that followed, the university’s impotent response of semi-apologetic emails spurred a wave of anger that washed over the campus, leaving in its wake a traumatized campus community and an

institutional apparatus that refused to take a stand to protect its most vulnerable members—all in the name of free speech.

This event is, without a doubt, the moment that led me on the path to examining the relationship between free speech and white supremacy on college campuses. Yet while it may have been a mere blip on the radar in the larger history of racist hate speech and violence on college campuses, it represented a significant "first" for me—the first time that I decided to notice the racial hierarchies that existed in my own seemingly sheltered academic and professional environment. And perhaps more importantly, it was the moment that I began to analyze the role that I played in creating and maintaining them. Ahmed (2007) notes that institutions are formed and transformed throughout ongoing work, decisions, and processes. In my role as a white member of the university community, I participated in the "ongoing work" that upheld white supremacy on campus—most notably by remaining silent on issues of racism.

The Project

This project is focused on the ways that university administrators respond to incidents of racist hate speech on campus. Hate speech is a form of assaultive speech, which constitutes "words that are used as weapons to ambush, terrorize, would, humiliate, and degrade" (Matsuda, et al. 1993, p.1). This project focuses specifically on hate speech with racist characteristics—in other words, speech that proposes the inherent superiority of one race (in this case white supremacy) over another (Lorde, 2007). Therefore, I will use the term "racist hate speech" to refer to the acts of speech and expression considered in the analysis. Further, in the context of this project, "racist hate speech" will encompass both acts of racist hate speech against non-white people as well as the closely related anti-Semitic speech directed against people of Jewish descent (Matsuda, et al., 1993, p. 22).

Through a Critical Discourse Analysis of administrative statements regarding incidents of racist hate speech on campus, this project aims to locate the role of these discourses in the maintenance of systems of racialized power and domination both within the institution itself as well as within the broader political landscape (Fairclough, 2001). Specifically, I am interested in uncovering how administrators' language around racist speech on campus contributes to the creation and maintenance of what Bell and Moore (2017) call "white institutional spaces," which are characterized by "white norms, values, and cultural representations as well as policies that assume, facilitate, and justify white power within the context of the institution" (p. 103). An analysis of this institutional language will allow for the identification of the more subtle ways that the discourses function to bolster white supremacy within institutions of higher education.

The identification of these discourses is an important first step in an effort to resist and ultimately replace them with language that defies rather than bolsters white supremacy. However, through this analysis, I also attempt to place these discourses within the context of the current political moment in which a radical right-wing movement, institutionalized within the Republican party, enjoyed four years of political power in the United States under the administration of former President Donald Trump. This movement takes the form of neofascism, characterized by the denial of facts, racism, xenophobia, misogyny, and the large-scale effort to dismantle democratic institutions (Giroux, 2017). In this context, racist hate speech is a central tool of the neofascist agenda, and the administrative discourses surrounding racist hate speech on campus represent an important link between institutions of higher education and neofascism.

Institutions of higher education are important battlegrounds for the propagation and legitimization of neofascism, and when its often hateful messages are met with resistance, the prophets (often conservative speakers, student groups, and faculty) claim to be First Amendment

martyrs in an effort to justify and legitimize their efforts to promote hateful speech on college campuses (Apple & Schirmer, 2016; Dols, 2017; Mayer, 2017; Scott, 2018; Stanley, 2018). These radical conservative efforts play an important role in the spread of neofascism on campuses through the weaponization of the liberal tenet of free speech with the intent to preserve and justify patterns of racial discrimination and exclusion that have existed in the United States for over four hundred years (Stanley, 2018). Therefore, the institutional responses to incidents of racist hate speech and expression are crucial. However, more often than not, leaders of institutions of higher education respond to these incidents with abstract notions of freedom and equality that fail to address the brutal legacy of racism and white supremacy that plagues not only college campuses but also our society as a whole. This erasure embodies an institutional commitment to white supremacy—a characteristic shared with neofascism.

The intersection between the administrative statements around incidents of racist speech on campus and neofascism are embodied by the dataset for this project compiled by the advocacy group the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE). FIRE states that its mission is to "defend and sustain individual rights at America's colleges and universities. These rights include freedom of speech, legal equality, due process, religious liberty, and sanctity of conscience—the essential qualities of individual liberty and dignity" (thefire.org, 2017, p.1). FIRE compiled these statements about free speech on campus that appear in a variety of different publications including institutional newspapers and websites and local and national media outlets. Their goal in creating this database is to create ostensibly unbiased documentation of "the changing course of American higher education." However, FIRE has also been instrumental in bringing legal action against universities that attempt to ban controversial speakers and other forms of racist speech and expression on campus (thefire.org).

Additionally, FIRE receives funding from many of the same sources that also underwrite political organizations affiliated with the far-right political movement; therefore, it serves as a "connecting joint" between the administrative responses to racist incidents on campus and neofascism (Bell & Moore, 2017; Simon, 2016). These conservative funding sources are cause for scrutiny into FIRE's "unbiased" devotion to the First Amendment. As Stanley (2018) explains, the conservative claim that institutions of higher education are enemies of free speech serves to repress protest against ideologies that do not align with neofascism and protect those that do—including white supremacy. In this sense, FIRE and its conservative funders work to quell opposition rather than promote the free exchange of ideas.

Against this backdrop, institutions of higher education are faced with the choice of defying incidents of racist hate speech on campus or risking incorporation into the neofascist agenda. It is up to those of us within institutions of higher education to hold our institutions accountable and to ensure that they pursue the former option in an effort to both promote racial equality within our institutions as well as to actively resist the propagation of neofascism. As the famous line from *Hamilton* the musical states, "History has its eyes on us" (Miranda, 2015).

Dissertation Structure

This Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) follows the format proposed by Norman Fairclough (2001), which consists of the following stages:

Stage 1: Focus upon a social problem that has a semiotic aspect (rather than beginning with a traditional research question).

Stage 2: Identify obstacles to the social problem being tackled. This includes locating the discourse within the broader "network of practices" within which the problem exists.

Stage 3: Consider whether the social order (network of practices) "needs" the problem.

Stage 4: Identify possible ways past the obstacles.

Stage 5: Reflect critically on the analysis. (p. 236)

Stages 1-3 represent what Fairclough (2001) terms "interactional analysis," which refers to the practice of viewing discourses and written texts in relationship to other aspects of social life (p. 238). Further, CDA argues that this connection is interdiscursive or, in other words, that what is happening within the text reflects what is happening socially. With this in mind, I will argue that the dominant themes from the statements reflect broader institutional efforts to uphold white supremacy, and subsequently, also align institutions of higher education with the neofascist agenda.

In line with Stage 1, the current chapter states the social problem at hand: institutional responses to incidents of racist hate speech on campus are often rooted in abstract and color-blind notions of equality and freedom and do not place these events within the historical context of racial exclusion and discrimination. Therefore, these responses not only contribute to the maintenance of institutional white supremacy, but they also align institutions of higher education with neofascism. In the following two chapters, I focus on Fairclough's (2001) Stage 2 by placing this problem within the broader "network of practices within which the problem exists" (p. 236). This task includes a detailed review of the academic conversation around racist hate speech and free speech on college campuses (Chapter Two) as well as the tangible and ideological connections between incidents of racist hate speech on campus and neofascism (Chapter Three).

In Chapter Two, I examine the academic literature surrounding racist hate speech on campus and highlight the dominant viewpoints of free speech absolutism, Critical Race Theory, and the conservative perspective. Within the realm of higher education, this conversation centers

around the categories of activism, academic freedom, and intellectual safe spaces. On the one hand, the absolutist position represents a constitutionalist perspective on racist hate speech and argues that speech, regardless of how hateful or vile it may be, should not be regulated at all except when the speech constitutes a threat of clear and present danger (Strossen, 2000). In contrast, the Critical Race position points to the importance of placing racist hate speech within the broader history of racial discrimination in the United States. In doing so, it becomes clear (from this point of view) that racist speech does not merely represent an ideology that many deem offensive, but also an extension of a bloody history of racial violence, terror, and exclusion. Therefore, from this perspective, racist hate speech deserves special consideration in terms of regulation (Matsuda, et al., 1993). Finally, the conservative standpoint essentially claims that by regulating offensive speech (including racist hate speech), institutions are "coddling" college students and leaving them unprepared for life in the so-called "real world," in which censorship is rarely an option. According to conservative proponents, college students should "toughen up" and learn to deal with difficult situations rather than expecting academic institutions to protect them from such interactions through the creation of "safe spaces" (D'Souza, 1991; Haidt & Lukianoff, 2015; Johnson, 2017).

Chapter Three aims to deepen the connection between the "conservative perspective" on incidents of racist hate speech on campus and neofascism. I argue that since the 1970s, a conservative network of ultra-rich donors and business elite have engaged in a hegemonic project to not only propel this free market ideology into the mainstream political conversation but to spread it so pervasively that it comes to determine a society's understanding of "common sense." In order to appeal to a broad base of supporters, they have enveloped diverse factions of society into this free-market fundamentalist agenda by incorporating cultural issues including

white supremacy and evangelical Christianity—a cocktail that ultimately brought about the current ascendance of neofascism (Harvey, 2005; Hedges, 2007; Mayer, 2016; Skocpol & Williamson, 2012). While it is beyond the scope of this project to present an exhaustive analysis of every political realignment that has occurred as a part of this hegemonic project, I instead have highlighted some key developments that provide important context regarding the key roles that corporate power and racism plays within it—both generally as well as within institutions of higher education—as racist hate speech is the topic of this project.

The far right has directed much of their efforts into institutions of higher education, which are crucial ideological battlegrounds. The fruits of this work are represented by the sprawling network of faculty, academic programs, and research institutions that billionaire donors have funded in an effort to produce research that supports free market ideology. In addition, the far right has also made attempts to spread its cultural message, rooted in white supremacy, through the funding of speakers, student groups, and activities on campus that have propagated racist ideologies under the banner of free speech (Apple & Schirmer, 2016; Dols, 2017; Mayer, 2016).

When these activities are met with resistance, conservative groups often claim that their First Amendment rights have been violated, and they seek assistance from organizations such as FIRE, which also receives significant funding from far-right donors to quell their opposition. This dynamic exemplifies Stanley's (2018) argument that the conservative arguments for "free speech" on campus are designed to protect only the types of speech that align with their viewpoints (which are increasingly tied to neofascism) and to censor counterspeech that challenges their ideology. Further, the financial ties between far-right donors and the promotion

and protection of racist hate speech on campus demonstrates both the tangible and ideological connections between these incidents and neofascism.

With this context in mind, Chapter Four discusses the research methodology, which takes the form of a Critical Discourse Analysis of FIRE's database of administrator statements made between 2016-2018. CDA aims to locate patterns of "language in use," and its primary purpose is to uncover the ways in which language contributes to social relations of power and domination (Fairclough, 2001; Taylor, 2001, p. 5). Therefore, I selected this methodology with the objective of locating how the language that administrators use in their statements around racist hate speech on campus functions to preserve white supremacy within institutions of higher education.

In Chapter Four, I also present the theoretical frameworks of *institutional whiteness* and *color-blind racism* that will guide the analysis. Ahmed (2012) refers to institutional whiteness as the ways in which white bodies fit comfortably within certain institutions while non-white bodies are deemed unusual and unwelcome. This phenomenon is a product of ongoing work to institutionalize "white norms, values, and cultural representations" (Bell & Moore, 2017, p. 103). As a result, institutional whiteness is linked to the creation of what Bell and Moore (2017) refer to as "white institutional spaces," which refers to spaces within which "racist social relations become entrenched in and reproduced through US institutions" (p. 102).

Central to the development of "white institutional spaces" are acts of "color-blind racism," which refers to the practice of explaining racial inequalities in non-racial terms. Color-blind racism is often carried out discursively through the use of "abstract liberalism," which refers to the application of the liberal language of equality, freedom, choice, etc. to situations rooted in racial inequality (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). In the case of racist hate speech on campus, this language takes the form of referring to all speech and speakers as deserving an "equal" platform

and maintaining the “freedom” to discuss unpopular ideologies on campus, regardless of the content. However, by failing to place racist hate speech in the appropriate social and historical context, these liberal tenets fail to address (and even erase) the inherent racial discrimination and violence embedded within both institutions of higher education and the broader society, further fortifying the walls of white institutional spaces (Bell & Moore, 2017; Wilder, 2013).

Following the discussion of the research methodology, Chapter Five details the findings of the analysis, which corresponds to both Fairclough’s (2001) Stage 2 (the obstacles to the social problem) as well as Stage 4 (the possible ways past these obstacles). In this sense, the discourse analysis presents the discourse as a barrier while also identifying gaps in which new discourses can be generated. The findings are organized by the three dominant themes that emerged from the data: discourses of denial of institutional racism, discourses justifying the presence of racist hate speech on campus, and institutional actions in response to racist hate speech on campus.

Per Fairclough’s (2001) stages three and four, this analysis discusses the ways in which the social order “needs” the problem and begins to identify gaps within the discourses that generate new ways to overcome these obstacles. Further, I argue that these discourses ultimately function to uphold the social order, rooted in white supremacy, within institutions of higher education through the color-blind devotion to liberal values of freedom and equality. However, the weaknesses of color-blind discourses also create space to reimagine the way that institutions discuss incidents of racist hate speech on campus. These reimagined discourses and actions are the subject of the concluding chapter.

Chapter Six brings this analysis back into the contemporary context and discusses the continued relevance for studying incidents of racist hate speech on campus against the backdrop

of neofascism. In addition, it provides a summary of the arguments made herein as well as some recommendations which, like the project itself, are discursive in nature. Finally, it states the contributions, both for institutions and for members of campus communities, that this project can potentially add to the study and discussion of incidents of racist speech on campus, and it also addresses some avenues for further research.

My Relationship to the Topic

Before proceeding to the next chapter, which details the current debates surrounding free speech on college campuses, I must first state my position in relation to the project. Since this is a qualitative research project, I, as the researcher, am the primary research tool—in other words, I will analyze the data through my own unique lens. Therefore, this project is not written from a distanced and objective standpoint. Rather, my own perspectives and experiences very much inform the analysis, and for this reason, it is essential to briefly explain my motivation for selecting this topic as well as my relationship to it (Bloomberg& Volpe, 2016).

I am entering this project from a feminist standpoint, much of which is influenced by the work of Sara Ahmed (2012, 2017). Her work on institutional whiteness and the act of "living a feminist life," (also the title of her recent book) has provided a critical foundation for my analysis of institutional discourses surrounding racist hate speech on campus. She says,

> Living a feminist life does not mean adopting a set of ideals or norms of conduct, although it might mean asking ethical questions about how to live better in an unjust and unequal world (in a non-feminist and antifeminist world) how to create relationships with others that are more equal; how to find ways to support those who are not supported or are less supported by social systems; how to keep coming up against histories that have become concrete, histories that have become as solid as walls. (Ahmed, 2017, p.1)

"Living a feminist life," per Ahmed's description, is something to which I aspire, and I am deeply indebted to her for providing me with this framework. In an effort to actively "live" this mission, I chose to conduct my dissertation research on institutional discourses surrounding issues of racist hate speech on campus with the hope of contributing to the creation of a more equal institution by chipping away at the institutional language that maintains the oppression of marginalized students by functioning as "white bricks" in the walls of white institutional spaces (Ahmed, 2017, p.136).

Moreover, it is important to note that although feminism aims to end sexism and sexual oppression, it is also deeply entangled with the project to end racism (Ahmed, 2017; Hooks, 2015). Therefore, the project to dismantle racism represents feminist "work" in both our personal and professional spaces, including within institutions of higher education. As a white woman, I must own responsibility for the eradication of racism and sexism because as Leonardo (2009) states, "White domination is the responsibility of every white subject because her very being depends on it" (p. 83). And yet, I enter this project with trepidation because of the blinding effects that my whiteness may have on my analysis as well as my own history of racism.

In the introduction to his book *The Wages of Whiteness*, David Roediger (2007) explains that he identified racial hierarchies rooted in white supremacy as a young person growing up in the Midwest. He adds that from an early age, he knew that he recognized the problematic nature of being white. When I read this declaration, I was overcome with envy, as I wished that I could tell of a similar experience of an early awakening to white supremacy and racial injustice. I, on the other hand, had spent the better part of my thirty-five years ambivalently accepting that by claiming my whiteness, I provided a nod of consent to a deeply entrenched system of racial oppression rooted in the domination of white people over people of color.

It is often assumed that white people don't understand or notice race or systems of oppression, and while it is tempting to claim ignorance, I cannot do so in good conscience precisely because I do understand (and have always understood) the power and privilege associated with whiteness—and I have a track record to prove it (Delgado & Stefancic, 1997). For example, as a high school student preparing for college, I wrote an essay about why affirmative action is not "fair" to non-minority students. Later, when I went on to college, I deliberately adopted a "color-blind" racial lens and smugly applauded my "raceless" worldview, which at the time I considered to be highly progressive.

Even during my time as a graduate student, when I began developing more critical perspectives, I engaged in thesis research that attempted to critique the neocolonial aspects of fair-trade clothing production in India. However, during my research at fair trade textile cooperatives, I functioned as both a researcher and a quality control representative from the parent fair trade clothing company from the United States. As a result, I entered the cooperatives as an "expert" from the West (though I could not even thread a needle) and consequently reinscribed neocolonial relationships of production rooted in white supremacy. I finished the research feeling both embarrassed and ashamed of myself for failing to notice the gravity of the white supremacist logic embedded within my project design.

I carried this experience with me as I began my doctoral coursework, and when I found myself on the ground level of the student union, surrounded by Milo Yiannopoulos fans gearing up for a boisterous display of racial hate on my campus, I was filled with anger both at the institution for allowing such a display to occur and at myself for failing to pay attention to the racism that has existed in my professional space all along and ultimately paved the way for this event to take place. The identification of racism in my professional realm of higher education led

me to reflect upon my personal spaces, which also include aspects of structural racism and white supremacy; therefore, I am attempting to critique the very structures within which I reside—a task fraught with tension, to be sure.

Ahmed (2004) suggests that when white subjects make personal declarations of racism as I have done above, the effect of these statements is for the white subject (me) to achieve personal exoneration from racism through the acts of acknowledging and making visible one's whiteness or history with racism. She says,

> So in saying we are raced as whites, then we are not racists, as racism operates through the unmarked nature of whiteness; or in saying we are racists, then we are not racists, as racists don't know they are racists; or in expressing shame about racism, then we are not racists, as racists are shameless; or in saying we are positive about our racial identity, as an identity that is positive insofar as it involves a commitment to anti-racism, then we are not racists, as racists are unhappy, or in being self-critical about racism, then we are not racists, as racists are ignorant; or in saying we exist alongside others, then we are not racists, as racists see themselves as above others, and so on (Ahmed, 2004, p.1.

Ahmed adds that such declarative statements that claim to "perform" an act of anti-racism actually do not accomplish much of anything other than placing the white subject at the center of the discussion on anti-racism. In this sense, they function as a "fantasy" of transcending racism through the mere act of admission, an impotent effort in an antiracist struggle which instead requires interventions within the "political economy of race," characterized by an unequal distribution of "resources and capacities" (p.1).

In line with Ahmed's critique of white declarations of anti-racism, I assert that my own declaration of racism along with my critique of white supremacy in no way places me above

white supremacy or makes me a “white savior.” As the writer Austin Channing simply states, “To fight white saviorism is to realize that you ain’t shit. You are just in solidarity with the rest of us in an effort to make the world a better place” (Channing, 2020). It is in an effort to situate myself and my work within this “solidarity” that Channing describes that I include this information about myself. I am not attempting to claim that being able to declare my own racism makes me not a “racist” or that I am somehow better than other white people who I deem to be racist. Rather, I have included this background to show that my entire worldview has been shaped by being “white,” which is an essential declaration because as a qualitative researcher, I am the primary research “tool,” and I will analyze the data through my own lens that is inescapably clouded by whiteness.

Consequently, the act of a white researcher critiquing whiteness is complicated, and it requires the researcher to “turn towards their role and responsibility in these histories of racism” as they “turn away from themselves, and towards others” (Ahmed, 2004; Jackson, 2019). With this objective in mind, I turn to the work of primarily scholars of color, to whom “whiteness” has never been invisible, to help guide my analysis on administrative responses to racist hate speech on campus. A few prominent examples of scholars who influence my work include Sara Ahmed, who showed me what a feminist world could look like, Joyce M. Bell and Wendy Leo Moore, who provided me with critical foundation for understanding the role that racist speech on campus plays in the maintenance of white institutional spaces, and Audre Lorde, who brilliantly articulates, in one of her most famous quotes, my own stake in dismantling racism: “I am not free while any woman is unfree, even when her shackles are very different from my own. And I am not free as long as one person of Color remains chained. Nor is any one of you” (Lorde, 2007, p. 133).

Lorde also argues that a further hindrance to overcoming racial oppression is white guilt, and she says that white guilt is no excuse for white people to remain silent on issues of oppression:

> [Guilt] is a response to one's own actions or lack of action. If it leads to change then it can be useful, since it is then no longer guilt but the beginning of knowledge. Yet all too often, guilt is just another name for impotence, for defensiveness destructive of communication it becomes a device to protest ignorance and the continuation of things the way they are, the ultimate protection for changelessness. (Lorde, 2007, p. 130)

It is in this spirit that I embark on this project with the goal of transforming my own shame and guilt into both personal and structural change.

Chapter 2: Review of the Literature

Introduction

The conflicts surrounding free speech in institutions of higher education in the United States are typically framed by placing the constitutional imperatives of freedom and equality in opposition to one another. On the one hand, "free speech" is a core academic value, but when certain speech, such as racist hate speech, conflicts with an institution's mission to provide equal educational opportunities to all students, a conflict arises with the institution's competing commitment to equality. Through this lens, administrators who must decide how to respond to an incident of racist hate speech on campus are faced with a unique dilemma: regulate or ban a particular speaker or form of expression in order to preserve the right to an equal education for students in the targeted group or allow the speech to occur on campus so as to not violate a particular student group or speaker's First Amendment right to free speech and expression.

The literature review that follows examines the ongoing conversation among those who oppose disciplining racist hate speech on campus due to the violation of the principles of academic freedom and free speech (which go hand in hand and are cornerstone values of higher education) and proponents of speech regulation aimed at pursuing racial justice for minority students, who have historically been marginalized within institutional spaces. Rather than taking for granted the liberal tenets of freedom and equality, which undergird the debates surrounding hate speech on campus, this analysis starts from a point of inequality by recognizing that these beloved liberal values emerged from a society built upon racial exclusion (Bonilla-Silva, 2018). Framing the conflicts this way creates space to interrogate how institutional responses can reinforce the existing white supremacy within institutions of higher education and to examine the

role that these conflicts play in the larger political context characterized by a recent surge of neofascism.

But first, it is essential to examine the existing academic discussion around these conflicts, which largely revolves around free speech absolutism. The first section of this review details the absolutist position on incidents of hate speech. Absolutists reject regulation of speech under the vast majority of circumstances and are rooted firmly in their belief that more speech, not less speech, will allow for damaging ideas to be defeated in the “marketplace of ideas” (Strossen, 2000). The second section moves the discussion of absolutism into the realm of higher education, and it focuses on the three primary areas of activism, academic freedom, and intellectual safe spaces. Finally, the third section problematizes the conservative interest in free speech activism on college campuses. The links between conservatism and conflicts surrounding free speech (particularly racist hate speech) are paramount to understanding how this issue fits into far-right efforts to incorporate institutions of higher education into the fold of neofascism. This overview will lay the groundwork for a more in-depth examination of this topic in Chapter Three.

Free Speech Absolutism

The absolutist position on the censorship of hate speech is exemplified by the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU), which argues that restriction on any speech is both unconstitutional and unwise except in the case of a “clear and present threat” (Delgado & Stefancic, 2004; Strossen, 2000). Nadine Strossen, former ACLU Director, describes the organization’s position as follows:

> Our position is not that government may never restrict speech, but rather, that it may do so only under very limited circumstances. In a nutshell, government may suppress speech

> only if necessary to prevent a clear and present danger of actual or imminent harm. Examples that would satisfy this appropriately strict standard are threats of violence; targeted verbal harassment, focused on one individual or a small group; and intentional incitement of imminent violent conduct or other illegal conduct. (Strossen, 2000, pp. 244-245)

This stance is rooted in the position of former Supreme Court Justice, Oliver Wendell Holmes, who stated that the censorship of speech without evidence of clear and present danger would diminish the power of the First Amendment and view "every idea as an incitement" (p. 250). In addition, the absolutist position relies on the concept of content neutrality or the notion that censorship based on unpopular topics and viewpoints is unconstitutional (Majeed, 2009).

The term "absolutist" is a slightly misleading category for this point of view due to the exceptions to speech regulations that stretch beyond the incitement of "clear and present danger." Geoffrey Stone, a leading First Amendment scholar at the University of Chicago and lead author of the university's free speech policy known as "The Chicago Statement" (considered by FIRE to be the gold standard of statements on free speech), notes that speech should only be restricted if it "violates the law, falsely defames a specific individual, constitutes a genuine threat or harassment, unjustifiably invades substantial privacy or confidentiality interests, or that is otherwise directly incompatible with the functioning of the University" (Creeley & Stone, 2015, p. 1). Stone's assertion draws attention to the important fact that absolutism with regard to the First Amendment does not actually exist.

For example, in the field of commerce, false statements about products and stock values are prohibited. In addition, government employees cannot engage in certain political activities, speech that spreads falsehoods about individuals is prosecuted, and fighting words, which

threaten the public order, are not protected under the First Amendment (Matsuda et al., 1993). In his explanation of the irony of the free speech conflicts at institutions of higher, Jason Stanley (2018) says,

> In private workplaces in the United States, free speech is a fantasy. Workers are regularly subjected to nondisclosure agreements, forbidding them to speak about various matters. In most workplaces, workers can be fired for political speech on social media. Attacking the only workplaces in a country with genuine free-speech protections using the ideal of free speech is another instance of the familiar Orwellian nature of propaganda. (p. 40)

He explains that the role of political propaganda is to “conceal a political movement’s problematic goals by masking them with ideals that are widely accepted” (p. 24). In this case, the conservative cry for “free speech on campus” is really an attempt to quell any oppositional views.

Despite the numerous restrictions on speech, racist hate speech continues to receive protection because as Matsuda (1993) argues, “it is so common that it is seen as a part of the ordinary jostling and conflict people are expected to tolerate, rather than as fighting words” (p. 35). In other words, racism, and the “right to be racist” is merely categorized as a different viewpoint that must be protected under the principle of content neutrality (Bell & Moore, 2017). Further, in terms of Stanley’s (2018) description of fascist politics, racist hate speech is symbolic of the speech that promotes the dominant fascist ideology, in this case white male patriarchy. This is specifically the type of speech that fascists intend to preserve and promote within the halls of academia at the expense of suppressing speech and expression that challenges and rejects it. Therefore, the notion of “free speech” is selectively applied.

Instead of imposing regulations on racist hate speech, free speech absolutists assert that speech should only be restricted on rare occasions and in extreme circumstances, and they tout "counterspeech," or the idea of "more speech rather than less speech" as more effective than regulations in response to instances of racist hate speech (Collier, 1995; Majeed, 2009; Creevey & Stone, 2015; Strossen, 2000). Absolutists fear repression at the heavy hand of a government granted the authority to censor speech. Instead, they claim that all ideas are worthy of a public forum and that those ideas that are untenable should be met with counter-expression. Through this process, they argue that the most optimal outcomes will prevail (Strossen, 2000; Matsuda et al., 1993). The counterspeech response to racist hate speech on campus will be discussed again later in this review once we have explored the perspective of the Critical Race Theorists.

Critical Race Theorists, on the other hand, argue that the absolutist approach perpetuates racism as it exemplifies an "idealized and decontextualized" interpretation of the First Amendment, which does not take into account the inherent racism and subsequently unequal social landscape of the United States (Matsuda et al., 1993; Lawrence et al., 1993, p. 58; Delgado & Stefancic, 2004; Bell & Moore, 2017, 2019). Similarly, Matsuda (1993) asserts that the law is "both a product and a promoter of racism," and she argues that there should in fact be legal consequences in cases of hate speech when "1) The message is of racial inferiority, 2) The message is directed against a historically oppressed group, and 3) the message is persecutory, hateful, and degrading" (p. 36). Subjecting this speech to legal prosecution would represent an effort to advocate for the rights and protection of marginalized and vulnerable groups:

> The places where the law does not go to redress harm have tended to be the places where women, children, people of color, and poor people live. This absence of law is itself another story with a message perhaps unintended, about the relative value of different

human lives. A legal response to racist speech is a statement that victims of racism are valued members of our polity. (p. 18)

In this sense, a blind devotion to First Amendment absolutism for the sake of preventing state-sanctioned persecution of marginalized communities overlooks the fact the underneath the fragile surface of liberal ideals lies the ugly and violent history of white male supremacy—its legacy of inequality, a bothersome thorn in the side of a national ethos that claims "liberty and justice for all."

While free speech absolutism is a fundamental component of the national narrative of the United States, it does not hold the same prominence in other Western countries. Tsesis (2010) notes that legal regulations of hate speech became common internationally after governments around the world recognized the damaging impact of Nazi propaganda and sought to prevent another such travesty. Countries including Canada, the United Kingdom, Australia, and New Zealand have enacted policies that limit hate speech which include the following elements: discrimination, connection to violence, and messages of inferiority, hatred, and persecution. Bell and Moore (2019) highlight Canada's hate speech laws, which state that hate speech does not align with the purposes for protecting free speech as follows: "a) seeking the truth and the common good, b) promoting self-fulfillment of individuals by allowing them to develop thoughts and ideas as they see fit, and c) ensuring that the political process is open to all persons" (p. 12). However, the United States has not adopted any such policy, which according to Matsuda (1993) demonstrates its unwavering commitment to the First Amendment at the expense of the democratic values of equality and full participation (p. 31).

In contrast, Strossen (2000), a descendant of Holocaust survivors, argues that speech regulations have done little to advance equality and protect targeted groups throughout history.

She draws upon the political climate prior to the Holocaust to support her point, and she cites a 1990 Canadian Supreme Court decision, which states that Pre-Hitler Germany employed similar anti-hate speech laws to Canada's current anti-hate speech laws. While these laws were enforced vigorously prior to Hitler's rise to power, they did not stifle the spread of Nazism. In fact, she claims that there is evidence that some of the purveyors of anti-Semitic speech used their criminal trials to spread their message to a wider audience. On the other hand, Matsuda (1993) and Delgado and Stefancic (2004) assert that racist hate speech is inextricably linked to acts of violence and that it works hand in hand with other hate-based propaganda to pave the way for the justification for acts of violence against marginalized groups: "Whom we will oppress, we first demonize. The demonization rationalizes what comes later: The group deserved what they got" (Delgado & Stefancic, 2004, pp. 23-24).

Nonetheless, the example of Holocaust survivors supporting the absolutist commitment to free speech is compelling. Strossen (2000) cites the 1977 Skokie Case, in which the former ACLU Director, Aryeh Neier, a Holocaust survivor, supported the rights of neo-Nazis to march in Skokie, Illinois, a city with a large Jewish population. She quotes Neier at length as he explains how he chose to defend the rights of his enemy:

> How can I, a Jew, refuse to defend freedom, even for Nazis? Because we Jews are uniquely vulnerable, I believe we can only win brief respite from persecution in a society in which encounters are settled by power. As a Jew, therefore, I want restraints placed on power. I want restraints which prohibit those in power from interfering with my right to speak, my right to publish, or my right to gather with others who also feel threatened. To defend myself, I must restrain power with freedom, even if the temporary beneficiaries are the enemies of freedom. (p. 280)

Neier’s statement, albeit controversial, embodies the absolutists’ fears of a tyrannical government emboldened with the power of censorship and provides a compelling counterpoint to calls for legal sanctions in cases of racial hate speech.

In contrast, Bell and Moore (2019) disagree with the idea that enduring hate speech is necessary to upholding freedom, and they argue that this assertion mistakenly assumes that hate speech and counterspeech are given equal protection under the First Amendment. To illustrate this “false equivalency,” they point to the fact that white supremacists such as Richard Spencer are protected by the First Amendment and subsequently given speaking platforms, yet groups led by people of color, from the Civil Rights Movement to Black Lives Matter, have been arrested and even assaulted by state officials while at the same time being called upon to be “civil” in their protests (p. 12). Therefore, counterspeech that challenges existing hierarchies often does not receive the same protection under the First Amendment, which complicates the popular notion that the free marketplace of ideas will provide marginalized groups with a fair chance at challenging their oppressors.

And on a deeper level, the notion that racist hate speech contributes to greater freedoms embodies the notion of “Black sacrifice,” which refers to the idea that accepting racism against people of color is necessary to promote the greater good and to advance the broader society. In this sense, the “greater good” and the broader society are associated with whiteness, which represents a dominant perspective in which racism is not only normalized but also required in order to maintain a worldview rooted in white supremacy (Lawrence et al., 1993, pp. 81–82). It is against this backdrop that we turn our attention specifically to the ways in which institutions of higher education navigate issues of free speech and play an active role in maintaining white supremacy both within and outside the walls of the academy.

Higher Education

The controversy over the regulation of hate speech bleeds into the sphere of higher education, where tensions between free speech and equal access to education have erupted in protests and resulted in efforts to regulate what can and cannot be said on college campuses (Tsesis, 2010, p. 617). Again, the disagreement arises between those who favor the regulation of racist hate speech on college campuses and those who instead advocate counterspeech as a more effective alternative. Critics of regulation of speech on campus express three primary concerns with regulating speech: 1) the notion that activists who rely on free speech will be negatively impacted by the regulations that they seek, 2) perceived threats to academic freedom, and 3) the possibility that students are being infantilized by the university agreeing to eliminate speech that is deemed offensive from educational activities. In contrast, proponents of speech regulation claim that it positively impacts the university community by allowing all students to participate more freely and equally in educational activities.

Activism

Activism on college campuses can be dated back to the Civil War Era but gained momentum during the years between 1900 and 1960. The primary issues with which activist groups engaged were anti-war movements, socialism, labor, democracy, and anti-communism during the Cold War (Altbach & Peterson, 1971). However, student activism on college campuses did not receive major national attention until the Free Speech Movement of the 1960s, notably on the campus of the University of California at Berkeley. In the fall of 1964, the Berkeley administration denied students the right to organize in support of the Civil Rights movement, which incited the student’s opposition to the administration’s mandates against raising money and distributing literature regarding Civil Rights. This opposition ultimately

spurred what is now known as the Berkeley Free Speech Movement (Cohen, 1985). In his 1964 statement titled The Berkeley Student Rebellion of 1964, the movement's leader, Mario Savio (1965), explained,

> [The administration's ban] combined an act of bureaucratic violence against the students themselves with an open attack on student participation in the Bay Area civil rights movement. The seemingly inexhaustible energy, which the Berkeley students had so long devoted to the struggle for Negro rights was not turned squarely on the vast, faceless University administration. This is what gave the Free Speech Movement its initial impetus. (p. 1)

The Free Speech Movement symbolized students' departures from the instrumental nature of higher education, with the end goal of receiving a diploma and, ultimately, a salary. Rather, the students at Berkeley fought for, and in many ways achieved, democratic participation on campus. In addition, the Free Speech Movement paved the way for further campus activism around the issues of civil rights and the Vietnam War, and it also made the university a crucial site of struggle for social justice (Cohen, 1985).

The absolutist position maintains that restricting free speech works against the interests of targeted groups who rely on the First Amendment in order to engage in activism, both on and off campus, and that speech restrictions are disproportionately enforced against targeted groups. For example, in a *New York Times* interview, prominent First Amendment scholar, Erwin Chemerinsky, explained that the University of Michigan drafted a speech code in the 1980s and, as a result, more than 20 Black students were accused by white students of employing racist speech. Further, there was not a single incident of a white student being punished for racist speech under the speech code (Schutler, 2017).

Therefore, while at first glance censorship of hate speech may seem to promote equality, some argue that it has the opposite effect (Strossen, 2000). Consequently, supporters of the absolutist approach cite the perceived irony that lies in the fact that groups who once relied on free speech for their own activism on college campuses and elsewhere are now seeking censorship of controversial speech (Collier, 2015; Haidt & Lukianoff, 2015; Creevey & Stone, 2015; Strossen, 2000). However, while the First Amendment is certainly paramount in activism on and off campus, this review demonstrates the ways in which groups who aim to disrupt the social order are not granted the same protections under the First Amendment—a fact that both reflects and reinforces the inherent societal inequalities that must be considered in arguments concerning free speech.

Scholars often cite the years of McCarthyism and the Civil Rights movement as crucial time periods for free speech activism (Collier, 1995; Creevey & Stone 2015; Strossen, 2000). The authors of "The Chicago Statement" enthusiastically recall a moment in the early twentieth century during which the University of Chicago allowed William Z. Foster, the Communist party's presidential candidate, to speak on campus. Despite a flurry of protest, the university president at the time, Robert Hutchins, stated that "our students . . .should have freedom to discuss any problem that presents itself." He further asserted that the "cure" for ideas we oppose "lies through open discussion rather than through inhibition" (Stone et al., 2014, p.1).

While the censorship of racist hate speech is often compared with McCarthyism, Matsuda (1993) argues that this analogy represents a false equivalency due to the drastically different contexts in which these discourses exist. She argues that the idea of racial superiority is universally agreed upon to be wrong and that "there is no nation left on this planet that submits as its national self-expression the view that Hitler was right." She further notes that "Marxism is

not universally condemned," and that similar to ideas of free market capitalism, liberalism, neo-conservatism, etc., Marxist thought is "part of the ongoing efforts of human beings to understand their world and improve life in it" (p. 37). In other words, political and economic systems are suitable topics of academic inquiry and discussion while racial inferiority is not.

While it is true that the First Amendment has been an important component of racial justice movements, activists have not necessarily been protected. Delgado and Stefancic (2004) point to the numerous times in which minorities were arrested and convicted for exercising their right to protest. They argue,

> History shows that minorities' protest rights are respected only when their behavior is meek, mild, decorous, and mannerly. As soon as their protest becomes strident, noisy, or obstructionist, it ceases to qualify for protection. Free speech is helpful only when minorities need it least. (pp. 206-207)

For example, in the case of Martin Luther King Jr., free speech was certainly crucial to his activism, but it would be inaccurate to say that the First Amendment protected him against government persecution. King was a target of constant FBI surveillance through its COINTELPRO domestic surveillance as a result of his controversial stances on race, economics, and imperialism; in a 1999 civil trial in Memphis Tennessee, the jury decided unanimously that there was sufficient evidence to prove that King's assassination was a conspiracy that involved numerous actors including local, state, and federal government agencies (CBS staff, 1999; kinginstitute. stanford.edu).

Similarly, protests aimed at promoting social justice and dismantling white supremacy on campus do not receive the same First Amendment protection as racist hate speech (Lawrence, 1993). From the historical violent incidents at Kent State and Jackson State to the contemporary

demonstrations by the Black Lives Matter movement and the infamous protest by the Occupy Movement at UC Davis (during which peaceful protestors were pepper sprayed by police), police repression is disproportionately used against protesters that seek to disrupt the social order. Simultaneously, known white supremacists, such as Richard Spencer, are protected by the First Amendment while protestors aimed at thwarting the spread of racist and hateful ideology are met with calls for civility by university administrators. Therefore, "the right to be racist" on campus is protected by the First Amendment while the right to protest is repressed (Memmott, 2011; Bell & Moore, 2019, p. 12*)*.

These examples disprove the liberal fantasy of an equal "marketplace of ideas" and demonstrate that the protection of speech functions according to existing power disparities (Delgado & Stefancic, 2004). In addition, the "unequal" marketplace of ideas is not limited to activist engagements—it also extends into the realm of academic freedom, which is perhaps the cornerstone value of institutions of higher education. The following section details the debate surrounding free speech and academic freedom and draws attention to the preferential treatment of white faculties' scholarship under the principles of content neutrality and academic freedom.

Academic Freedom

The American Association of University Professors (AAUP) asserts that institutions of higher education are committed to advancing the "common good" through the search for knowledge and truth. This task requires that university faculty have freedom in both their research and teaching (AAUP, 1940). The presence of speech regulations in institutions of higher education is troubling to critics, particularly those with conservative viewpoints who are concerned that institutions are engaging in the censorship of unpopular ideas, including hate speech (D'Souza, 1991). Furedi (2016) claims,

> There are powerful cultural forces at work that promote the perception that the policing of academic freedom is not what it really is: the coercive regulation of everyday communication and the repression and stigmatization of certain ideas. Instead, the undermining of academic freedom is often presented as an enlightened attempt to prevent offence or as a sensible way of minimizing conflict. (p. 123)

From Furedi's point of view, the goal of preventing conflict takes precedence over the institution's commitment to academic freedom. In this context, O'Neill (2016) compares universities to "kindergartens" and states, "The elevation of safety over rigorous engagement represents the death of the university as it has been understood in the modern period" (p. 6).

This group of critics abhors the culture of "political correctness," a term that conservatives often use pejoratively to refer to a "devotion to recognizing and alleviating the burdens of historically marginalized groups." The call for political correctness fuels the conservative rallying cry against perceived elites who aim to force their agendas on others while rejecting opposing views. For this reason, conservatives have also associated political correctness with totalitarianism (Kitrosser, 2016, p. 1990). For example, in his 1991 book *Illiberal Education*, a polemic against political correctness in universities, Dinesh D'Souza quotes S. Frederick Starr, former president of Oberlin College, who said:

> It is common in universities today to hear talk of politically correct opinions, or PC for short. These are questions that are not really open to argument. It takes real courage to oppose the campus orthodoxy. To tell you the truth, I was a student during the days of McCarthy, and there is less freedom now than there was then. (p. 239)

We can recall from a previous section of this review that Matsuda (1993) rejects the comparison between McCarthyism and racist hate speech due to the universal consensus against racial

superiority and the debatable nature of leftist ideology. However, Majeed (2009) emphasizes the danger in censorship of speech that challenges consensus and argues that such speech is essential in democratic societies.

With regard to the freedom of faculty on university campuses, Creeley and Stone (2015) lament the punishment of professors with controversial opinions and research agendas including Laura Kipnis, a Northwestern University professor who has been the subject of recent Title IX inquiries due to her controversial comments regarding the university's role in defining the scope of sexual assaults on campus (Martin, 2015; Creeley & Stone, 2015). He points once again to the University of Chicago's "Chicago Statement," which emphasizes the idea that speech and expression should not be limited by the institution except for in rare cases that interfere with the functioning of the university or violate the law. It further highlights the importance of dialogue rather than suppression as the most effective way to deal with difficult or offensive issues:

> In a word, the University's fundamental commitment is to the principle that debate or deliberation may not be suppressed because the ideas put forth are thought by some or even by most members of the University community to be offensive, unwise, immoral, or wrong-headed. It is for the individual members of the University community, not for the University as an institution, to make those judgments for themselves, and to act on those judgments not by seeking to suppress speech, but by openly and vigorously contesting the ideas that they oppose. Indeed, fostering the ability of members of the University community to engage in such debate and deliberation in an effective and responsible manner is an essential part of the University's educational mission. (Stone et al., 2014, p.1)

This passage falls in line with calls for counterspeech rather than censorship, a stance also advocated by free speech absolutists.

While the scholars mentioned above express concern that regulating speech on campus threatens academic freedom, others feel as though the opposite is true—namely, that certain speech, particularly racist hate speech, threatens the intellectual lives of institutions and faculty. These critics blame the recent upsurge in free speech outrage on campus on a broader movement of anti-intellectualism in the United States, a key component of neofascism (Scott, 2018; Stanley, 2018; Sultana, 2018). This disdain for and fear of intellectuals is embodied by former Secretary of Education, Betsy DeVos, who told students, "the fight against the education establishment extends to you, too. The faculty, from adjunct professors to deans, tell you what to do, what to say, and, more ominously, what to think." However, Scott pushes back against this argument and emphasizes that the notion of academic freedom requires the expertise of scholars in advancing the "common good" by providing students with a rigorous training in critical thought—not indoctrination. In this sense, she cautions against conflating academic freedom and free speech which she argues, "denies the authority of knowledge and of the professor who purveys it" (Scott, 2018, p.1).

Sultana (2018) also fervently argues that even though free speech and academic freedom are often used interchangeably, they are in fact distinct. While free speech guarantees the rights of citizens to "voice their opinions and expressions" without facing persecution from the government, academic freedom provides this freedom to scholars but adds the important distinction of quality:

> Academic freedom enables free speech that is both informed and with reasoned argument to take place, as it is intellectually-driven and knowledge-based. Academic freedom is

> different from free speech in that it is founded on the principles of scholarly rigor, which involves engaging with theories and methodologies, and demonstrating competency of ideas that have been debated. (pp. 230-232)

Similarly, Matsuda (1993) says, "Not all views deserve the dignity of an academic forum. Poorly documented, racially biased work does not meet the professional standards required of academic writing" (p. 41). She adds that theories that may be unpopular but are supported by sufficient evidence deserve to be heard in an academic setting.

The core issue at hand in this debate is the distinction between academic freedom, which relies on pre-established scholarly rigor and process, and the mere right to voice an opinion, regardless of how baseless it may be, in any forum. Scott (2018) argues that academic freedom is under attack in the conservative-led speech wars on campuses. She explains,

> The right's reference to free speech sweeps away the guarantees of academic freedom, dismissing as so many violations of the Constitution the thoughtful, critical articulation of ideas; the demonstration of proof based on rigorous examination of evidence; the distinction between true and false, between careful and sloppy work; the exercise of reasoned judgment. To the right, free speech means an entitlement to express one's opinion, however unfounded, however ungrounded, and it extends to every venue, every institution. (p. 1)

One such instance of the expression of an "ungrounded opinion" in an academic setting (in Scott's terms) is the recent publication of the article "The Case for Colonialism," published in the journal *The Third World Quarterly*. This article romanticizes and even advocates colonialism despite the well-documented violence and legacies of trauma suffered by indigenous people and colonized people. Therefore, such a project lives in the realm of "ungrounded opinion" and does

not meet the rigor of an academic project to be given protection under the principles of academic freedom.

Referring to the same article, Cooper (2017) adds,

> It is also unacceptable to publish work that defends the right of any nation to violently colonize another group. Trying to make the case for colonialism, given what we know about the genocide of indigenous folks and the multigenerational trauma of the trans-Atlantic slave trade, is harmful. It is not merely a difference of opinion. But this is often how freedom of speech works for white academics — they are given a platform for their ideas, even when it is clear that the ideas don't meet academic standards. (p. 1)

This quote illustrates the essential point that advocating for the violent history of colonialism does not constitute the mere expression of an alternative viewpoint, but it actually misrepresents history and causes real harm to those who experience the damaging effects of its legacy (Sultana, 2018). Further, as Cooper demonstrates, white faculty are able to use academic institutions and publications to promote these harmful ideas under the guise of academic freedom. Within this context, the racist hate speech of white faculty and white supremacist activists alike receives greater freedoms and protections than does the speech of speakers of color who aim to disrupt the social order. This display of academic white supremacy is also emblematic of fascist politics, which "makes room for the study of myths as facts" and undermines the legitimacy of scholarly knowledge. For this reason, Stanley (2018) argues that it is not productive for institutions of higher education to spend precious time and resources debating theories that have been definitively proven false through extensive scientific inquiry (p. 47).

On the other hand, Majeed (2009) states that institutions of higher education cannot and should not regulate speech or expression that may be perceived as "low level," including

explicitly racist or sexist language. While he does not address the question of scholarly rigor, he does discuss the quality of the speech, and he argues that such “low level” speech does actually contribute to the marketplace of ideas as well as the pursuit of truth, the institution’s primary mission, by sparking debate and inquiry around controversial topics. He claims that it is better to let these arguments unfold in the public forum rather than to let them fester underground. On the contrary, Sultana (2018) calls her fellow academics to defend the scholarly process and speak out against those who jeopardize both academic freedom and the production of knowledge by publishing material that is inaccurate and damaging to marginalized groups.

Much like the discussion surrounding free speech and activism, the debate surrounding academic freedom and the censorship of racist scholarship also shows that not all speech is treated equally and the speech that upholds existing power structures, in this case institutional white supremacy, is given a legitimate platform under the cloak of academic freedom—even at the expense of scholarly rigor. And yet, the critics who remain concerned that the censorship of racist hate speech and other speech that does not meet the standards of “political correctness” will pose a threat to academic freedom are joined in their crusade for free speech by conservative critics, who are preoccupied with the “coddling” of students through the creation of spaces that are free from offensive speech. These conservative critiques claim that institutions are teaching students that censorship is acceptable and consequently failing to prepare them for inevitable conflicts that they will encounter in their post-college lives (Haidt & Lukianoff, 2015, Lukianoff, 2016).

Intellectual Safe Spaces

Critics of speech regulation accuse universities of complying with students’ demands to create intellectual “safe spaces” by ridding the university of words or ideas that may be

disturbing. Terms such as “microaggressions,” defined as seemingly innocuous phrases that are actually perceived by some as violent, and “trigger warnings,” which refer to the warnings that professors should theoretically provide to students if something controversial or disturbing might be said, are at the forefront of the debate around safe spaces (Haidt & Lukianoff, 2015; Suk Gerson, 2014). Scholars also argue that college students feel as though they have the right to “not be offended” and consequently should be able to avoid speech that causes them discomfort (Lukianoff, 2016; Majeed, 2009).

In their widely read and influential article “The Coddling of the American Mind,” which appeared in the fall 2015 issue of *The Atlantic*, Greg Lukianoff, the President and CEO of FIRE, and Jonathan Haidt, a social psychologist, argued that by embracing the idea of safe spaces, institutions of higher education are hindering the maturation of students and poorly preparing them for life post-graduation, where speech cannot be predicted or controlled. These authors go so far as to link the perceived issues of free speech on campus to the increase in diagnoses of mental health crisis in college students due to the fragility and “thin skin” that is nurtured by overly protective spaces, including educational safe spaces, which shield students from disturbing thoughts (Haidt & Lukianoff, 2015).

Johnson (2017) also argues that the creation of safe spaces on campus is infantilizing, and he quotes a *New York Times* journalist, who sarcastically claims that a safe space created for students at Brown University was filled with “cookies, coloring books, bubbles, Play-Doh, calming music, pillows, blankets, and a video of frolicking puppies, as well as students and staff members trained to deal with trauma.” A representative of FIRE added that Brown’s “real goal is to provide an intellectual cocoon for students…to create an ideological bubble for students on campus in which students’ beliefs will be free from challenge” (p. 5).

Following this line of thought, University of Chicago Dean of Students, John Ellison, wrote in his letter to incoming freshman,

> Our commitment to academic freedom means that we do not support so-called "trigger warnings," we do not cancel invited speakers because their topics might prove controversial, and we do not condone the creation of intellectual "safe spaces" where individuals can retreat from ideas and perspectives at odds with their own. (Grieve, 2016)

Johnson (2017) agrees with Ellison's position on safe spaces:

> At their most basic level, today's safe spaces and trigger warnings seem designed mostly to stifle criticism of the majority viewpoints on questions related to race, gender, and ethnicity. With faculty and student opinion (at best) ambivalent about defending free exchange of ideas, administrators and trustees will need to step up—as Chicago's Ellison did—to ensure campus environments remain committed to open inquiry. (p. 8)

Here, too, there are impulses of "anti-political correctness" which, according to these perspectives, stifle non-majority viewpoints (Kitrosser, 2017). While the authors above argue that the creation of safe spaces impedes intellectual debate and conversation, others challenge this notion and claim that the presence of violent speech on campus also has a debilitating effect on intellectual exchanges, particularly for minority students (Delgado & Stefancic, 2004; Lawrence, et al., 1993; Solorzano, et al., 2000).

For example, Solorzano, Ceja, and Yosso (2000) tell the story of an African American student who explains the differential treatment that white students and students of color receive when planning events on campus: "When it comes time for black students to do things on campus…there's a whole set of rules that you have to abide by, whereas the other students, it's like, 'Well, you all have a good time'" (p. 68). This example validates arguments that color-

blindness, as it pertains to the law and to university policy, is a myth (Boler, 2004; Lawrence, 1993). In addition, it exemplifies the notion of "white innocence" by assuming white students pose less of a threat than students of color and therefore deserve fewer restrictions and more freedom (Baldwin, 1993, 1998; Frank, 2014).

Lawrence (1993) adds that the impact of racist speech is no less severe than speech that directly incites violence. He claims that the injury from racist speech typically takes the forms of psychic and reputational damage as well as the denial of educational opportunity, and he emphasizes the importance of understanding the depth of these injuries:

> To engage in a debate about the First Amendment and racist speech without a full understanding of the nature and extent of the harm of racist speech risks making the First Amendment an instrument of domination rather than a vehicle of liberation. (p. 72)

Similarly, Delgado and Stefancic (2004) claim that the racist hate speech can take not only a psychological but also a physical toll on victims:

> The short-term harms of hate speech include rapid breathing, headaches, raised blood pressure, dizziness, rapid pulse rate, drug-taking, risk-taking behavior and even suicide. The stress of repeated racial abuse may have long-term consequences, including damaged self-image, lower aspiration level, and depression. (p. 12)

In this sense, hate speech can also be physically injurious and even violent, rendering the distinction between fighting words and racist speech inadequate. This is particularly true when violent speech is placed in the proper historical and political context. Given the serious impact of racist hate speech on victims, it certainly infringes on the rights of targeted students to access an equal educational experience (Lawrence, 1993).

The sections above demonstrate the conflicts in the literature surrounding the impacts of speech regulation with regard to activism, academic freedom, and the creation of intellectual safe spaces. Those who favor limiting speech claim that such measures are necessary to ensure that all students have equal access to educational opportunities while those who oppose any censorship claim that these actions violate essential constitutional rights and also do little to advance equality (Strossen, 2000, 1990; Tsesis, 2010; Lawrence et al., 1993; Matsuda et al., 1993). The following section provides an overview of the discussion regarding the regulation of campus speech via speech codes as well as the contrasting "counterspeech" strategy advocated for by absolutists.

Regulation vs. Counterspeech

The regulation of speech in institutions of higher education generally takes the form of "speech codes," which refer to "university regulations prohibiting expression that would be constitutionally protected in society at large" or "any campus regulation that punishes, forbids, heavily regulates, or restricts a substantial amount of protected speech," and they have received similar scrutiny (Majeed, 2009, p. 483). Creeley and Stone (2015) cite a recent FIRE report, which claims that "illiberal" speech codes exist in 55% of institutions of higher education, and he warns against what he perceives as negative educational outcomes in the event of their enforcement: "For students and faculty, the message is clear: Speaking your mind means putting your education or your career at risk" (p. 1).

Proponents of speech codes claim that they function for the benefit of the public and that disallowing racist and xenophobic speech does not hinder the university's mission to pursue truth and knowledge. Further, they serve as a tool to prevent the dissemination of "menacing stereotypes, symbols, and statements that deter people from enjoying the intellectual life of a

university" (Tsesis, 2010, p. 621). Similarly, Lawrence (1993) advocates for carefully crafted guidelines that restrict racist speech in certain cases, and he provides the speech code that once existed at Stanford as an example. These guidelines stated that First Amendment protection would not apply to speech on campus that 1) stigmatizes a group based on their "sex, race, color, handicap, religion, sexual orientation, or national and ethnic origin; 2) is addressed directly to the individual or individuals whom it insults or stigmatizes; and 3) makes use of 'fighting' words or non-verbal symbols" (p. 67). For Lawrence, racist hate speech constitutes "fighting words" that cause incredible damage to victims, and such regulations represent an effort to prevent this special form of violence. Further, in the context of universities, these fighting words do not promote dialogue and discussion. Rather, they function to intimidate and threaten targeted groups, who are consequently excluded from the intellectual life of the university (Delgado & Stefancic, 2004; Lawrence et al., 1993; Tsesis, 2010).

On the contrary, Strossen (1990) finds Lawrence's proposed speech regulation problematic due to what she perceives as an inescapably vague definition and application of regulations, the potential to discourage unorthodox speech and views on campus, and the limited reach that such regulations could address. In Strossen's view, these codes are symbolic at best (p. 499). Collier (2015) echoes the concern that such regulations are limited in the effort to curb racism. She says that speech codes are a "well-intentioned but improper solution to a frustrating problem" because while they "draw a line in the sand" with regard to what can and what cannot be done, they legitimate actions that may be harmful but do not cross this line (p. 266). Along with the tendency to be vague, Majeed (2009) further explains that speech codes often do not pass legal muster. In fact, the speech code at Stanford University, which Lawrence advocates,

was repealed in 1995 after the court decided that it violated the constitutional value of content neutrality and that it was overly broad.

Instead of employing speech codes, scholars that decry censorship of speech on behalf of the government and universities advocate "counterspeech" as the best approach to deal with hate speech. It is important to note, however, that the reliance upon counterspeech to quell racist hate speech is an approach that is unique to the United States. Tsesis (2010) explains, "The mantra of more speech is based on a libertarian faith that the world community discounted after it understood the effectiveness of anti-Semitic Nazi propaganda. It also elevates harassment and intimidation to an equal plane with dialogue" (p. 664). And yet, the absolutist position maintains that counterspeech is a more effective and less restrictive approach to combatting hate speech.

For example, Majeed (2009) argues, "By responding with counterspeech, minority students can point out the deficiencies in those views and ultimately defeat them in the marketplace of ideas, thereby reaching a wide campus audience and informing it in meaningful and important ways" (p. 518). Similarly, Strossen (2000) claims that the counterspeech approach is "potentially" empowering, as it provides an opportunity for the targeted groups to speak back to the purveyors of hate speech. However, she does acknowledge that it may be difficult for the potential victims to challenge their aggressors, but she adds that if the broader community came together to oppose the speech then it would become easier for the potential victims to join in the counterspeech (p. 255). Collier (2015) also promotes counterspeech and tolerance based on individual morality and urges educators to use their influence to cultivate students' values (p. 274). Likewise, Creeley and Stone (2015) say that passionate debate around controversial or even offensive themes is a cornerstone aspect of higher education. They cite the Chicago Statement, which urges students to "openly and vigorously contest the ideas that they oppose"

even when the speech is considered by the majority of the university community to be "offensive, unwise, immoral, or wrong-headed" (Creeley & Stone, 2015; Stone et al., 2014, p. 1).

On the other hand, Lawrence (1993) argues that if good speech will truly drown out the bad speech in the marketplace of ideas, as the absolutist claim suggests, then those committed to equality must truly participate in acts of counterspeech against perpetrators of hate speech. He notes that all too often, those in power fail to express their outrage when incidents of hate speech occur so as not to violate the perpetrator's First Amendment right to express an opposing viewpoint. As such, he states, "When both public and private responses to racist speech are rejected as contrary to the principle of free speech, it is no wonder that the victims of racism do not consider First Amendment absolutists allies" (p. 83). Similarly, others view the notion that students should employ counterspeech towards the aggressor as short-sighted and paternalistic. They assert that this argument misses the fact that the use of racist hate speech is rarely an invitation to dialogue but rather a "slap in the face." Further, talking back to a perpetrator of hate speech can be very unsafe for the victims and can lead to physical violence (Delgado & Stefancic, 2004, p. 207; Tsesis, 2010).

Bell and Moore (2019) also claim that counterspeech is an inadequate response to racist speech on college campuses because racist speech is inextricably linked to historical racial violence against people of color. The authors point to the presence of nooses as an example of racist expression that conjures up a violent history of racial terror against Black people in the United States. It also functions as a reminder that white people can elicit racial violence against people of color with relative impunity. In this context, racist hate speech and counterspeech do not hold the same power, and viewing them as such presents a false equivalency that separates

racist speech from its historical context and perpetuates the subordination of people of color. They state,

> When racist speech and expression take place in institutional settings like colleges and universities, these forms of communicative action reinscribe the relations of structural and cultural power that are essential elements of White institutional space. They signify the outsider status, as well as the alleged inferiority of people of color in that space. In addition, they signify the continuing potential for violence against people of color in those spaces. Racist speech and expression hold the power that counterspeech does not. Therefore, in offering the solution of more speech, administrators deploy a false equivalency between structurally nonequivalent forms of expression, tacitly reifying the power of racist speech and the outsider status of people of color in higher education institutions. (p. 10)

In this sense, they claim that administrators who propose counterspeech as a way to deal with racist speech on campus effectively separate the speech from its history and create an "anti-epistemology," or a way "not to know" about the histories and experiences of people of color (p.11). It is precisely this "unknowing" that Matsuda (1993) and Lawrence (1993) call upon us to end. Instead, they argue that the harms of racist speech must be considered in a highly contextualized analysis that includes the victim's particular experience as well as a group's history of racism and persecution.

Conclusion

This literature review has summarized the conversation surrounding free speech within the context of incidents of racist hate speech on college campuses. Within the realm of higher education, these conversations largely revolve around the topics of activism, academic freedom,

and intellectual safe spaces. The conversations within this review occur most often between proponents of the dominant perspective of free speech absolutism (including the conservative perspective) and critics from the field of Critical Race Theory.

In sum, the key difference between the authors' viewpoints is represented by their responses to incidents of racist hate speech on campus. Absolutists and conservatives who favor the counterspeech approach take the position that almost all speech should be treated equally under the First Amendment regardless of the impact it may have on the targets of that speech. In contrast, scholars who favor institutional regulations challenge this argument and point to the fact that equality is a liberal myth and that the failure to recognize the unequal conditions under which racist hate speech occurs only reinforces the subordination of targeted groups.

The next chapter aims to place this debate within the broader political context of the recent rise of neofascism within the United States. In some ways, it represents a departure of from the conversation presented in this review; however, it attempts to provide contemporary political context with special attention to the following questions: 1) Why is racist hate speech an important component of neofascism? and 2) Why is racist hate speech that occurs specifically within institutions of higher education significant to neofascism's rise? I aim to answer these questions through a brief examination of both the rise of contemporary neofascism and the tangible and ideological connections that link it with institutions of higher education.

Chapter 3: Political Context

Introduction

As the popular saying goes, “When fascism comes to America, it will be wrapped in a flag and carrying a cross” (O’Rourke, 2019). This prescient prediction came to life on June 1, 2020, when former President Donald Trump marched out of the oval office with staff in tow and ordered police to clear peaceful protestors from the streets using rubber bullets and chemical agents. He ordered this excessive use of force to make way for a photo op of himself awkwardly wielding what he described as merely “a bible” (but not necessarily his own) in front of St. John’s church (Flegenhiemer, 2020; Montague, 2020). Hours before the photo op, Trump, in true dictatorial fashion, threatened to invoke the Insurrection Act of 1807, which would allow the US military to use force against peaceful protestors demonstrating against police brutality in the wake of the murder of George Floyd, a Black man, at the hands of a Minneapolis police officer on May 25, 2020 (Montanaro, 2020). This scene brings to the forefront the intersection between corporate power (represented by the Trump administration), racism, and evangelical Christianity that fuels the neofascist regime that recently presided over the United States (Giroux, 2017; Hedges, 2006; Sides et al., 2018).

In this chapter, I argue that “liberal” institutions of higher education also share commitments to white supremacy and corporate power, which aligns them with the neofascist agenda. We can see these connections take both tangible and ideological forms. First, the tangible connection is made clear by the corporate funding sources shared by organizations that promote the neofascism on multiple levels of society, including within institutions of higher education. Of particular interest to this project is the funding shared by both far-right political

organizations that have propagated neofascism as well as those that facilitate and protect racist speech on college campuses.

While the shared funding sources represent the tangible connections between neofascism and institutions of higher education, the subsequent ideological connections exist in institutions' increasing support for free market fundamentalism and the legitimization of white supremacy—an ongoing project that I argue plays out at least in part through incidents of racism on campus and the institutional responses (Mayer, 2016; Apple & Schirmer, 2016). Drawing upon Bell and Moore's (2017) thesis that the protection of racist hate speech on campus maintains institutions of higher education as "white institutional spaces," this chapter seeks to extend this argument by suggesting that such protections also align institutions of higher education with the conservative project that propelled neofascism to power.

Before proceeding with this analysis, I first must offer a series of qualifications regarding what this chapter does and does not aim to accomplish. First, I do not argue that liberal institutions of higher education and elite conservative donors are the only two forces responsible for the rise of neofascism. Rather, I assert that these seemingly disparate factions are, in fact, connected by their shared commitment to white supremacy and corporate power, which has allowed for them both to be incorporated into the folds of neofascism. Second, while far right donors are often responsible for funding racist speaking events on campuses, I am also not claiming that they are responsible for engineering racism (broadly) on college campuses. As Chapter Two explained, racism is woven into the fabric of institutions of higher education, which were established long before the rise of the current wave of neofascism (Wilder, 2013). Rather, I suggest that they weaponize the First Amendment in an effort to garner institutional acceptance and legitimization of racist speech and expression.

Finally, I am in no way stating that either conservative voters or institutions of higher education have been duped by the elite conservative class into an unconscious alignment with neofascism. Rather, I argue that the elite conservative class has merely harnessed their existing commitments to white supremacy and lavishly funded the expansion of neofascism through the work of citizens and institutions. Amway founder and conservative donor Richard DeVos embodied this idea when he described the right-wing organization, The Council for National Policy, as an effort to “bring together the doers with the donors” (Hedges, 2007, p.139). This is precisely the stance that guides this analysis as well.

The first section of this chapter briefly presents some definitional characteristics of fascism and its contemporary iterations, including the current brand of neofascism most recently exhibited by the Trump administration. Working backwards, the second section aims to locate the roots of this movement within the formation of the new right and the neoliberal project—two key developments in the elite corporate class’s hegemonic project to propel their free-market and racist ideology to dominance. The summary of these developments is brief, as it is beyond the scope of this project to provide an in-depth analysis of the multiple political realignments that have led to the rise of neofascism. However, my intent in including this brief overview is to show how racist hate speech, corporate power, and institutions of higher education play a central role in this far-right hegemonic project.

From there, I attempt to provide an overview of how common funding sources link the formation of the far right with institutions of higher education, particularly with regard to incidents of racist hate speech on campus. This tangible connection between the far right and institutions of higher education provides important context regarding the significance of incidents of racist speech on campus (and the institutional responses) within the rise of

neofascism. Once again, I argue that the institutional responses to these racist incidents on campus also create both tangible (financial) and ideological (free market fundamentalism and white supremacy) linkages to the far right's hegemonic project, which currently takes the form of neofascism.

Neofascism in the White House

Chris Hedges (2007) introduces his book, *American Fascists*, with an essay by Umberto Eco in which he details elements of what he describes as "Eternal Fascism"—the elements that exist in its various historical and contemporary iterations. According to Eco, a key component of fascism is the prevalence of traditionalism and the subsequent rejection of modernism and rationality: "Thinking is a form of emasculation…and disagreement is treason." Eco adds that this penchant for irrationality is fueled by social and economic frustration and fear, particularly from the middle class who may be struggling economically and feel threatened by the increasing power of social groups who were previously marginalized to a greater extent. This group flocks to nationalism—the idea that being born in the same country is the ultimate unifier—and, as a result, adopts xenophobic behaviors towards those perceived as outsiders. Internal and external wars become the standard way of life, and the authoritarian leader "pretends to be the interpreter of the common will" (pp. i-vi).

Eco's description of eternal fascism aligns with what Jason Stanley (2018) calls "fascist politics," which are the tactics by which fascist leaders comes to power. These strategies include, "the mythic past, propaganda, anti-intellectualism, unreality, hierarchy, victimhood, law and order, sexual anxiety, appeals to the heartland, and a dismantling of public welfare and unity." Stanley adds that fascist politics do not necessarily lead to the development of a fascist state, but states that "they are dangerous, nonetheless" (pp. xiv-xv).

In the United States, the elite corporate class, via the Republican party, utilizes these "fascist politics" to garner broad based support for a free-market fundamentalist agenda. It is this combination of free-market fundamentalism and fascist politics that characterizes the current iteration of fascism, or neofascism, that we have recently experienced in the United States under the presidential administration of Donald Trump. His campaign slogans, "Make America Great Again (2016)" and "Keep America Great (2020)," embody a nostalgic nod to a perceived simpler time when "traditional" values rooted in the supremacy of white men went unquestioned. According to Trump's former chief strategist, Steve Bannon, this particular period of "greatness" most closely aligns with the 1930s, which Stanley (2018) explains is the era during which the United States had the most sympathy for fascism (p. xvi).

The Trump administration deployed a dangerous cocktail of fascist politics that consisted of appeals to evangelical Christianity, racism (in the form of white supremacy), a culture of war (via appeals to law and order), and the abandonment of thought, discourse, and truth, which is exemplified in Trump's relegation of the mainstream media to the status of "fake news" in favor of his own administration's presentation of "alternative facts" (Bradner, 2017). Giroux (2017) explains,

> Both its [fascism's] living memory and distinctiveness are evident in Trump's appeal to racial hatred, social cleansing and disposability along with his use of the symbols and language of ultra-nationalism so as to expand a culture of war and domestic terrorism. (p. 890)

Similarly, in an interview with *Democracy Now*'s Amy Goodman and Nermeen Shaikh (2016), Cornel West stated that Trump, whom he deemed an unstable narcissist, selected a right-wing administration that would lead toward "the arbitrary deployment of law…to reinforce corporate

interest, big bank interest, and to keep track of those of us who are cast as other—peoples of color, women, Jews, Arabs, Muslims, Mexicans and so forth and so on" (p.1).

The examples of racism and xenophobia from four years under the Trump administration are far too many to cover comprehensively in this chapter, but a few notable actions do stand out. For example, in a boisterous demonstration of xenophobia, Trump campaigned largely on the promise to "build a wall" on the United States-Mexico border, and he referred to Mexican immigrants as "rapists (Jacobs, 2018). He also enacted a travel ban (via executive order) against people from predominantly Muslim countries and suggested that four US congresswomen of color (all of whom are US citizens) "go back to where they came from" (Cohen & Quilantan, 2019; Thrush, 2017). And let us not forget about the time that he famously stated that there were "very fine people on both sides" after the "Unite the Right" rally in Charlottesville, during which a white nationalist protester drove a car through a group of counter-protesters killing thirty-two year old Heather Heyer (Holan, 2019; Caron, 2017). These examples, among many others, illustrate the racism and xenophobia that ran rampant throughout the former President's discourse and policies.

So too did a devotion to corporate interests, which was exemplified by the enormous tax cut that the Trump administration bequeathed to corporations—a move that according to tax law professor, Bret Wells, disproportionately benefitted the top 1% of the wealthiest individuals in the country (Drucker and Tankersly, 2019). Further, the Trump administration's "revolving door" cabinet was characterized by the appointment of corporate heavyweights. Examples include but are not limited to Rex Tillerson, former CEO of Exxon Mobile, as Secretary of State; Betsey DeVos, a billionaire heiress and enemy of public education, as the Secretary of Education; Steve Mnuchin, hedge fund investor, as the Secretary of Treasury; and Wilbur Ross,

a Wall Street mogul who invests in troubled companies, as the Secretary of Commerce (DeSilver, 2017). Trump also nominated Andrew Puzder, CEO of the corporation that owns fast-food chains Hardee's and Carl's Jr., to serve as the Secretary of Labor. However, in an ironic turn of events, he withdrew his nomination after it was revealed that he had hired an undocumented immigrant as a housekeeper (Merica and Raju, 2017).

Reflecting on this phenomenon, Klein (2017) says,

> It struck me that what's been happening in Washington is not the usual passing of the baton between parties. It's a naked corporate takeover, one many decades in the making. It seems that the economic interests that have long since paid off both major parties to do their bidding are tired of playing the game…So now they're cutting out the middle-men—those needy politicians who are supposed to protect the public interest—and doing what all top dogs do when they want something done right: they are doing it themselves. (p. 4)

In this sense, we witnessed an explicitly racist, misogynistic, faux-Christian presidential administration forging a corporate takeover of government institutions. This was no accident. In fact, over the past five decades the corporate class—with the help of far-right billionaire donors, conservative media, and grassroots efforts—has redefined both American conservatism and the political landscape at large (Harvey, 2005; Mayer, 2016; Skocpol & Williamson, 2012). The result of this effort is the collapsing of the public and private sectors of society into what Sheldon Wolin (2014) terms the "incorporated state," all under the promise of a return to the mythical past defined by "traditional values" and the absolute power of white men—contemporary neofascism in a nutshell.

In the next section, I discuss why racism (and subsequently racist hate speech) are central to contemporary neofascism. I attempt to provide a brief overview of some of the defining factors of the rise of neofascism within the Republican party, particularly regarding appeals to white supremacy and free market fundamentalism. To aid with this task, I draw upon Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony, which when applied to the development of conservative neofascism represents a corporate-led hegemonic project aimed at defining mass society's "common sense" in terms of the supremacy of white men, Christianity, and the free market. The rise of the new right, the neoliberal project, and the Tea Party are key developments within this hegemonic project that garnered a mass following for the contemporary neofascist agenda. After laying this groundwork, I will then move on to discussion of the role that institutions of higher education play (particularly with regard to racist speech on campus) within the rise of contemporary neofascism.

The Road to Neofascism: Hegemony, The New Right, Neoliberalism, and the Tea Party

Gramsci's theory of hegemony is defined as the "cultural, moral, and ideological leadership over allied and subordinate groups" (Gramsci, 2000, p. 423). Hegemony is a subtle form of rule through which the dominant class determines and propagates a "common sense" understanding of society and our role within it (Lipman, 2011). In contrast to domination strategies that rely on physical coercion and frontal assaults (a war of maneuver in Gramsci's terms), hegemony is achieved through a "war of position" which is waged within the confines of the state and takes the form of a long-term and multi-faceted ideological effort to consolidate not only state institutions but also civil society (schools, family and religious life, cultural organizations, etc.) under a dominant group's leadership. The uniting of different strata of society behind the leading class's ideology represents what Gramsci calls a *historical bloc*.

Therefore, in an analysis of hegemony, the ruling class is rather a ruling alliance that functions according to the dominant class's ideology and agenda (Hall, 1986).

Applying this framework to the conservative hegemonic project, the dominant group refers to the elite corporate class, which includes intellectuals, businessmen, and billionaire "philanthropists" such as Charles and David Koch, Joseph Coors, Richard and Betsey DeVos, The Scaife family, John M. Olin, the Bradley family, and other wildly wealthy and conservative donors who contribute to a funding network that Jane Mayer refers to as "Dark Money." Their brand of free-market fundamentalism advocates for limited government and calls for the slashing of corporate and personal taxes, minimal government regulation of business (particularly with regard to environmental impacts), and drastically scaled-back social support for the poor. They claim to be driven by principle, but it is no coincidence that these initiatives also benefit their personal bottom lines (Mayer, 2016).

Mayer argues that the current political moment is at least partially the result of a decades-long war of position, consisting of free-market political and ideological projects embodied by the Kochs' three-pronged strategy titled *The Structure of Social Change*. This plan was devised by their long-time advisor Richard Fink, and it aimed to remake the United States into a "libertarian land free of taxes and regulation." Akin to an assembly line, it included the production, packaging, and marketing of their free-market ideology. First, the production of research and knowledge supporting their ideology was to take place at institutions of higher education. From there, this information would be packaged through a vast new network of think tanks and institutes and sold to the public through grassroots civic organizations, all funded by the Kochs and their ultra-wealthy and radically conservative counterparts (Kotch, 2016). Following this plan, these titans of industry along with other corporate groups established a sprawling network

of think tanks (including The Cato Institute, The Heritage Foundation, The American Enterprise Institute), academic programs, lobbyists, grassroots organizations, advocacy groups, and legal organizations aimed at appointing conservative judicial nominees (Apple & Schirmer, 2016; Mayer, 2016, Omi & Winant, 2015; Schulman, 2016).

Appeals to cultural issues were central to the efforts to gain a mass following for this free-market fundamentalist agenda—particularly because it runs counter to the class interests of poor people by concentrating wealth within the upper echelon of society. To broaden its appeal, conservative advocates adopted the aforementioned "fascist politics" of tradition and incorporated cultural issues—primarily white supremacy and Christianity—in an effort to cultivate broad-based support for their economic agenda (Harvey, 2005; Stanley, 2018). In doing so, they harnessed the frustration of white voters in "the silent majority" who rejected the advances made by oppressed groups during the Civil Rights movement (Omi & Winant, 2015, p. 191). This cross-class white alliance came together to form the "new right"—the base of the new conservative party—which, along with the rise of neoliberalism, planted the roots of contemporary neofascism.

The new right represented a conservative backlash to the Civil Rights Movement and the resulting gains of previously oppressed groups including Black people, LGBTQ communities, and women. The power that these groups gained as well as the increasing focus on secularity, urbanization, and science triggered a "politics of resentment," particularly amongst white Americans in "the silent majority" who suddenly felt that their identity and culture were under siege. The new right offered this frustrated group a "well-organized alternative to the moral and existential chaos of the preceding decades: a network of conservative organizations with an aggressive political style, an outspoken religious and cultural traditionalism, and a clear populist

commitment" (Hedges, 2006; Omi & Winant, 2015, p. 191; Wolin, 2011). In what Harvey (2005) terms "an unholy alliance," the party of corporate greed also became the party of tradition and morality (p. 50).

The new right and the associated white alliance between embittered members of the white working class and the corporate elite coincided with the rise of neoliberalism, a complementary economic project defined as

> The first instance a theory of political economic practices that proposes that human well-being can best be advanced by liberating individual entrepreneurial freedoms and skills within an institutional framework, characterized by strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. (p. 2)

The neoliberal project was also led and funded by the elite corporate class and gained momentum in the 1970s in response to the economic crisis following the post-war period of embedded liberalism, which is marked by significant state regulation of the economy, the expansion of the welfare state, and politically powerful labor unions.

While this period delivered high rates of economic growth, it eventually resulted in a crisis of capital accumulation due to insufficient places for capital to be reinvested. This crisis of accumulation ultimately led to soaring rates of inflation and unemployment or "stagflation." Neoliberalism aimed to quell stagflation via privatization and "free-market fundamentalism." However, the outcome of wealth concentration within the upper echelon of society demonstrates that it was also an attempt by the political elite to reinforce their class power, which at that point was threatened by the social movements of the 1960s and the growing threat of socialism due to the turmoil caused by high unemployment and inflation (Giroux 2014, p. 1; Harvey 2005, p, 19; Lipman, 2011).

The neoliberal project is hegemonic in the sense that it seeks to define “common sense” in terms of the free market. Lipman (2011) states that “Neoliberalism is not just out there as a set of policies and explicit ideologies. It has developed as a new social imaginary, a common sense about how we think about society and our place in it” (p.6). Specifically, this effort focused on spreading a disdain for government and replacing communal identities with a devotion to rogue individualism—in other words, society was to consist of self-interested individuals as opposed to interdependent citizens of communities. Margaret Thatcher summarized this effort when she proclaimed that there was “no such thing as society, only individual men and women—and their families. Economics are the method…but the objective is to change the soul (Harvey, 2005, p. 23)” Democrats also embraced neoliberalism due to their increasing dependence on corporate campaign contributions. As a result, neoliberalism became the lingua franca across the political spectrum (Brown, 2018; Harvey, 2005).

However, the project to “change the souls” of the masses (particularly the white working class) to operate in every sense according to free market principles was no short order, given that this ideology runs counter to the class interests of those whose livelihoods depend on government programs including social security and Medicare (Skocpol & Williamson, 2012). Once again, the discriminatory racial projects embedded within neoliberalism functioned to incorporate the new right into the neoliberal base; therefore, Omi and Winant (2015) state, “Neoliberalism was at its core a racial project as much as a capitalist accumulation project” (p. 211). Accordingly, neoliberals rearticulated racist ideas to fit in with the new right’s platform by tying economic redistribution via programs such as welfare with the idea that money would be taken away from hard-working and “deserving” taxpayers and given instead to people of color and immigrants who the new right perceived to be lazy, unskilled, and less intelligent than their

white counterparts (Omi & Winant, 2015; Sides et al., 2018). This strategy is evident in Ronald Reagan's racist characterization of welfare recipients as "welfare queens" and "strapping young bucks" that use public assistance to purchase luxury items (Omi & Winant, 2015, p. 221).

This racist ideology carried over to the formation of the Tea Party, which is a conservative, grassroots network of activists and organizations that "couples its incoherent reading of the constitution with the neoliberal ideology of free market absolutism (Omi & Winant, 2015, p. 234). The Tea Party consists of mostly working-class, educated, white, extremely conservative, and often very religious, senior citizens. Infuriated by the election of Barack Obama and frustrated with the lack of hardline conservative stances within the mainstream Republican party, the Tea Party emerged with the intent to both defeat the Democrats and put pressure on mainstream Republicans. In short, they wanted to "take their country back." Tea Party activism is predominantly done on the local level; however, these groups are also often supported by national organizations including Freedom Works and Americans for Prosperity, both of which are, unsurprisingly, funded by ultra-wealthy conservatives—most prominently the Koch family (Skocpol & Williamson, 2012, pp. 46,104).

The Tea Party utilizes racist ideology in an effort to justify the shrinking of the social safety net—a key conservative and neoliberal priority—through the discourse surrounding "deserving" groups of people. In the following passage, Skocpol and Williamson (2012) capture the racist nature of the conversation around "deserving" groups in her interviews with members of the Tea Party:

> As we listened to our Tea Party interlocutors talk about undeserving people collecting welfare benefits, racially laden group stereotypes certainly did float in and out of the interviews, even when people never mentioned African Americans directly. Racial

> overtones were unmistakable, for instance, when a Virginia Tea Partier told us that a "plantation mentality" was keeping "some people" on welfare. (p.68)

She adds that the Tea Party's idea of "deserving" groups is not only a racially charged discursive tool used to determine whether a particular group should be eligible for public assistance but that it also presents an alternative way for white people to attempt to deny racial minorities of their full citizenship rights. The concept of "deserving" groups reflects white racial anxiety of changing demographics and the future of the country's identity—a central subtext of Trump's campaign promise to "Make America Great Again."

In sum, the corporate class has successfully waged a hegemonic project and galvanized broad-based political support for their free-market fundamentalist economic agenda, and some key developments in this mission are the formation of the new right, the neoliberal project, and the Tea Party. Appeals to white supremacy and racial anxiety have been central to this mission, and these efforts yielded significant returns in the form of overwhelming support for Trump from white voters in the 2016 election:

> According to Edison Research, Trump won whites making less than $50,000 by 20 points, whites making $50,000 to $99,999 by 28 points, and whites making $100,000 or more by 14 points. This shows that Trump assembled a broad white coalition that ran the gamut from Joe the Dishwasher to Joe the Plumber to Joe the Banker. So when white pundits cast the elevation of Trump as the handiwork of an inscrutable white working class, they are being too modest, declining to claim credit for their own economic class. (Coates, 2017, p.1)

And even though some members of the conservative elite, most notably the Kochs, disavowed Trump publicly, Mayer (2016) explains,

> In several important respects, he was their natural heir and the unintended consequence of the extraordinary political movement they had underwritten since the 1970s. For forty years, they had vilified the very idea of government. They had propagated that message through the countless think tanks, academic programs, front groups, ad campaigns, legal organizations, lobbyists, and candidates they supported. It was hard not to believe that this helped set the table for the takeover of the world's most powerful country by a man who made his inexperience and antipathy toward governing among his top selling points. (p. xviii)

Whether they liked it or not, the decades-long war of position led by corporate conservatives culminated with a war of maneuver in which Donald Trump took the helm of the Republican party by touting both his outsider "businessman" background and the exclusion of those who are not white men. The Republican party's subsequent assault on democratic institutions and voting rights along with their draconian policies on immigration and reproductive rights laid bare both their authoritarian aspirations and their foundational principles that propelled them to power: free market fundamentalism, evangelical Christianity, and white male supremacy.

Hendrikse's (2018) concept of *neo-illiberalism* is helpful in making sense of the link between neoliberalism and contemporary neofascism. He suggests that this political transformation can be described as neoliberalism evolving into an illiberal mutation—or *neo-illiberalism,* which leaves the economic aspects of neoliberalism (financial deregulation, free trade agreements, global financial infrastructure, etc.) intact and works in tandem with an illiberal cultural movement exuding nationalism, protectionism, and exclusion (pp. 169, 170). This phenomenon is evident in Klein's (2017) description of the corporate takeover of primary democratic institutions within the Trump administration, which at the same time promised to

combat elites and prioritize the interests of the white working class. Here, Trump's *neo-illiberal* strategy combined anti-immigrant rhetoric with empty promises to bring back the blue-collar jobs previously decimated by neoliberal globalization (Brown, 2018; Hendrikse, 2018).

In this sense, neo-illiberalism combines elements of neoliberal economics with a cultural penchant for authoritarianism, achieved through neoliberalism's promotion of rogue individualism and rejection of social bonds and solidarity. In such a climate, Brown (2018) argues that neoliberal rationality "is widely mobilized by the right to challenge norms of equality, tolerance, and inclusion in the name of freedom and choice" (p. 65). The far right's claim that these democratic norms violate their individual rights to free speech on college campuses is representative of neo-illiberalism, which has invaded institutions of higher education, posing a direct challenge to their "liberal" commitments. For example, higher education has become increasingly co-opted by market logic, relegating the education itself to a mere commodity and subsequently diminishing higher education as a public good. Consequently, this erosion of the democratic aspect of education clears a path for the far right to use the right to "free speech" as an exclusionary weapon. In this context, racism and racist hate speech are exclusionary practices that have fueled both the neo-illiberal turn and the subsequent rise of neofascism.

This brief analysis, which can be understood as a neo-illiberal turn culminating in neofascism, does not provide an exhaustive analysis of the political realignments that led to neofascism's rise. However, it does aim to give an overview of the political context within which neofascism ascended as well as the roles that corporate power, racism, and racist hate speech played in this process. This context lays out important groundwork for the analysis of racist hate

speech on college campuses and the relationship between these incidents (and more importantly the administrative responses to these incidents) and neofascism.

The Centrality of Education

Mayer's (2016) above account of the multifaceted nature of the elite conservative hegemonic project exemplifies Hall's (1986) assertion that a war of position takes place on multiple levels, and academia represents another important ideological battleground. In fact, institutions of higher education are central to the rise of neofascism. This is evident in the aforementioned three-pronged approach that the Kochs used to spread free market ideology—the first prong consists of the production of academic research backing the free market economic agenda to give it legitimacy (Schulman, 2016). In addition, Stanley (2018) explains that "anti-intellectualism" is a core component of "fascist politics," in which proponents of neofascism aim to discredit left-leaning intellectualism and replace it with right-wing economic and cultural values. He says,

> Fascist politics seeks to undermine public discourse by attacking and devaluing education, expertise, and language...This does not mean that there is no role for universities in fascists politics. In fascist ideology there is only one legitimate viewpoint, that of the dominant nation. Schools introduce students to the dominant culture and its mythic past. Education therefore either poses a grave threat to fascism or becomes a pillar of support for the mythical nation. (p. 36)

This quote comes to life in the recent controversy surrounding the teaching of Critical Race Theory within institutions of public education. An analysis in EdWeek shows that as of June 29, 2021, "26 states have introduced bills or taken other steps that would restrict teaching critical race theory or limit how teachers can discuss racism and sexism, according to an Education

Week analysis. Nine states have enacted these bans, either through legislation or other avenues" (edweek.org). And in a tweet in April of this past year, Former Vice President Mike Pence said, "We will reject Critical Race Theory in our schools and public institutions, and we will CANCEL Cancel Culture wherever it arises!" (Pence, 2021). In essence, Pence is saying that it is acceptable to cancel Critical Race Theory while at the same time rejecting "cancel culture" more broadly. This hypocritical stance reflects Stanley's (2018) argument that neofascism aims to disseminate only the viewpoint of the "dominant culture and mythic past." Otherwise, as Stanley explains, institutions of education are a threat to the dominant order.

In this context, the conflicts surrounding free speech (particularly racist hate speech) on college campuses are central to the mission to cultivate support for neofascism. Similar to the formation of the new conservative base, a major component in the incorporation of institutions of higher education into the conservative hegemonic project is the legitimization of white supremacy. However, it is important to emphasize here that the corporate class was not responsible for bringing racism to campus. On the contrary, institutions of higher education have been embroiled in racist practices for centuries. From their founding, they were deeply intertwined with slave economies (from which they profited dearly), and they also embraced pseudoscience that declared the biological inferiority of non-white people (Wilder, 2013). Therefore, white supremacy is embedded within institutions of higher education, and it represents a shared characteristic with neofascism, which is easily exploitable through appeals to "free speech" on campus.

The following section discusses two important ways in which the corporate class incorporated institutions of higher education into the folds of neofascism: first, through the funding of academic programs that support free market fundamentalism, and second, through

appeals to "free speech" in an effort to justify the presence of white supremacy on campus. Similar to the broader conservative hegemonic project and the *neo-illiberal* turn discussed earlier, appeals to the free market and white supremacy are central to the mission to incorporate seemingly disparate factions of society (in this case institutions of higher education) behind the neofascist agenda.

The Incorporation of Institutions of Higher Education

Following Hayek's assertion that conquering intellectuals was crucial to conquering politics, the elite conservative class understood the importance of establishing an intellectual movement within the academy to produce research in support of their free market agenda. The incorporation of overwhelmingly liberal institutions of higher education into the conservative historical bloc (in Gramscian terms) was, conveniently, made possible by corporate-led neoliberal education policies, which diminished state aid to institutions of higher education.

As a result, many institutions were left dependent on private funding, which opened the window for funders including the Kochs, Bradleys, Olins, and Scaifes to wield their influence in academia. They established what they termed "beachheads" or "conservative cells" at the most prominent institutions by giving large gifts (through their foundations) to universities to establish programs, research centers, or individual faculty who would produce research to support their economic interests. Making donations through their foundations not only counted as a tax write-off, but it also gave the donors the appearance of being charitable while at the same time allowing them to maintain control over how the money was spent (Apple & Schirmer, 2016; Giroux, 2014; Mayer, 2016).

For example, the Koch brothers gave 108 million dollars to 366 universities between 2005 and 2014, and they have donated millions more since then (Kotch, 2016). With this money,

they have cultivated a vast network of over 5,000 professors as well as academic programs and research centers all dedicated to producing research in areas that protect their interests, including climate-change skepticism and corporate tax reductions (Apple & Schirmer, 2016). Similarly, John M. Olin, who made his fortune in the chemical industry, was one of the leaders in funding conservative institutes and programs at institutions of higher education. His passion for deregulation was without a doubt personal as his corporation became a primary target of the EPA due to its production of pollutants such as DDT and for dumping mercury into local water supplies.

Mayer further explains that by the time the foundation had spent all of its 370 million dollars in assets in 2005 (per Olin's direction), it had spent half of it on spreading conservative ideology on college campuses around the country. The Olin Foundation also funded individual faculty and their programs, including a 3.3-million-dollar donation to Harvey C. Mansfield's program on Constitutional Government at Harvard, which focuses on a conservative interpretation of the constitution. Between 1990 and 2001, the program produced 56 fellows who went on to teach at major universities, and others who went to work in government, think tanks, and the media. The Olin Foundation funded eleven programs at Harvard and proved that "even the best-endowed American university would allow an outside, ideological group to build 'beachheads,' so long as the project was properly packaged and funded" (Mayer, 2016, pp. 114, 116, 128-129).

These efforts demonstrate the ways in which conservatives have incorporated institutions of higher education through the funding of academic activities that legitimize free market fundamentalist economic ideology. In addition to these efforts, the conservative rallying cry for "free speech" on college campuses also represents an attempt to incorporate institutions of higher

education into neofascism through the legitimization of racist hate speech on campus. Here again, we see the complementary ideologies of free market fundamentalism and white supremacy working together to expand support for neofascism—this time within institutions of higher education.

Specifically, the attacks which claim that institutions of higher education are against free speech represent conservative "anti-intellectual" propaganda employed in an effort to undermine academic knowledge and culture that threatens the "traditions" embodied by fascism, including patriarchy and the nation's mythical past. Stanley explains,

> The role of political propaganda is to conceal politicians' or political movements' clearly problematic goals by masking them with ideals that are widely accepted... Political propaganda uses the language of virtuous ideals to unite people beyond otherwise objectionable ends. (p. 24)

In this sense, the appeals to "free speech," which do indeed sound virtuous, are actually utilized to suppress the protests led by students who both challenge and reject neofascism's marginalization of people other than white men, including women, people of color, Jews, immigrants, members of the LGBTQIA community, etc.

The corporate conservative donors responsible for funding academic research supporting their free market economic agenda are also directly involved in the free speech conflicts on college campuses. They often fund both conservative speakers through think tanks and foundations as well as efforts to promote litigation against universities that they claim have "silenced" conservative (and racist) hate speech and expression. One prominent connection between the corporate conservative movement and racist speakers on campus was the 2017 campus speaking tour of aforementioned "scholar" Charles Murray, a former fellow at the

prominent think tank the American Enterprise Institute (AEI). A direct descendant of the post-WWII corporate lobbying organization-in-disguise called the American Enterprise Association, the AEI has significant links to the DonorsTrust organization, a fund that anonymously disperses donations from elite, right-wing donors, including the Koch foundations, the Richard and Helen DeVos Foundation, the Lynde and Harry Bradley foundation, and the John M. Olin Foundation. Mother Jones famously dubbed this group as the "dark money ATM of the conservative movement" (Mayer, 2016, p. 253; sourcewatch.org).

Murray, a once struggling scholar whose work was originally funded by conservative mega-donor John M. Olin, appears in the Southern Poverty Law Center's (SPLC) "extremist files," and he is categorized as a white supremacist due to his research that draws from the eugenics movement. The SPLC states,

> Charles Murray, a fellow at the American Enterprise Institute, has become one of the most influential social scientists in America, using racist pseudoscience and misleading statistics to argue that social inequality is caused by the genetic inferiority of the black and Latino communities, women and the poor.

Murray's research supports the stereotype (promoted by the new right and neoliberals alike) that poor people and people of color are lazy and less intelligent than their affluent, white, male counterparts. He attempts to provide proof of their validity by drawing from pseudoscientific studies linked to the eugenics movement. His attacks on poor mothers are particularly egregious, and in his book *The Bell Curve* (as quoted by the Southern Poverty Law Center), he states, "for women near the poverty line in most countries in the contemporary West, a baby is either free or even profitable, depending on the specific terms of the welfare system in her country." Further,

he argues that because of their low IQs, poor women have strong incentives to game the welfare system because pursuing a career is not a viable option (SPLC, p.1).

Although Murray’s work has been unequivocally discredited by the scientific community, arguments like the one above have been an important reference for the drafting of policies used to dismantle spending on social programs such as welfare—a proposal that ties in neatly with both the economic and racial goals of neoliberalism (Dols, 2017). In addition, his work gives white conservatives a sense of validation for their racist views. Touting his racial pseudoscience, he states, "A huge number of well-meaning whites fear that they are closet racists, and this book tells them they are not. It's going to make them feel better about things they already think but do not know how to say” (DeParle, 1994).

In light of his historically flagrant attacks on poor people and people of color in the name of “science,” it is no surprise that his 2017 campus speaking tour sparked protests. At Middlebury College, student protestors effectively shut down the event and forced Murray to present his lecture via livestream (Jaschik, 2017). At the University of Michigan, protestors halted the event for 45 minutes, after which protestors left and Murray was able to complete his lecture about his newest book, *Coming Apart: The State of White America, 1960-2010*, an anti-intellectual work that casts the plight of the white working class as an issue of class with the coastal elites abandoning their fellow Americans who live in the “fly-over” area of the country (Arm, 2017). However, in contrast to the event at the University of Michigan, Murray’s speaking event at my university in 2017 went fairly smoothly despite a peaceful and rainy protest outside the venue that I attended along with over 100 other students (Duke, 2017).

In essence, Murray is a shoddy academic, bankrolled by conservative billionaires, and charged with providing a credible justification for the exploitation of and disinvestment in poor

communities of color. He certainly exemplifies the far right's attempt to infiltrate universities with this ideology in the name of scholarship and the free exchange of ideas, but he is not alone in this mission. We can also find another example in the organization Young America's Foundation, formerly the Young Americans for Freedom, which states in its mission statement that it seeks to ensure that "increasing numbers of young Americans understand and are inspired by the ideas of individual freedom, a strong national defense, free enterprise, and traditional values" (YAF.org). One of the ways in which they accomplish these initiatives is by providing conservative student groups with resources to bring conservative speakers to campus, and many of these speakers espouse racist ideas.

For example, former Attorney General Jeff Sessions, a "law and order" Republican with a history of racial discrimination, is included in the YAF's pool of speakers that students can bring to their universities (Laughland & Swaine, 2017). Also on the list is Dinesh D'Souza, a darling of the conservative media and enemy of the "cultural left," who devoted much of his career to promoting racist ideology. For example, in line with the ideology of the new right, he provides the following interpretation of The Great Society from the fictional perspective of Lyndon B. Johnson:

> We Democrats are going to create a new plantation for you [Black people], this time in the towns and cities. On these new plantations, unlike on the old ones, you don't have to work. In fact, we would prefer if you didn't work. We are going to support you through an array of so-called poverty programs and race-based programs. Essentially we will provide you with lifetime support, just as in the days of slavery. Your job is simply to keep voting us in power so that we can continue to be your caretakers and providers.

And with regard to Black peoples' voting rights, he said, "On this plantation they [Black people] had a different casting role, not as exploited workers who did not vote but rather as exploited voters who did not work" (Frum, 2018, p.1).

But if neither Sessions nor D'Souza fit the bill for a campus speaking event, students could also opt for a less polished option—the confederate-flag-wielding, gun-toting Ted Nugent. Recently, amidst a nation-wide movement to remove statues of confederate generals, brutal conquistadors, and other racial oppressors, Nugent made the misguided plea to tear down a statue of Barack Obama and his daughter Malia simply because it "offended him." Columnist Lee DeVito (2020) responded, "if merely being perceived as 'offensive' was enough of a reason to tear shit down, the Motor City Madman would have no career—that's his whole thing." Nugent's call to remove the Obama statue not only misses the mark in terms of context, but it also represents an ironic position from someone whom the YAF claims is dedicated to fighting for "personal freedoms," which would, ostensibly, include the freedom of expression. Here again, we see fascist politics at work as sympathizers only tolerate the freedom to express their viewpoints.

Sessions, D'Souza, and Nugent are just a few of the almost 100 speakers that the YAF advertises on its site, so surely there is something to please every conservative palate. And like Charles Murray, the YAF speakers are also funded by the same conservative donor networks. Similar to the AEI, the YAF has received millions of dollars from both the Koch and DeVos families, and it also receives significant funding from DonorsTrust (bridgeinitiative.org). Further, this donor funding does not stop at merely bringing conservative speakers and ideology to campuses across the nation—it also provides legal services for conservative groups whose events and actions are challenged by university administration, most notably through the organization

the Foundation for Individual Rights in Education (FIRE), which is the source of the dataset for this project.

In its mission statement, FIRE claims that its purpose is to "defend and sustain individual rights at America's colleges and universities. These rights include freedom of speech, legal equality, due process, religious liberty, and sanctity of conscience—the essential qualities of individual liberty and dignity" (thefire.org, p. 1). A primary component of this mission is also to defend the rights of those who engage in racist hate speech on campuses, and their strategies include the following:

> Direct litigation against campuses that attempt to enact or enforce policies limiting racist speech and expression, targeted media campaigns that criticize colleges and universities in an attempt to coerce administrators to stop activities that FIRE views as limiting racist expression protected by the First Amendment, maintenance of a listing on their website of schools that the claim violate the First Amendment based on their analysis of the infringement of freedom of speech, and the creation of yearly reports that assign freedom of speech scores to colleges and universities. (Bell & Moore, 2017, pp. 106-107)

While FIRE claims to be advocating a non-partisan and absolutist stance on free speech, their funding sources tell a different story. According to one of FIRE's founders, Harvey Silvergate, conservative causes on campus are being limited in order to "protect the growing minority student population from racial intolerance." Therefore, Silvergate explains that the conservative agenda aligns with FIRE's mission, and as a result, FIRE has received funding from conservative organizations such as the Lynde and Harry Bradley Foundation, the Sarah Scaife Foundation, and the Charles Koch Institute" (Simon, 2016, p. 1). Backed by this funding, FIRE has become

one of the most powerful organizations defending the right to express racial hate speech on campuses (Bell & Moore, 2017).

While litigation is FIRE's "last resort" approach (and it only applies to public universities who are legally bound to the First Amendment), FIRE employs other strategies to pressure institutions into allowing unfettered speech and expression on campus, regardless of its damaging impacts on students (Simon, 2016). For example, it developed the "Spotlight Database," which ranks institutions of higher education using criteria that corresponds to a "stoplight:" red=restrictive, yellow=moderately restrictive, and green signifies that an institution does not restrict free speech and expression according to FIRE's analysis (thefire.org). Therefore, institutions should strive for a "green light" rating.

FIRE also produces media that highlights grievances from students who believe that their First Amendment rights have been violated. In fact, they produced a series of videos at my university, which they also designated one of the worst colleges for free speech. One of the videos in this series highlights an incident during the 2016 presidential campaign, during which a conservative student group "chalked" the campus with phrases such as F*** Mexicans, The Wall—Build it, Blue Lives Matter, and Trump 2016 (Onsgard, 2016a; Onsgard, 2016b). The university subsequently removed these messages due to their offensive content and because the display of political speech might compromise the university's 501c3 nonprofit status. Unsurprisingly, the conservative students were furious, and FIRE's video portrays a white, blonde, female student clutching her pearls and lamenting the fact that the university had "washed away" her right to free speech (FIRE, 2017).

Such productions as well as speaking events akin to those described in this section represent conservative efforts to legitimize exclusionary speech, especially racist hate speech,

within institutions of higher education. And as this project will demonstrate, these efforts are largely successful because institutions of higher education tend to prioritize their devotion to free speech over their commitment to providing an equal education for all students. In the following chapters, I will show how administrative discourses are central to the preservation of "freedom" at the expense of equality.

Conclusion

In sum, this chapter provides context as to why racist hate speech is a core component of neofascism as well as why racist hate speech specifically within institutions of higher education is significant to neofascism's rise. This chapter also provides an analysis of the ways in which the complementary ideologies of racism and free market ideology function to envelop both a conservative base of voters as well as institutions of higher education into the folds of neofascism. In this sense, I argue that conservative-led efforts to gain influence over institutions of higher education as well as their initiatives to organize their supporters are two distinct yet connected branches of the conservative hegemonic strategy that has manifested in neofascism.

Conservative appeals to "free speech" on college campuses represent the "fascist politics" of "anti-intellectualism," which are aimed at discrediting institutions of higher education that may produce knowledge and culture that threatens the pillars of neofascism—patriarchy, white supremacy, the mythical past, etc. (Stanley, 2018). And while liberal institutions may denounce neofascism, they too are structured by these pillars, and their legitimization of racist speech on campuses lays bare the common devotion to white supremacy shared by both conservative neofascism and institutions of higher education. This commonality paves the way for the incorporation of institutions of higher education into neofascism.

With this groundwork in place, we can begin to shift our focus from why racist hate speech is significant to neofascism (both broadly and within institutions of higher education) to specifically how it functions to incorporate institutions of higher education into its folds. To do this, we will look at administrative discourses surrounding incidents of racist hate speech on campus specifically within the context of liberal language around free speech. But before moving on to this analysis, the next chapter lays out the research methodology that I will use, which is Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA). In addition to summarizing the principles of CDA, I will also introduce the theoretical frameworks of institutional whiteness and color-blind racism, which will guide the analysis of the institutional language surrounding racist hate speech on campus.

Chapter 4: Research Methodology

Review of the Context

Before moving on to the discussion of the research methodology, which is the subject of the present chapter, it is essential to first summarize the arguments of the previous two chapters to ensure a solid understanding of the context of the project. With this groundwork firmly established, we can begin to pivot our focus away from "why" racist hate speech (both generally as well as on campus) is significant to the rise of neofascism to "how" this speech actually functions to incorporate institutions of higher education into its folds. In line with Fairclough's (2001) Stage 2 of discourse analysis, Chapters Two and Three have placed the social problem of racist hate speech on campus within the broader network of practices in which it is located in an effort to provide an essential foundation for the analysis of institutional discourses surrounding racist hate speech on campus. In essence, these chapters reviewed both the mainstream conversation surrounding free speech and racist hate speech on campus as well as the role that these conflicts play within institutions of higher education in the context of neofascism.

Chapter Two provided an overview of the primary conversations regarding racist hate speech and expression within institutions of higher education. Many of these conversations presented in this chapter occur between proponents (liberals and conservatives alike) of free speech absolutism, the idea the government should not regulate speech unless presented with the clear threat of violence, and those from the field of Critical Race Theory, who claim that an absolutist perspective on speech fails to place racist hate speech within the appropriate historical context, thus erasing the role of racist hate speech in the history of racial discrimination and violence in the United States. Within the context of higher education, the conversations revolve around the themes of activism, academic freedom, and the conservative critique of "intellectual

safe spaces." Ultimately, scholars from the absolutist camp oppose regulations and favor the counterspeech approach, while those from the Critical Race perspective feel as though the counterspeech approach is inadequate and fails to recognize the inherent inequalities between racist hate speech and counterspeech. Further, they argue that the failure to interrupt racist hate speech impedes the institution's competing obligation to provide equal access to educational opportunities to all students (Bell & Moore, 2017, 2019; Delgado & Stefancic, 2004; Haidt & Lukianoff, 2016; Lawrence, 1993; Matsuda, 1993; Strossen, 2000; Majeed, 2009).

Chapter Three aims to place the conflicts surrounding racist hate speech on campus within the broader political context characterized by the rise of neofascism. It provides important context regarding racist hate speech as an essential component of neofascism as well as the significance of racist hate speech on campus to its rise. Rather than working to truly uphold the ideals of free speech and expression, this chapter argues that the conflicts surrounding racist hate speech on campus function to uphold both white supremacy and anti-intellectualism, both of which are neofascist values. In other words, the conservative rallying cries for "free speech on campus" actually represent an effort to suppress counterspeech that challenges these neofascist ideals (Stanley, 2018). In addition, Chapter Three highlights the ties between backers of neofascism and institutions of higher education, which are both tangible (financial) and ideological, represented by shared commitments to free market and racist ideology. As a result, these shared affinities pave the way for institutions of higher education to be incorporated into the neofascist agenda.

At this point, we can now turn our attention to one way in which this incorporation takes place discursively through the analysis of administrative statements surrounding racist hate speech on campus. To do so, it is essential to first become familiar with the research

methodology that guides this project. Guided by the theoretical frameworks of "institutional whiteness" and "color-blind racism," I conducted a Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA) of administrative statements regarding incidents of racist hate speech on campus. Through this analysis, this project attempts to locate the ways in which administrative discourses around incidents of racist hate speech on campus, which are often rooted in the color-blind language of First Amendment absolutism, work to maintain institutions of higher education as "white institutional spaces." Ultimately, I argue that these discourses represent a commitment to white supremacy that is found not only in the depths of the far right but also within the halls of the academy. Consequently, this common denominator fosters the incorporation of institutions of higher education into neofascism. By identifying these discourses, it is my hope that those of us who inhabit institutions of higher education can locate and dismantle this particular way in which white supremacy functions within institutions.

The Method: Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA)

A discourse is "characteristic of saying, doing, and being," and discourse analysis aims to locate patterns of "language in use" (Gee, 2014, p. 47; Taylor, 2001, p. 5). Fairclough (2001) explains that the "critical" aspect of CDA functions to "show how language figures in social processes. It is critical in the sense that it aims to show non-obvious ways in which language is involved in social relations of power and domination, and in ideology" (p. 229). Similarly, Van Dijk (1993) states that the primary focus of CDA should "deal primarily with the discourse dimensions of power abuse and the injustice and inequality that result from it." Therefore, the work of CDA is highly political, and the targets of analysts are the elite social actors that benefit from the reproduction of dominance and inequality. In this sense, the work of CDA should be focused on improving the situations for populations most marginalized by dominant social

groups (p. 252). Given these definitions, CDA is a fitting method for this project, which aims to explore how the institutional language around incidents of racist hate speech on campus functions to uphold white institutional spaces. I am guided by the mission for CDA described by Van Dijk above; as such, my focus is on the language of the powerful social agents, the administrators and leaders, at institutions of higher education.

Van Dijk (1993) also presents the idea of social cognitions, which are "socially shared representations of societal arrangements, groups and relations, as well as mental operations such as interpretation, thinking, and arguing, inference and learning, among others." He suggests that a core purpose of CDA is to discover how exactly the discourses themselves translate into socially shared representations (or social cognitions). In doing so, researchers can discover links between individual discourses and the reproduction of the social order that occurs when oppressive discourses become hegemonic (pp. 257-258). In the context of institutions of higher education, CDA can reveal connections between the individual administrator statements and the broader phenomenon of institutional whiteness.

The theoretical underpinnings of CDA include the scholars associated with the Frankfurt School as well as philosophers including Foucault and Althusser. Antonio Gramsci also provides crucial theoretical underpinnings for CDA, particularly with his concept of hegemony (see Chapter 3), which, once again, refers to the "cultural, moral, and ideological leadership over allied and subordinate groups" (Fairclough, 2001; Gramsci, 2000, p. 423). The concept of hegemony can be used to analyze the ways in which social cognitions become hegemonic, particularly through the discursive mechanisms of justification and denial, both of which bolster hegemonic narratives that naturalize racial inequality (Van Dijk, 1993; Wodak & Matouschek, 1993).

Given that hegemony is a subtle form of domination in which the ruling class does not use direct force or coercion to achieve domination, discourses play an important role in the manufacturing of "consensus, acceptance, and legitimacy of domination" among subordinate classes (Van Dijk, 1993, p. 255). In other words, the analysis of discourse provides insight into the ways in which domination is internalized ideologically in the form of everyday "common sense" (Fairclough, 2001). This project is specifically concerned with the hegemonic status of white supremacy and argues that the subtle racism found in the color-blind institutional language surrounding racist hate speech on campus works to bolster the "common sense" understanding of white supremacy by legitimizing the idea that racist speech should and must be tolerated for freedom's sake. Ultimately, this position paves the way for an easy incorporation into the fold of neofascism.

Organization

As stated in the first chapter, the organization of this project follows the CDA framework set forth by Fairclough (2001), which consists of the following five stages:

- Stage 1: Focus upon a social problem that has a semiotic aspect (rather than beginning with a traditional research question).
- Stage 2: Identify obstacles to the social problem being tackled. This includes locating the discourse within the broader "network of practices" within which the problem exists.
- Stage 3: Consider whether the social order (network of practices) 'needs' the problem.
- Stage 4: Identify possible ways past the obstacles.
- Stage 5: reflect critically on the analysis. (p. 236)

Stages 1-3 represent what Fairclough (2001) terms "interactional analysis," which refers to the practice of viewing discourses and written texts in relationship to other aspects of social life (p. 238). In this sense, Stage 1 and part of Stage 2 are broadly concerned with naming a problem and locating the discourse surrounding that problem within the related "network of practices," all of which occurs in the first three chapters of this project. Indeed, both the dominant discourses around racist hate speech in institutions of higher education as well as the ways in which the far right has leveraged these conflicts in an effort to incorporate institutions of higher education into the neofascist agenda also constitute "obstacles to the social problem to be tackled." However, it is through the actual analysis of the discourse, which is the focus of Chapter Five, that we can identify the specific language and discursive techniques that uphold institutional whiteness within institutions of higher education and foster their alignment with neofascism.

Chapters Five and Six address the final three stages of Fairclough's framework. Stage 3 asks whether the social order "needs" the problem at hand, and through this analysis, I argue that the answer, simply stated, is "yes." This is especially evident in the ways in which incidents of racist hate speech on campus are framed as a "First Amendment issue" rather than a "Fourteenth Amendment" issue, which would instead focus on the constitutional imperative to provide equitable access to education (absent of institutional racism) for all students (Bell & Moore, 2019; Lawrence et. al., 1993). Here, it is essential to underscore the fact that non-white members of US society have never enjoyed the "freedoms" enshrined in the constitution to the same extent as have their white counterparts. Therefore, the focus on freedom of speech (including racist hate speech) at the expense of the well-being of students of color upholds the social order, characterized by white supremacy, and prioritizes the "right to be racist on campus" (Bell & Moore, 2017).

Stage 4 focuses on locating the weaknesses and gaps within the texts in order to locate potential disruptions and create space for change. Here, I draw upon the critiques of the conservative argument that institutions of higher education are anti-free speech. These critiques, which focus on the non-absolute nature of free speech (see Chapter Two) as well as the ways in which these conservative attacks act as conservative propaganda aimed at elevating anti-intellectualism (see Chapter Three) are helpful in the task of "poking holes" in the arguments set forth in the administrative statements. Within these gaps lies the possibility to create new discourses around incidents of racist hate speech on campus that are focused on equality for marginalized students rather than the freedoms of white students which exist at their expense.

And finally, Stage 5 requires a reflection on the analysis, which may lead to asking questions about the accessibility of the analysis and the ways in which the analysis does or does not involve those who experience the social problem most deeply (Fairclough, 2001, p. 239). While this project does not focus on the voices of those who are victims of racist speech on campus, I do see this project, which instead focuses on the identification and analysis of administrative discourses, as a first step towards future research that includes these perspectives.

The Data

I chose to focus on the statements of the university administrators due to their power in the decision-making process regarding the protection and presence of racist hate speech on college campuses. These statements were collected between 2016 and the present date and exist in a live database compiled by the organization the First Amendment Rights in Education (FIRE). As previously noted, FIRE receives considerable funding from the same conservative donor networks that have also funded and orchestrated the rise of neofascism. FIRE's conservative funding along with its absolutist commitment to free speech on campus places this

dataset directly in line with this project's aim to analyze administrative discourses (often written from the absolutist standpoint) that preserve white institutional spaces as well as to connect these discourses to neofascism.

My choice to focus on the public language of administrators rather than personal interviews stems from a pilot study that I completed during the spring of 2017 in which I interviewed administrators at my university regarding their perspectives on how institutions should handle incidents of hate speech on campus. While these interviews did highlight some of the specific events and challenges recently faced by the university with regard to racist hate speech, the administrators often defaulted to the types of "official" responses that I had read in various publications from other institutions across the country. Therefore, I decided to focus on these public statements in an effort to locate broad patterns in this institutional language. In addition, applying CDA to FIRE's leader statement database allows me to broaden the scope of the project because it includes data from institutions across the country. This is crucial given that the presence of racist hate speech on university campuses is a widespread problem (Lawrence et al., 1993; Matsuda et al., 1993; Bell & Moore, 2017).

The database itself is housed on FIRE's website, and it consists of over 700 statements made by university administrators between 2016 and the present date. The years from 2016 onward are certainly not representative of the history of racist hate speech on campus, but this time span does correlate to the time period during which the neofascist political movement, represented by the election of Donald Trump, came to power within the United States. After Trump's election, incidents of racist propaganda on college campuses more than tripled, an indicator that this specific time period merits close investigation (anti-defamation league.org, p. 1). Further, even though Trump lost the election in 2020, he remains king of the Republican

party, and whoever runs on the Republican ticket in 2024 will likely run a campaign rooted in neofascism, just as Trump did (Caputo, 2021; Tufekci, 2020). Therefore, a Democratic win in 2020 does not signal the end of neofascism but rather an ongoing struggle. In this sense, studying the time span associated with the rise of Trump remains relevant and critically important.

The database provides the year, position of the administrator quoted, the title of the institution, the statement, and a link to the document or website in which the statement appears. Because it is beyond the scope of this project to analyze all 700 plus statements, I narrowed the database using the keywords “racism,” “racist hate speech,” and “hate speech.” Applying these filters left me with 191 statements from 108 administrators, ranging in length from a couple of lines to a few paragraphs. In addition, I reviewed the corresponding articles in which the statements were found in order to provide additional context and relevance. For example, I paid particularly close attention to the articles that corresponded to the statements filtered by the keyword “hate speech” to ensure that the incident being discussed (when applicable) pertained specifically to racist hate speech and not some other form of hate speech—almost all of them did, and I have noted those that clearly did not. These articles are often found in the university newspaper or website, but they also appear in periodicals and local and national media outlets.

FIRE’s database also conveniently includes a user guide that explains the purpose of the database as follows:

> In the fight for free speech on college campuses, university presidents and administrators have a big role to play.
>
> Each day, higher education leaders are quoted in the media articulating their institutions’ positions on guest speakers, academic freedom, speech policies, due process, and more. Some institutions live up to their responsibilities and promises; others don’t.

FIRE's goal in compiling this Leader Statement Database is to provide you a record of these positions.

> Some presidents give flowery praise to the First Amendment, but hypocritically clamp down on free speech rights by maintaining "free speech zones," caving to calls to disinvite guest speakers, and maintaining terrible speech policies. Others thoughtfully articulate the position that, painful as it may be sometimes, even vile speech is preferable to administrative censorship—a position FIRE shares. Most fall somewhere in the middle. (Burnett, 2017, p. 1)

This statement provides clear evidence that FIRE takes an absolutist approach to the protection of racist speech on college campuses, assuming that it would consider racist speech to fall into the category of "vile" mentioned in the quote above. And although the instructions clearly state FIRE's stance on free speech on college campuses, it also states that the database is not meant to be a "blacklist" of presidents who don't uphold their perceived commitment to the First Amendment—the fact that FIRE does not provide any commentary on the individual statements within the database also supports this assertion. However, the instructions also urge students to hold their university administrators accountable to upholding the institutional commitment to the First Amendment; therefore, while the database itself may appear neutral, the mission behind its creation is far from it.

To aid in the data analysis, I used the qualitative software Dedoose to organize, code, and analyze the statements. I first made separate entries for each statement, including all of the information listed in the database as well as the full text of the corresponding article (when available). From there, I uploaded these entries into the Dedoose platform. I then coded the data through the method of open coding to locate the emerging themes. I repeated the process of

coding and searching for themes until I reached a level of saturation at which no new themes emerged (Grbich, 2012). I arrived at the final themes using Dedoose's qualitative reporting features, and through this analysis, I found that each of the themes fell into one of three discursive categories: discourses of denial, discourses of justification, and institutional actions. These results align with the literature on CDA that suggests that discourses rooted in denial and justification reproduce inequality (Van Dijk, 1993, Matouschek & Wodack, 1993).

Theoretical Framework: Institutional Whiteness and Color-blind Racism

Sara Ahmed's work on institutional whiteness is the primary theoretical guide for this project, and I have attempted to carry her feminist orientation throughout my analysis. She locates her work (specifically her work on diversity) within the tradition of "Black British Feminism" even though it does not specifically address the gendering of the university. However, she explains, "In reflecting about gender as a relation, feminist theorists offer critical insight into the mechanisms of power as such, and in particular, how power can be *redone* at the moment it is imagined as *undone*" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 13). I am inspired by the idea of "redoing" the mechanisms of power, and I hope that this project too can shed light upon how the discursive power, albeit subtle, of the institutional language around incidents of racist speech on campus could be both *undone* as well as reimagined in a way that defies institutional whiteness.

This project also has direct ties to the "undoing" of gender-based inequality because it is concerned with the connections between institutions of higher education and neofascism. Stanley (2018) explains that patriarchy is a central component of fascist regimes because they aim to recreate the patriarchal family within society. The fascist leader represents the father of the nation, and his power over the country translates into men's power over their family: "his strength and power are the source of his legal authority, just as the strength and power of the

father of the family in patriarchy are supposed to be the source of his ultimate moral authority over his children and wife" (p. 6). Therefore, neofascism has a direct interest in maintaining patriarchy, and one example of this effort within the realm of higher education is the attacks on gender studies programs that "subvert masculinity" (p.44). Here again, it is apparent that neofascist sympathizers only tolerate freedom of speech and expression when the speech in question is supportive of the neofascist agenda.

Institutional Whiteness

Ahmed (2012) cites the importance of Durkheim's sociological model that allows for institutions to be the object of analysis; however, she also explains the importance of not viewing institutions as social facts by taking their stability for granted. Rather, she argues that "institutions become a given, as an effect of decisions made over time, which shapes the surface of institutional spaces" (p. 39). In this sense, the focus of research on institutions should be on describing them and looking closely at how various aspects of institutions become stabilized and "instituted" (p. 20). In the project at hand, the specific aspect of institutional life under investigation is the institution's language surrounding incidents of racist speech on campus. Through this analysis, we will see how this language represents ongoing work to stabilize the "whiteness" of an institution.

For Ahmed, institutional whiteness is an embodied characteristic: "institutional spaces are shaped by the proximity of some bodies and not others: white bodies gather and create the impression of coherence." She adds that this phenomenon creates a "sea of whiteness," that easily accommodates white bodies but marks other bodies as out of place, unexpected, and aberrant (p. 35). In this sense, institutions maintain their whiteness through active and ongoing work and processes that construct and reproduce white norms. The construction of white norms

is rooted in the history of racial exclusion within institutions of higher education, which subsequently led to the "uncontested institutionalization of white norms, values, and cultural representations as well as policies that assume, facilitate, and justify white power within the context of the institutions" (Bell & Moore, 2017, p. 103; Wilder, 2013). Ahmed (2012) says that the institutionalization of white norms occurs when they fade into the background of institutional functions and become invisible to white people who easily "inhabit whiteness" or those who are not white but have become accustomed to existing in white spaces (pp. 25, 35, 157). This idea provides an important qualification to popular claims that whiteness is generally invisible—rather, as Ahmed states, it is invisible merely to those who are white (Ahmed, 2007, 2012, 2017; Delgado & Stefancic, 1997).

Ahmed (2012) focuses her analysis on diversity initiatives as the "active work" that institutions do in an effort to maintain their whiteness. She argues that diversity work is often about changing the "image" of the institution to one of inclusivity rather than challenging the white norms that maintain the institutional exclusivity. To illustrate this idea, she uses the metaphor of host and guest to represent a white institution "welcoming" diversity into its institutional structure: "Whiteness is produced as host, as that which is already in place or at home. To be welcomed is to be positioned as the one who is not at home" (pp. 34, 41). Or, in other words, adding bodies of color to an institution in an effort to create diversity affirms the institution's primary characteristic of whiteness—it "keeps whiteness in place" while bodies of color remain "out of place" (p. 33). This idea of "keeping whiteness in place" is also helpful to the study of administrative discourses rooted in color-blind racism as these discourses also contribute to the maintenance of institutional whiteness.

Color-blind Racism

With Ahmed's concept of institutional whiteness in mind, we can consider the administrative discourses surrounding racist hate speech on campus as both "instituting actions" and the "ongoing work" that "keeps whiteness in place" within institutions of higher education. These discourses bolster whiteness by employing color-blind racism, or what Eduardo Bonilla-Silva (2018) calls the "new racism." In contrast to the explicitly racist practices during the Jim Crow era, which justified the oppression of Black people based on the fictitious assumption of their "biological and moral inferiority," the new racism is instead rooted in color-blind ideology, which rests upon the premise that "racial inequalities are the result of non-racial dynamics" (pp. 2-3).

In the neoliberal spirit of individualism, color-blind racism blames racial inequality on individual shortcomings rather than on institutionalized racism. We can look once more to Skocpol's interviews with Tea Party members to see how these discourses bolster both neoliberalism and racism. She quotes Tea Party member Stanley Ames, who said, "redistribution of wealth is not the answer. What you do is earn your place." This sentiment aligns well with the Tea Party catchphrase, "Redistribute my work ethic," a simple statement that allows members of the Tea Party to not only claim that individual responsibility and "hard work" (rather than race) are the determining factors to one's material success but also to implicitly proclaim that they work harder than people from racial minority groups (Skocpol & Williamson, 2012, p. 67).

Bonilla-Silva's (2018) complementary concept of "abstract liberalism" is helpful to understanding how these color-blind discourses function to preserve institutional whiteness. Abstract liberalism refers to the ways in which color-blind language applies the liberal concepts of equality, individualism, choice, etc. to the explanation of issues stemming from racism. This

discursive technique takes form in phrases such as "equal opportunity" and "free speech," and its portrayal of these liberal tenets as lived realities for all students has the potential to erase histories of racial discrimination. In other words, the discourses that employ abstract liberalism insert liberal values of equality, justice, freedom, choice, etc. into institutional spaces and processes where they do not exist and function to hide the fact that for non-white people, they were never present in the first place (Mills, 1997).

Against this backdrop, Bonilla-Silva (2018) connects the racist tropes embedded in neoliberal language to the racist roots of liberalism itself and explains that "modernity, liberalism, and racial exclusion were all part of the same historical movement" (p. 55). Likewise, Mills (1997) states, "From the inception, then, race is in no way an 'afterthought,' a 'deviation' from ostensibly raceless Western ideals, but rather a central shaping constituent of those ideals" (p. 14). In other words, the sentiment "We the people" refers to "the people who count, the people who really are people ('we the white people')" (p. 3). As previously mentioned, this sentiment rings true within institutions of higher education; in fact, the history of higher education is deeply entangled with slavery, as many institutions of higher education in the colonies were built by slave labor (Wilder, 2013). Further, these same institutions went on to cultivate the research and ideology that legitimized white supremacy and justified the dispossession of Native American and Black people for centuries to come. Therefore, white supremacy within institutions of higher education was part of their original blueprint.

Color-blind discourses that university administrators employ in their discussions of incidents of racist hate speech provide prime examples of the ways in which discourses rooted in abstract liberalism function to obscure the racial inequality that is inseparable from the history of higher education. These discourses are typically associated with the absolutist approach to free

speech discussed in Chapter Two and are represented by institutional arguments expressing the right to "free speech" for everyone as well as the importance of granting "equal" treatment to all forms of speech, despite its profoundly negative impact on victims.

Bell and Moore (2017) argue that these color-blind discourses work in conjunction with overt acts of racism to maintain what they term "white institutional spaces." They explain that when overt acts of racism happen on campus, university administrators often take the opportunity to reject such acts of racism and to claim that these racist acts represent an anomaly to the otherwise "equal" university operations. In doing so, institutional racism is delimited to these overt and aberrant acts while other aspects of white institutional spaces such as racial disparities in admissions, hiring, positions of power, etc. are left in place (p. 111). In other words, these discourses allow administrators to create the image of inclusivity while supporting institutional policies that perpetuate racial discrimination and exclusion—or, in Ahmed's (2012) terms, they serve as a subtle reminder of how institutions accommodate white bodies while marking others as unwelcome.

White Bricks

In terms of this project, I would like to suggest that we can think of color-blind discourses that uphold institutional whiteness metaphorically as "white bricks" that construct both institutional walls and bridges to neofascism. The image of bricks comes from Ahmed's (2007, 2017) conception of academic brick walls that uphold the structure of white institutions. She explains that these walls are made up of "white bricks," which are formed as a result of an institution's continued reproduction of tendencies that bolster white supremacy:

> Tendencies are acquired through repetition. A tendency is a direction: it is a leaning that way, a falling that way, a going that way. Once a tendency has been acquired, a conscious

> effort to go that way is no longer necessary. Things fall that way almost of their own accord. (Ahmed, 2017, p. 149)

For example, in her research on institutional diversity she refers to the ways in which citations function as white bricks in institutional walls, and she suggests that by predominantly citing white males and hosting events consisting mostly of white speakers, institutions, perhaps even unwillingly, actively engage in the construction of white institutional spaces by producing (and reproducing) these "white bricks" that support their structure (p.154). These structures are fortified over time as institutions add more "white bricks" to their structures through the repetition of decisions and actions that affirm whiteness.

She explains that, eventually, whiteness becomes a system that becomes normalized when those who draw power from their whiteness dismiss allegations of racism and sexism, for example, by claiming that those who call attention to discrimination are overly wrapped up in identity politics and should just "get over it." The way in which Ahmed likens the construction of institutional systems to "walls" is worth quoting at length:

> A wall becomes a defense system. Sexism and racism are reproduced by the techniques that justify the reproduction. When these words are dismissed, we are witnessing a defense of the status quo: it is a way of saying, there is nothing wrong with this; what is wrong is the judgment that there is something wrong with this. The very systematic nature of sexism and racism is obscured because of the systematic nature of sexism and racism: so many of those incidents that wear us down, that we don't speak of, that we have learned not to speak of. We have learned to sever the connection between this event, and that, between this experience and that. To make a connection is thus to restore what has been lost (where loss should be understood as an active process) it is to generate a

different picture. Apparently unrelated phenomena, things that seem "just to happen," to fall this way or that, become part of a system, a system that works. It is a system that works because of how it smooths progression. (p. 157)

Therefore, with the notion of white bricks in mind, we can think of the color-blind discourses that are the subject of this analysis as particular types of "white bricks" that "justify the reproduction" of institutional whiteness (per the quote above) and metaphorically construct the walls of white institutional spaces. These discourses can take a variety of forms, but most are rooted in the tendencies to deny or justify incidents of racist hate speech on campus (Van Dijk, 1993).

For example, as I discussed in Chapter Two and will show in the following chapter, administrators often attempt to assuage complaints about racist speech on campus by portraying these incidents as anomalies and effectively denying the existence of structural racism on campus. Sometimes too, those in power respond to such complaints with a plea to targeted groups to just "get over it." Or, perhaps, targeted students might also be told that the toleration of racist speech is the price that they must pay for their sacred right to free speech. Students who complain might be accused of a lack of understanding of the First Amendment because if they grasped the fact that free speech is "equally" essential for the oppressed as well as the oppressors, then they would realize that their complaints were unfounded. Such reactions abscond the historical context of racial discrimination in which these acts of racist hate speech reside. As a result, they take the form of white bricks that are laid one by one, strengthening the hold of whiteness within institutions of higher education.

And while these discourses represent white bricks within the walls of white institutional spaces, they simultaneously build bridges, both ideological and tangible, to neofascism. First, the

construction of white institutional spaces forges an ideological bridge, rooted in white supremacy, between institutions of higher education and neofascist ideology. In addition, the financial connections between conservative donors and institutions of higher education function as tangible white bricks within the bridge connecting institutions of higher education to neofascism. As Chapter Three demonstrates, these "bricks" often take the form of donations for the creation of research that supports their free-market fundamentalist agenda as well as the sponsorship of conservative student organizations and speakers, including those who espouse racist speech—a central feature of neofascism.

In sum, the construction of white institutional spaces via color-blind administrative discourses in response to acts of racist hate speech demonstrates an institutional commitment to white supremacy. Consequently, these discourses create a point of entry for members of the far right, who can leverage the institution's color-blind interpretation of "free speech" to claim their "right to be racist on campus" (Bell & Moore, 2017). Through these abstract and de-contextualized interpretations of liberal values, institutions subsequently align themselves ideologically with neofascism and uphold their commitment to "freedom" at the expense of their commitment to "equality" for marginalized students (Bell & Moore, 2019; Lawrence et al., 1993). For this reason, it is important to identify these discourses and to resist them in an effort to "throw a wrench" in the system of institutional whiteness (Ahmed, 2017, p. 158).

Limitations

This study is limited in the sense that it focuses primarily on racist speech on campus and does not offer an equal focus on other damaging forms of hate speech. Certainly, issues of gender, social class, sexuality, and other identity categories are also relevant units of analysis in any debate surrounding hate speech on campus. Therefore, even though racist hate speech is the

primary unit of analysis in this project, I was open to other forms of hate speech that emerged in the data, particularly in the data that corresponded to the statements filtered by the term "hate speech," which casts a broader net than the filters of "racism" and "racist speech." As previously stated, if relevant statements presented other forms of hate speech, I noted this difference in the analysis.

In addition, this project focuses solely on the discourses of high-level administrators and does not include the voices of the victims of racist hate speech on campus. Given the scope of this project and the objective to discover how administrative discourses are linked to the maintenance of white institutional spaces as well as neofascism, this omission was intentional. However, future research projects could and should focus on the voices of victims in an effort to learn about the victims' experiences as targets of racist hate speech and to craft institutional policies based on their needs for an equitable experience in higher education.

Finally, perhaps the most significant limitation of this study is my own whiteness. I am a white person who easily inhabits white institutional spaces, and while I would not say that whiteness is invisible to me (in Ahmed's terms), I can say with certainty that I chose not to see it for the majority of my life. This white orientation has shaped not only my worldview but also my research lens, and even though I have tried to re-focus this lens over the past years in an effort to identify and resist the structures that uphold white supremacy, I will undoubtedly miss things due to the significant blind spots that cloud my lens. Therefore, as a white person undertaking a project that aims to locate color-blind discourses that uphold white supremacy—the same discourses that have shaped my identity—I employed the practice of reflexivity in an effort to give my analysis as much credibility and trustworthiness as possible.

Bloomberg and Volpe (2016) state that reflexive practices “focus on examining one's subjectivity and biases and reflecting on how these shape the research process.” They add,

> Researcher as instrument raises important ethical, accountability, and social justice issues, including intersubjectivity, power, positioning, authorship and voice. Importantly, the reflexive researcher understands that a reflective stance is an imperative; that is, reflexivity implies the explicit self-consciousness on the part of the research including social, political, and value positions. (p. 56)

With the practice of reflexivity in mind, I constantly aimed to evaluate the ways in which my whiteness impacted the analysis. Further, I will be open to (and grateful for) the critical feedback of those for whom whiteness has never been invisible or something that can be willingly unseen.

Conclusion

This Critical Discourse Analysis draws upon the theories of institutional whiteness and color-blind racism in an effort to locate the ways in which institutional language surrounding racist hate speech on campus contributes to the maintenance of institutions of higher education as white institutional spaces. The administrator database compiled by FIRE lies squarely within the crosshairs of the racist projects that occur both within institutions of higher education as well as within the broader context of neofascism. First, the statements often reflect both FIRE’s and the institution’s ideological commitment to the absolutist interpretation of the First Amendment, a de-contextualized perspective that erases histories of violent racial discrimination in the name of “equality.” Additionally, FIRE also receives funding from the donor networks that also fund political projects associated with neofascism—therefore, this database represents a tangible connection.

The chapter that follows consists of the actual analysis of the discourses found in FIRE’s database of administrator statements. Following Fairclough’s (2001) model, this chapter will not only discuss the obstacles that these discourses present, but it will also begin to identify gaps in the discourses, within which we can find ways to overcome these challenges. In Ahmed’s (2012) terms, this new discursive space provides an opportunity to discover how these power structures can be “redone at the moment that it is imagined as undone” (p. 13). The deconstruction and reimagining of institutional discourses is a key component to this project.

Chapter 5: Findings

Introduction

Up to this point, I have made two primary arguments: 1) the administrative discourses surrounding hate speech on campus contribute both to the maintenance of institutions of higher education as white institutional spaces, and 2) they also bring institutions of higher education into the folds of neofascism. Through a detailed examination of administrator statements, this chapter aims to show exactly how the language that administrators use to discuss racist hate speech contributes to the preservation of inequality both on campus and within the broader society. The goal of this analysis is to both locate these discourses and interrupt them, ultimately making space to reimagine the ways that institutions respond to incidents of hateful speech and expression on campus. Ideally, such a process would result in acts of racist speech being unacceptable not only discursively, but also through stronger institutional actions, a subject that will be discussed in the concluding chapter.

The data presented in this chapter aligns with Van Dijk's (1993) assertion that discourses rooted in denial and justification naturalize inequality—indeed, the majority of the statements from this dataset fall into one of these two categories with statements of denial largely centered around existing institutional commitments to creating an environment free of racism and statements of justification for racist speech on campus focused on both legal and principled obligations to the First Amendment. These two discursive categories work together to preserve white institutional spaces by denying the existence of structural racism within the institution and then justifying incidents of racist speech on campus by referring to them as anomalies that are deserving of First Amendment protections. In other words, the message is clear that it is necessary to endure racist hate speech on college campuses for the sake of preserving the sacred privilege of free speech. And yet, administrators do not advocate for doing nothing when faced

with acts of racism on campus. Rather, their suggestions for institutional actions, the third prevalent theme that emerged from the data, also align broadly with the absolutists' preferred response of counterspeech.

The first section of this chapter provides an overview of the data, including the predominant themes and categories that emerged in the analysis. The next section consists of a detailed analysis of the three dominant themes: discourses of denial, discourses of justification, and institutional actions. Within these themes, I examine the specific language used as well as the ways in which these discourses function to both preserve institutions of higher education as white institutional spaces and align them with neofascism. The identification of these discourses is representative of Fairclough's Stage 2, as they represent obstacles to the problem at hand. And in line with Stages 3 and 4, the discussion of these discourses also considers the ways in which these discourses uphold the existing social order, rooted in white supremacy, while also identifying gaps in the discourses in an effort to reimagine institutional responses to incidents of racist hate speech on campus.

Analysis Overview

The most common code found in these statements was the "institutional rejection of racism," which consists of an administrator denouncing the particular act of hateful speech and/or expression on campus. These rejections are rooted in the idea that these hateful acts run contrary to the values of the institution, which in the statements are often expressed through institutional commitments to the ideals of diversity, inclusivity, equality, mutual respect, and safety. Institutional rejections of hate speech often appear at the beginning of administrator statements, and they function to deny the existence of racism, sexism, etc. outside of the incident being discussed (Bell & Moore, 2017). Further, they serve as a precursor to justifications for the

presence of hate speech on campus—for example, "We at such and such university deplore racism, but…." and so on.

The justifications that often follow these statements of denial make up the second dominant category of data, with the most common code (and justification) being the "legal obligation to allow speech." Along with legal obligations to the First Amendment, other justifications include institutional commitments to free speech, dialogue, academic freedom, and a rejection of censorship. These justifications are often rooted in the absolutist perspective discussed in Chapter Two and represent a color-blind interpretation of constitutional and institutional imperatives around equality and freedom. These color-blind interpretations not only fortify institutions of higher education as white institutional spaces, but they also pave the way for the incorporation of institutions of higher education into the neofascist agenda by justifying, and subsequently legitimizing, incidents of racist speech on campus.

Finally, a third notable, yet less prominent, category emerged from this data, and it is denoted by the code "institutional actions," which encompasses the steps that institutions should take in response to incidents of hate speech on campus. The most prevalent sub-theme in this category was counterspeech, which is indicative of the absolutist call for "more speech, not less speech" in response to incidents of hateful speech and expression. Other less prominent responses include calls for greater mental health services on campus, disinvitation of speakers (only in the event of an imminent threat to campus security), and disciplinary action under the law when appropriate. Within the sub-theme of counterspeech are calls for educational efforts regarding the First Amendment and tolerance, event avoidance, and vague calls for displays of solidarity and love on campus. Ultimately, I argue that these actions fall short of what is needed for meaningful institutional resistance to acts of racist speech on campus, and in the concluding

chapter, I will present a few examples of discursive interventions that could lead to a counterhegemonic response.

Discourses of Denial: What We Stand for and What We Reject

Administrators often include in their statements on incidents of racist hate speech on campus a declaration of their institutional commitments to ideals such as diversity, equality, mutual respect, and safety for all members of the campus community. For example, in 2017, after two University of Northern Florida students posted a video mocking students who participated in "take a knee" protests, former university President John Delaney began his statement by stating, "We are a campus with strong policies and practices concerning racial harmony, civility, respect, and bullying" (Matter, 2017, p.1). Similarly, after a second incident in which racial slurs appeared in dormitories at Framingham State University, University President Javier Cevellos emphasized that "Framingham State draws strength from its diversity... We are an institution where individuals of differing cultures, perspectives, and experiences are welcomed, respected, valued, and supported" (Haddadin, 2017, p.1). Likewise, after swastikas were found on the campus of Nassau Community College, President W. Hubert Keen wrote on the institution's Facebook page, "Nassau Community College is an institution that fosters a safe environment for all and values equality and respect for all of its students, faculty, staff, and visitors (Nassau Community College Facebook, 2016). And in response to a student group's invitation of a controversial speaker at the University of Southern California, the former VP of Student Affairs, Ainsley Carry, said, "Our cultural centers, cultural assemblies, and student leaders have made tremendous strides in making this campus a safe space for so many marginalized student populations." She then asked, "is it really possible this speaker can unravel

all that has been accomplished to make this University better? Should we grant any speaker that much power? I hope the answer to these questions is, Hell, no!" (Carry, 2018, p.1).

One of the first notable characteristics of these discourses is the common use of the first-person plural pronouns "our" and "we." By simply referring to an institution as "our campus" or referring to the institution using "we," the administrators make a subtle but powerful reference to these institutions as being collective and inclusive entities before they explicitly state these commitments. Through the use of these first-person plural pronouns, the text assumes that the administrator is speaking on behalf of everyone within the institution who ostensibly hold the same values (i.e., "our values"), not to mention the same power in decision making (i.e., "should we grant any speaker that much power?") as those in positions of power within the institution. This facade of equality, inclusion, and collectivism serves an important function in the denial of institutional racism because it falsely portrays these values as embedded within the fabric of the institution itself, leaving little room for the discussion of institutional racism.

In addition, the actual stating of the institutional commitments to equality, inclusivity, and diversity along with justifications of incidents of hate speech on campus exemplify Ahmed's (2007, 2012) critique of such initiatives as being primarily used in an effort to portray a positive image of the institution rather than representing substantive efforts to dismantle institutional whiteness. As Bell and Moore (2017) state, institutional statements that profess these commitments to abstract liberal principles "validate their commitment to anti-racism—or at least, to non-racism—through the celebration of diversity despite their widespread participation in racialized institutional practices and structures" (p. 111). In the case at hand, the statements of liberal commitments occur against the backdrop of the tolerance of racist speech and expression on campus. Using Ahmed's (2012) framework, this contradiction plays an important role in

keeping “whiteness in place” (p. 33). In fact, Bell and Moore (2017) argue that these statements are an integral component of an institution’s color-blind response, and they complement rejections of racist hate speech and expression, another predominant theme that emerged in this analysis.

One example of such a rejection comes from Cornell University President Martha Pollack, who, in response to the posting of anti-Semitic fliers on campus, said, “Cornell reviles their messages of hatred; we revile it as an institution, and I know from many personal conversations that thousands of Cornelians deplore it individually” (Jaschik, 2017, p.1). Similarly, in response to the 2017 white supremacist rally at the University of Virginia that left counter-protester Heather Heyer dead, the former University of California President, Janet Napolitano, said, “As the leader of the University of California, an institution dedicated to the vibrant and respectful exchange of ideas, I write to you today to condemn these hateful actions by white supremacists and to reaffirm UC’s values of diversity and inclusion” (Napolitano, 2017, p.1). And in response to the invitation of white supremacist Richard Spencer to the University of Florida, President Kent Fuchs said, “The values of our universities are not shared by Mr. Spencer, the National Policy Institute, or his followers. Our campuses are places where people from all races, origins, and religions, are valued equally, welcomed and treated with love, not hate” (Fuchs, 2017, p.1).

While the above statements express a rejection of racist ideology and expression on campus, others take this stance a step further by claiming that such acts will not be tolerated on campus. In response to the posting of a racist video by a former student, University of Alabama President Stuart Bell said “We are united in condemning this racist behavior and resolute in our commitment to ensure our students, faculty, and staff, know that they are welcome, accepted,

and supported on our campus, and that discriminatory behavior will not be tolerated" (Bell, 2018, p.1). Similarly, in response to a white supremacist banner found on campus, Appalachian State Chancellor Shari Evert stated, "It cannot be said too many times: we will not tolerate violence, discrimination, injustice and racism on Appalachian's campus" (Wood, 2017, p.1).

Bell and Moore (2017) argue that these institutional rejections and assertions that overt racist acts will not be tolerated on campus along with the statements espousing liberal commitments to equality, diversity, and mutual respect work together with the overt acts of racism to maintain institutions of higher education as white institutional spaces. First, the overt acts of racism serve as reminders of a violent history of racial exclusion that deemed people of color to be inferior to white people, and subsequently left non-white people without equal access to institutions and their resources. These overt acts of racism come to exemplify "real racism" in the dominant discourse and overshadow the quotidian forms of color-blind racism that characterize white institutional spaces including racialized power structures, and institutional culture and practices. They explain, "through the recursive interaction between the racial organization of these institutions and the abstract liberal discourse that avows equal opportunity and color-blindness, white normativity is constituted and reconstituted in daily life within these institutions" (p.105).

Further, in Ahmed's (2012) terms these practices (both the overt racism and the color-blind practices) facilitate the "belonging" of white bodies while non-white bodies are marked as "out of place, unexpected, and aberrant" (p. 35). In sum, when incidents of overt racism occur on campus, the administrative responses detailed above, which focus on color-blind narratives of diversity and equality as well as rejections and intolerance of racism function to narrowly define acts of racism as those overt acts, which are easily rejected. Consequently, the racist and more

subtle institutional practices that privilege whiteness continue and come to define “normal” institutional operations.

In addition, the notion that institutions do not tolerate such acts of overt racism is largely performative due to their limited power to stop such acts in accordance with the First Amendment. Bell and Moore (2017) explain,

> The widespread public assertions of administrators and faculty that racism on college and university campuses is abhorrent and will not be tolerated are functionally mostly rhetorical. This is the case because there has been a committed and active movement in the post-civil rights era to protect the right to be racist on college and university campuses. This movement is, as might be expected, characterized by an abstract liberalist color-blind narrative that emphasizes the protection of absolutist constructions of freedom of speech. Unfortunately, it is this colorblind discourse that has informed the US courts in their decisions regarding the balance between equality of access in education and freedom of speech. (p. 111)

Therefore, because the courts have codified a color-blind and historically decontextualized definition of free speech, the “right to be racist,” in Bell and Moore’s words, is also largely protected on campuses, even those that simultaneously profess commitments to equality and diversity. Former University of Virginia President Teresa Sullivan exemplifies this tension in the statement that she made prior to the aforementioned white supremacist rally that took place in 2017:

> As a unified community, we condemn the detestable beliefs of the KKK as well as the group’s messages of intolerance and hate. We also support the first amendment and the principle of free speech, and we know that members of this group have the right to

> assemble and speak. We abhor these beliefs yet we recognize their right to express these beliefs in a public forum, and the city of Charlottesville plans to protect their right to do so. (de Bruyn, 2017, p.1)

Sullivan's quote provides a prime example of administrators condemning acts of racism and yet justifying them based on their commitment to the First Amendment.

In fact, an obligation to the First Amendment was the primary justification that the administrators in this dataset stated for allowing incidents of racism to occur on campus. Thinking back to Van Dijk's (1993) argument that discourses rooted in denial and justification naturalize inequality, we can conceptualize how the discourses above that are rooted in proclamations of diversity and equality as well as those expressing rejections and intolerance of racism on campus function as discourses of denial. And as for the justifications, the next section demonstrates how these discourses are largely centered around the institution's commitment and obligation to honor the First Amendment at all costs.

Discourses of Justification: First Amendment Absolutism

The administrative discourses that justify hate speech on campus on the grounds that they must comply with the First Amendment are rooted in both principle and legality. They largely align with the arguments for free speech absolutism (see Chapter Two), which once again refers to the idea that speech should only be regulated by the government if there is a clear and present threat of violence (Strossen, 2000). While some administrators willingly boast their institution's devotion to the First Amendment, others express concern about the tensions that arise between their First Amendment obligations and their institutional commitments to equality. These perspectives emerged from the data in two primary themes: institutional commitments to the First Amendment and legal obligations to abide by the First Amendment. Together these themes

serve as justifications for the presence of hate speech on campus by supporting the absolutist narrative that hate speech is something that must be tolerated to safeguard the broader guarantee of freedom of speech and expression.

Principled Commitments to the First Amendment

In a *New York Times* interview (quoted in FIRE's database), prominent First Amendment scholar Erwin Chemerinsky stated,

> The central principle of the First Amendment—and academic freedom—is that all ideas can be expressed. Sometimes they are ideas or views that we might consider noble, that advance equality. Sometimes they might be ideas that we abhor. But there is no way to empower a government or campus administration to restrict speech without allowing for the possibility that tomorrow, it will be our speech that is restricted. (Schutler, 2017, p.1)

Similarly, Wallace Loh, President of the University of Maryland, stated, "The First Amendment protects speech we abhor in order to safeguard speech we cherish. Unfettered expression is essential to academic freedom and a democratic society" (Loh, 2017, p.1). Further, Chemerinsky, along with UC Irvine Chancellor Howard Gillman, added,

> History demonstrates that when we give officials broad powers to restrict or punish speech considered hateful, offensive, or demeaning, that power is inevitably abused. Unpopular speakers are victimized, and legitimate opinion silenced. Over the course of U.S. history, officials censored or punished those whose speech they disliked: abolitionists, labor activists, religious minorities, communists and socialists, cultural critics, gays and lesbians, demonstrators and protestors of all stripes. (Chemerinsky & Gillman, 2016, p.1)

These statements exemplify the absolutist notion that speech should only be restricted in the rarest of occasions (the imminent threat of violence) because the obstruction of some speech could, theoretically, lead to widespread censorship, which is precisely what First Amendment absolutists aim to avoid.

In accordance with this objective, a resistance to censorship is, unsurprisingly, another prominent theme that emerged from the administrator statements. In response to a conservative student aiming to bring conservative commentator Ben Shapiro to campus, Dorothy Leland, the former Chancellor of the University of California at Merced, said,

> Hateful words are symptoms of much deeper ills, and banishing the words will not cure the social diseases that cause them. These diseases have names—anti-Semitism, sexism, racism, homophobia—and public higher education especially has an obligation to study the history and etiology of these diseases and to identify interventions that aren't just palliative but restorative. (Leland, 2018, p.1)

Erwin Chemerinsky similarly argued,

> I think we have to be attentive to the fact that many students want to restrict speech due to very laudable instincts. They want to protect other students from hate speech. They want to create an inclusive community for all. But the response to hate speech can't be to prohibit and punish it. It's unconstitutional. We have to find other ways to create inclusive communities. (Schutler, 2017, p.1)

While both Leland and Chemerinsky rejected the censorship of racist hate speech as a means to remedy social ills, they do acknowledge that this speech is highly problematic for the campus community. In addition, they noted that institutional interventions are necessary to deeply address the roots of hate speech and ultimately to create more inclusive communities.

In this same spirit, other administrators expressed their fear that censorship could further alienate marginalized student communities by impeding the “free exchange of ideas,” a principle that rests upon the absolutist ideal of content neutrality, meaning that speech should not be restricted due to its content (Majeed, 2009). To some administrators, the free exchange of ideas was also seen as a necessary component of the institutional efforts to advance equality among student groups. For example, in a statement to the university, Stanford President Marc Tessier Lavigne (2017) said,

> Some outside speakers may be controversial to some because they challenge accepted notions in a reasoned way. Some may be provocative. And some may be both. Whatever the circumstance, as part of the university’s commitment to the free exchange of ideas, when organizations within our community genuinely want to hear an outside speaker, we support their efforts as long as university policies are followed. (p.1)

In addition, in response to a professor’s controversial comments about violence against white people, Texas A&M President Michael Young stated,

> The first amendment protects the rights of others to offer their personal views, no matter how reprehensible those views may be. It also protects our right to freedom of speech, which I am exercising now. We stand for equality. We stand against the advocacy of violence, hate, and killing. We firmly commit to the success, not the destruction of each other. We wish no violence or harm even to those who espouse hateful views under the first amendment, a sentiment that by its very nature is one that they would deny others...
>
> Our core values are very much intact. (Flaherty, 2017, p.1)

Likewise, Chico State President Gayle Hutchinson stated, “As a public institution, we cannot discriminate against or prohibit speakers invited to speak on campus or prohibit student groups

from sharing their beliefs—nor would we want to. It is our goal to respect all people, of all backgrounds, at all times" (Hutchinson, 2019, p.1). These statements demonstrate a professed commitment to equality by granting equal access to all perspectives and ideas, including (ironically) messages of racism and exclusion.

Along with advancing equality within institutions, administrators also stressed the importance of the "free exchange of ideas" to the pursuit of knowledge and caution against the censorship of content that could lead to the "chilling" of conversations. For example, Matt James, the Assistant Dean of Student Affairs at Marshall University, said, "But I think when especially talking about political issues, what is controversial to you may not be controversial to me so we don't want to put a certain level of censorship in place when we are not allowing students to have these critical conversations" (Francis, 2017, p.1). Through such conversations, administrators explained that students must learn to listen to perspectives that are different than our own. Reflecting the institutional value of diverse ideas, Taylor Reveley, President of the College of William and Mary, stated,

> We must be willing to accept the expression even of the ideas with which we emphatically disagree, so long as they are expressed non-violently, in accordance with the law, and in ways compatible with public safety. The First Amendment contemplates as well that free speech is the crucial means by which we respond to, and refute, ideas with which we profoundly disagree. (Reveley, 2017, p.1)

Likewise, Marc Johnson (2017), President of the University of Nevada, Reno, added,

> Our learning environment respects the right to freely express views and debate openly in civil discourse. There will be clashes of beliefs and opinions, but they must be peaceful. As a community, we abhor violence and it has no place on our campus. If we are to come

> to greater understanding of each other, it will be through open, honest, non-violent discussion, and exploration of all ideas. Educating ourselves on the other's point of view is the key to understanding and peaceful co-existence. (p.1)

Once again, these administrators are arguing that in order to advance equality within the institution, all ideas and perspectives should be given equal platforms and consideration.

In this sense, such considerations also extend to speech that is hateful or offensive to marginalized student groups. Therefore, proponents of this perspective argue that hateful or offensive speech must be tolerated as a part of the greater effort to advance equality—a notion that once again ties back to "content neutrality." For example, in response to a speaking event featuring Ben Shapiro at UC Berkeley, University of California Professor Emeritus Mark Yudof explained,

> The historic core of First Amendment Jurisprudence, applied to regulation of speakers on public-university campuses, is that the rules shaping access must be content neutral. Those rules should neither privilege nor limit speech because of disagreement with the values of the speakers—whether white supremacists or proponents of racial equality, advocates or opponents of boycotting Israel, or support or opposition to the immigration policies of the Trump administration. Even non-violent speech, heinous words vilifying African-Americans, gays, or Jews, for example is protected under the first amendment. (Yudof & Waltzer, 2017, p.1)

Similarly, Ann Cudd, former Dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Boston University, recalled John Stuart Mill's argument for tolerating speech that expresses unpopular viewpoints, including racist hate speech. She said,

> John Stuart Mill's arguments do not support an absolute right to say anything anywhere. They do not support the breaching of the privacy of employment, medical, or student performance information. They do not support speech that creates chaos, riots, immediate violence or conveys threats. But these arguments do support tolerating racist, homophobic, or sexist speech that falls short of this mayhem. They support permitting speech that is considered by some to be heretical or blasphemous, anti-American, or communist. They support tolerating speech that is demonstrably false or hurtful. A commitment to liberal education requires that we tolerate speech that falls into these latter categories—but we can and should also support speech that vigorously opposes it. (Cudd, 2017, p.1)

And regarding the toleration of hate speech at universities, Ana Mari Cauce, President of the University of Washington, stated, "It can be difficult to accept that even hateful and repugnant speech is protected by the constitution and that allowing it to occur at public universities, sometimes elevating a speaker's status, is the price we pay for ensuring everyone's freedom of speech" (Cauce, 2018, p. 1). In essence, these administrators' statements all represent the absolutist argument that the restriction of speech based on content, even hateful content, is antithetical to democracy and its corresponding ideals of equality and freedom. Therefore, hateful speech must be tolerated for the sake of the greater good.

However, Van Dijk (1993) explains that discourses can bolster oppressive power structures through the dominant group portraying themselves ("us") as losing something, in this case the right to free speech, because the needs of the marginalized group ("them") are favored (p. 265). For these administrators, the equal treatment of ideas and students is disconnected from historical inequality marked by discrimination and violence that is inextricable from the

exclusionary messages embedded within racist hate speech (Bell & Moore, 2017; Lawrence et al., 1993). In addition, racism—the belief in the superiority of one race over another—is relegated to merely a "diverse perspective" that deserves equal toleration and debate (Lorde, 2007; Matsuda et. al., 1993). Once again, these color-blind statements present a contradictory situation in which the promotion of equality through the tolerance of "diverse perspectives" is achieved by allowing exclusionary practices such as racist hate speech.

These administrative statements are also connected to the notion of "Black sacrifice," which suggests that racist speech and expression is something that must be endured for the sake of greater good (Lawrence et al., 1993, pp. 81–82). In other words, Black sacrifice is essential to the preservation of white freedoms, including the right to be racist on campus. In this sense, the idea of Black sacrifice is central to the color-blind notion that content can be "neutral" and that all speech must be tolerated even if it targets groups of people that have historically and currently experienced discrimination and violence. Framed this way, administrative statements that focus on the primacy of the First Amendment and the color-blind notions of content neutrality, the free exchange of ideas, and the toleration of different perspectives (including racist perspectives) for the sake of equality and freedom (and at the expense of students of color) can be viewed as white bricks within institutional walls. These bricks function to reproduce institutional whiteness or, in Ahmed's (2012) terms, to "keep whiteness in place" (p. 33). They also act as tools of incorporation into neofascism.

Legal Obligations to the First Amendment

While the justifications above focus on institutional principles that rest upon their commitments to the First Amendment, other administrators emphasize their legal obligations to abide by the First Amendment, even if doing so presents a conflict with their institutional

mission. And as stated earlier in this section, the courts have been clear in their rulings about prohibiting speech based on its content at public institutions—it is unconstitutional (Bell & Moore, 2017). Erwin Chemerinsky stated, “The Supreme Court has repeatedly said that the First Amendment means that public institutions cannot punish speech, or exclude speakers, on the grounds that it is hateful or deeply offensive. This includes public colleges and universities” (Chemerinsky, 2017, p.1). Former University of California Berkeley Chancellor Nicholas Dirks explained this institutional obligation clearly in the statement he made in response to the invitation of Milo Yiannopolous to Berkeley’s campus:

> First, from a legal perspective, the U.S. Constitution prohibits UC Berkeley, a public institution, from banning expression based on content or viewpoints, even when those viewpoints are hateful or discriminatory. Longstanding campus policy permits registered student organizations to invite speakers to campus and make free use of meeting space in the student union for that purpose. As mentioned the BCR is the host of the event, and therefore it is only they who can disinvite Mr. Yiannopolous. Consistent with the dictates of the First Amendment as uniformly and decisively interpreted by the courts, the university cannot censor or prohibit events, or charge differential fees. (Dirks, 2017, p.1)

And in a succinct statement, Rutgers University President Robert Barchi summed up the First Amendment imperative on his campus: “It is free speech, it’s not hate speech... If it’s a general building on the university, that’s First Amendment Rights” (Munoz, 2017, p.1). These statements show how administrators can express regret about having to tolerate racist hate speech on campus while at the same time emphasizing their very real legal obligation to provide a platform.

In this sense, the legal obligation to abide by the First Amendment allows administrators to frame their statements on hate speech as a regrettable conundrum of “It isn’t that we want to

allow it, but legally, we must." For example, in response to tweets that identified a fascist sympathizer on the campus of Midwestern State University, President Suzanne Shipley said, "And when something like this {offensive social media post} doesn't meet the criteria of an immediate threat to campus, the university has to treat it as protected by the First Amendment, even if it is contrary to our values as a campus" (Wynne, 2019, p.1). Likewise, in response to the invitation of known white supremacist Richard Spencer to the University of Florida's campus, President Kent Fuchs stated, "While this speaker's views do not align with our values as an institution, we must follow the law, upholding the First Amendment not to discriminate based on content and provide access to a public space" (Fuchs, 2017, p.1). And in response to incidents of racial profiling and cultural appropriation in fraternities and sororities at Cal Poly, President Jeffrey Armstrong, who consequently suspended Greek life indefinitely, stated,

> I have to start by saying that I abhor and denounce racist speech and actions—they are inconsistent with my personal values and those of Cal Poly. I wish we could forbid them from our campus, and ensure that they are never expressed again. But that is not realistic. While this may anger and frustrate many, the laws governing constitutional rights to free speech are unambiguous and unequivocal. The First Amendment protects the free speech of everyone on our campus, and the university cannot sanction any campus community member or visitor who is legally expressing their views—even if we as a university find those views to be disgusting, racist, sexist, homophobic, or in any other way contradict our values. (Armstrong, 2018, p.1)

Armstrong's statement includes the full discursive formula consisting of the initial rejection of racism and denial of its compatibility with the institution's values followed by a justification of its presence in accordance with the First Amendment. Once again, the message expressed here is

that although it may be offensive, the tolerance of racism is necessary for the preservation of free speech. Or in other words, white freedom, specifically the right to be racist, is contingent upon Black sacrifice.

These statements exemplify the tensions and contradictions that arise when racist hate speech is framed as necessary and legally protected speech for the sake of ensuring freedom and equality for all students. However, Bell and Moore (2019) argue that the reliance on the First Amendment justifications for the tolerance of racist speech on campus undermines the right of students of color to access equitable educational experiences free from discrimination and harassment, which is guaranteed by both the Fourteenth Amendment and the Civil Rights Act. In this sense, Lawrence (1993) argues that the framing of issues of racist hate speech on campus around the First Amendment emphasizes the rights of the perpetrators of racism as opposed to the hurtful experiences of the targets of this racist speech: "It is a very sad irony that the first instinct of many civil libertarians has been to express concern for possible infringement of the assailants' liberties while barely noticing the constitutional rights of the assailed" (Lawrence et al., 1993, p. 65). This legal framing that prioritizes the constitutional rights of white students further institutionalizes white supremacy by giving legal protection to the perpetrators of racism at the expense of the rights of victims.

Similar to the arguments in Chapter Two regarding the non-absolute nature of the First Amendment, Bell and Moore (2019) emphasize that there are plenty of examples of unprotected speech, which include false statements about products and/or stock values, speech that spreads falsehoods about individuals, fighting words, non-disclosure agreements, and the prohibition of government workers to participate in certain political activities (Matsuda et al., 1993; Stanley, 2018). Therefore, the type of speech in question is essential. To illustrate this discrepancy within

the realm of higher education, Bell and Moore (2019) draw upon the examples of anti-harassment policies. They claim that such policies, which are typically directed at sexual harassment, are rarely framed around the First Amendment, whereas racial harassment policies, which are much less common (if they exist at all), are almost always framed in these terms.

Here, we see that speech that holds the potential to victimize white people is not tolerated, while speech that specifically targets people of color is legally protected under the First Amendment. This disparity illustrates the selective nature of the absolutist position that relies on the abstract interpretation of liberal principles of freedom and equality. When freedom of speech for white students undermines the equal access to educational opportunities for students of color, it is essential to place these principles within the proper historical context, which would first require the admission that US institutions were built around the absence of freedom and equality for people of color (Mills, 1997).

However, instead of providing this historical context around racist hate speech on campus, administrators have mostly opted for institutional responses in line with the absolutist response of counterspeech. The following section focuses on the third prominent theme of "institutional actions," and it details the most common suggestions and strategies that emerged from this analysis. These suggestions reflect the absolutist argument that more speech, not less speech, is the optimal response. In addition, it also details the opposing perspectives that argue that counterspeech itself is an insufficient response to incidents of racist hate speech given the power disparity between racist hate speech wielded by white people and counterspeech that comes from people of color.

Institutional Actions: Forms of Counterspeech

The dominant themes regarding institutional actions that emerged from the administrator statements are focused primarily on counterspeech initiatives that are educational in nature and led by the institution as well as counterspeech activities in which the broader campus community can partake. While these actions are noble in theory, critics argue that the counterspeech approach fails to place racist speech in the appropriate historical context, thereby creating the false narrative that racist speech and counterspeech hold the same structural power. Further, those in power within institutions often do not engage in meaningful counterspeech and expression in an effort to protect the free speech of perpetrators of racist speech. Once again, these narratives function to preserve institutions of higher education as white institutional spaces (Bell & Moore, 2017, 2019; Delgado & Stefancic, 2004; Lawrence et al., 1993; Matsuda et al., 1993).

Educational Counterspeech

A primary concern of administrators is that students do not fully understand the importance of the First Amendment, particularly the ways in which it is essential for oppressed populations. Erwin Chemerinsky stated,

> I do worry that students today may equate free speech more with cruel or racist posts on Yik Yak than with the civil rights protests of the 1960s. But even when students talk about harm and safety, they need to remember how malleable those terms are. There is no doubt that the Civil Rights protests deeply offended many Southerners, however objectionable that may sound to us today. An example like that illustrates why offensiveness to an audience can't justify stopping speech. (Schutler, 2017, p.1)

Similarly, University of California President Janet Napolitano said "We have to consider the student concerns but return to basic principles about what free speech means and how do we better educate students about the extent of the First Amendment" (Watanabe, 2017, p.1). University of Washington President Ana Mari Cauce added,

> There is a need for more education of our student body, for them to have a better understanding of why the First Amendment is so important. They have seen the First Amendment used to defend racism and sexism, etc. They don't have the real understanding that the First Amendment has been used to defend minority views. (Jaschik, 2017, p.1)

And in a succinct statement, Larry Moneta, Vice President of Student Affairs at Duke University, said, "Freedom of expression protects the oppressed far more than the oppressors" (Leonard, 2018, p.1).

The call for more education about the First Amendment may seem like a natural instinct for those who work in the field of higher education; however, these sentiments closely resemble the category of paternalistic justifications that Delgado and Stefancic (2004) dub, "If you just knew your own history" (p. 205). As discussed in Chapter Two of this project, these authors argue that while free speech has been historically important to marginalized groups, the First Amendment as interpreted by the US legal system has not necessarily been on their side. They argue that protesters who aim to disrupt the social order, including during the Civil Rights Movement or Black Lives Matter protests, are often arrested and convicted for exercising their First Amendment right to "free speech." And as Bell and Moore (2017, 2019) point out, white supremacists, such as Richard Spencer, are instead given platforms to express messages of racial superiority, which are protected by the First Amendment. Therefore, the right to be racist is

preserved, while the right to meaningfully protest white supremacy is punished. This disparity leads Delgado and Stefancic (2004) to argue that the First Amendment is most beneficial to minority groups when their speech and expression is “meek, mild, decorous, and mannerly.” In other words, First Amendment protections apply “when they [minority groups] need it least” (p. 207).

While some administrators call for institutional educational efforts to revolve around the First Amendment, others focus more on educational efforts rooted in resistance. In response to white supremacist flyers found on campus bulletin boards, Pat Bosco, VP of Student Life at Kansas State University, explained the intersection between educational efforts and counterspeech:

> Hateful speech is not speaking for my school, but it is protected speech. It also does not in any manner speak for my school and I will do everything I can to take advantage of a teachable moment and hopefully be much louder than any protected speech that I believe to be repugnant and against everything we are committed to as a K state family. (Hathaway, 2017, p.1)

Similarly, in response to an incident of egregious racist bullying, University of Hartford President, Gregory Woodward, discussed efforts to create an action plan for helping students address incidents of racism. He said, "What we’re going to think about is how do we educate our community to speak out when they see injustice, racism, how do we educate our students to address that, recognize it, take it forward with them as they enter their lives and become good citizens” (Newton, 2017, p.1).

In addition, other administrators focused on flexing the institution’s intellectual muscle to discredit messages of hate. For example, Indiana University Provost Lauren Robel said,

> There are many ways an academic institution, especially a state institution of higher education, which is bound by the First Amendment, can react to controversial speech. We can do what IU's Political and Civic Engagement program did: teach and discuss. Or do what the scholars who scrutinized The Bell Curve's social science did: interrogate the reasoning or evidence undergirding the claims, and disprove them if they are wrong. (Robel, 2017, p.1)

With a similar focus on intellectual resistance, University of Maine President, Glenn Cummings responded to a visit by Larry Lockman (known for his controversial stances on sexuality, sexual violence, and immigration) said,

> I'm not sure I protected the people I was meant to protect. Larry Lockman was given a microphone to spread hate speech against the people I'm paid to, I want to, protect... and if we have another conservative speaker at USM, we won't have them up there alone—spewing their hate. We'll have them debating the dean of the law school. There are ways to limit their microphones. (Cummings, 2017 p.1; McGuire, 2017, p.1)

These statements represent a distinctly academic approach to the resistance of hate speech on college campuses. Once again, these efforts are noble, but they rest upon the assumption that the leadership within institutions of higher education is willing to engage in counterspeech that extends beyond issuing impotent statements, including those found in this database, even if it means risking the accusation of creating an environment that is deemed hostile to the First Amendment (Lawrence et al., 1993).

Counterspeech and the Campus Community

The counterspeech efforts for which administrators advocate are not only academic in nature—rather, administrators also encourage them within the broader campus community. In a

call for the university to respond to acts of racist speech and expression with counterspeech, former University of Tennessee President, Beverly Davenport, stated,

> Even though the First Amendment to the Constitution protects hate speech, that does not mean we must remain silent about it. In fact, we have a responsibility to condemn what we know is wrong. Hate is wrong. Racism is wrong. Advocating for the exclusion of all but one race is clearly wrong. (Davenport, 2018, p.1)

Similarly, in response to fliers found on campus promoting the white supremacist group Identity Evropa, Middle Tennessee State University President, Sidney McPhee, said, “While the First Amendment protects the right to utter even abhorrent speech, it also protects our right to speak out forcefully against ideas and viewpoints that are contrary to the values of Middle Tennessee University” (Flowers, 2017). And in his statement on the white supremacist attack in Charlottesville, William and Mary President, Taylor Reveley, stated, “The First Amendment contemplates as well that free speech is the crucial means by which we respond to, and refute, ideas with which we profoundly disagree” (Reveley, 2017). Howard Gilman summed up this idea neatly and emphasized that counterspeech is preferable to censorship when he says that students who are upset by offensive speech, “must also consider one of the most hard-won lessons of free speech law: often the best remedy for hateful speech is more speech, not enforced silence” (Chemerinsky & Gilman, 2016, p.1). UC Berkeley Chancellor, Carol Christ, echoed this sentiment and explained that censorship can negatively impact the university’s image:

> The right response is not the heckler’s veto, or what some call platform denial. Call toxic speech out for what it is, don’t shout it down, for in shouting it down, you collude in the narrative that universities are not open to all speech. Respond to hate speech with more speech. (Volokh, 2017, p.1)

These statements reflect the institutional commitments to free speech and the free exchange of ideas and suggest that, as Gillman succinctly argued, the best way to counter hate speech is with more, not less, speech.

Other administrators noted the potential for counterspeech initiatives to provide the campus community with the opportunity to come together to show solidarity against hateful messages on campus. For example, University of Florida President, Kent Fuchs, encouraged students to come together in a rejection of the hateful speech of Richard Spencer:

> Though we have a responsibility as a public university, we also have a vital duty to our students, faculty, and staff to uphold our educational mission. Instead of allowing hateful speech to tear us down, I urge our campus community to join together, respect one another, and promote positive speech, while allowing for different opinions. (Fuchs, 2017, p.1)

Likewise, in his response to a noose found on campus, Colorado State President, Tony Frank suggested that solidarity as an act of counterspeech was the best way to support targeted student groups:

> While we could never protect members of our community from hate speech, how do we ensure that the most vulnerable among us understand that they do not understand those words alone, that they do not reject that ideology alone, that they do not stand alone before those who say it? How do we make sure that all of us, CSU, as a community, stand shoulder to shoulder so that the vitriol and vehemence of hate speech crashes, broken and empty, against a solid shore undergirded by the immense strength of human dignity? (Coltrain, 2017, p.1)

Cornell University President Martha Pollack expressed a similar call for the campus community to support each other in light of recent incidents of racism on campus: “For the vast majority of Cornelians who abhor these recent events, we need your help. Please speak out against injustice, racism, and bigotry, and reach out to support one another. Ours must be a community grounded in mutual respect and kindness” (Pollack, 2017, p.1). And at the University of Connecticut a campus lecture titled “It’s ok to be White,” given by conservative speaker Lucian Wintrich, resulted in Wintrich being “shouted down” and effectively denied a platform. In response, President, Susan Herbst called for greater civility from the campus community when faced with opposing views: “We have to think back to the 60s, and it’s about fighting hate with love” (Jaschik, 2017, p.1).

Throughout these statements, we see the onus placed on the campus community to protest the racist speech that is protected by the institution, which as history demonstrates, leaves protestors vulnerable to punishment and surveillance—even when the counterspeech is non-violent (Lacy, 2021). In addition, the statements by Fuchs and Herbst exemplify, once again, the phenomenon of racist hate speech being relegated to a “different opinion” or “opposing view” rather than an act of discrimination with a violent history. Here, we see the embodiment of Matsuda’s (1993) argument that racist hate speech “is so common that it is seen as a part of the ordinary jostling and conflict people are expected to tolerate, rather than as fighting words” (p. 35).

While the administrators above encouraged students to find solidarity through counterspeech, others instead focused on the power of denying an audience to racist speakers. Through this form of counterspeech, they argued that students speak volumes by simply not engaging. After the University of Alabama student group, America First, invited white

supremacist speaker Jared Taylor to campus, President Stuart Bell simply stated, "The best way to demonstrate distaste for hateful dialogue is to not give it an audience" (Flanagan, 2018, p.1). Kent Fuchs, President of the University of Florida, reflected this idea in response to the Richard Spencer speaking event on campus: "These types of groups want media attention. I encourage our campus community to send a message of unity by not engaging with this group and giving them more media attention for their message of intolerance and hate" (Fuchs, 2017, p.1). Likewise, Michigan State Interim President, John Engler, responded to Richard Spencer's visit to campus by saying, "Let's instead register our opposition by depriving them of the attention they desperately seek" (Terada, 2018, p.1). And, in response to the appearance of hateful signs on campus, Susquehanna State University President, Jonathan Green, drew upon institutional values when he said,

> Last semester, I wrote to the campus community that we will not shine a light on every act of hate speech or iconography reported on our campus, because we don't want to become an amplifier of repugnant ideologies. These messages fly in the face of the university's mission and values. (Moore, 2018, p.1)

In a similar discursive move, Middle Tennessee University President Sidney McPhee emphasized the importance of not giving attention to white supremacist fliers found on campus:

> Those values commit us to reason, not violence; to both listening and speaking; and to our membership in this diverse community. We will maintain our focus on the enrichment that comes to our campus through the wide range of backgrounds represented by our students, faculty, staff, and alumni, and we will refuse to give hate groups the attention they seek. (Flowers, 2017, p.1)

Therefore, according to these administrators, denying attention to these groups is a powerful form of counterspeech as well as an act of solidarity that falls in line with institutional missions while at the same time acting in compliance with First Amendment obligations.

However, at this point, we must once again recall the arguments in which critics of the counterspeech approach argue that it is rooted in color-blind racism because it fails to consider the power differential between the racist speech of white people, who enjoy greater legal protections, and the counterspeech of people of color, whose protest counterspeech has historically experienced greater levels of legal punishment. For example, Delgado and Stefancic (2004) state that perpetrators of racist speech are rarely offering an invitation to dialogue and that the targets of such speech may be putting themselves in danger by responding with counterspeech. In addition, counterspeech aimed at challenging the racial hierarchy is often subject to punishment by law enforcement at a greater frequency than racist speech (Bell and Moore, 2019). For example, as a part of the "Black identity extremism" project within the counterterrorism division, the FBI has monitored and surveilled racial justice activists including, but not limited to, Marcus Garvey, Martin Luther King Jr., and protestors in the Black Lives Matter Movement who protest against police brutality, including current Congresswoman Cori Bush (Lacy, 2021).

Another crucial aspect of the power differential between racist speech and counterspeech lies in the historical context of the racist speech, which the absolutist perspective blurs with the language of freedom and equality. Bell and Moore (2019) use the example of the placement of a noose on campus to illustrate the history of racial terror embedded in racist speech and expression. In this sense, racist speech not only signifies a group's outsider status, but it also serves as a reminder that white people can exert violence upon people of color with relative

impunity. Therefore, they explain that when university administrators call upon students to meet racist hate speech with peaceful “counterspeech” they effectively separate the racist speech from its violent historical context. This color-blind failure to recognize the inherent inequality between racist speech and counterspeech creates what they call an “anti-epistemology” or a way “not to know” this crucial historical context by whitewashing histories of racial violence and discrimination (p.11). This erasure functions to maintain institutional whiteness under the fictitious banner of equality and freedom that supposedly exist within the institution’s free marketplace of ideas.

In sum, while counterspeech in theory might seem like an ideal and less restrictive approach for combating racist speech, in practice, the structural inequalities that underpin racist hate speech and counterspeech render most expressions of it inadequate. The framing of racist hate speech on campus as a First Amendment issue prohibits the degree of counterspeech necessary to effectively and forcefully combat racist speech on campus. Not to mention, it characterizes the perpetrators of racist speech as martyrs for freedom and glosses over the impact of racist speech on victims (Lawrence, et al., 1993). For counterspeech initiatives to be effective within the context of higher education, those in power would need to commit to much stronger expressions, as the statements made by administrators rarely succeed in expressing sufficient outrage at the perpetrators of racist speech in fear of violating their First Amendment rights. For example, perhaps the University President could lead the picket line rather than hiding behind an official email.

However, some administrators do bravely point out the misguided focus on free speech within the context of racist hate speech on campus. In response to the violent right-wing protest in Charlottesville, University of Chicago President Robert Zimmer said,

Recent events in Charlottesville saw a group claiming to act on the basis of free expression, but whose behavior demonstrated the opposite. The celebration of Nazi hoods and flags, torches and hoods of the KKK, accompanied by powerful weapons visibly carried by those espousing hate and exclusion with a clear intent to menace and threaten, and the death of an innocent person must be seen for what they are—an attempt to intimidate, overtly threaten, and arrogate for themselves, an exclusive right to speech. Such overt efforts to intimidate and threaten the safety of others are not within the "freedom of expression" espoused by our University. (Zimmer, 2017, p.1)

While the University of Chicago's statement on free speech is considered to be the gold standard by absolutist scholars and organizations, including FIRE, Zimmer expressed in his statement above that acts of violence and intimidation should not be considered under the banner of free speech. Similarly, the members of the Higher Education Council of San Antonio (the presidents of local colleges and universities) also recognized the need to call attention to the misrepresentation of hate speech as a "free speech" issue:

But from time to time, American colleges and universities are subject to witness hate speech or activity that is disguised as free speech. Such has been the case in recent weeks at several colleges and universities in San Antonio and throughout Texas. As members of the Higher Education Council of San Antonio, we—the presidents of the colleges and universities throughout this community and supporters—feel that it is important for us to speak out and make a distinction between diversity of thought and disingenuous representation of free speech. (HECSA, 2017, p.1)

And Adam Falk, President of Williams College, gave the most urgent and direct assessment (within this dataset) of the conflation of hate speech with free speech:

> How many more examples do we need? For how long are we going to allow the vocabulary of freedom to be hijacked by people trying to impress upon us its opposite? As Sen Tim Kaine (D-VA) said at yet another congressional hearing on the topic recently, "Colleges should be a place of robust speech and disagreement…" But I think we cannot use the banner of protecting free speech to allow people to terrorize folks. Those who care about real freedom of speech, as I do, and I know Sen. Kennedy does—jneed to be far more concerned with such threats than with even the most boisterous student protest. As an educator, I politely decline to hide my head in a bag. It's too important for me, and Senator Kennedy, and all of us to keep our eyes and ears open to the rising chorus of hate. (Falk, 2017, p.1)

Falk's statement not only draws attention to the problematic use of "free speech" to protect perpetrators of hate speech, but it also alludes to the role that racist hate speech plays in the current wave of neofascism.

Conclusion

The findings detailed within this chapter highlight the ways in which administrative discourses uphold white institutional spaces by both denying racism on campus as well as justifying racist hate speech and expression on campus under the banner of the "free speech." These discursive tactics reflect Van Dijk's (1993) assertion that discourses focused on denial and justification naturalize inequality. Further, in this case, these discourses portray racially marginalized groups on campus as a threat to the dominant group's (white members of the campus community) First Amendment rights. Therefore, the idea that racist hate speech is something that must be tolerated for the sake of "everyone's" freedom elides the history of subjugation that people of color have experienced in the United States since its inception. In

other words, white freedoms continue to be contingent on the sacrifice of people of color (Lawrence, et al., 1993).

Further, the institutional actions proposed by administrators are heavily focused on counterspeech, which aligns with the absolutist approach for confronting racist hate speech on campus. Viewing these statements alongside critiques from Critical Race Theorists and others shows how these discourses employ a color-blind perspective that utilizes the liberal language of freedom and equality to erase the inherent inequality embodied by instances of racist hate speech on campus as well as in the counterspeech that often follows. These color-blind discourses function to "keep whiteness in place" within institutions of higher education by placing the responsibility of resistance largely on vulnerable members of the campus community who wield the least institutional power (Ahmed, 2012, p. 33; Bell & Moore, 2017, 2019).

In addition to upholding the walls of white institutional spaces, color-blind discourses also serve as tools of incorporation that put institutions of higher education at risk of being subsumed within neofascism. These discourses bridge institutions of higher education with neofascism through the shared ideology of white supremacy, and this shared affinity puts them in easy alignment. For this reason, it remains imperative to study incidents of racist hate speech on campus in the context of the current political landscape.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

This is the awful paradox of tolerance. There arise moments when those who would destroy the tolerance that makes an open society possible should no longer be tolerated (Hedges, 2007, p.36).

Introduction

When Donald Trump definitively lost the 2020 presidential election to Joe Biden, I found myself contemplating whether or not I should continue to focus on the link between incidents of racist hate speech on campus and neofascism. For a moment, I optimistically (and naively) considered the prospect of Trumpism being defeated and perhaps losing relevance. However, on January 6, 2021, in the early days of my data analysis, I happened to take a break and turn on the television only to discover that an attempted coup was taking place at the Capitol Building in Washington D.C. Violent white terrorists wielding confederate flags and clad in clothing bearing white supremacist messaging, and sometimes even full military garb, stormed the capitol, looting and vandalizing the building. All the while, the unprepared Capitol Police largely enabled the attack—some officers even gingerly opened the barricades and posed for selfies with the mob. One officer, in a true demonstration of chivalry, even offered assistance to a white, female member of the mob as she descended the Capitol stairs after the riot, showing that when the perpetrators of violence and chaos are white, the police meet them with acts of dignity rather than violence (Lampen, 2021).

These terrorists were acting in response to the "Big Lie," which is the false belief perpetuated by Trump arguing that he was the rightful winner of the election and that the election was stolen from him by democrats, who staged a "rigged" election (Wolf, 2021). This myth has been disproven through countless recounts and election investigations across the country,

including a shoddy effort in Arizona that holds the potential to impact efforts to subvert future elections (Mayer, 2021). However, in fascist politics, the facts do not matter, and as a result of the insurrection, five people died, including a police officer (Stanley, 2018; Healy, 2011).

Very soon after the insurrection unfolded, an image displaying a sharp contrast in the policing of speech circulated widely throughout digital media platforms. The image showed the Capitol stairs packed with armed guardsmen in full riot gear in preparation for a peaceful Black Lives Matter protest earlier that year (Lampen, 2021). This militaristic police response for a peaceful protest in support of Black Lives Matter compared with the lax police response to a white supremacist insurrection lays bare the disproportionate First Amendment protections that white people enjoy in contrast to their fellow citizens of color. What these events show us, once again, is that violence is merited for even the most mundane purposes (i.e., Trump's aforementioned bible photo opportunity) when the demonstrators are people of color, but when a mob of white people violently storm the Capitol, they garner at least partial support from law enforcement and depart largely unscathed.

Watching the events of January 6th unfold shook me out of my brief state of optimism and sharpened my focus on the connections between incidents of racist hate speech on campus and neofascism, which was clearly alive and well. Further, I concluded that the disproportionate lenience that white people receive under the First Amendment, both on and off campus, provides an important counter perspective to the typical color-blind responses touted by both the courts as well as institutions of higher education. It is precisely this disparity that must set the backdrop for future discussions of racist hate speech on campus as well as the administrative responses to these incidents.

In this concluding chapter, I provide a summary of the arguments made herein, briefly discuss the avenues for future work, and discuss the contributions that I hope that this project will make to the study of incidents of racist hate speech on campus. This discussion aims to show how we might reimagine the ways that institutions of higher education might respond to incidents of racist hate speech. Through these reimagined responses, institutions could chip away at these "white bricks" that preserve their campuses as white institutional spaces and sever their alignment with the neofascist agenda.

Summary of Argument

In line with Fairclough's Stage 1 for CDA projects, Chapter One begins by stating the "social problem with a semiotic aspect" that sparked the project. In this case, the social problem is that the color-blind administrative discourses surrounding incidents of racist hate speech on college campuses function not only to uphold institutional whiteness but also as tools of incorporation into neofascism. It is with this problem in mind that I aim to unearth the color-blind aspects of these discourses in an effort to both dismantle institutional whiteness as well as break the ties between institutions of higher education and neofascism. In addition, I also discuss my personal relationship to this issue, which is an important aspect of a qualitative project in which the researcher (me) interprets the data through their own lens (Bloomberg & Volpe, 2016).

From there, Chapters Two and Three focus on Fairclough's Stage 2, in which the social problem is "located within the 'broader network of practices' within which the problem exists" (Fairclough, 2001, p. 263). Specifically, Chapter Two provides an overview of the current academic conversation surrounding free speech and racist hate speech on college campuses. Of particular import is the idea of free speech absolutism, which refers to the constitutionalist perspective that argues that speech should only be regulated by the government in the event of a

clear and present threat of violence (Strossen, 2000). As such, other unpopular ideas should be subject to argument in the "free marketplace of ideas." In addition, Chapter Two focuses on the discussion of racist hate speech within the realm of higher education and highlights three prominent areas which are impacted by this debate: activism, academic freedom, and the creation of academic safe spaces. Through this conversation, the dominant viewpoints of free speech absolutists (liberals and conservatives alike) are contrasted with critics from the field of Critical Race Theory, who problematize the absolutists' reliance on liberal notions of freedom and equality to support their arguments for the toleration of hate speech—even though (in the case of racist hate speech) the freedom and equality of which they speak comes at the expense of students' of color right to an equal educational experience (Bell & Moore, 2017, 2019; Lawrence et al., 1993).

The prevalence of the absolutist (and color-blind) perspective within the academic conversation surrounding incidents of racist hate speech on campus leads directly into Chapter Three, which discusses the seemingly unlikely synergy that liberal institutions of higher education share with neofascism. Through a discussion of the broader political context, characterized by the contemporary ascendance of neofascism, Chapter Three argues that institutions of higher education are an important ideological site of struggle that the far right has harnessed in an effort to gain legitimacy for their version of radical conservatism that has evolved into neofascism. In other words, the incorporation of institutions of higher education is a central initiative in the conservative hegemonic project. In an effort to make college campuses more friendly to neofascism, far right donors and supporters have not only given enormous amounts of money to develop research institutions that support their economic efforts, but they have also employed "free speech martyrdom" by claiming that their ideology (including racism)

is suppressed on campus (Dols, 2015; Mayer, 2016; Apple & Schirmer, 2016). As a result, college campuses are often portrayed by conservatives as unfriendly to free speech, a core academic value. However, as Stanley (2018) demonstrates, this argument is largely unfounded and employed not in an effort to promote "free speech for all" but rather to protect the often "unpopular" speech that aligns with neofascism while simultaneously suppressing the opposition.

Chapters Two and Three provide important context for the contemporary analysis of institutional responses to racist hate speech on campus against the backdrop of a political landscape characterized by the threat of neofascism. This context brings institutional language to the forefront of conservative efforts to incorporate institutions of higher education into the neofascist agenda and consequently demonstrates the importance of a critical analysis of institutional discourses surrounding racist hate speech on campus. With this background in tow, Chapter Four provides an overview of Critical Discourse Analysis (CDA), the chosen research methodology for this project. CDA seeks to locate the ways in which language legitimizes and upholds power structures rooted in inequality.

Chapter Four also presents the primary theoretical frameworks of *institutional whiteness* and *color-blind racism*, which serve as a guide to understanding how administrative discourses surrounding racist hate speech on campus function to not only preserve institutions of higher education as white institutional spaces but also serve as tools of incorporation into neofascism (Ahmed, 2007, 2012, 2017; Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Bell & Moore, 2017, 2019). In addition, Chapter Four includes important details about the organization FIRE, which compiled the dataset for this project. FIRE, a legal advocacy organization dedicated to preserving First Amendment Rights on campus, both proclaims an absolutist interpretation of the First Amendment and

receives substantial donations from far-right donors associated with bankrolling the rise of neofascism (Simon, 2016). Thus, it lies directly in the crosshairs of the primary aspects of this project: administrative responses to incidents of racist hate speech on campus and their connection to neofascism.

The actual analysis of the data occurs in Chapter Five, which coincides with Fairclough's Stage 2) "identifying obstacles to the social problems being tackled" and Stage 3) "considering whether the social order needs the problem" (p. 263). From this analysis three prominent themes emerged: discourses of denial, discourses of justification, and institutional actions. In line with Van Dijk's (1993) assessment of how discourses of denial and justification work in tandem to uphold power structures rooted in inequality, the findings of this analysis showed how administrative responses to incidents of racist hate speech on campus can simultaneously deny the existence of racism on campus while justifying the presence of racist hate speech, often in the name of freedom and equality as promised by the First Amendment.

These color-blind discourses rooted in abstract notions of liberal values effectively separate racist hate speech from their social context rooted in racial violence and discrimination, an often-overlooked aspect of liberalism (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Mills, 1997). As a result, racist hate speech is viewed through the rose-colored lens of "equality and freedom" as "just another unpopular idea" worth consideration in the "free marketplace of ideas" (Matsuda et al., 1993). Such a perspective erases both the historical and contemporary impacts of racist hate speech on targeted populations, and consequently, institutions of higher education continue to function as white institutional spaces. It is precisely this affinity for white supremacy, demonstrated by color-blind interpretations of liberal values, that allows institutions of higher education to be incorporated into the neofascist agenda.

The research findings also demonstrate that administrators are not silent regarding how institutions should respond to incidents of racist hate speech on campus. While they almost unanimously opposed any type of censorship, they did overwhelmingly support counterspeech efforts, which aligns with the absolutist perspective. These counterspeech initiatives fall into the categories of educational counterspeech, which is an academic response to offensive speech, and community efforts, in which the broader campus community is encouraged to engage in peaceful protests and counter demonstrations. The crux of this approach is that more speech, not less speech, is the ideal response to incidents of abhorrent speech and expression, including racist hate speech.

However, in contrast, critics claim that an emphasis on counterspeech creates the illusion that racist hate speech propagated by white people and counterspeech from marginalized communities hold the same structural power. These critics point to the disproportionate punishment and surveillance that communities of color experience when they attempt to disrupt the racial order through protest (i.e., the recent insurrection at the Capitol) (Delgado & Stefancic, 2004; Lacy, 2021). At the same time, confirmed white supremacists, such as Richard Spencer, receive platforms and protection on campuses across the nation. Bell and Moore (2017) refer to this discrepancy as the institutional prioritization of the "right to be racist" on campus.

A Discursive Recommendation

So, what is an administrator to do? In line with Fairclough's Stage 4, this section aims to think about possible ways past the discursive obstacles of denial, justification, and a reliance on the absolutist tactic of counterspeech to resist racist hate speech on campus. Since the focus of this project is the analysis of discourse, my proposed intervention is also discursive in nature. As we can recall from Chapter Five, public institutions of higher education are often unable to

actually prohibit speech based on the nature of its content due to their legal obligations to comply with the First Amendment. However, while the administrators of an institution itself may not be able to deny a platform to someone who promotes messages of racist hate speech on campus, they can change the ways in which they frame the conflict, and there are a number of ways to do so.

For example, rather than relying on the color-blind discursive move of first denying racism at an institution and then justifying it based on their commitment (either based on principle or legal obligation) to the First Amendment, they should instead problematize why incidents of racist hate speech on campus are framed as a "free speech" issue in the first place. As we saw in Chapter Five, Bell and Moore (2019) provided the powerful example of the ways in which incidents of sexual harassment on campus are rarely framed as a "free speech" issue whereas incidents of racial harassment almost always contain this caveat. This comparison holds the potential to lead to conversations about why an institutional policy can dictate that a particular type of speech that targets women (for example) is not seen as a threat to constitutional freedoms while speech that targets people who are not white does, ostensibly, pose this threat. A hopeful outcome of such a conversation would be to uncover the ways in which racism is intertwined with the liberal values of freedom and equality and, thus, is embedded into institutional structures (Bonilla-Silva, 2018; Mills, 1997).

Similarly, it would be helpful for administrators to refuse to take the "absolute" nature of the First Amendment for granted. In other words, administrators should also point to the other types of speech that are not given protection under the First Amendment (including sexual harassment as stated above), which, as we saw in Chapter Two, also include speech that "violates the law, falsely defames a specific individual, constitutes a genuine threat or harassment,

unjustifiably invades substantial privacy or confidentiality interests, or that is otherwise directly incompatible with the functioning of the University" (Creevey & Stone, 2015, p. 1). Once again, specific examples of prohibited speech include false statements about consumer products or stock values, the limitation of government employees to participate in certain political activities, speech that spreads falsehoods about individuals, and fighting words (Matsuda et al., 1993). Stanley (2018) adds that employees of private workplaces are often subject to non-disclosure agreements and can be fired for engaging in political speech on social media. With these examples in mind, administrators and members of the campus community alike should be questioning the reasons why false speech about stock prices and consumer products (for example) are not protected by the First Amendment, while false speech about entire groups of people (such as the pseudo racial science promoted by Charles Murray) are given First Amendment protections.

The act of "poking holes" in the absolutist argument for the protection of racist hate speech on campus creates room to reframe these incidents in terms of the Fourteenth Amendment and the Civil Rights Act, both of which guarantee "racially equitable access to higher education" (Bell & Moore, 2019, p. 13). As Lawrence (1993) argues, the emphasis on the First Amendment prioritizes the protection of the perpetrators of racist speech at the expense of the victims. Perhaps if administrators crafted their statements to highlight the impact that racist hate speech has on the educational experience of victims of racist hate speech, it would become clear that such acts also represent a violation of constitutional rights. In other words, the protection of racist hate speech on campus in line with the First Amendment is incompatible with the constitutional imperative to provide equal access to higher education, as dictated in the Fourteenth Amendment and the Civil Rights Act.

Along with pointing to policies and examples of speech that defy the absolute nature of free speech, Stanley (2018) argues that we should also connect the conservative portrayals of institutions of higher education as enemies of free speech to “fascist politics.” In line with the idea that institutions of higher education play an important role in the far-right hegemonic project that has manifested in neofascism, he argues that the legitimization of racist hate speech within educational institutions presents a crucial aspect of fascism’s growth. In other words, educational institutions that oppose the primary dictates of fascism (including racism and patriarchy) pose a direct threat. Therefore, the attacks on institutions of higher education on the grounds of “free speech” function as fascist propaganda, which aims to gain support for fascism’s objectionable goals based on widely accepted views. In this case, the “free speech” attacks use the heterodox accusation of impeding the beloved liberal values of freedom and equality to pressure institutions of higher education to legitimize incidents of racist speech on campus under the banner of free speech. Therefore, administrators should name these attacks as such rather than succumbing to them in the name of their liberal commitments.

Here once again, we can see how the color-blind discourses rooted in abstract interpretations of liberal values serve as tools of incorporation into neofascism. However, this counterpoint was virtually non-existent in the discourses that I analyzed in this project—indeed the color-blind responses prevailed. If administrators acknowledged the above qualifications to free speech absolutism in their framing of “free speech” conflicts, specifically with regard to racist hate speech on campus, perhaps these conservative attacks would lose some of their power, making space for new discursive tactics that would instead prioritize an equal educational experience for students of color rather than white students’ “right to be racist” on campus (Bell & Moore, 2017).

Future Work

In accordance with Fairclough's Stage 5, which calls for a critical reflection on the analysis, it is necessary to note the places in which this project is incomplete. As mentioned in Chapter Four, this project regrettably does not include the voices of students who have been targeted by racist hate speech. The inclusion of these voices would add important depth to these arguments by adding personal narratives of how racist hate speech impacts their educational experiences. Further, these narratives could provide insight as to how institutions of higher education could work to provide educational experiences truly rooted in equality for all students and members of the campus community.

In addition, the scope of this project was also limited to the database of the administrator statements compiled by FIRE. While this dataset was a good fit for this specific project, given its ties to free speech absolutism (and consequently color-blind discourses) as well as the conservative interests that have helped propel neofascism to the forefront of politics, it is by no means a complete representation of administrative discourses that should be called into question. Therefore, further research should also "cast a larger net" in terms of sample size in an effort to show the pervasive nature of both incidents of racist hate speech on campuses as well as administrative responses.

Finally, I will continue to reflect upon what I may have missed as a result of my "white" research lens. To do so, I must abandon the temptation to deem myself an "expert" in institutional whiteness as a result of completing this project, and instead, I must remain humble, open to criticism, and hyper-aware of the fact that my own whiteness will always be a limitation in this line of research. As a result, I will listen to the input of others who do not easily inhabit

white spaces as easily as I do and use this feedback to sharpen my own critiques of institutional whiteness in my future work.

Significance

Despite these shortcomings, this project does add a layer of significance to the existing work on the topic. First, it examines administrative responses to racist hate speech on campus in relation to the rise of neofascism in the United States. Examining the critiques of color-blind administrative responses to racist hate speech on campus alongside research that discusses the role that racist hate speech plays in “fascist politics” provides important contemporary context as to why institutional resistance to racist hate speech on campus remains an urgent issue.

While the research that I have cited herein has provided invaluable information regarding both the construction and maintenance of white institutional spaces as well as role that the conflicts surrounding free speech play within the context of neofascism, I was unable to locate any research that bridges these arguments (Bell & Moore, 2017, 2019; Lawrence, 1993; Stanley, 2018). This task is of great importance because it demonstrates how the responses to incidents of racist hate speech on campus have an impact that reaches far beyond the walls of academia. As this project argues, the color-blind discourses that administrators employ in response to incidents of racist hate speech on campus serve as tools of incorporation into the neofascist agenda. In this context, the ways in which administrators respond to incidents of racist hate speech on campus has implications for not only the immediate campus community but also for the future of democracy in the United States.

Second, this project attempts to provide language that would allow for both institutions and individuals to reframe their responses to racist hate speech on campus and consequently change the conversation around these incidents when they occur. Doing so would help

institutions avoid discursive entrapment within the freedom versus equality binary and also create space for the creation of policies that promote these liberal values for marginalized students who have never enjoyed them in the first place.

In this sense, the revamping of the conversation surrounding incidents of racist hate speech on campus could, in Ahmed's (2012) words, show how a mechanism of power, which in this case is rooted in widely accepted color-blind discourses, can be imagined as "undone" (p. 13). This "undoing" then creates space for its "redoing," which in a discursive sense could involve the adoption of language that problematizes color-blind discourses rooted in the abstract interpretation of liberal values and instead places racist hate speech in its proper historical context. By creating a discursive framework that begins from the point of inequality and subjugation rather than color-blind notions of freedom and equality, institutions of higher education should be compelled to pursue both institutional language and policies that aim to correct these historical injustices rather than continuing to deny and justify their existence. In line with Ahmed's (2012) vision, the undoing of an unequal power structure upheld in part by color-blind discourses holds the possibility of re-doing it in a way that better promotes equality for marginalized members of the campus community.

Finally, this project also holds significance for individual members of campus communities across the countries, particularly those who are white. When I embarked on this project, freshly agitated by the Milo Yiannopolous event on my campus in 2016, I was completely immersed in my own whiteness and subsequently not equipped with the language to resist the administrative discourses that continued to reassure me that this unfortunate event was uncharacteristic of "our" institution and yet also justified due to "our" duty to honor the rights of free speech and expression for all members of the campus community. Even though I was not

armed with the language of resistance, I did possess a nagging feeling of discontent in my gut—I knew that what I had witnessed was wrong, but I could not explain why without finding myself in the discursive trap that pits freedom against equality.

My hope for this project is that it might provide language that members of campus communities can use to resist the popular color-blind discourses that maintain "our" institutions as white institutional spaces. As a result, others may do a better job than I did of defying institutional whiteness and fighting to chip away at these white discursive bricks that uphold the walls of white institutional spaces and simultaneously build a bridge to neofascism. Both the pursuit of equality within institutions of higher education and the future of democracy in the United States depend on such resistance.

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