CIVILIZING THE ACADEMY: CRITICAL DISCOURSE ANALYSIS
OF A UNIVERSITY CIVILITY CAMPAIGN

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Students, administrators, and faculty often position the university as a site of incivility while paradoxically claiming that the primary role of the university is to uphold tenets of civility and to teach our students how to be civil. In this study, I investigate the application of a large public research university’s civility campaign as education and social practice, interwoven within diversity discourses and practice. Using critical theories, and critical discourse analysis, I place in conversation a micro, meso, and macro assessment, including the appraisal of more than 130 documents that directly or indirectly relate to the civility campaign. I offer a discussion on how “civility” is discursively constructed within the texts of a campus civility campaign targeted to students, what rationalities and assumptions underlie the texts, and how university students are constructed and situated as educational subjects with and through the civility discourses. Major study findings consist of four enduring historical conceptual frameworks of civility: civility as enactment of courtesy, politeness, manners and decorum; civility as virtue; civility as a political foundation for civil society and citizenry; and civility as a dialogic/conversational model. Other significant findings include civility applied throughout the campus campaign as: unity in spite of difference; a function or expression of community; a response to diversity; an element of safety; and competing notions as a condition for, extension of, and threat to freedom of speech. The study findings pose questions regarding accountability and the practice of campus civility campaigns, and the compatibility of this practice to the ideals purported in higher education. Finally, I propose implications for higher education practice and future research directions.
DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my mother, Olivia, the most remarkable woman I have known, and my son, Rashad, who brings me more joy than he can ever know. Your kindred compassionate spirits are forever a source of inspiration.
LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

CDA       Critical discourse analysis
ERIC      Education Resources Information Center
SGA       Student Government Association
SOU       Scarlet Oak University
ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

Our nation seems to be obsessed with civility. No surprise that this focus on civility or the “the movement for civic renewal” (Carter, 1998, p. 13) has found its way into the academy. Judith Shapiro (2014, para. 1) suggests that this focus on civility in colleges and university has come to the fore recently, as it does from time to time when there is some especially hot-button, polarizing issue in academe”. Shapiro (2014) contends that civility has become even more important as tensions regarding academic freedom, controversies over “trigger warnings” regarding sensitive course material, and debates such as those that circle the Israeli/Palestinian conflict engage our campus communities. Students, administrators, and faculty often position the university as a site of incivility while paradoxically claiming that the primary role of the university is to uphold tenets of civility and to teach our students how to be civil. In my position with the Division of Student Affairs at a large public university, I often hear colleagues lament the lack of student civility on campuses. They offer as evidence some online post they found offensive, or annoying student classroom behavior, such as students arriving tardy to class, or excessive cell phone use while the course is in session, echoing reports in the literature examining incivility in the university context (Knepp, 2012). In a recent survey of college students, 44 % of the 18 to 29-year-olds who participated in the survey pointed to institutions of higher education as the most crucial actor with regard to the restoration of civility (Allegheny,
It is no surprise then that many universities have adopted civility campaigns similar to the one in which I was asked to participate a few years ago.

I was asked to submit a single phrase describing my unit’s contribution to promoting civility built around the slogan “One Team, One Bama.” No definition of how civility was being understood or defined was offered. I submitted my brief response: “We learn from the lived experiences of our diverse population.” This was promptly modified because, at ten words, it was “too long.” The following week, I received a handful of posters to display in our office with the constructed messages representing each Student Affairs department (i.e. Women and Gender Resource Center: “We learn from the experiences of a diverse population-We are One Team. One Bama”; University Recreation: “We promote healthy and active lifestyles for all-We are One Team. One Bama”; and the Dean of Students Office: “We care about each student’s success in and out of the classroom-We are One Team. One Bama”). I was told that our department was assigned a week to market the civility message via social media along with the divisional mission to “maximize each UA student's learning experience” (http://www.sa.ua.edu/mission.cfm?p=1). Echoing these efforts, when asked at a recent Student Affairs state conference the most pressing issue facing universities today, a high-ranking administrator replied “civility,” signaling that the issue of civility has become a prominent feature in current higher education discourse. Nods throughout the seated practitioners seemed to confirm this as a compelling concern, yet no one followed up with questions, nor was more explanation offered.
Calls for civility have relevance to public spheres and have become part of a collective discursive environment. Statements and initiatives should be examined regarding the platforms from which they move, and any taken for granted assumptions of shared understanding and intent investigated. Often emerging in response to controversies and debates within the campus communities, civility campaigns and their related negotiations have implications on college campuses.

The issue of civility has been one in which I have become increasingly aware recently. For example, through a professional listserve two years ago, I received notification that the Director of a Gender and Sexuality Center comparable to the one in which I work was not affiliated with her higher education institution anymore. Despite histories of universities as spaces for freedom of speech, critical thought, and open debate, this director was no longer employed two days after she posted a comment on her Facebook page praising students on their completion of their art project in the center that honored as a “woman of courage” Assata Shakur, a civil rights activist and former Black Panther in exile listed on the FBI’s Most Wanted list. The mural had been installed by members of a Black sorority and students affiliated with the center, and featured the image of Assata Shakur along with two of her quotes. The university statements following the incident were limited, but offered that they could not reveal more details given that this was a personnel issue. According to the Marquette Wire, a University spokesman stated in an e-mail to the news source offering only that “Susannah Bartlow is no longer an employee with Marquette University” (Wickman, 2015, para. 2). They continued, “We will work with the Center’s advisory board to search for a new Director so that we can continue to grow the important programs in the Center” (Wickman, 2015, para. 3). The statement released to media and placed on the university website read, “Our University’s senior leadership just
became aware of a mural that was created and displayed in a remote area of campus. This is extremely disappointing as the mural does not reflect the Guiding Values of Marquette University. It is being removed immediately. We are reviewing the circumstances surrounding the mural and will take appropriate action” (Marquette University News, 2015, para. 2).

A flurry of media attention followed, including features on Fox 6 News, national blogs, campus media outlets, and local papers across the state. The community appeared divided on the issue, with a petition being circulated on behalf of the director comments pointing to the university’s guiding values (Bartlow, 2015b) of developing a “nurturing an inclusive, diverse community that fosters new opportunities, partnerships, collaboration and vigorous yet respectful debate” (http://www.marquette.edu/about/mission.php). However, the University official public response to the issue was limited with regard to engagement in the debates. The University announced that the Center would be reorganized, and split into two different offices, “one for student support services and the other for academic and scholarly work,” and would carry a new focus on “scholarship” (Peterson, 2015, para. 1), a move the former director attributed to the influence of the corporatization of the university, reliance on outside donors, and a ‘risk averse management strategy’ employed by the institution (Bartlow, 2015a, para. 3).

The core issues entailed in these incidents of freedom of speech, historicity, rights and responsibilities of citizens in a community, whose voice is privileged and to what end, and what counts as appropriate scholarship, are at the center of civility debates and are making their way to the forefront of the higher education landscape. Advertisers have also picked up on the attractiveness of “civility” to higher education. For example, from the Higher Ed Topics listserve, I received an advertisement for a webinar, “Move Beyond Civility: Facilitate Difficult Classroom Dialogues” stating, “We know this has been a particularly difficult year as students
continue to challenge faculty and administrators to hear their concerns” (July, 2016). Being explicit about the specifics of these challenges is unnecessary, as this advertiser, along with many Twitter and blog posters, is fully aware of tapping into public conversations currently circulating within the academy and beyond.

Derived from the Late Middle English, *civility* grew from the Old French *civilite*, from the Latin *civilitas*, and from *civilis*, signifying “relating to citizens” (http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/civility). Echoing these etymological roots in his piece “Civility: A Contemporary Context for a Meaningful Historical Concept,” author Dennis Peck (2002) suggests, “The terms citizenship, civility, and civilization are derived from the Latin *civis* (citizen) and *civitas* (city), and are the equivalents of the Greek words stemming from *polis* (city)” (p. 359). Some understandings of civility, as Aristotle and other early Greeks would assert, is about maintenance of the politically associated citizenry of the nation/state. Others would argue that it is instead primarily functional in nature, a set of rules of social engagement, commonly understood as manners, etiquette, and guidelines for being polite as articulated in our nation’s history in George Washington’s 110 *Rules of Civility & Decent Behaviour in Company and Conversation* (Moore, 1926), and mirrored in P. M. Forni’s (2002) modern-day twenty-five *Rules of Considerate Conduct*. Yet understood within another framework, civility is posed as a moral frame tied to ethics, even faith beliefs, to guide a pluralistic community (Carter, 1998).

Scholars have pointed to the marked gaps and inconsistencies of even defining the concept of civility, which has often been described as being “vague” and “porous” (Scott, 2015). Stephen Carter (1998) posed:

We seem to have trouble agreeing on exactly what civility is. Some people…think of
manners. Others think of proper standards of moral conduct, or a set of standards for conducting public argument. Still others think of willing participation in the institutions that enable our democracy to thrive (p. 13).

However, even with the ambiguity and amorphousness of the concept cited widely in the literature (Carter, 1998; Ehrenberg, 1999; Hall, 1995; Herbst, 2010; Peck, 2002; Scott, 2015), calls for civility as a panacea in the general public, political sphere, and education institutions continue to circulate widely.

Why have institutions of higher education taken up civility discourses and implemented civility initiatives? Why all the concern about civility? Why now? What did this emphasis on civility within higher education move from and lead to? What does civility really mean?

**Purpose of the Study**

The university in which I am both a student and practitioner is not alone in joining many others in the development and implementation of institution-led student-focused civility campaigns. Given the proliferation and emphasis on civility, I want to press the issue and explore the complications and many facets of the concept. I am aware that a commitment to robust scholarship and inquiry may seem as though I am questioning (which is likely read as positioning myself *against*) civility. However, the very complex nature of the concept, combined with the widespread use of civility/incivility rhetoric and civility student-focused campaigns within university settings, creates a civility discourse simultaneously hyper-visible and invisible, poised for further investigation.

A primary purpose of this research is to explore the various ways in which institutions have adopted the discourse of civility initiatives aimed at improving the civility of their students. Using critical discourse analysis (CDA), I examine how the specific practice of campus civility
campaigns targeted to students are constructed, and the various ways that student subjectivities may be framed within these discursive practices. In short, using one campus civility campaign at an institution other than my own as an example, I explore how civility is represented in the university campaign. Within this frame, the study exposes discourse as a “social semiotics,” or social meaning-making, (Halliday, 1978; Hodge & Kress, 1988; van Leeuwen, 2005), and illuminates how civility is signified, and what content is included or excluded, and undervalued and overvalued, as expressed through and with the campus campaign.

This research moves beyond the descriptive to apply an explanatory analysis to investigate not only representation through and with content and processes, but also how discourse serves the production and interpretation of social relations and events. The research exposes rationalities which undergird and legitimize the campaigns, and connects those with circulating discourses, revealing what Fairclough (1989) describes as the “power behind” discourse, or the unseen ideological forces governing discourses in the public domain. This supports critical discourse analysis as a useful tool for important inquiry in the field of the social and cultural foundations of education, drawing on the interplay of the micro, meso, and macro systems which inform, compose, and operationalize the educational practices expressed through campus civility campaigns.

**Research Questions**

Central to the direction of this study of a campus civility campaign targeted to students are the following research questions applied through a critical discourse analysis:

1. How is civility discursively constructed within the texts of a university civility campaign targeted to students?

   Sub-questions include:
• What are the elements of the civility discourse expressed in the campaign?
• What are the key socio-semantic strategies used to present civility within the campaign?
• How is civility defined and represented?
• What elements of civility are supported or are identified as important? What elements are discredited, downplayed, or omitted?
• What key themes recur throughout the texts to represent civility?
• How are the civility discourses implicated in setting institutional priorities?

2. What rationalities and assumptions underlie the texts?

Sub-questions include:

• What rationalities and rationales are apparent in the civility campaign?
• How do these rationalities shape the discourse?
• How is the civility discourse legitimized?
• What are the proposed purposes and rationales for the campaign? What problems are constructed?
• How does civility come to be constructed within the documents as a solution to these problems? Why is civility considered a solution? What justifications are provided?
• What conceptual frameworks of civility do they develop, uphold, reproduce, or contest?

3. How are university students constructed and situated as educational subjects with and through the civility discourses?

Sub-questions include:
• Who is present and missing from the texts and discussions? Who is and is not subject to the civility campaign?

• How is an “ideal/non-ideal” social actor presented within the campus civility campaign?

• How do social actors the within the education institutions get differentiated, measured and classified through and with the civility discourse practice?

• How are the expectations, responsibilities, possibilities, and limitations of students defined within the civility campaign?

• How are the opportunities for being and becoming social actors of the institutions positioned through and with these particular discursive and social practices?

• What practices and technologies are offered as ways to become ideal student practitioners of civility?

Rationale

Given the proliferation and impacts of civility in the public discourse, this study is both relevant and timely. Specifically, the research is salient to the fields of the social and cultural foundations of education and higher education. By employing a lens of critical discourse analysis, it provides an opportunity to offer an alternative viewpoint, and question the status quo by bringing forward the “normalizing” dominant discourses enacted through and with campus civility campaigns. This application of a critical discourse analytic lens to these issues is related to the important concepts of democratic dialogue, democracy, and civil society (Dunmire, 2012). This scholarship counters a history of reductionism in the academic literature by providing a critical inquiry into the intersection of civility and educational practice.

Lorraine Code (1991) urges that “Knowing well is a matter both of moral-political and
epistemic concern” (p.72), an intervention. Strategic tactics of knowledge erasure or avoidance serve the prevailing logics and rationalities, operationalizing “epistemologies of ignorance” (Tuana, 2008). This study engages critical discourse analysis to respond to these omissions and delve into a campus campaign to question the very foundational assumptions and practices from which these practices move and draw authority. The dominant body of literature on civility within higher education operates from binary frames, establishing the case for civility (a renewal to address a perceived loss or absence of civility), or in response, a rebuke of the import or need for civility. Debates circulated within the literature regarding civility and higher education often center on academic freedom of faculty members, with a limited number of texts focused on struggles with the philosophical abstractions of civility frameworks. In contrast, this study will offer an exploration of the conflicting notions of civility, and flesh out institutional civility initiatives as simultaneously educational and social practice. The struggle over meaning is central to democracy and reflective of the tenets of public education for the “public good” in service of the democratic interests. This critical discourse analysis contributes to an accountability through transparency, a characteristic of healthy democracies (Bentham, 1999; Meijer, 2012; Stiglitz, 2003). Relevant to this aim, this study will explore the variables of power, knowledge production, meaning making, the construction of the self, and the intersection of these to explore an understanding of civility as a conceptually rich and historically, socially, culturally, and politically embedded concept.

The study is also timely as it is situated within a particular historical moment as topics of civility and civility campaigns are becoming part of the normalized climate of higher education. The unique role of educational institutions in participating, shaping, reproducing, and/or contesting the civility discourses needs careful attention. Higher education institutions have a
history as sites of civil rights protest (Miller, 2015), and are often situated in the cultural imagination as a key socio-cultural resource. As such, they hold powerful positions capable of influencing not only members of the campus, but the extended community as well. In the field of higher education, emphasis is placed on the development of the academy through ‘cultures of evidence’ emphasizing accountability and transparency (Allen & Kazis, 2007; Culp & Dungy, 2012; Dwyer, Millett. & Payne, 2006; Middaugh, 2007). As education practitioners uphold reciprocal standards of critical thinking and the grounding in theory informed by practice and practice informed by theory, this necessitates applying a lens of inquiry to the specific practices of campus civility campaigns directed toward students.

A recent body of literature has begun to emerge troubling the fixation with civility in higher education (Mayo, 2001, 2002; Scott, 2015; Zerilli, 2014). The civility discourse texts shape the education practice, which in turn contributes to the shaping of social actors’ (i.e. college/university staff, students, and faculty) subjectivities. The research literature on student civility is focused heavily on civility as a method of correction or response against the growing argued trend of student incivility, especially as renewed visibility on student protests have been reported in response to their perceptions of inequities in the campus and extended community. Civility discourses now commonplace within institutions of higher education interestingly occupy positions of both invisibility and hypervisibility as they circulate within the ‘common sense’ practices in higher education institutions, permeated by popular media and public discourses. How civility is defined, by whom, whose interests are served, for what purpose, and with what effects, have been largely missing from the discussions. Despite the investment of resources to these initiatives, the relevance of these campus campaigns to the educational process of learning and teaching has not been empirically established. This study serves as a form of
intervention with the capacity to enable challenges to the power imbalances and to serve a political agenda through the scrutiny and questioning of taken for granted daily education practices which are sites of regulation and/or possibility.

**Significance**

The relationship of civility to higher education is rooted within many ideals and values the academy has historically privileged. With its ties to concepts of civil society and civil discourse, civility is related to many central facets of education, including the balance of autonomy of thought and action with shared community and plurality, critical thinking and action, along with goals of pursuing what is often cited as the ‘common good.’ Notwithstanding, the importance within the ‘critical tradition’ of exposing and making visible the familiar and taken for granted (Burr, 1995; Gergen, 1985) is relevant to this study of campus civility campaigns, which are simultaneously commonplace education, and socio-political practice. Contributions to the scholarly literature are needed which will have a reach and influence to the higher education communities. Specifically, this study will help to elucidate how threads of these historical and social understandings are being enacted within higher education institution contemporary practices.

**Theoretical and Conceptual Underpinnings**

This study is grounded in critical theory and critical discourse analysis, both of which will be subsequently elaborated on in Chapters Two and Three. Within the umbrella of critical theories fits a host of varied areas with unique, and sometimes contradictory, historical trajectories and intellectual traditions, including feminist, gender, and queer studies, critical race studies, disability studies, indigenous studies, colonial studies, and Foucauldian genealogy, among others. However, some commonly shared theoretical critical dispositions or defining
“ways of seeing and conceptualizing” (Kellner, 2003, p. 51) applied within these contemporary critical theories form the foundations from which this investigation emerges. Those theoretical features which are foregrounded throughout the study include the dialectical relationship and co-construction of the discursive, social, and material; the interrelationship of knowledge, power, and meaning making; critical examination of standards of normativity, norms, and processes of normalization; and a de-centered, destabilized subject. Each of these central conceptual facets of critical theories is integrated throughout the study, and will be elaborated on in the review of literature.

This research is also built directly within the frame of critical discourse analysis (CDA), which may be described as both a theoretical and methodological framework (Fairclough, 1993, 1995, 2014; Gee, 2014; Jaworski & Coupland, 1999; Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002; Locke, 2004; McGregor, 2010; van Dijk, 1993, 2001; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). CDA is a recognized area of scholarship built upon constructivist epistemologies and the influence and contributions of many disciplines, with core tenets emerging from the intersections of cultural studies, media studies, and critical linguistics. A significant body of work lays a foundation from which to explore critical discourse analysis, which emerged in part as a response to the critique that discourse analysis applied generally insufficiently recognizes and addresses key elements of power and privilege, and by extension, practices of hegemony (Fairclough, 1992, 1995; Foucault, 1978/1990; Gee, 1996; Kress, 1991; Hodge & Kress, 1993; Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002; van Dijk, 1998; Wodak, 1996, 2002; Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

Given the inter-disciplinarity of this theoretical framework, there is variance among approaches. However, in addition to the commonality of proposing a complex and multi-faceted understanding of “discourse,” critical discourse analysis, while subject to variation, is
distinguished by key features which have been theorized by many notable scholars across the field (Fairclough, 1992; 1995; Foucault, 1978/1990; Gee, 1996; Hodge & Kress, 1993; Kress, 1991; Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002; van Dijk, 1998; Wodak, 1996, 2002; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Fairclough and Wodak (1997) cite some consistent foundational principles gained through the legacy of CDA practitioners, which are often cited in other volumes regarding CDA (i.e. Rogers, 2004). These primary assumptions are as follows: CDA addresses social problems, power relations are discursive, discourse constitutes society and culture, discourse does ideology work, discourse is historical, a socio-cognitive approach is needed to understand how relations between text and society are mediated, CDA is interpretative and explanatory and uses systematic methodology, and CDA is a socially committed scientific paradigm (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997). These features will be elaborated on in the subsequent literature review and integrated in the third chapter on methodology.

**Definition of Key Terminology**

Below are key concepts, which have variance as to the way they are understood or defined broadly. Here they are described in terms of how they are operationalized throughout the present study:

The purpose of CDA is to study “the way social power abuse, dominance, and inequality are enacted, reproduced, and resisted by text in talk and the social and political context” (van Dijk, 2001, p. 352).

**Critical theories**—To be distinguished from Critical Theory (Adorno, 1973; Adorno & Horkheimer, 1972; Habermas, 1976) associated specifically with the Frankfurt School (Critical Theory of Society or Critical Socialist Theory), within this research, critical theory is applied broadly to encompass a broad range of intellectual traditions, i.e. feminisms, critical race theory, disability studies, queer theory, etc. Critical theories may be delineated from traditionalist theoretical approaches in that they are “‘critical’ in the Greek sense of the verb krinein, which signifies to discern, reflect, and judge, and ‘theory’ in the sense of the Greek noun theoria which refers to a way of seeing and contemplation” (Kellner, 2003, p. 51). In their review of the literature on CDA in the discipline of education, Rogers, Malancharuvil-Berkes, Mosley, Hui and O’ Garro Joseph (2005) offer, “Critical theories are generally concerned with issues of power, justice, and the ways that the economy, race, class, gender, religion, education, and sexual orientation construct, reproduce, or transform social systems” (p. 368). Thus, these are theories with an interest in critique and explanation, as well as descriptive analysis.

**Data**—Within this study, data are information sources drawn from three interacting levels (Fairclough, 1989; 1992; 1995): the micro, individual texts and their syntactical, rhetorical, and metaphoric structures; the meso level, analyzing production and consumption of the text and evaluating how power relations are enacted; and the macro level, analysis at the broad social interdiscursive and intertextual level.

**Dialectical**—Within this study, this is used to describe a type of relationship meeting the following characteristics: “elements are different, cannot be reduced to another, require separate
sorts of analysis, are not discrete, and (drawing on the work of Harvey [1996]) each element internalizes other elements” (Fairclough, 2004, p. 230). For example, within CDA, dialectical relationships are understood to exist across the discursive, social, and material domains.

**Discourse**- A simple definition of discourse may be described as “language in use.” Discourses make up a dense fabric of spoken, written and symbolic texts (Rymes, 2009, p. 6). However, a more complex and multi-faceted reading of discourse is embraced in critical discourse analysis and within this study. Fairclough and Wodak (1987) offer:

CDA sees discourse – language use in speech and writing – as a form of ‘social practice.’

Describing discourse as social practice implies a dialectical relationship between a particular discursive event and the situation(s), institution(s) and social structure(s), which frame it… Discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned – it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of, and relationships between, people and groups of people (p. 258).

**Frames**- Throughout this study, frames are understood through the lens of critical discourse analysis as “ideologies in practice” (Rymes, 2009, p. 224).

**Ideologies**- Within this study, ideology is distinguished from the positivistic, and specific Marxist understanding of the term, in favor of the definition drawn on the work of Fairclough (1995) as “meaning in the service of power” (p. 14). Relevant to this research, Wodak and Meyer (2009) contend, “It is not that type of ideology on the surface of culture that interests CDA, it is rather the more hidden and latent type of everyday beliefs in which CDA practitioners are interested,” and also highlight that “dominant ideologies appear as ‘neutral’” (p. 8).
Interdiscursivity- Interdiscursivity is an important consideration within critical discourse analysis, particularly when assessing meso and macro level connections. Lesley Rex and Laura Schiller (2009) summarize:

“The term interdiscursivity is useful as a description of the complex relationships among discourses that inform what speakers say or write. Speakers have appropriated these discourses from sources they have encountered throughout their lifetimes…We may not be aware when we speak of the worlds of meaning that inform what we say. Nor are those with whom we speak aware of the worlds that inform their hearing of what we say or write (p. 56).

Material- The Oxford English Dictionary (2016) defines material as “Denoting or consisting of physical objects rather than the mind or spirit; Concerned with physical needs or desires” (http://www.oxforddictionaries.com/us/definition/american_english/material via @OxfordWords). Within this study, this concept is relevant as the material is one domain interrelated with others. The material is in a dialectical relationship with the social and discursive, and subject to power differentials. Expressions of the material include embodiment, place, space, and “material conditions,” such as access to goods.

Power- To be distinguished from traditionalist understandings of power as centralized, this study largely draws from a poststructural conceptualization of power, relying heavily on the influences and the contributions of Michel Foucault. He defines power as “in circulation” and as the “total structure of actions brought to bear upon other actions. In other words, the conduct of conduct” (1982, p. 789). Foucauldian understandings on power applied throughout the research are captured in a summary by O’ Farrell (2007, para. 49):
Power is not a thing but a relation; power is not simply repressive but it is productive; power is not simply a property of the State; power is not something that is exclusively localized in government and the State (which is not a universal essence); power is exercised throughout the social body; power operates at the most micro levels of social relations; power is omnipresent at every level of the social body; the exercise of power is strategic and war-like.

Social- In general terms, the word social is described as “of or relating to society or its organization.” Within the field of critical discourse analysis, and expressed through this study, discourse is understood as a practice which is enacted through the entanglements of the linguistic, political and social, and analyzed through a complex web of social structures and interaction (Fairclough, 1989; 1992; 1995).

Subjectivity- Influenced largely by poststructuralist traditions, this study makes use of the term subjectivity, as well as identity, to reflect an understanding of the self (in relation) as a contingent, rather than fixed, understanding of the self, and as a function which is shaped by, and co-constitutive of, the discursive (Davies, 1997; Gonick, 2006; Mansfield, 2000).

Text- Within the critical discourse analysis conventions and applied within this study, a text is defined as any instance of written and spoken language that has coherence and coded meanings (Luke, 1996).

Organization of the Dissertation

In this initial chapter I have provided an introduction outlining my interest in campus civility campaigns, particularly as a socio-educational practice with particular histories and investments. I have introduced the conceptual and theoretical underpinnings which lay the groundwork of this research project, provided a sketch regarding background information on
critical theory and critical discourse analysis, indicated key purpose and objectives of the study, and how these would be approached. The chapters which follow are organized across key content areas. Chapter Two provides a context for the research with regards to a review of the theoretical orientation and relevant literature on civility, and civility and higher education. The third chapter explores critical discourse analysis, and the associated research methodology and methods utilized in the study. Chapter Four offers a descriptive presentation of the study findings, including major themes, patterns, and variations found through the critical discourse analysis. In the subsequent final chapter is a discussion of the findings and conclusion, including major explanatory and interpretive results, the implications for how these contribute to the existing body of knowledge, and recommendations for future research.
CHAPTER II

REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

This chapter provides insights as to the content, scope, and organization of this dissertation employing a critical discourse analysis as the methodological and theoretical lens to explore a campus civility campaign. The sources of the review draw primarily from the academic literature, but include data from popular press sources as well in some instances, to support reflections on the multiple contemporary contexts of civility campaigns targeting students. This literature review is presented within six organizing sections. The first section is a brief overview of the history of the concept of civility and how civility has been employed from Plato to the 21st century. While certainly not an exhaustive or all-inclusive review given the complexities of the concept, it does place a wide historical lens on the evolution of the definitions and ideas related to civility and the vestiges of these roots that persist in contemporary understandings of the concept. Expanding from this historical overview, differing broad conceptual frameworks regarding the meaning and function of civility emerge, reflecting the legacy of this historical progression. The following section addresses the teaching of civility to our youth, and higher education institutions as purveyors of civility. The next section focuses on civility campaigns and the context of crisis, giving a context for why civility campaigns have emerged on college campus in the 21st century. The subsequent section explores critiques of how civility has been
conceptualized in higher education. The final section explores critical theory and the foundation of commonly held broad theoretical assumptions from which this study emerges.

**Western Civility and Its Philosophical and Historical Roots**

Despite the assertion of civility as a viable solution to offer social cohesion and respond to complex problems, and the assumption that this is a normative element of democracy, basic inquiry regarding civility remains unexplored. While it is often customary to clearly define the terms that are central to the project, with regards to civility, and its related concept of civil society, this is a principal facet of the complexity, or perhaps more aptly, the perplexity. The term civility has been described as “imperfect” (Herbst, 2010), “vague” and “porous” (Carter, 1998), and “fuzzy” (Ehrenberg, 1999) among others. Acknowledging this, Virginia Sapiro (1999) noted, “It would take an advanced degree in alchemy, not political science to draw a tidy but reasonably comprehensive definition out of the literatures to which one must turn to learn about civility as it is understood today” (p. 2). In understanding or defining civility, it is important to appreciate its contingent and historical roots, which offer a somewhat rhizomorphic, rather than purely linear, trajectory of the concept.

Pointing to the complexities and entanglements of the evolving application of civility, Salvador Giner (1995) in his study of the history of civil society with regard to the diversity of the conceptions and associated theories suggested, “That account tells us that there is no such thing as the classical conception of civil society” (p. 304). While the discourses of campus civility campaigns specifically have not been examined, a body of scholarly research has been applied to trace the socio-historical evolution of understandings of civil society and civility (Anheier, 2004; Boxx & Quinlivan, 1996; Carter, 1998; DeLue & Dale, 2016; DeWiel, 1997; Elias, 1939/1994; Ehrenberg, 1999; Hall, 2013; Keane, 2003; Powell, 2013; Rouner, 2000; Shils
& Grosby, 1997), the vestiges of which carry through in current applications of civility. In The Politics of Civil Society: Big Society, Small Government, author Fred Powell (2013) emphasized the emergence of “metanarratives of civil society” and the importance of this historicity in exploring contemporary frameworks of civil society, civility, and citizenship, offering “Without understanding its past, it is not possible to understand and locate civil society within present-day debates” (p. 37). The metamorphosis of shifting and habitually resurfacing ideas on civil society and civility, often positioned as a normative feature of a democratic society, can be traced in the literature from the early Greeks and Romans to postmodern philosophers.

The Classical Era

The classical Greeks and Romans are often credited as some of the earliest scholars to philosophize deeply on the concepts of civil society and civility. In exploring how to achieve the communal ‘good life’ and the negotiations therein, the ancient Greeks posited that virtue could be taught, and that an educated citizenry, could engage in civil society as political actors (Edwards, 2011). Ehrenberg (1999), cited Pericles notion of the ‘citizen–soldier’ who, as a member of his community, will “subordinate one’s private interests voluntarily to those of the city” (p. 13). Socrates encouraged that tensions could be resolved using the dialectic, now referred to as the Socratic method, a form of public dialogue in which the participants engaged in debate posing propositions, which would be continually discussed and finally lead to irrefutable truth as a result of this open reasoning (O’ Brien, 1999).

Plato understood civil society to be a mechanism of organizing public life by privileging the political over private interests. Citizenship within the politically organized commonwealth was understood in terms of the citizens’ connections to the independent city-states. Plato proposed a cohesive vision of the good via excellence that was common to all, and representative
of a unitary and morally redemptive political community, or *philos*, and even endorsed State censorship in service to this greater universal good (Ehrenberg, 1999). Plato characterized the individual as having three predominate defining elements: the appetite, or the part of self associated with physical satisfactions; the spirit, which seeks social approval; and reason, which seeks truth in service to the political commonwealth. Plato’s ideal citizen would be a person guided by the highest of these—reason, and therefore capable of moderation, and supported by a strong spirit, enabling them to subordinate the desires of the appetite, or individual self, which posed threats to cohesion and unity. Plato offered in *The Republic* (as cited in Ehrenberg, 1999):

> And this disunion comes about when the words “mine” and “not mine,” “another’s” and “not another’s” are not applied to the same things throughout the community. The best ordered state will be the one in which the largest number of persons use these terms in the same sense and which accordingly most nearly resembles a single person (p. 6).

An ideal Platonic society would be one in which the citizens, led by ‘the enlightened one,’ a noble philosopher-king, serve the common good (worthy of pursuit for its own sake), embrace virtues such as moderation and duty, and fulfill the occupational roles within the division of labor to which they were suited, while diminishing the particular interests of the individual, including desires related to family life and private property.

Plato’s student, Aristotle, built on this prior theorization, and proposed that civic association (*demos*) could not be understood as separate from political associations (*polis*). The voluntary association of citizens as a result of shared interests, despite multiplicity among the citizenship in material conditions and social positions, was illustrated in Aristotle’s *Nicomachean Ethics* (cited in DeWiel, 1997, p. 9). Aristotle offered:

> Now all forms of community are like parts of the political community; for men journey
together with a view to some particular advantage, and to provide something that they need for the purposes of life; and it is for the sake of advantage that the political community too seems both to have come together originally and to endure, for this is what legislators aim at, and they call just that which is to the common advantage.

Aristotle thus envisioned the importance of self-governance via a middle class, who formed the ideal citizens in supporting the common good from the position of the moderate (not an oligarchy serving the interests of the economically advantaged or a democracy understood to serve the interests of the poor), who understood how both to rule and obey (Ehrenberg, 1999). He acknowledged plurality within the whole, yet still positioned the good of the citizen as connected to the good of society and social stability via the political configuration of the city-state.

In the societas civilitas that emerged out of the Roman Republic, all social classes were deemed relevant to civil society in creating a system of checks and balances that would bolster a commonly shared res publica, or common good for the benefit of a political state. The growth of laws as a result of public deliberation defined by the collective reason of the people emerged as a mechanism to define rights and privileges of Roman citizenship. This was a method for upholding justice and defining not only the citizen in relation to the public sphere, but the “res privata,” or private life as well. Ehrenberg (1999) noted the significance of this suggesting, “The individual was now separated into a private person and a public citizen” (p. 27). Those items such as family, religion, property rights, and other elements associated with the private self were now domains of citizenship and an extension of self-governance based on mutual dependence of its polity. One of the key features of the thinking in this era regarding civility and citizenship was the assertion of a cosmic order, or natural law or truth, which formed the standards for the
ordering of individuals, capable of using reason to pursue the virtuous, and form community on this basis (DeLue & Dale, 2016).

The Middle Ages

Following the collapse of the Roman Empire, the middle ages posed a marked turn away from a humanist orientation of civil society and citizenship as part of a political commonwealth, to that of a Christian commonwealth that would serve to order both the social and political domains of its citizens (Hall, 1995). The early scholarship of this framework for civility and human relations was expressed by the works of Catholics Saint Augustine and Thomas Aquinas. One of the most notable contributors in shaping this turn was Augustine of Hippo, or Saint Augustine, as he was often referred to, author of “Civitas Dei.” What was once a city understood as a political entity under the Greco-Roman lineage, was now understood as a city defined as entity which was the domain of a Christian God. Citizens, as subject to the divine laws of a Christian God, were understood within a lens of human frailty tied to the “original sin” and the fall of Adam and Eve (Raeder, 2003). As such, citizens were viewed as incapable of political autonomy as self-governance, as this would only be tainted by individual choice. The church encouraged Christian civility, as charity, and submission to the will of God (as interpreted through the church) and as a mechanism to find relief caused by human suffering as the legacy of original sin (Powell, 2013).

Thirteenth century Thomas Aquinas provided a theological view of civility and citizenship which reflected the intellectual legacies of both Aristotle and Saint Augustine. Historian Jason Wallace (2011, para. 9) suggested, “With Augustine, he recognized the problem of sin and the need for redemption, and with Aristotle he had a high view of the human rational principle and the inevitable need for community.” Thomas Aquinas proposed that rational
pursuit of the laws of nature expressed through human law were extensions of divine rule set by God. He offered “love thy neighbor” as a guiding dictum to create equal and fair treatment, and posed that fear of the church and God were the foundations which lead to civil stability (Setianto, 2007). While Aquinas acknowledged the distinction of the sacred from the secular, he suggested that religious authority was the primary conduit for establishing the path for a moral citizenry to achieve the common good as ordained by God (DeWiel, 1997).

Later, as Protestants scholars during the 16\textsuperscript{th} century at the end of the Middle Ages, both Martin Luther and John Calvin contested the primacy of what they viewed as a corrupt (and not truly religious) Catholic church and the political power of the Pope to influence the church and civil society. Of their philosophies, O’ Brien (1999) suggested their main contributions were that people should be free to choose their own religious commitments while continuing the social and civil function of religion through a Christian citizenry demonstrating charity and service to their neighbors. Luther and Calvin both believed that all citizens should follow the rule of the State, but conceded that this was only necessary because many citizens were not true Christian believers (Baylor, 2015). Both Luther and Calvin positioned the secular government with the authority to diminish any civil unrest or disorder, which they viewed as sinful and a violation against the supreme power, a Protestant Christian God (Baylor, 2015).

The European Renaissance

Signaling another shift in the understanding of civility, civil society, and by extension citizenship, the Renaissance of Italy and other European nations was supported by important political and economic shifts and instability during these transitions. Ehrenberg (1999) summarized that the church “became a junior partner of the state as religion began its slow retreat into the realm of private devotion” (p. 56). As trade moved from the territory of feudal
control and guilds of the medieval era to more extensive trade markets, royal bureaucracies and a growing commercial elite began to form alliances and a centralized source of civil society expressed through political control.

Perhaps the most notable political theorist of this period was Niccolo Machiavelli, known for his writings of *The Prince* in which he proposed the existence of a naturally corrupt political state and church, with the state as supreme and in competition with other states (Machiavelli & Wooten, 1995). Machiavelli characterized the political state as essentially one which “strives to control, regulate, and organize subsidiary spheres of life after its own interests” (Ehrenberg, 1999, p. 56). Thus, Machiavelli proposed a civil society defined as a republic which could offer security to its citizenry through a strengthened political central organizing leader (the Prince), and citizenship based on “private morality answering to public necessity and not vice versa” (citing Matthes [2000], Falco [2004], p. 20). Drawing on the earlier works of Snyder (1999), Falco (2004) explored citizenship within this Machiavellian Renaissance frame and suggested, “Civic practice is not a pre-political identity, it is neither ethnic heritage, class, nor living within certain borders, but engagement in civic practices that produces a common civic identity” (p.19). Within this Machiavellian lens, the individual and individuals’ needs are subordinate to the needs of the politicized state.

**The Age of Reason**

Some of the most enduring concepts associated with civility and conceptualization of citizenship in contemporary Western thought emanated from scholarship from the 17th century, often referred to as the Age of Reason. One of the key philosophers of this time was Thomas Hobbes, who was influenced by the uncertainties and civil unrest posed by English Revolution and the Protestant Reformation of this time (Edwards, 2011). Hobbes (1651/1909) conceived of
the state as a sovereign and authoritative *Leviathan*, referencing the Biblical sea monster, capable of protecting its citizens from the state of nature. This natural state he regarded was marked by insecurity, vulnerability, barbarism and war, which would inevitably ensue if equal individuals pursued their competing private interests. In such, he proposed a social contract, or “common commitment to public power that makes civilization possible” (Edwards, 2011, p. 19). The context for this utilitarianism citizenship was a state formed by a covenant among individuals. Hobbes’ provision for a citizenry was characterized as a “war of all against all” and emphasized an “under-socialized conception of man” (Peck, 2002, p. 359). He theorized that individual citizens made the rational choice to succumb to the coercion and power of a protecting state responsible for quelling dissent and thus providing communal stability.

While Hobbes saw the state of nature as one marked by belligerence, John Locke, who also agreed that society was formed via a social covenant (“initial contract”), proposed that the natural state or the “state of freedom” was such that individuals, as social beings, had the right to preserve themselves and property (Locke & McPherson, 1980). Locke saw property as “the abstract representation of individual freedom” (Ehrenberg, 1999, p 86) and as “both a natural right and condition for moral independence and personal autonomy” (Edwards, 2011, p. 20). This tacit consent was understood as such as morally binding. Pharo (1992) provided, “In Locke, the unique moment of the initial compact creates legal conditions of political legitimacy that are valid forever” (p. 346). Unlike Hobbes, Locke distinguished civil society as a pre or un-political domain, separate from the state, which should have limited rule of law and authority. DeWiel (1997) posed, “The first task of this civil society is to protect the individual—his/her rights and property—against the state and its arbitrary interventions” (pp. 14-15). Thus, Locke’s citizenship was via property, and his citizen and civil society within an orientation of “economic man”
The Enlightenment

Jean Jacques Rousseau (1782) was another contractarian, who theorized that the unifying “general will” coordinated human conditions when individuals in association voluntarily submitted to this sovereign and virtuous pursuit of the impartial and objective good. The general will was “not the will of the majority. Rather, it is the will of the political organism that he sees as an entity with a life of its own” (Younkins, 2002, p. 167). Ehrenberg (1999) explained, “Rousseau’s politicized and moralized theory of civil society summarized his attack on enlightened self-interest and the rational calculation of advantage” (p. 154). He professed that the equality of humankind and pure individuals were present in the natural state, but via civilization and social institutions, hierarchies and distinctions were created. He critiqued earlier scholars’ presumptions that the public good would be served by the prioritization of preserving individual rights and the rights to property, asserting that this would instead serve to ultimately fracture communities and offer only an illusion of freedom and equality (O’Brien, 1999). Rousseau posited that in becoming citizens, they ceased being men in the state of nature in exchange for being citizens in community, interdependent on each other, and therefore, subject to the community’s laws (Barnard, 1984).

Breaking from the tradition of the social contract was the Enlightenment scholar Immanuel Kant, who proposed a civil society founded on rules of law in harmony with morality defined as both a duty and rational necessity which would bring about justice (Pharo, 1992). Ehrenberg (1999), offering a summation of Kantian civil society and theoretical stance offered, “There can be no freedom without law, no civil society without the state, and no peace without coercion” (p. 117). Kant emphasized the moral capacity of ordinary citizens to uphold a
universal moral order operationalized through mutual obligation and respect of all its citizens (who feared punishment as a result of a breach), enacted through a representational government justified in using coercion as necessary for enforcement (DeLue & Dale, 2016). Within this framework, Kant proposed, “Humans are morally free because they can know what is right without being told” (Ehrenberg, 1999, p. 111). This intrinsic drive by citizen’s rational will was understood to work in service to a “categorical imperative” or law of morality which is universal and unconditional, absolute for all members, and the validity of which is not reliant on any ulterior motive or end. Interestingly, Kant suggested an individual freedom achieved through moral and social responsibility, viewing revolution by the people as inharmonious with civil society and morality (Ehrenberg, 1999; Cummiskey, 2008).

The Nineteenth Century

In the new era of modernity, many scholars produced works that would challenge former conceptualizations of civility and civil society. Both building on and rejecting many of Kant’s assertions, Romanticism’s G. W. F. Hegel, who produced the “Philosophy of Right” in 1821, distinguished civil society as grounded in a “system of needs” in which individuals pursue their own interests within those of bourgeois society, or bürgerliche Gesellschaft (Kainz, Hegel, & Marx, 1974). Edwards (2011) described, “Like Smith, Hegel knew that bourgeois civil society constantly generated inequality, illustrating the paradoxical motion from choice, self-interest, and autonomy to isolation, dependence, and subservience” (p. 22). Hegel defined civil society as a social and economic sphere distinguished from the micro society of the family and the macro society of the State, and reliant on the guidance of the universal ethical state to ensure stability of private property, social class, and the division of labor (Laine, 2014).
Karl Marx similarly saw the economic realm, and the inherent inequality it engendered, as integrated as a key feature of civil society. According to Marx, civil society was therefore worthy of critique given that “civil society itself had to be democratized” (Edwards, 2011, p. 22) through an abolishment of the market oriented civil society. Ehrenberg (1999, p. 135) provided, “Marx’s (1843) whole approach would be built on the important difference that separates ‘the radical revolution’ which aims at ‘general human emancipation’ from the ‘partial, merely political revolution,’ the revolution which leaves the pillars of the house still standing.” Thus, Marx saw civil society not as a space for emancipation, but as a tool for class division and a barrier to social cohesion as the rights of the individual overshadowed the rights of citizens to pursue the common good.

Another 19th century contributor to the conceptual lineage of civil society and civility who was interested in the idea of democratization and skeptical of the state was the political philosopher Alexis de Tocqueville, author of *Democracy in America* (1969). De Tocqueville was a French aristocrat who idealized the United States in comparison to the political states of Europe. He emphasized the importance of a society built on the collective action of its citizens, free in their associations which extended beyond those of the formal type to include churches, communities, and families (Woldring, 1998). De Tocqueville suggested that civil society was a mediating force between the individual (and a collective of equals) and the state (the political sphere), and was oriented to private matters (Setianto, 2007). Unlike many of his predecessors and contemporaries, while emphasizing individual liberties, de Tocqueville did not address the economic realm as one of primary importance (Ehrenberg, 1999).
The Twentieth Century

Important sustaining contributions to the evolution of our understanding of civility and civil society were introduced by various philosophers of the twentieth century. Italian communist Antonio Gramsci, who theorized in the context of European Fascist governmentality, for example, challenged liberty as a bourgeois idea, and democracy as a mask to obscure class separation and the hegemonic practices of the state and society (Buttigieg, 1995). He theorized civil society as a “public room,” to be distinguished from the economic and state domains, as a superstructure providing both opportunities to challenge and reinscribe dominant political ideologies and cultural oppression (DeWiel, 1997). Powell (2013) offered that Gramsci theorized the development of citizens in their capacities with each individual as an ‘organic intellectual’ capable of transforming and reinventing the world through this ‘revolution of the mind,’ and emancipation via human consciousness. Laine (2014) cited Powell (2000) in concluding that one of the key contributions coming out of Gramsci’s scholarship was the positioning of civil society as “a site of social contestation, in which collective identities, ethical values, action-orienting norms, and alliances were forged” (p. 65). Thus, while critiquing the structures and processes of civil society, Gramsci offered an optimistic outlook in some aspects.

Jürgen Habermas (1976), a scholar of the Frankfurt School, proposed in his mid-20th century scholarship the need to address in civil society the cultural and ideological oppression stemming from capitalist relations. These relations impacted both the social and political domains produced a society which disempowered the working classes from demanding structural change (Flyvbjerg, 1998). Citing Habermas (1992), Paffenholz and Spurk (2006) offered this characterization of civil society as citizen advocacy reinforcing, “Marginalized groups in particular need to organize and a find a way to articulate their interests. This is necessary because
political parties and parliaments need to get informed public opinion beyond the established power structures” (p. 374). Habermas proposed a communication ethics which would lay the groundwork for a deliberative democracy, in which citizens would engage together with the shared interest of open and rational dialogue as a commitment to truth seeking (Fleming, 2000). Habermas’ proposal of consensus building public debate was reliant on law and constitutions to uphold the necessary procedural ideals to encourage this communication, such as autonomy of citizen participation in dialogue and neutralized power differentials among the citizens participating (Flyvbjerg, 1998).

The highly influential work *A Theory of Justice* by John Rawls in 1971 ushered a new contemplation of civil society with civility tied to that of ideal citizenship (Keane, 2003). Rawls (1971) challenged utilitarianism and frames of majority rule, key concepts previously tied to liberalism. He suggested a model instead of a civil society built on a principle of justice whereby each individual of a society should be the equal bearer of rights, including freedom of speech, even if this was not deemed to be in harmony with the majority interests (DeLue & Dale, 2016). Another corollary of his theory was the “difference principle” which presupposes a “veil of ignorance” in human relations such that social and economic inequities were allowable only under the condition that the least advantaged in society would benefit from the arrangement (O’Brien, 1999).

**Historical Legacies: Four Differing Enduring Conceptual Frameworks of Civility**

Jussi Laine (2014) succinctly stated, “Recognizing that civil society does mean different things to different people is one of the keys to moving forward, because it gets us beyond false universals and entrenched thinking” (p. 71). As is evident from the philosophical and political tensions across history, and often echoed in the literature, the conceptions of civil society and by
extension civility vary greatly. For example, Peter Johnson (2007) spoke to the different “senses” of civility and observed that civility can be portrayed as transgressing the boundaries between political philosophy and ethics. He offered, “We can think of it as a virtue that requires that others be treated with consideration and respect and also as a procedural good that excludes arbitrariness and unjustified partiality” (Johnson, 2007, p. 312). How civility is defined, what domains are encompassed, what purpose civility serves, and how those purposes are best accomplished are contested throughout history. As a result a robust typology for analyzing civility has been largely undertheorized. In the *Oxford Handbook of Civil Society* editor Michael Edwards (2011) submitted:

> But civil society is also a confusing and contested concept because so many different definitions and understandings exist (often poorly connected to and articulated with the others), and because the claims that are sometimes made for its explanatory power never quite match up to the complexities and contingencies of real cultures and societies, especially when interpretations fashioned at one time or in one part of the world are transported to another (p. 3).

Important debates include those regarding the complexities of freedom and control and the roles of the state versus those of society.

Similarly, tensions exist among the theorizations regarding whether the focus on civility should be on individuals’ needs or communal needs, should encompass the secular, the religious, or both, or be defined along divisions of the private or the public. Varying frameworks of civility may posit civility as constraining or aspirational, with orientations rooted in “pessimistic ontologies” or “utopian wishes” regarding human nature and citizenship (Keane, 1998, p. 152). These points of dispute within the multitude of civility frameworks, point to a
myriad of ways over time in which forms of civil society and civility has been delineated and characterized.

A wealth of civility conceptualizations have been offered across the historical, ideological, and disciplinary spectrums. For purposes of this investigation analyzing campus civility campaigns, I offer four general categories indicative of the way civility has been, and is still, commonly conceptualized. It is important to note, however, that these categories which follow are not mutually exclusive, and may overlap to some degree. These categories include: civility as courtesy, politeness, code, and manners; civility as socio-political foundation for civil society; civility as virtue; and civility as dialogic/conversation model.

**Civility as Enactment of Manners, Courtesy, Code, and Politeness**

Much of the current focus in the popular press has circled around this notion of civility and its counter, incivility as related to etiquette, manners, polite conduct, or adherence to social conventions including “attention to dress, bodily hygiene, interactions, and physical conduct” (Clark & Carnasso, 2008, p. 12). A well-known publication linking civility to the execution of good manners was authored by George Washington, who later became the first president of the United States. In *Rules of Civility and Decent Behaviour In Company and Conversation* he offered his readers what was considered practical guides to social relations, such as the third rule, “Show nothing to your friend that may affright him” (Moore, 1926, para. 3).

In contemporary society, *The Civilizing Process* (Norbert Elias, 1939/1994) and *Learning How to Behave* (Schlesinger, 1946), and later *Rudeness and Civility: Manners in Nineteenth-Century Urban America* (Kasson, 1990), surveyed a historical trace of manners and standards of etiquette and asserted that social strictures were reflective of the broader state, serving both to progress society, while also functioning to create and maintain social hierarchies. Reflections
on civility and courtesy in the public domain were evidenced by the popularity of daily newspaper columns by Emily Post and Judith Martin, or “Miss Manners,” who authored *A Citizen’s Guide to Civility* (1999). In “The Virtue of Civil Society” Edward Shils (1991) agreed that civility as good manners and courtesy provide for harmonious communal living within conditions of differential resources and orientations. Specifically, he noted, “Civility in the sense of courtesy mollifies or ameliorates the strain which accompanies the risks…and the injuries of real losses of an economically, politically, and intellectually competitive society in which some persons are bound to lose.” (p. 13). Stephen Carter (1998) argued that manners and courtesy, at the very least, are precursors to building open community. One of the most influential proponents of civility and manners is Pier M. Forni of John Hopkins University, who authored *Choosing Civility: The Twenty-five Rules of Considerate Conduct* (2002). He proposed, “You cannot have any kind of community if there are not some rules,” thus linking civility with social codes and decorum.

**Civility as Socio-Political Foundation for Civil Society**

Another conceptualization of civility posits the idea of civility as a complex foundation for the political and social order, dating back to historical roots with the ancient Greeks and Romans. Within the conceptualization of civil society as the polis, civility is linked to a political state and is often positioned as a normative feature of the body politic, tied directly to positioning subjects as citizens (Ehrenberg, 1999). For example, reflective of this positioning of civility as a normative part of the democratic process, in *Democratic Civility: The History and Cross-Cultural Possibility of a Modern Political Ideal* editor Robert W. Hefner (1998) shared, “However seductive the temptation to flee the public for the pleasures of the private, modern freedoms are thoroughly dependent upon citizen participation in, and effective guarantees by, a
civil state” (p. 38). While differing on nuanced characteristics, civility has commonly been widely theorized in contemporary contexts as linked to a bounded community, such as a nation, state, government or body politic.

Civility within this framework is positioned as an extension of the political body and defined by essential components including social and political associations, structures, and legal policies (Barber, 1984; Gutmann, 1998; Johnson, 2007; Kronman, 1996; Kymlicka, 2000; Meyer, 2000; Rawls, 1993; Sapiro, 1999; Walzer, 1974; Zurn, 2013). For example, John Rawls (1993) spoke to a “duty of civility” tied to political justice based on public reason understood as a range of values to which members of a pluralistic society may use in a democratic society to make plans, prioritize goals, and take fitting action (Brown, 2003). Similarly, Fred Powell (2013) proposed that one model for understanding civility in modernity is its manifestation in the political realm via the “welfare state” which functions by placing the rights and entitlements of citizens at the center of political functioning.

Civility as Virtue

An additional conceptualization of civility is that which defines civility primarily as a virtue associated with morality. For example, civility may be framed as encompassing the virtues of respect, family values, religious piety, sacrifice, and restraint (Papacharissi, 2004; Schmidt, 2000). Sapiro (1999) referred to this notion of civility as a virtue as “self-regulated demeanor.” In his essay, “Civility, Sincerity, and Ambiguity” philosopher Nick Jones (2011, para. 3) declared, “The virtue most often mentioned as fostering harmony when present and permitting discord when absent is civility.” Taking issue with those who would situate civility as procedural in nature, a set of rules, Jones (2011, para. 40) further offered, “There is probably not much advice to be given by way of rules, since civility is a virtue and practicing virtue demands
attention to context in ways that rules cannot handle.” Similarly, Clifford Orwin (2011) lamented civility as an “endangered virtue.” He wrote, “Unfortunately, we have moved beyond the point where civility need merely be defended. It must now be rebuilt. Obviously those of our institutions that still inculcate it, good families, good schools, and good churches, should continue to do so,” (p.7) emphasizing traditional institutions as key to the transmission of civility as a virtue.

Civility as a virtue is sometimes referred to as “convictional civility” (i.e. Guinness, 2008; McConnell, 2013; Mitchell, Sanderson & Thornbury, 2015), described as “the mean of both virtues (civility and conviction)-a harmonious marriage” (Mitchell, Sanderson & Thornbury, 2015, p. 109). This notion of civility emphasizes the related virtues of respect and Christian compassion (Hayden, 2010; Mouw, 2010). Contemporary authors such as Stephen Carter in Civility: Manners, Morals, and the Etiquette of Democracy (1998), and Edward Shils and Steven Grosby (1997) in their work The Virtue of Civility: Selected Essays on Liberalism, Tradition, and Civil Society, suggested that civility as a virtue captures the essential qualities of civility and by extension, practice, and valuing of morality, associated with temperance and faith. Civility as a virtue is also encompassed in the literature, including within higher education scholarship, as related to the practice of ethical leadership (Elsner & Boggs, 2006; Fluker, 2009, 2011; Thornton, 2013).

**Civility as Dialogic/Conversational Model**

A final commonly offered description of civility is that which may be understood as a dialogic or conversational model. Within this framework, civility applies to private interpersonal communication or public domains and functions related to community formation and
preservation. Sapiro (1999) termed this description of civility as “rhetorical procedures.” Taking up this orientation while critiquing civility as manners and etiquette, the Institute for Civility in Government proposed, “Civility is about more than just politeness, although politeness is a necessary first step. It is about disagreeing without disrespect, seeking common ground as a starting point for dialogue about differences, listening past one’s preconceptions, and teaching others to do the same” (http://www.instituteforcivility.org/). Civility workshops with titles such as one offered by a state association "Can We Talk? Moving from Discord to Dialogue" (https://www.ohiobar.org) were reflective of this orientation, as was linguistic scholar Deborah Tannen’s (1998) bestseller The Argument Culture: Moving from Debate to Dialogue.

Similarly Shelley Lane and Helen McCourt (2013) offered, “Both civility in politics and civility in everyday life are governed by shared rhetorical norms that serve as guides for appropriate communication-related behavior” (p.17), a concept echoed in Hansen’s (2011) description of civility as “skills of reasoned discussion” (p. 200). Likewise, in their book Civility in Business and Professional Communications, the authors (Troester & Mester, 2007) suggested the definition of civility as “the set of verbal and non-verbal behaviors reflecting fundamental respect for others and generating harmonious and productive relationships” (p. 10). Within this category of describing civility, abilities such as listening, perspective taking, and owning thoughts and feelings (Arnett & Arneson, 1999; Lane, Abigail, & Gooch, 2014) are common skill sets and principles civility to be strategically applied in communication interaction encompassed within this umbrella of civility. Leland Spencer (2013) proposed that rhetorical “progressive civility” is a mode of public advocacy advanced when the rhetor prioritizes human connection by “transcending the particulars of a conflict by exercising a commitment to caring” (p. 57) despite disagreement. These communication skills sets were embraced by Ronald
Arnett’s (2001) description of “dialogic civility” as a “pragmatic commitment to keeping the conversation going in a time of narrative confusion and virtue fragmentation” (p. 315), and Susan Herbst’s (2010) declaration of civility as a strategic, assistive rhetorical and behavioral tool in the context of a “rude democracy” marked by plurality and power differentials.

Civility Critiques

Despite the circulation of these multivariate frames for civility, a body of scholarship has begun to level opposition regarding the civility, and by contrast, incivility discourses. Publications within the higher education community with titles such as “Assuring Civility or Curbing Criticism?” (Jaschik, 2011), “College Students Must Grow Thicker Skin: An Argument Against Civility” (McHugh, 2014), and the “Case Against Civility” (Willick, 2014) revealed an uneasiness about the prominence and impact of the recent civility focus. Using five general categories of the challenges articulated recently in a scholarly publication by Christopher Zurn (2013, pp. 351-358), I apply this model to outline some of these critiques which include: civility as vacuous and indeterminate, civility as epiphenomenal, civility merely as a strategic tool to gain power and position, civility as anti-individualist and homogenizing, and civility as marginalizing and anti-egalitarian.

Civility as Vacuous and Indeterminate

One of the initial critiques introduced by Zurn (2013) asserted that civility is a term both vacuous and unspecific. He proposed that at the core of these attacks is the various and often competing descriptions of the term, relegating civility to an empty signifier. Civility is often conflated with many other terms, ranging from politeness to deliberative dialogue. Many scholars have echoed this refrain that “civility” has been over-extended in usage and is not
clearly delineated (i.e. Carter, 1998; Scott, 2015), leading Zurn (2013) to conclude, “The equivocity of ‘civility’ in everyday usage is clear” (p. 349).

Debates regarding the core nature of civility abound. For example, although often characterized as encompassing courtesy and politeness, this reading of civility has been critiqued by some as a surface reading of civility (i.e. Herbst, 2010; Weeks, 2011). While some theorists argue the essential function of civility is as a political function, Lawrence Cahoone (2000) proposed that "civil society is not primarily political" and to treat it as such is to "engage in an overvaluation of the political" (as cited in Schmidt, 2000, p. 26). Similarly, authors such as Edward Shils and Steven Grosby (1997), and Stephen Carter (1998) put forward that civility is more expansive than the political realm, which they define in a traditional sense as formal and related to the negotiations of government.

John Ehrenberg (1999) noted the lack of robust scholarship in unearthing the substance of the term civility. He proposed that as a result, the term “is often deployed in a thin, undertheorized, and confusing fashion” (p. x). Mirroring this sentiment, feminist philosopher Margaret McCabe (2014) articulated this lacking by describing civility as “under construction”. In his piece, “Civility Is for Suckers: Campus Hypocrisy and the ‘Polite Behavior’ Lie,” David Palumbo Liu (2014, para. 2) offered, “One problem is, of course, what counts as ‘civility’?” Similarly, Susan Herbst (2010) wrote of her search for the “elusive civility.” Zizi Papacharissi (2004) reiterated this noting, “The actual meaning of civility tends to be rather elusive. What does it mean to be civil? What types of behaviors are associated with civility?” (p. 260). It was this very “lack of precision” of the demarcations of what constitutes civility that led a California court to rule against a university who sanctioned a student for a violation of civility under the student code of conduct. The court ruled that the university code did not clearly distinguish civil
behaviors from those deemed uncivil. Based on this ambiguity and the university reliance on presumed ‘commonsense’ understandings of civility and incivility, the court ruled that any university issued sanctions invoking the standard of civility were illegitimate (Saavedra, 2008).

**Civility as Epiphenomenal**

Zurn (2013) posed a second critique of current uses of civility as essentially “epiphenomenal,” or not only unrealistic, but a type of stand in for the issues that are truly valuable regarding the nature of human relations and social cooperation. Zurn (2013) wrote, “Calls for civility, especially when they are really calls for a mild consensus and a bland unanimity, on this view simply misunderstand democracy as a kind of polite talking session, a well-run graduate seminar responsive to the force of argument and reason” (pp. 352-353). In support of this critique, David Correia (2014) referred to civility as a “smokescreen” and suggested:

The expectation of ‘civility’ and ‘collegiality’ as necessary virtues for academics as well as recent criticism, and firings, of scholar-activists deemed intemperate and thus unfit for the classroom is a smoke screen to obscure a concerted backlash against the practice of scholar-activism. The demand for ‘civility’ as a condition of scholarly fitness is intended not to protect some sort of normative scholarly standard of civil discourse but rather to divert our attention away from the inequalities (and privileges) that radical scholars expose (para. 1).

Echoing this sentiment, Harvard law professor Randall Kennedy (1998) has critiqued scholars such as Carter (1998) and others as “virtuecrats” who offer what may be described as naïveté at best, but potentially dangerous embrace of civility in its capacity to defocus, and even obscure, important tensions within society.
Other scholars (Boler, 2004; Cloud, 1996, 1997; Jones, 2004; Boor Tonn, 2005) have offered cautions regarding the limitations and critiques of framing civility within the “romance of conversation” (Schudson, 1997), an idealistic ‘feel good’ approach which often does not allow for the deep work needed to untangle inequitable social relations. Mari Boor Tonn (2005) similarly interrogated civility and the “cult of conversation” as a viable solution to complex problems. She asserted this is not only because this practice often engages individuals in sharing experiences, and then does not lead to action to address problems, but also, that this framing inappropriately redirects attention to individuals as “dialogues risk becoming substitutes for policy formation necessary to correct structural dimensions of social problems” (p. 408).

In the same way, Norman Finkelstein (2008) opined that the application of tropes of civility and incivility is generally applied with hypocrisy and subverts a healthy environment in which dissent is reflective of the plurality of a community’s members. Finkelstein (2008) contended, “Indeed, the accusation of incivility frequently signals a politically motivated excuse to change the subject. Those sincerely committed to the pursuit of truth can see past a barb here and there” (p. 300). Put more directly, in his piece for the New Yorker, Hua Hsu (2014, para. 10) described the civility discourse as “bullshit,” and as “a high road that nobody ever actually walks,” pointing to an illusory characterization of civility.

Civility Merely as a Strategic Tool for Power and Position

A third critique as posed by Zurn (2013) was the use of civility as a strategic tactic of manipulation, and for the purpose of gaining power and position. Susan Herbst (2010) in her work Rude Democracy: Civility and Incivility in American Politics offered an illustration of this. Herbst (2010) recounted how in the 2008 presidential campaign, candidates Barack Obama and Sarah Palin both invoked calls regarding civility and incivility in strategic, and often
appropriating, ways. She further posited that these discourses contributed to a political context that may have advanced the candidates goals, but offered little in the way of educating citizens on matters of political substance. Ultimately, Herbst (2010) advocated for a more discerning and informed public educated fully on a healthy “culture of argument.” In defining civility Herbst (2010) reported, “Civility is best thought of as an asset or tool, a mechanism, or even a technology of sorts” (p. 4). It is this particular casting of civility as a strategic technology or tactic that concerned Elizabeth Brulé (2015). She suggested:

> The push for balance, respect and civility is closely linked with the university’s managerial technologies of risk assessment, use of space policies and surveillance measures. The conflation of personal safety with idea of fairness and inclusion is highly problematic. Not only do calls for balance and inclusion lead to increased surveillance and regulation of student activist activity, they also obscure the ways in which a corporate service sector framework is being used to silence marginalized student voices (Herbst, 2010, p. 164).

Brulé (2015) thus exposed how the tactical application of the civility discourse is used precisely to perpetuate an erasure of the generative possibilities of student dissent, and replace this with a divisive use of self-surveillance under the guise of promotion of an agentive self.

Another apropos example of using civility as a strategic tool is the discourse of civility circulating within the legal field. Attorney Eugene Meehan (2006) in guiding members of an international law association suggested, “Instead of thinking of civility as something that must be regulated, or that will come naturally, that we should rather think of civility and courtesy as tools in the lawyer’s arsenal” (np). Meehan’s (2006) use of a militaristic metaphor is indicative of civility being positioned as a type of arms or strategic tool to be taken up to extend a position
of advantage. Countering his argument, Kathleen Browe (1994) encouraged that “Rambo style” tactics are often described as acts of incivility in the law profession, but often work to the advantage of the clients the attorneys are sworn to represent. She asserted that while these tactics are critiqued as an affront to “collegiality” among lawyers, and challenge norms of socially sanctioned behaviors in the court (often dominated by privileged white males), “hardball litigation” is a type of advocacy to clients (Browe, 1994).

**Civility as Anti-Individualist and Homogenizing**

Zurn (2013) proposed that an additional critique of civility argued by a host of scholars is its anti-individualist and homogenizing aspect. Among this group includes John Stuart Mill (1978) who perceived civility as linked to the “despotism of custom” and as a potential threat through its enforcement of conformity to progress for the community. Thus, civility is depicted as a mechanism of normalization. A critic following this same vein of thought, Melanie White (2006), offered that steps to “mobilize civility reflect the desire to consolidate and reinforce social expectations in order to achieve a common ground in the face of social difference, rather than to create the conditions for destabilizing and challenging the content of ‘good citizenship’” (p. 459). In this passage White’s (2006) argument is challenging the flattening of plurality under the name of civility, rather than the opening up possibilities for belonging and association that reinforces and benefits from multiplicity.

Similarly, Adalbert Evers (2010) provided, “Civility and civicness may come into tension and conflict with one another. One such tension is between respecting individualism and requiring people to behave as ‘good citizens’” (p. 48). This statement reveals how civility is often operationalized to create normalized subjectivities of ideal (‘good citizen’) and by extension, non-ideal social actors. Historically, civility has often been applied as a feature to
delineate the “civilized,” typically those members with access to power and authority, from those deemed as not civilized, i.e. barbaric, such as indigenous communities, communities of color, and other non-dominant communities (Boyd, 2006; Calhoun, 2000). Jeffrey Kurtz (2010) described:

Discourses of civility, pleas for civility, are not merely (are never merely) longing paeans for some sort of golden age of public discourse, for such an age never has existed. Instead, what matters is reading civility for the normative forces at work within it (p. 19).

In her chapter exploring civility and its application to the undocumented citizen, Leti Volpp (2014) posed, “The imagined community of nationhood has a universalist and inclusionary dimension, the collective cohering of ‘we the people’…constructed through the exclusion of those who are considered outside its edges” (p. 82). Civility in this perspective invokes a “collective cohering” in a simulacra of unity, which serves to delegitimize those deemed outside this normative, and yet often unattainable, membership.

Civility as Marginalizing and Anti-Egalitarian

A body of critical literature levels difficult questions regarding the civility discourses and their function and effect on silencing, erasure, and disciplining within institutions (Boyd, 2006; Brulé, 2015; de Mott, 1996; Estlund, 2001; Kennedy, 1998; Kurtz, 2010; Mayo, 2001, 2002; McKerrow, 2001; Owens Patton, 2004; Pasque & Harris, 2013; Sarat, 2012; Schudson, 1997; Warner, 2000). Of the many types of civility critiques, Zurn (2013) depicted this one as the most “deep” and “worrisome” as he pointed to work theorized by scholars such as Iris Marion Young (1990), Randall Kennedy (1998), Austin Sarat (2012), and Michael Warner (2000). He elaborated, for example, on Kennedy’s (1998) work showing how anti-slavery discussions of
abolition were once labeled as uncivil discourse. Similarly, he expounded on Sarat’s (2012) evaluation of how civility rhetoric was deployed to question the validity and legitimacy of the 1960’s American social civil rights protests. The contributions of Warner (2000) also brought forward the exclusion from public discourse of sexual orientation beyond those discourses that depicted non-dominant sexual orientation through characterizations of shame in the 1980’s civility rhetoric.

A related issue is the application of civility discourses and the resulting influences on the positioning and becoming of social actors, as “these norms enact peculiar kinds of discipline upon participants’ efforts to argue their convictions” (Kurtz, 2010, p. 12). For example, higher education Student Affairs practitioners Penny Pasque and Brittany Harris (2013), speaking to the false dichotomy of civility and incivility, questioned:

Whose civility are we talking about when we use this word? By using civility as an organizing rule, we automatically exclude comments and voices from public view that fall outside dominant notions of civility. Asked another way, whom are we consciously or unconsciously including or excluding through what we may perceive as benign language? (p. 144)

Similarly, Joan Scott (2015), who has coined the moniker “the new thought police,” questioned, “Why are campus administrators invoking civility to silence critical speech?” (p.11). Tracey Owens Patton (2004) offered that this muting of critical perspectives is part of a “problematic civility” described as a barrier, and as a mask, a “hegemonic civility,” that serves to collude with institutional tactics supporting naturalized inferential racism and sexism.

Cris Mayo (2001; 2002) posed concerns of civility creating a mechanism for social distancing and marginalizing hierarchies, despite providing an illusion of serving as a bridge
for social cooperation. She contended, “If civility requires leaving unspoken things that would disturb placid social interactions, the practice of civility will necessarily leave out those whose presence disrupts the bias that presumes their absence” (2001, p. 79). Thus, public and structural concerns are relegated to the interior of private negotiations. Applying a feminist critique of civility, Linda Zerilli (2014) similarly argued the tensions of social cooperation with “the ways in which, what has been taken by dominant groups to be uncivil behavior, has been crucial to enlarging the democratic process” (p. 131).

Other critical scholars offered additional critiques. For example, Alison Jones (2004) challenged civility as the “talking cure” proscribed to address societal ills, and described civil dialogue as “unconscious colonization” by dominant groups to focus on their own inclusion. Jones (2004) explained, “What is ultimately most significant to dialogue is not talking by the marginalized, but hearing by the dominant group” (p. 65). Critics such as Jones (2004) charged that current civility discourses are signified and operationalized to serve agendas for regulation, extending the arm of social control. These critics asserted that through censorship, surveillance, and silencing, civility discourses disregard dissenting voices in the service of hegemonic practices. Benjamin de Mott (1997) spoke to this stifling through the “seductive” orthodoxy of civility via a “vocabulary of common good, civic trust, communal participation, and social capital,” concluding that “seductiveness isn’t substance” (p. 12). In line with this thinking, Michael Schudson (1997) suggested that conventions of discursive engagement prioritize civility at the expense of necessary debate and ultimately argued “democracy may require withdrawal from civility itself” (p. 306).

**Teaching our Youth Civility**

The primary thrust of the historical teaching of civility to youth was in service to the
development of children as future citizens. In the article “The Implications of Civility for Children and Adolescents: A review of the Literature,” the authors (Wilkins, Caldarella, Crook-Lyon, & Young, 2010, p. 40) suggested, “[These] young people are the leading citizens of tomorrow; if they can be taught to realize the values and resist the threats to civility, a more civil society may be encouraged.” Early proponents promoting civility to children include Erasmus of Rotterdam (2008), who in 1530 published one of the first civility and etiquette books, a bestseller of the 16th century. In *De Civilitate Morum Puerilium Libellus* (A Handbook on Good Manners for Children), he offered his young mentees guidance on appropriate behavior such as, “It is bad manners to look at someone with one eye open and one shut. For what else is this than to deprive oneself of an eye?” With a renewed emphasis on civility in recent years, the book, was re-released in 2011 by Penguin publishers with the ad copy, “Manners are best instilled at an early age- an idea as pertinent today as it was then!” (https://penguin.com.au/books/a-handbook-on-good-manners-for-children-9781409052104).

One of the most powerful mechanisms for teaching children early ideals of civility was found in the case of the McGuffey Readers (Peck, 2002). As some of the earliest known books to focus on civility and character development for children, these were used as a tool for literacy. These books, prominent in the schools from the 1830’s through the 1920’s, were focused on moral virtues and individual responsibility (Field, 1997). They were read by children and adults and, along with the Bible, were the most commonly owned book in households of the time (Wilkins, Caldarella, Crook-Lyon, & Young, 2010).

There has been an extended trend of using schools as one of the primary sites for teaching civility to children. Research indicates that in contemporary contexts civility is still used in a holistic approach to teaching children (Feldman, 2001; Montessori, 1976), and as a foundational
concept to help youth conceptualize citizenship (Wilkins, Cadarella, Crook-Lyon., & Young). Recently civility has also been contextualized within elementary schools as a form of violence prevention education, and tied to the notion of empathy (Kahn & Lawhorne, 2003) as an anti-bullying platform framed within the ‘safe school’ discourses (Sandhu & Aspy, 2000).

Within secondary education, an emphasis is placed on helping students navigate identity development during the time of adolescence. Tied to this identity development, civility curricula is often deployed in the schools as a mechanism for reinforcing character development and moral education (Youniss & Yates, 1999). Lawrence Schaefer (1995) advocated for a “renaissance of civility teaching,” positing that youth in secondary school settings are particularly needy of, and amenable to, teaching regarding community connection and group belonging.

Civility, Crisis, and Campus Climate

Given institutes’ of education extended relationships with civility discourses and teaching, a reasonable question is, why the emphasis now on campus civility and higher education institutions? Not relegated to any one discipline, calls for responses abound attributing to what has been labeled as the ‘incivility spiral,’ an expression introduced in the human resource management literature (Andersson & Pearson, 1999). This term is now widely used and has broadly become part of the philosophical and operational landscape in schools of thought across specialties, including higher education. This ‘incivility spiral’ provides a diffuse context in which to understand how civility is positioned as a response to perceived crises. Within institutions, including those of higher education, the representations of crises are subject to, and circulated within and through, multiple, simultaneous, and often competing discourses. Erica Meiners and Therese Quinn (2010) offered, “…cultural imaginings of who cannot be trusted, is dangerous, and is unworthy of care and support-are gendered, sexualized and racialized, and deeply
embedded in US narratives” (p. 151). They point to some of the hazards that may be posed without thoughtful consideration of the complexities and entanglements of the civility discourses.

For example, Robert Putnam’s essay (1995) advances a discourse of crisis related to his concerns of societal disconnection. His national bestselling book *Bowling Alone: The Collapse and Revival of American Community* (Putnam, 2000) lamented a central threat regarding the breakdown of modern civility, drawing attention to disengagement of citizens from civic life. As evidence, he suggested the decline in citizen involvement with social and public associations, such as political organizations, church groups, and parent-teacher associations. Journal articles across fields reflect this *cri de coeur*, or cry of the heart/passionate cry (Sarat, 2014, p. 8) regarding the loss of civility as a primary catastrophe, or civility as a needed cure-all to address tensions of social cooperation. For example, titles such as “Making Civility Mandatory: “Moving from Aspired to Required” (Grenardo, 2013) in the area of law, “Fostering Civility in Nursing Education and Practice: Nurse Leader Perspectives” (Clark, Olender, Cardoni & Kenski, 2011) in the area of nursing, “What Happened to Civility?” (Hershorn, 2009) in the popular press, and “A Plea for Civil Discourse: Needed, the Academy’s Leadership” (Leske, 2013) in education reflected the pervasive notion that our communities are at risk due to the need for more civility, or because of danger based on losing civility.

These contemporary discourses of crises in the extended community have permeated institutions of higher educations which build on the “legacy of crisis discourse and utopian expectations” (Thomas, 2011, p. 69). Concurrent crisis discourses now shaping the landscape of colleges and universities include emphasis on sexual assault and Title IX adherence (Sable, Danis, Mauzy, & Gallagher, 2006; Powell & Todd, 2013), economic crisis and the marketization

This current higher education is characterized by a context of tensions related to fear of a current or impending ‘incivility spiral’, with universities responding in a number of ways, including the establishment of campus civility initiatives as a remedy and an extension of broader discourses of accountability, managerialism, and self-management (Peters, Marshall & Fitzsimons, 2000; Thomas, 2011). In a 2015 Survey of Chief Academic Officers, a majority of provosts reported concerns about declining civility among the faculty, and stated that civility is a valid and reasonable criteria in the hiring and evaluation of faculty members (Jaschik, 2015). A recent article in *The Chronicle of Higher Education* (Thompson, 2014) spotlighted how hundreds of universities across the country are developing bias incident teams as a result of hate speech and acts targeted to marginalized identity groups. After a local shooting that resulted in wounding a state representative, The University of Arizona announced the establishment of The National Institute for Civil Discourse, joining other institutions, such as The University of Colorado and its Beyond Intractability initiative and Rutgers University’s Project Civility, in responding to violence, perceptions of incivility, and “virulent rhetoric” in the political landscape (The Nashua Telegraph, 2011).

Similarly, a 2011 article featured incidents of campus student incivility, such as a student challenging a professor to a physical altercation after the faculty asked him to cease the use of electronic media in his classroom (Zagier, 2012). In their article for *Contemporary Issues in*
*Education Research*, authors Chris Ward and Dan Yates (2014) advocated for a procedural approach to student incivilities common in the academy via the establishment of student codes and universities policies to clarify expectations of student behavior as a viable solution. Similarly, Robert Connelly (2009) argued in favor of establishing a “Code of Academic Civility” that would explicitly share, via first year student coursework, the foundational assumptions of expectations of community.

**Civility and Higher Education**

Universities have long been seen as the purveyors of civility. The relationship of civility to higher education is rooted within many ideals and values the academy has historically privileged. For example, recently University of California President Janet Napolitano said, “Campuses have historically been places where social issues in the United States are raised and where many voices are heard” (Pearce, 2015, para. 10). With its ties to concepts of civil society and civil discourse, civility is related to many central facets of education, including the balance of autonomy of thought and action with shared community and plurality, critical thinking and action, along with goals of pursuing what is often cited as the ‘common good’.

In her characterization of the relationship of the academy to the civility contextual environment, Tracey Owens Patton (2004) put forward, “The university is not merely an instructional site where learning takes place, but rather it is a social institution that both has the power to shape current political thought, and is also shaped by current public response and cultural, political, or social issues” (p. 62). Henry Giroux (2003) highlighted another important aspect of the relationship of civility to the academy. He suggested:

> Intellectuals who work in our nation’s universities should represent the conscience of this society because they not only shape the conditions under which future generations learn
about themselves and their relations to others and the outside world . . . [but they] are by their very nature moral and political rather than simply cost-effective and technical (p. 191).

This sentiment concurred with others regarding the entanglements of higher education to responsibilities and influence on the public consciousness and moral condition that places the university as an institution with particular import concerning issues of civility and incivility.

While institutions of education, including higher education, have long been positioned as having an integral relationship to the exploration of civility, there is a relatively recent growing small body of scholarly higher education literature explicitly theorizing civility as it applies to colleges and universities. For example, based on research initially begun in 1994 through the Higher Education Research Institute, a program of the University of California at Los Angeles, a conceptual model suggests an integration and extension of civility to leadership development. One of the earliest to address this issue within the higher education literature explicitly was the Social Change Model of Leadership Development, introduced by scholars and co-principal investigators Helen Astin and Alexander W. Astin (1996). This model included as one of the primary tenets (or “7C’s as they were referred to) “civility in controversy,” a dialogic approach to resolving difference that emphasizes open communication and trust building. Astin & Astin (1996) argued that civility is an important facet in establishing the didactic relationship of the individual to the collective, and emphasized, “A central concept in our approach to leadership development is collaboration,” which they articulate as a “working ensemble” (p. 9).

Fifteen years later, Kent Weeks (2011) authored In Search of Civility: Confronting Incivility on the College Campus, a volume in which he posed was produced as a response to the contemporary incivility crisis. He suggested that this book fills a need to address civility within the specific communities that make up the university, such as the Greek community, athletics,
residential life, etc. Weeks (2011) saw the role of the higher education institution as having an obligation, traced from the early roots of ‘in loco parentis’ and paternalistic responsibilities, to provide a moral education for students in the midst of this crisis. For example, he stated, “As appealing as it is for students to have a right to free speech, it sometimes stands in direct contradiction to the valid interests of public educators who seek to instill a sense of moral virtue and civility in their students” (pp. 99-100). Weeks (2011) offered that civility should be tied to higher education practice, and explored a range of types of incivility in the campus environment, which included those in the classroom (i.e. plagiarism), as well as outside the classroom, such as his category of incivility defined as behaviors in which the students inflict harm on themselves (i.e. substance abuse and ‘hook-up’ culture.)

Paul Elsner and George Boggs (2005) edited Encouraging Civility as a Community College Leader.” Making use of case studies, the authors explored the challenges faced by community college presidents in their encounters with a continuum of campus incivility, ranging from habitual student tardiness, to overtly rude remarks by students and colleagues. Framed within Stephen Carter’s (1998) definition of civility as “the sum of the many sacrifices we are called to make for the sake of living together” (p. 11), many of the contributors concluded with the importance and need for a clearly defined code of conduct, balanced with building an environment that encourages “respectful dialogue.” Also coming out of the community college field, Judy Rookstool (2007) produced the book Fostering Civility on Campus, largely motivated by her interest in national debates over civility. She defined civility through the dialogic lens and as a virtue of "underlying respect" for others (p. v) achieved “when people are engaging in debate, sharing knowledge to form the basis of dialogue that is aimed at reaching agreement while also taking into account the ideas of others” (p. 18). Rookstool (2007) also argued for
Andrea Leskes (2009) approached civility through the lens of civil discourse. She urged universities to take up a leadership position in preparing students to develop critical skills, such as tolerance, enacted through programs such as sustained dialogue and other dialogic programs currently practiced at institutions as part of a commitment to a healthy campus and extended community. The author elaborated, “Robust engagement with difficult ideas is at the heart of academic freedom” (Leskes, 2009, p. 49). Sarah Darling (2013) concurred and encouraged that campus student leaders, in particular, are uniquely positioned to effect social change via engagement with conversation across difference, and through the adoption of an “appreciative education” model to avoid conflict and incivilities in dialogue.

Campus Protest and Activism

Recent controversies have placed civility, and by extension incivility, at the core of campus relations as competing and dissenting ideas have played out within the academy. Central to these debates are the tensions of collegiality and plurality, civility as explored in relation to issues of “academic freedom” of university faculty members, and free speech of students to express dissenting views. Contesting civility as an appropriate frame to be placed as a priority above the rights of free speech and expression by members of the academy, the organization Freedom of Individual Rights (FIRE) was founded in 1999 by University of Pennsylvania professor Alan Charles Kors and civil liberties attorney Harvey Silverglate. Their expressed 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. FIRE’s core mission is to protect the unprotected and to educate the public and communities of concerned Americans about the threats to these rights on our campuses and about the means to preserve them (https://www.thefire.org/about-us/mission/).

FIRE hosts legal defense initiatives, policy reform advocacy, public awareness campaigns, and a database analyzing the codes of more than 400 public universities for what they charged are immoral and unconstitutional rights restrictions often in the guise of civility. Along this same line, Henry Reichman (2014), chair of the American Association of University Professor’s (AAUP) Committee on Academic Freedom and Tenure, blogged publicly that contemporary incivility charges mirror those of anti-communist McCarthyism in the 1950’s.

In 2014 Steven Salaita experienced a highly publicized cancellation of his faculty appointment at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, which spurned open civility debates (Jaschik, 2015). After public comments expressing concern regarding the Israeli occupation appeared on his social media, statements released from the university indicated it was these remarks that were the basis for the university decision to no longer employ Salaita. The core reason asserted by the administration was that these statements fell outside of the bounds of civility and may lead to the discomfort of some students. In a demonstration following his release, protesters carried signs which read “Civility = Silence. Silence = Death” (Jaschik, 2015), referencing similar sentiments to those of FIRE and other advocacy groups.

Critiques of the university’s reliance on civility as justification for their actions were highly publicized. They included remarks such as those made by Michael Meranze (2014) on his blog “Remaking the University” that civility enables “managerial intrusion” and is reminiscent of forces used to stop open debate and protest needed to engage true intellectual discourse within
the university. Shortly thereafter, the Chancellor of The University of California at Berkeley, Nicholas Dirks, issued a public statement calling for civility in the academy reflecting attempts by the universities to manage what was deemed as faculty incivility. In an e-mail sent to all faculty, staff, and students, Dirks noted, “Free speech and civility are two sides of a single coin – the coin of open, democratic society” (O ‘Malley, 2014, para. 6). This statement drew many critiques on the basis that civility at the expense of free speech was antithetical to universities, which are charged with refining intellectual and social pursuits through rigorous debate (Flaherty, 2014).

Student protest was also targeted via policies and statements invoking civility as a management response to quell student action deemed uncivil. For example, a recent student protest at the University of California at Irvine regarding a film showing resulted in the university threatening to ban one of the participating student groups from campus and an administrative referral of the student groups to report to the District Attorney’s office regarding potential criminal charges for being disruptive (Hussain, 2016). While the students denied any violations of campus codes, the Chancellor released a statement describing the incident as “crossing the line of civility” and added “While this university will protect freedom of speech, that right is not absolute” (http://chancellor.uci.edu/engagement/campus-communications/2016/160519-ssi-incident.html). Similarly, the Boston Globe featured an article (Abraham, 2013) revealing that Northeastern University required students who had failed to register a walkout protest to create a civility statement and sign civility pledges, among other sanctions.

Despite the stance of universities nation-wide to engage in institutionally endorsed mechanisms to uphold civility, such as hosting organized conversations, a resurgence of student
protest has been seen in recent years. Although often deemed inappropriate and falling in the
category of uncivil behavior by campus administration, Madison Pauly and Becca Andrews
(2015) pointed to a renewed surge of civil unrest in response to perceived structural inequities.
They suggested:

At a number of schools, organizers are calling for the resignations of top administrators
who they say haven’t done enough to respond to racism on campus. Many plans envision
new racial-justice curricula, and some protesters are asking their colleges to hire
administrators with titles like "Diversity Officer." Most are demanding that colleges hire
more faculty from underrepresented groups—not just black and Latino professors, but
female, queer, and non-gender-binary black and Latino professors, and those who study
identity and culture. And nearly every list of demands includes mandatory sensitivity
training for faculty and staff (para. 2).

Examples of this student activism included students calling out pervasive racism and state
sanctioned race-based violence by joining with the Black Lives Matter movement and social
media campaign #BlackOnCampus, to calling for other forms of community action. Students at
the University of Missouri reported public disruption and protest as instrumental in their success
in achieving the resignation of their University President, who they held responsible for racial
discrimination in their university system (Haidt & Jussim, 2016; Jaschik, 2015). In another
protest deemed “controversial,” a Columbia University senior and her fellow students carried
mattresses on their backs across campus in an effort to express concerns about the university
 mishandling rape charges reported to the campus authorities (Alter, 2015). A statement released
by the University’s President urged for action outside of this type of protest offering,
“Universities increasingly stand alone in society as forums for open community-based discourse
and that surely is the correct and useful path here” (Bollinger & Goldberg, 2014).

At Pennsylvania State University, students used similar attention grabbing tactics as they participated in a “die in” laying on the ground as an effort to protest their concerns over racism. Following the protest, university administrators publicly responded asking that students “consciously choose civility” and stating, “Civility is vital to any expression, and its absence only creates deeper divides among us. Let us all contribute to a more just and tolerant society” (Jones & Sims, 2014). Similarly, Princeton University student members of the “Black Justice League” were called out by their university as committing acts of civil disobedience after the students participated in sit-in protests at the University President’s office. In their public response to the institution, they placed the delineation of civility at the center. They offered, “Freedom of speech is a mark of civil life and should be vigorously defended. However, if freedom of speech is defined as the ability to vilify, erase, and belittle, this definition does not align itself with the noble ideal of civility” (Syvrluga, 2015, para. 12). By the end of 2015, more than eighty universities were represented on the online site at “www.thedemands.org,” in which students did not ask politely, but instead publicly placed their list of “demands” on the virtual web, to outline their action plans for their universities to end structural inequalities. Thus, a renewed interest in campus protest nationally once again placed universities at the center of debates regarding the role of the higher education in defining and upholding civility.

Student-Focused Campus Civility Campaigns

Emerging out of the context of competing discourses and current public debate regarding incivility and its causes, higher education institutions have responded by looking to campus-based civility initiatives to guide students. In “Campus Life: In Search of Community,” Ernest Boyer (1990) proposed that the solution to crises of loss of social connection and civility is for
universities to “create community” by emphasizing the common values of the institution. Reflective of this assumption and an accountability discourse, Joshua Hayden (2010) offered that a framework of civility contributes to “deep learning” and added, “In engaging students beyond dialogue and etiquette, practicing civility builds teamwork skills based on common agreement and accountability. As opposed to individualistic ways of discourse, teams necessarily have a common aim and tie to one another despite their differences” (p. 23).

Alan Scher Zagier (2012, para. 2) contended that student-focused civility campaigns are linked to university diversity efforts, noting, “From the University of Missouri to Penn State and Vanderbilt, colleges across the country are treating the erosion of common decency as a public health epidemic on par with measles outbreaks and sexually transmitted diseases.” Some publications have begun to mention university attempts via civility campaigns to address these social tensions within campus climates. Often a response to campus crisis, how these “diversity” initiatives are framed varies, drawing on multivalent and historically embedded understandings of the meaning of civility. An example of this includes The University of Missouri “Show Me Respect” campaign, established following two White students pleading guilty in April, 2010 to misdemeanor charges for dumping cotton balls outside the school’s Black Culture Center during Black History Month (Zagier, 2012). Tracey Owens Patton (2004) stated, “Civility has been expressed as the notion that a campus community is a ‘family’ and the university is ‘home’ to administrators, faculty, and students” (p 69), revealing that the pathways taken up by institutions may be to seemingly make invisible the tensions of the community by dissolving appearances of difference among its members.

While campuses across the country enact these campaigns, only one empirical article could be found regarding campus civility campaigns specifically. This was the research brief
“Campus-Wide Initiatives to Promote Student Civility” (2012) published through the Education Advisory Board, with a forward by P. M. Forni. The authors, Erin McDougal & Sarah Moore, (2012) offered their finding, “Across institutions, contacts describe three different reasons for establishing a campus-wide civility initiative: student conduct issues on campus, incidents at other higher education institutions, and national events” (p. 6). In addition, in this qualitative study based on interviews of campus administrators at twelve institutions across the U.S., McDougal & Moore (2012) noted a lack of quality assessment of the civility campaigns at these universities in which they were implemented. They summarized, “Contacts explain that due to the difficulty of assessing the impacts and effectiveness of an entire campus campaign, most institutions rely on attendance records at events and anecdotal evidence to assess the success of a civility initiative” (McDougal. & Moore, 2012, p. 6). They further elaborated that only two of the participating institutions used formal surveys for the evaluation of specific civility-focused events. More importantly, none of the institutions conducted assessment on the effectiveness of the civility campaign in its entirety, indicating a gap in the literature and a need for further investigation. Drawing on critical discourse analysis and critical theory as a tool, this study, based on critical theory, helps to expand the body of scholarship explicitly examining campus civility campaigns.

**Critical Theory**

Given the specific inter disciplinary contributions of critical discourse analysis, along with the application of CDA to address social problems, this study draws its theoretical base from a foundation of critical theories, to be distinguished from the more classical Critical Theorists (note capitalization) associated with the German Frankfurt School (Adorno, 1973; Adorno & Horkheimer, 1972; Habermas, 1976). Steinberg and Kincheloe (2010) described the emergence
of critical theories as an infusion of “theoretical bricolage” drawn from a broad scholarship from modern interpretivist communities which have evolved since the early introduction of early Critical schools of thought. It is upon this understanding of critical theories that this research is defined, reflective of Douglas Kellner’s (2003) delineation:

‘Critical’ is synoptic and wide-ranging, encompassing ‘critical’ in the Greek sense of the verb *krinein*, which signifies to discern, reflect, and judge, and ‘theory’ in the sense of the Greek noun *theoria* which refers to a way of seeing and contemplation (p.51).

The shared key assumptions coming out of scholarship within the critical tradition are interwoven into the methodology of critical discourse analysis which are employed in the study and discussed in more detail in Chapter Three. Key tenets of critical theories relevant to this investigations include: the dialectical relationship and co-construction of the discursive, social, and material; interrelation of power, knowledge, and meaning-making; critical examination of standards of “normativity,” “norms,” and processes of “normalization; and a decentered, destabilized subject, each of which is elaborated below.

**Dialectical Relationship and Co-Construction of the Discursive, Social, and Material**

While this study focuses on the discursive as the point of entry through a critical discourse analysis of campus civility campaigns, it is with the understanding that the discursive is shaped through (and also shapes) the social and material world. Critical theorist ideologies may be described as “differently rooted in the same faith” (Franks, 2002, p. 2) in that they have readily been situated against purely positivist, realist, functionalist, or social constructivist traditions. This study supports a move away from tidy delineations in which domains may be isolated to embrace a “suspicion of Cartesianism’s penchant for boundary fixing” (Steinberg & Kincheloe, 2010, p. 141), and acknowledges the overlap of the social, material, and discursive.
Critical theorists encourage transgression of divides reflecting limiting binarism, such as distinctions between the individual and the social system, and the material and the discursive. Instead, critical theories suggest an “emergent interplay” through porous borders across these elements, which accounts for the complexities of, for example, a materiality marked by bodies “of and in the world,” reflecting a materiality produced by and through the discursive and social, as well as physical (Tuana, 2008, p.198). The assertion of these multiple domains as engaged in a dialectical relationship articulates the material/social/discursive as not only reflective, but also productive. Likewise, as cited in Burbules and Berk (1999, p 53), noted critical theorist Paolo Freire (1987) urged a reading the world (material and social) with reading the word (discursive), each shaped and understood by the other. Within these critical theories, the domains of the discursive, social, and material are not unitary variables which can be wholly separated from their counterparts. This is a particularly salient aspect with significance to this campus civility campaign project via critical discourse analysis. This investigation has a purpose to describe, interpret, and ultimately provide possibilities for intervention regarding the formation of student subjectivities through and with civility discourses embedded in university sanctioned civility initiatives.

**Interrelation of Power, Knowledge, and Meaning-Making**

Across the multiplicities of critical traditions, the concepts of power, knowledge, and meaning-making are interrelated and understood to have impacts on the social, discursive, and material systems and effects. Jorgensen and Phillips (2002, p. 77) reflected, “As its name indicates, critical discourse analysis is intended to generate critical social research, that is, research that contributes to the rectification of injustice and inequality in society,” tied to asymmetries in power relations. This study employing critical discourse analysis has practical
application to a problem embedded within these dynamics. Specifically, it addresses the unexplored application of student-focused civility campaigns. An emphasis through critical theories, and studies such as this one, is on the interaction of these multiple concepts not as an exercise for intellectual abstraction, but towards the development of concepts foregrounded in criticalist research traditions because they have import on daily lives.

In such, critical theorists reject universal and absolute groundings of truth, but speak to the ‘politics of meaning-making.’ Practitioners advancing critical theories challenge positivist orientations and instead assert that understandings of truth and knowledge are intertwined with social locations and embedded within implicit power relations. Meanings as such are negotiations which may be contested, and emanate from historical, social, discursive, and material underpinnings, reflective of the non-static, dynamic nature of power, knowledge, and meaning. In examining common assumptions held by criticalists, Kincheloe, Mclaren, and Steinberg (2011) concurred that among these basic shared premises are the assertions, “All thought is fundamentally mediated by power relations that are social and historically constituted; facts can never be isolated from the domain of values or removed from some form of ideological inscription” (164). Therefore, who, what, or how the knowledge/power nexus is and articulates, what power and knowledge does and should do, and how power, knowledge, and meaning are delimited, employed, and measured, are all central elements for theorizing and investigation.

Knowledge production, consumption, and interpretation are aspects of the critical agenda. Reflective of this agenda, within this investigation is an acknowledgement of the multiple hierarchies that are part of the naturalized landscape of higher education. For example, subject positions of faculty are differentiated from student and staff, and also distinguished from administrator within campus structures and organization. Within this hierarchical institutional
categorizing, assumptions are made regarding the limits and value of knowledge production of individuals, as well as varying social groups. This study explores what knowledge is held up as relevant, and to what ends. It probes how meaning is created through and with a student-focused campus civility campaign.

In embracing these criticalist traditions, flat concepts of power envisioned as simply negative, sovereign or juridical are rejected, along with the power and agency binary, and structural determinism. Instead a case is made in favor of a complex, nuanced hybrid understanding of power. This notion of power, departing from traditional frameworks that articulate power through a centralized and vertical top-down transactions, may be described as diffused, productive, and “in circulation” as a “micro-physics flowing through the capillaries of the social body” (Foucault, 1977, p. 26). As such, discourse is then situated as an instrument and an effect of micro and macro level power, as well as power itself, in that discourse enables and/or delimits particular ways of thinking, speaking, becoming, and being. For example, this study not only digs into what civility signifies within these institutional contexts, but by extension, explores how students and other social actors are positioned in relation to the civility discourses enacted through these campaigns.

**Critical Examination of Standards of Normativity, Norms, and Normalization**

Critical theorists hold for inspection the concepts and application of *normativity* and *normalcy*, and descriptors and categories such as *normal*, as disputable, and deemed largely as a functioning category by and for dominant groups. Disability studies scholar Rosemarie Garland-Thomson (2007, p. 114) explained, “We use the cultural story that we call normalcy to structure our shapes.” Our understandings of ourselves, our bodies, and others are fashioned from a language embedded in the “cultural imaginary” of normality. Comparably, queer theorists
question these claims to legitimacy encompassed in the concept of normality. For example, Judith Butler (1990) and scholars (e.g., Warner, 1993) theorized this problematizing of normality through a lens of gender, sex, and sexuality as “performance,” rather than a natural state. Feminist critical schools of thought also echo these sentiments toward normality. In their chapter entitled “Normativity and Norms” for the *Oxford Handbook of Feminist Theory*, the authors (Spade & Willse, 2016) suggested:

Feminisms approach cultural ‘common sense’ about gender and sexuality critically, exposing how the putative facts about gender, bodies, family structures, and work roles are historically contingent and culturally constructed, as well as both harmful and open to transformation. Much of what feminists challenge are arrangements that have been deemed ‘natural’, such as gender role assignments supposedly rooted in immutable bodily difference (p. 551).

What is taken for granted and inculcated into the status quo is often at the crux of debate throughout feminist and gender and queer studies critical scholarship.

Similar to challenges by these scholars to gender and sex, what have been assumed to be ‘natural’ categories of reference, key critical race theorists such as Richard Delgado and Jean Stefanic (2001) challenged the social construction of race, and explicated how whiteness and racism has been used as a tool for dominance through a positioning of normality. To illustrate this, Gloria Ladson-Billings (2014) offered, “Race is not a construct of the powerless or the dispossessed. It functions to keep a particular set of power relations in place and to make whiteness hegemonic and positioned as the site of normativity” (p. 261). In a similar vein, scholars such as Dean Chavers (2009) in indigenous and post-colonial studies, critiqued normativity as a foundation to justify imperialist practices and symbolic and physical brutalities
against non-dominant groups. In the essay “Normal,” Elizabeth Stephens (2014) suggested, “The ongoing proliferation of such critiques is a reflection of how privileged the idea of normality remains” (p. 141). While the particular locus of emphasis varies, within each of these arenas of scholarship concepts of normativity and normalization, and by contrast deviancy or abnormality, are taken up and subject to inquiry, critique, and deconstruction. In this study, one means of analyzing how normality is taken up includes an investigation of how ideal, and by comparison non-ideal, student actors are produced and reflected within the campus civility campaign. Another related aspect of the study is how civility is described, as opposed to how incivility (and deviancy) is conceptualized.

A Decentered, Destabilized Subject

Critical theories, and particularly influences from poststructural theories, seek to, in general, proceed outside of humanist understandings of the unified subject (Mansfield, 2000). Within this study, subjectivity will be used to represent the social construction of self-hood as always constituted through positionality, as self-in-relation, over identity, which implies essence, coherence and stability. Marnina Gonick (2006, p. 19) commented, “In poststructural theory, the subject is never fully complete; it is always in process. As a result, this subject is always simultaneously a product and producer of the symbolic economy.” Gonick (2006) articulated that the self is taken up simultaneously as subject and object. Questions of who or what as to subjectivity, must then be co-mingled with questions pointing to the practices central to the how of becoming or being with reference to subjectivity formation.

Bronwyn Davies (1997) responded to critiques that the possibility of agential action is incompatible with this interpretation of the subject. She proposed that this account “is not to destroy the humanist subject nor to create its binary other, the 'anti-humanist subject' (whatever
that might be), but to enable us to see the subject's fictionality, whilst recognizing how powerful fictions are in constituting what we take to be real” (p. 271). Similarly, James Overboe (2007) posed that the subject is trapped within matrices of normality. He suggested that normality, while an illusory concept, nonetheless, has physical, emotional, social, financial, and other consequences within the generative function of the “shadows of normality” (p. 229) in morphing subjectivities. This reflects a destabilized notion of the subject and one that is fluid and co-constructed through the social, discursive, and material, and the meanings affixed through and with those domains.

Davies (1997) elaborated that within this understanding of a poststructuralist self, “We make language reflexively visible, that is, not just visible as an object, but visible as an active force shaping bodies, shaping desire, shaping perception” (p. 281). Illustrative of this, Debra Youdell (2006), drawing on the previous work by Butler (1990) and Foucault (1978/1990), exposed in her study “the performatory constitution of subjects” (p. 35) by analyzing the processes within a school system that allow for the formation of particular types of educational subjects. Youdell (2006) further explained, “The subject is understood not as pre-existing, self-knowing, and continuous, but as subjectivated through her/his ongoing constitution in and by discourse” (Youdell, 2006, p. 35). She concluded that applying discursive analysis provides a lens giving insight into the “endurance of particular configurations of educational inequalities,” (Youdell, 2006, p. 35) but also an opportunity to intervene through a disruption of dominant discourses and routine educational practices of inequity that organize and shape students and their understandings of themselves. Similarly, this research study deploys critical discursive analysis in part to explore university civility campaigns in relation to their positioning of student subjectivities.
Conclusion

Critical theory is employed throughout this study, beginning with the very choice of a campus civility campaign as the selected topic of interest. The entanglements of everyday practices of higher education institutions such as campus civility campaigns are experienced as real, with material conditions and consequences on (student) bodies constructed with and through these campaigns. Through a critical reading of the study materials, I explore my topic through textual and interdiscursive deconstruction. I probe how a campus civility campaign may uphold or rub up against constructions of socio-culturally defined normality, which sets up what is deemed as appropriate modes of student behavior or citizenship, and by contrast, deviancy from this normative frame.

Using a higher education institution as a particular entry point to my analysis, I encounter discursive and social practices which engage the very question of how civility (and incivility) is defined. These are questions whose answers are value based and culturally, socially, and historically situated or embedded. In answering “What is civility?” the circulation of power may not seem obvious, but is intimately linked to logic systems based on certain presumptions and supporting ideologies. Campus civility campaigns are discursive practices which proceed as if they are purveyors of stand-alone truths. These truths are translated to hold particular meanings within a material-symbolic economy. The issue of power differentials is inextricably tied to central inquiries related to what civility articulates, as well as what civility is understood to do, or should do.

Consistent with the aims of critical theory, I use the study to investigate what everyday assumptions are relied upon to uphold the campus civility discourses and infuse them into public consciousness. Critical theory provides the foundations for illuminating structural features and assumed to be transparent social relations of higher education institutions. A close and engaged
analysis entails acknowledging the broader frame in which these discursive practices are situated, such as the circulating discourses of crises around the ‘incivility spiral’ and other crises discourses in higher education and the extended community. Within the study, I engage critical theory to hold skeptical ‘common sense’ logics of the conventional practices of a campus civility campaign. In the following chapter, I describe the methodology that I employ to achieve these ends.
CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Problem and Research Questions

The entanglements of civility discourses, philosophical rationalities, ideological standpoints, and the formation of educational subjects are examined through a lens of circulating power relations. As such, they are investments with particular agendas. In unearthing textual meaning, this critical discourse analysis examines the interplay of discourse elements, including the processes, contexts, structures, texts, and content, which enable power inequities. As introduced in Chapter One, central to the direction of this study of a campus civility campaign targeted to students are the following research questions, which were applied through a critical discourse analysis:

4. How is “civility” discursively constructed within the texts of a university civility campaign targeted to students?

Sub-questions included:

- Who contributes to this discourse and how? Who is missing from the discussions?
- What are the elements of the civility discourse expressed in the campaign?
- What are the key socio-semantic strategies used to present civility within this campaign?
- How is civility defined and represented?
What elements of civility are supported or are identified as important? What elements are discredited, downplayed, or omitted?

What key themes recur throughout the texts to represent civility?

How are the civility discourses implicated in setting institutional priorities?

5. What rationalities and assumptions underlie the texts?

Sub-questions included:

What assumptions and rationales are apparent in the civility campaign?

How do these rationalities shape the discourse?

How is the civility discourse legitimized?

What are the proposed purposes and rationales for the campaign? What problems are constructed?

How does civility come to be constructed within the documents as a solution to these problems? Why is civility considered a solution? What justifications are provided?

What conceptual frameworks of civility does the campaign develop, uphold, reproduce, or contest?

6. How are university students constructed and situated as educational subjects with and through the civility discourses?

Sub-questions included:

Who is present and missing from the texts and discussions? Who is, and is not, subject to the civility campaign?

How is an “ideal/non-ideal” social actor presented within the university civility campaign?
How do social actors within the education institution get differentiated, measured and classified through and with the civility discourse practice?

How are the expectations, responsibilities, possibilities, and limitations of students defined within the civility campaign?

How are the opportunities for being and becoming social actors of the institution positioned through and with these particular discursive and social practices?

What practices and technologies are offered as ways to become ideal student practitioners of civility?

Study Design: Critical Discourse Analysis

This research moves beyond the descriptive to apply an explanatory analysis to investigate not only representation through and with content and processes, but also how discourse serves the production and interpretation of social relations and events. The research exposes rationalities which undergird and legitimize the campus civility campaigns, and connects those with circulating discourses, revealing what Fairclough (1989) described as the “power behind” discourse, or the unseen ideological forces governing discourses in the public domain. This supports critical discourse analysis as a useful tool for important inquiry in the field of the social and cultural foundations of education, drawing on the interplay of the micro (text), meso (discursive), and macro (socio-cultural) systems which inform, compose, and operationalize the educational practices expressed through campus civility campaigns.

CDA Overview

Each of these central conceptual facets of critical theories is integrated throughout the study. Carmen Siebold (2005) observed the “theoretical perspective that lies behind the methodology provides the context for the process as well as grounding its logic and criteria, and
the epistemology or theory of knowledge is seen as embedded in the theoretical perspective and thereby the methodology” (pp.18-19). This study is also built directly within the frame of a critical discourse analysis (commonly referred to as “CDA”), which may be described as both a theoretical and methodological framework (Fairclough, 1993, 1995, 2014; Gee, 2014; Jaworski & Coupland, 1999; Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002; Locke, 2004; McGregor, 2010; van Dijk, 1993, 2001; Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

CDA is a recognized area of scholarship built upon the influence and contributions of many disciplines, with core tenets emerging from the intersections of cultural studies, media studies, and critical linguistics. A significant body of work lays a foundation from which to explore critical discourse analysis, which emerged in part as a response to the critique that discourse analysis applied generally insufficiently recognizes and addresses key elements of power and privilege, and by extension, practices of hegemony (Fairclough, 1992; 1995; Foucault, 1978/1990; Gee, 1996; Hodge & Kress, 1993; Kress, 1991; Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002; van Dijk, 1998; Wodak, 1996, 2002; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Given the interdisciplinary nature of this theoretical framework, there is variance among approaches.

However, despite this lack of theoretical and methodological orthodoxy, at the core of all critical discourse analysis is an examination of discourse. While the term discourse is often signified only through the lens of linguistic terms, critical discourse analysis encompasses a complicated, polysemic understanding of discourse. Chris Weedon (1987), on the character of discourse, offered:

Discourse signifies ways of constituting knowledge, together with the social practices, forms of subjectivity and power relations which inhere in such knowledges and relations between them. Discourses are more than ways of thinking and producing meaning. They
constitute the 'nature' of the body, unconscious and conscious mind, and emotional life of
the subjects they seek to govern (p. 108).

Discourse is understood as power-implicit, value-laden, and influential in the shaping of
worldviews. Within this context subjectivities are viewed as mutable and contingent, co-
constructed with and through the discursive. Luke (2000) described discourse as “systematic
clusters of themes, statements, ideas and ideologies” (p. 456), emphasizing the many layers and
domains of interactions entailed within discourse. Similarly, the discursive may be described as
simultaneous linguistic and social practice that is capable of being generative, reflective, and
restrictive of meaning.

difficult to think and act outside it” (p. 485). Similarly, Rebecca Raby (2002) suggested,
“Privileging one set of representations over another, discourses tend to claim the status of
truth…As such, and as discourses work as truth statements, it is difficult to ‘see through’ them to
identify how our reality is shaped” (p.430). Within this ubiquity, the forces of the discourses on
practice often become invisible without close examination.

Discursive framing moves beyond simply naming, to contribute to the subject/object
becoming and being within a contingent power/knowledge dynamic (Corker and French, 1999;
Hughes & Patterson, 1997). Education discourses are expressed within and through a system
“actively shaping and producing subject positions and material realities in which we find
ourselves” (Allen, 2008, p. 52). Making visible this context, including patterns and exceptions in
which texts are conceived and put forward, is critical to interpreting the development and
meaning-making of the discursive formation, and applicable to the investigation of a campus
civility campaign.
Key Features of CDA

In addition to extending a complex and multi-faceted understanding of discourse, critical discourse analysis, while subject to variation, is distinguished by key features which have been theorized by many notable scholars across the field (Fairclough, 1992; 1995; Foucault, 1978/1990; Gee, 1996; Kress, 1991; Hodge & Kress, 1993; Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002; van Dijk, 1998; Wodak, 1996, 2002; Wodak & Meyer, 2009). However, within this broad frame of critical discourse analysis as a theoretical and methodological base, and through the legacy of CDA practitioners, are some consistent foundational principles suggested by Norman Fairclough and Wodak (1997) which are often cited in other volumes regarding CDA (i.e. Rogers, 2004) as follows:

- CDA addresses social problems;
- Power relations are discursive;
- Discourse constitutes society and culture;
- Discourse does ideology work;
- Discourse is historical;
- A socio-cognitive approach is needed to understand how relations between text and society is mediated;
- CDA is interpretative and explanatory and uses systematic methodology; And
- CDA is a socially committed scientific paradigm.

One of the key principles upon which critical discourse analysis is built is that CDA addresses social problems. This important aspect of critical discourse analysis is the delineation of research framed as a ‘critical’ using CDA as a pragmatic tool with an action orientation. Rebecca Rogers (2004) explained, “Analyzing texts for power is not enough to disrupt discursive
powers. Instead the analyst must work from the analysis of texts to the social and political contexts in which the texts emerge” (p. 4). For example, a CDA study (Gabel, Reid, Pearson, Ruiz, & Hume-Dawson, 2016) of websites of university disability offices and services was placed within the context of “diversity” discourses and closely examined the expansion and extension of diversity and inclusion discourses as reaching beyond the commonly applied race-only discussions of diversity within the broader political and education arenas.

Another foundational premise upon which CDA is built is that discourse constitutes society and culture. Stephen Ball (2006) asserted the inter-relation of discourse to the broader context. He summarized, “We do not speak a discourse, it speaks us. We are the subjectivities, the voices, the knowledge, the power relations that discourse constructs and allows” (p.48). Similarly, Fairclough (2001) proposes, “The values of textual features only become real, socially operative, if they are embedded in social interaction, and discourses only become real, socially operative, as parts of institutional and societal processes’ (p.117). Thus, one of the key tenets of CDA is that language use is a ‘social practice’ which is constituted via social structure, while simultaneously stabilizing or shifting that structure (Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

The inter-relation of power to discourse is a central facet of critical discourse analysis. Illustrative of this, Stephen Ball (1990, p. 2) offered:

Discourses are about what can be said and thought, but also about who can speak, when, and with what authority. Discourses embody meaning and social relationships, they constitute both subjectivity and power relations… In so far as discourses are constituted by exclusions as well as inclusions, by what cannot as well as what can be said, they stand in antagonistic relationship to other discourses.
As such, power is formed by, and exercised through, discourse. Discourses “can be both an instrument and an effect of power” (Foucault, 1990, p. 101). Thus, drawing on a Foucauldian legacy, both power and discourse are understood as complex, diffuse, “embodied and enacted rather than possessed, discursive rather than purely coercive, and constitute agents rather than being deployed by them” (Gaventa, 2003, p. 1).

Another assumption characteristic of CDA is that discourse “does ideology work.” Norman Fairclough (1995) distinguishes the term ideology to clarify ideology as “meaning in the service of power” (p. 14). Relevant to this research, Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (2009, p. 8) contended, “It is not that type of ideology on the surface of culture that interests CDA, it is rather the more hidden and latent type of ‘everyday beliefs’ in which CDA practitioners are interested.” Susan Iverson (2008) illuminated the relationship of ideology manifested through dominant discourse. She proposed, “Some discourses are taken up more readily than others…Dominant discourses are reaffirmed through their institutionalization and can be identified most easily by the way in which they have become taken for granted” (p. 184). Discourse then is undergirded by ideology, either explicitly, or implicitly, serving particular agendas and the construction of particular social actors.

CDA also incorporates the presumption that discourse is historical. Discourses and texts achieve signification within specific socio-cultural, ideological, temporal, and spatial contexts. Anabela Carvalho (2008) reflecting on this commonly held belief of the historical quality of the discursive suggested, “Texts are always built on previous ones, taking up or challenging former discourses” (p. 163). Texts and discourses do not stand alone, but are mediated in relation to the contexts in which they are situated, and connected to a discursive legacy salient to the shaping and interpretation of knowledge, power, and meaning.
An additional central assumption of CDA is that a socio-cognitive approach is needed to understand how relations between text and society are mediated. Influential to this articulation, CDA scholar Teun van Dijk (1997) proposed that social actors negotiate discourse not only from their standpoint and encounters as an individual, but also draw from the “social representation” or values, ideas, and symbols of their communities. The meaning of texts is not only linguistic, but carried through social significance and understandings. Ruth Wodak and Michael Meyer (2009) explained, “These socially shared perceptions form the link between the social system and the individual cognitive system, and perform the translation, homogenization and coordination between external requirements and subjective experience” (p. 25). CDA proceeds with an assumption of a link between the discursive influence on and through individual perceptions, which are contextualized within, and mediated through, the social order.

Another important aspect of CDA is that it moves beyond description to provide interpretation and explanation, and uses systematic methodology. John Flowerdew (1999) summarized this point offering:

By familiarizing oneself with the situation of the text, one is able to interpret it; but at the same time, in analyzing the micro features of the text one also gains insights into the situation in which it was produced. This is what is meant when discourse analysts talk about the reflexive relation between language and context or society (p. 1083).

While there is a clear heterogeneity to the applications and analytics involved in critical discourse analysis projects (Fairclough & Wodak, 1997), there is a presupposition among practitioners that CDA meets a need previously unmet by bridging the gap of micro analysis with macro analysis, and by making connections between language use and discourse with power, dominance and inequity (van Dijk, 1998). Flowerdew (1999) contended, “There are systematic,
although not one-to-one, relationships between linguistic form and meaning” (p. 1094). Thus, the application of critical discourse analysis is not haphazard, but involves a critical and reflective orientation.

Of final mention regarding the shared foundational premises of CDA is that it is a socially committed scientific paradigm. Van Dijk (1993) posed that CDA is set apart from other analyses in the discursive tradition in its encouragement of an “explicit sociopolitical stance” through work that “is admittedly and ultimately political” (p. 252). Similarly, Wodak (2001) suggested, “CDA aims to investigate critically social inequality as it is expressed, signaled, constituted, legitimized, and so on, by language in use, or discourse” (p. 2). Through critical analyses, CDA puts forward an agenda research as emancipatory action.

Application of CDA to Studies in Education

Critical discourse analysis has become an established area of study institutionalized in scholarly communities globally, and represented through publications such as Discourse and Society formed in 1990, Critical Discourse Studies, and Discourse and Communication and Visual Semiotics, among many others (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). Studies applying discourse analysis have also been featured in a number of scholarly journals devoted to education, including Higher Education (Metcalf & Fenwick, 2009), The Journal of Diversity in Higher Education (Gabel, Reid, Pearson, Ruiz, & Hume-Dawson, 2015) and other academic journals. Elizabeth Rogers (2004, p. 1) produced a text devoted specifically to the application of CDA to education, asserting that this type of research design holds “much promise for educational research” in its ability to explore “difficult to pinpoint” power-knowledge relationships, and because CDA is “amply prepared to handle contradictions” as they are enacted through discursive practices.
Critical discourse analysis has often been applied to lines of investigation exploring contemporary issues in higher education. For example, the work of Hensley, Galilee-Belfer, and Lee (2013) explored the discourse of ‘the greater good’ on public and private roles of higher education. Other examples of studies applying critical discourse analysis to higher education include an examination on the construction of disability on a university system’s websites (Gabel, et. al., 2015), an analysis of university attendance policies (Macfarlane, 2013) using critical discourse analysis, and an examination of the Department of Education publications related to discourses of economic advancement and citizenship (Suspitsyna, 2012). The usefulness of CDA to problems related to education is evident in the expansiveness of the many areas in which CDA is applied. Additional examples among the numerous applications of CDA to education studies include: discourse and education policy (Arnott & Ozga, 2010; Ball, 2006; Iverson, 2008; Liasidou, 2008; Tlili, 2007), the charter school movement (Carr, 2015), the social construction of learning (Gee & Green, 1998), state endorsed textbook selections (Upadhyaya, et. al, 2010), curricula and citizenship discourses (Abowitz and Harnish, 2006), representation of study abroad (Doerr, 2012), literacy education (Luke, 1992), classroom management (Wagner & Herbel-Eisenmann, 2008), teacher identities (Stevens, 2014), student identities (Nilsson, Ekloft, & Ottoson, 2009; Ryan, 2008; Switzer, 2010), the corporatization of higher education, university websites (Mautner, 2005; Zhang & O’Halloran, 2013), and distance learning (Lee & Brett, 2014).

**Critiques of CDA**

The scholarly literature has cited a variety of critiques of critical discourse analysis, summarized here and offered in more detail in the literature review chapter. Among the primary critiques, as noted in the body of scholarship, include the lack of orthodoxy and heterogeneity of
methods and strategies (Pennycook, 2001; Widdowson, 1998). Addresses to respond to the critique of the heterogeneity of critical discourse analysis have been offered by a number of principal critical discourse analysis scholars. For example, Gilbert Weiss and Ruth Wodak (2003) responded that CDA may be understood as “a theoretical synthesis of conceptual tools” (p.7). CDA practitioners see this multiplicity as one of the qualities which contributes to the theoretical and methodological robustness of the CDA scholarship. In addition, they point to a set of shared tenets and assumptions that offer cohesion across this variance (Fairclough, 2001; Gee, 2004; Jorgensen & Phillips, 2002, Rogers, 2004; van Dijk, 1993, Wodak & Meyer, 2009).

Criticism of critical discourse analysis also often concerns the practice of “cherry picking” (Wodak, 2008, p. 11) the examples that best suit the researcher assumptions and an over-reliance on the textual analysis alone despite making claims regarding the social nature of discourse and critical discourse analysis as a tool to address inequities (Haig, 2004). In response to the concerns regarding validity of data, or the “cherry picking” and the over-reliance on the textual domain, practitioners of critical discourse analysis respond by asserting the salience of the interdiscursive and use of intertextuality as analytical tools, as well as the placement of micro, meso, and macro analysis in conversation. In addition, Wodak (2008) suggested that analytic rigor, via “providing retroductable, self-reflective presentations of past or current research processes” (p. 11) is central to addressing these claims. This transparency and close attention to procedure is strongly endorsed across the school of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough 2001; Gee, 2004; van Dijk, 1993).

Methodological Standards

Given its situation within a qualitative research paradigm, generalizability, as it is held up in positivist frameworks, is not a central purpose of this study. However, taking into
consideration the layered goals of close description with interpretation and explanation, this research has the potential to offer valuable insights to education practitioners, and higher education institutions in particular. In addition, the study serves as an intervention by exposing the often hidden characteristics of pervasive civility discourses, and their ties to the broader climate of other encompassing discourses and socio-political contexts.

The study also makes no claims to objectivity and this is not a primary goal of the project. With the evolution of qualitative inquiry, Renato Rosaldo (1993) spoke to the “sea change to the once dominant conceptions of truth and objectivity” (p.21) toward an understanding of the socio-discursive construction of truth as contextualized and contingent. In the chapter “Philosophical Approaches to Qualitative Research,” the authors (Spencer, Pryce, & Walsh) suggested that criticalists “hope and expect their value biases to influence the research process and outcome” (p. 91). This is consistent with the aims of this study and of critical discourse analysis as moving beyond description with a goal of interpretation and explanation toward an end of intervention to address power differentials. This study is made stronger via its multi-layer analysis which includes dialogue among the micro (text), meso (discursive), and macro (socio-political) level analysis.

A final element of consideration is the issue of rigor as it relates to my research philosophy. Deidre Davies and Jennifer Dodd (2002) posed that rigor in qualitative research should not be a concept dismissed based on its roots in a quantitative and positivist tradition, but rather embraced in terms of “attentiveness to research practice” (p. 288). In this study, I will document and report on the researcher decision-making process, and provide specific textual examples when presenting data to allow for exposing the basis of interpretation. I concur with Davies and Dodd’s (2002) proposal that “Qualitative research can meaningfully speak about
rigor: terms such as attentiveness, empathy, sensitivity, respect, honesty, reflection, conscientiousness, engagement, awareness, openness, context are meaningful in building a framework of rigor” (p. 279), consistent with my research philosophy. In the qualitative paradigm, systemic and rigorous analysis are associated with transparency, substantiation of claims with evidence, and sufficient representation of analysis results and process (Anfara, Brown, & Mangione, 2002)

This study on campus civility campaigns also meets quality standards as suggested by David Silverman’s (2006) recommendations for producing quality qualitative research in that it makes use of naturally occurring data (published through the internet and accessible to the public), addresses the interrelationships between elements (i.e. textual, discursive, socio-cultural), attempts theoretically fertile research (based on the rich legacies of CDA scholars), and begins with how questions prior to asking why (use of ‘explanatory critique’ that builds to an analysis of power relations). In addition, Silverman (2006) points to issues of reliability in qualitative research by making the interpretations available for inspection by the reader via transparency in discussion of the data by allowing the reader access to the original data by using "low-inference descriptors" and providing quotes in context.

**Study Scope, Data Selection and Data Set**

In the qualitative research paradigm, the process of sampling is not a singular activity, but is developed through multiple decisions as the researcher engages in the reflective process of considering the theoretical grounding and purpose of the study (Emmel, 2013). In addition, according to Michael Patton (1990), the umbrella of “purposeful sampling,” in which the researcher seeks to further the research agenda and objectives applies to the selection techniques utilized in all qualitative studies. He offered, “Qualitative inquiry typically focuses in depth on
relatively small samples, even single cases, selected purposefully” (Emmel, 2013, p. 169). With regard to sample size, the goal within the critical discourse analysis paradigm is not to develop generalizability, but to explain, describe, and interpret (Maxwell, 2013) the phenomenon under investigation. Citing Morse and Field (1995), Timothy Guetterman (2015, para. 5) concluded, “Consequently, sampling is not a matter of representative opinions, but a matter of information richness. Appropriateness and adequacy are paramount in qualitative sampling.”

Accordingly, I employed a purposeful sample technique with regard to data selection. Only one U.S. higher public university civility campaign was selected for inclusion in the study. Purposeful sampling is a technique commonly employed in the field of qualitative research given its benefits in identifying and selecting information-rich data sources, while allowing for an effective use of limited resources (Patton, 2002). First, a “convenience” sampling technique was used in order to reflect colleges and universities with the following criteria for selection: 1) four-year research college or universities, 2) had implemented student-focused civility campaigns or initiatives; and 3) also had texts available online from which to complete the analysis. Using an initial internet Google search with the terms: “university civility campaign,” “university civility initiatives,” “college civility campaign,” and “college civility initiative,” provided an initial yield of 81 campuses with civility campaign materials available via the web. After an initial analysis to determine the particular campus to serve as the point of study, with regard to selection of the texts for analysis, I engaged “opportunistic,” or “emergent,” sampling, which is following new data sources as a result of finding references within a current text to lead to an additional data source. This flexibility of data sourcing allowed for a more robust understanding of the discursive practice and its nuances.
Given a consideration of the accessibility of resources available online (Merriam, 2009), and the thick description and accompanying interpretation that is characteristic of CDA and other similar investigative strategies, a single case study was chosen given it was consistent with the applied methodology. Also, with the wide access to online data, the single case approach provided for the avoidance of “data drowning,” or collecting too much data so that the researcher fails to process the data meaningfully (Lobe, Livingstone, Olafsson, K., & Simões, 2008). For example, while not including CDA specifically, John W. Creswell (2013) recommended a sample size of no more than four cases for case study research. As a result, many higher education institution types are not represented among those to be analyzed, including faith based universities, military academies, community colleges, or historically black universities. This was not to assert that civility discourses are not permeating these campus communities. This choice was related to study manageability and quality control. This decision to delimit the scope of the study assisted in fulfilling methodological rigor by providing the study with a specific frame of reference, and addressing the suggestion to work with a sample that is small when producing a close investigation through language and methods such as those applied in critical discourse analysis (Askehave, 2007; Daniel, 2011; Potter & Wetherell, 1987).

Specifically, Scarlet Oak University (a pseudonym) was selected among the potential campuses as the site for study for multiple reasons. The first reason was that it met the three initial criteria for selection (four year college/university, civility campaign targeted to students, civility texts available online). Additionally, there was a high quantity of SOU civility-related texts available online, along with a variety of sources and types for these texts. A related benefit of selecting this particular campus for study was the extended run of the campaign, which began in 2011 and was still being implemented. Another key feature regarding selection was the
similarities (i.e. southeast region, size, funding, and type, among others) of this institution to that of the one in which I am affiliated. This gave me the opportunity to avoid potential conflicts of interest that may have emerged from researching my own university, while still allowing me the possibility to gain applicable insights. Furthermore, Scarlet Oak University (SOU) is a large, research, state flagship university, and therefore, likely to yield influence with other institutions and the field of higher education.

Located in the Southeast of the United States, Scarlet Oak University is a co-ed and residential, public, state-funded research institution that offers both undergraduate and graduate degree programs. With an urban setting, and this flagship campus is located in one of the state’s largest cities. Campus reports include total enrollment numbers of just over 28,000 students, whose gender demographics indicate nearly half of students reported as male, and nearly half reported as female. Published university statistics specify that more than 75% of the students attending Scarlet Oak University self-described as being White.

One of the features common to many variations of CDA applications is the investigation of aspects of “naturally occurring language use by real language users” as opposed to “researcher-provoked” data (Wodak & Meyer, 2009). In this study, I drew from the “naturally occurring language use” of texts circulated on the digital web regarding campus civility campaigns. Within the critical discourse analysis conventions and applied within this study, a 'text' is defined as any instance of written and spoken language that has coherence and coded meanings (Luke, 1996). Researchers Gee, Michaels, & O’ Connor (1992) pointed out that a text is always produced in social settings and its composition is therefore not reliant on language alone. One of the leading practitioners associated with CDA, Noman Fairclough (2003) offered that the signification of text is applied in a manner to include the “semiotic dimension of social
events” which would include a range of sources and interactions, such as websites, written documents, and organizational meetings and interviews.

Data used in this study consisted of a wide range of texts related to campus civility campaigns targeted to students. The texts of this investigation included newspaper articles, campus creeds, administrative memorandums, videos, meeting minutes, university website pages, flyers and other publicity materials, as well as other items found on the web regarding discursive civility practices, negotiations, or resistances which provided inter-discursive and socio-political context for the campaigns, giving insight into the context in which the civility campaigns circulated.

After the initial identification of Scarlet Oak University as the case study of focus, online data was gained through a search using the internet and online databases including LexisNexis, Education Resources Information Center (ERIC), Academic Search Premiere, and Academic One File using the terms “Southern Oak University civility” or “SOU civility.” Specifically, the data set was comprised of a total of 135 texts, composed of 77 online documents or webpages reflecting the university-sponsored civility campaign materials, and 58 additional related materials outside of the campaign proper, i.e. publications from other sources, regarding the civility campaigns of Scarlet Oak University (SOU).

**Data Analysis Methods**

In analyzing the study, I placed various levels of analysis in conversation. For example, to all the texts I applied micro analysis, examining each of the texts for indicators of language choice, theme, etc. At the level of meso analysis, I placed the individual texts in relationship to other circulating concurrent discourses, and at the macro level examined broader socio-cultural contextual elements such as the socio-cultural and political context impacting higher education
practice and the implementation of civility campaigns. In placing the domains of the textual, discursive, and contextual in conversation through multi-layered analysis, I built a robust study design.

Pirjo Nikander (2008) observed, “Data collection in discursive research is always followed by a time consuming period during which the researcher immerses in the materials by thorough reading and rereading” (p. 418). Throughout the research process, I implemented this suggestion, along with following the guidance of Huckin (1997), who recommended that the researcher begins the analytic process by reading through a text in an open, undiscerning manner, then reads again closely with an eye for criticality. This critical reading also included being mindful of Fairclough’s (1995) assertion that “Choice entails exclusion as well as inclusion” (p.210). Hilary Janks (1997) discussed the importance of vacillation from positions of engaged (reading with) and estranged (when the positions the text offers to us as readers are far removed from what we think, believe, and value) reading positions, noting “The theory and practice of CDA suggests strategies that enable this deliberate move and argues the need for reading against the text to counterbalance reading with the text” (pp. 330-331).

In his use of CDA, Gordon Waitt (2005) suggested that as a practitioner gains experience with discourse analysis, the process becomes intuitive. With regard to general procedures, I embraced Waitt’s (2005) general guide. He offered seven organizing and procedural steps regarding method as follows: (1) Think outside pre-existing coding categories; (2) Become thoroughly familiar with the text; (3) Code with an eye toward the ways in which the author/producer is situated in a particular discursive framework; (4) Ask how is this text presenting ‘truth’; (5) Consider any inconsistencies; Explore, in what ways is the text silencing? And (6) Pay attention to details. Similarly, Wendy Cukier and her colleagues Ojelanki
Ngwenyama, Robert Bauer, and Catherine Middleton (2009) offered the following general procedures in relation to empirical CDA method: (1) Defining the body of data; (2) Analyzing content and coding; (3) Reading and interpreting the text; and (4) Explaining the findings.

While this provided a general guiding framework, I specifically applied the model and tools of CDA to an analysis of each of the texts as developed by Anabela Carvalho (2000, pp. 21-26) in “Discourse Analysis and Media Texts: a Critical Reading of Analytical Tools” and extended from methods of discursive analysis of media texts drawn from theories and methods citing Teun van Dijk (1980, 1985, 1988) for framing and narrative analysis. I developed as a direct extension from Carvalho’s (2000) process for multi-level analysis the “Critical Discourse Analysis Analytic Tool” (Appendix A). This was used as a primary mechanism for recording notes regarding each text across each analytic category. The tool included a mechanism to record the name of the text, and, as suggested by Carvalho (2000) the following:

I. Textual analysis
   Surface descriptors and structural organization
   Objects
   Actors
   Language and rhetoric
   Discursive strategies and processes
   Ideological standpoints

II. Contextual analysis
   Comparative-synchronic analysis
   Historical-diachronic analysis

Textual Analysis

Surface descriptors and structural organization. After the initial reading, I began with an analysis of the text regarding surface descriptors and structural organization. ‘Surface’ elements of the text included the date (if any) of publication, the author (i.e. the author’s
institutional standing and belonging, ideological commitments), the quantity of the material, and the placement of the text. Who produced this? What are the indicators of this? Was this a typical text of its type? Why/Why not? I applied other questions such as, why did some things get said and others do not? How are things said, and what are the possible implications of that? In what other ways could it have been written? I also examined the structure of the text which “has a key role in the definition of what is at stake, as well as in the overall interpretation of an issue” (Carvalho, 2000, p. 21), particularly focused on the title and any headings which establish import. What was the structure and selection of language indicating about the text?

**Objects.** Within this analytic category, I explored which objects the text constructs. Objects are similar to topics or themes (both broad and specific). Carvalho (2000) stated, “However, the term 'object' has over 'topic' or 'theme' the advantage of enhancing the idea that discourse constitutes rather than just ‘refers to’ the realities at stake” (p. 22). What was the evidence of these? What is emphasized and de-emphasized? What events/specific issues were associated to the broader issue under consideration? What events or issues ‘originated’ a particular text?

**Actors.** This analytic category included an examination of the text regarding: Who does the text mention? How are these actors represented? Which individuals or institutions were either quoted or referred to in the text. Carvalho (2000) proposed, “Actors are then both subjects - they do things - and objects - they are the talked about” (p. 24). How was the image of social actors built? How were their relations and identities defined? Whose perspective seemed to dominate?

**Language and rhetoric.** Within this analytic category, specific language aspects were considered in relation to the identification of key concepts and their relationship to wider
cultural and ideological frameworks. An analysis of the vocabulary used for representing a certain reality, e.g. forms of adjectivation, and at the writing style, e.g. formal/informal, technical, conversational was included, as well as metaphors and other figures of style employed in the text (i.e. an emotionally charged discourse, with an appeal to readers' emotions, etc.) What and how did the text reflect issues as objects of persuasion? Were civility and related terms defined? If so, how? What conceptualizations of civility were reflected?

**Discursive strategies and processes.** Carvalho (2000) defined discursive strategies as intervention in order to achieve a certain effect or goal. How and what framing is used to organize discourse according to a certain point of view or perspective via content selection and composition. Carvalho (2000) offered, “Selection is an exercise of inclusion and exclusion of facts, opinions, value judgements. Composition is the arrangement of these elements in order to produce a certain meaning” (p. 26). What specific strategies (i.e. narrativization, positioning, legitimation, politicization, or by contrast de-legitimation, de-politicization) were used and how were they used specifically? Carvalho (2000) defined narrativization as “constructing a sequence of (predicted) events and (anticipated) consequences” and emphasizes how this discursive strategy places emphasis on the importance of social actors and, more generally, human agency. She articulated positioning as a “discursive strategy that involves constructing social actors into a certain relationship with others, that may, for instance, entitle them, or not, to do certain things. Positioning can also be viewed as a wider process of constitution of the identity of the subject through discourse” (p. 23). “Legitimation consists in justifying and sanctioning a certain action or power, on the basis of normative or other reasons. Politicization is the attribution of a political nature or status to a certain reality” (Carvalho, 2000, p. 23). The analysis also mapped discourse strategies in
relation to social actors. Which actors used which discursive strategies? How were different actors involved in the discursive strategies of others?

In addition, within this analytic area was a consideration of discursive processes, which “consist of wider effects on discourse and on its relations to social contexts” (Carvalho, 2000, p. 24). This included discourse structuration (domination of the terms of a debate) or discourse institutionalization (the transformation of institutional structures and/or practices in a way that embodies a certain discourse). Within the text, how did discourse operate in the construction of meanings, and in the broader relation to social, political and cultural contexts?

**Ideological standpoints.** Within this category, I looked for the fundamental political and normative standpoints. How did these influence the selection and representation of objects, actors, the language, and the discursive strategies employed in a text? What concepts were present or absent in the text? Citing Fairclough (1995, p. 14) what were the implicit assumptions in the text which contribute to producing or reproducing unequal relations of power, relations of dominance? What was obscured in the text? How did the inclusion and exclusion of textual material serve the creation of a certain meaning? What was the significance of events, and of their wider political, social and economic context? What rationalities and ideologies were reflected? How did this text reflect the wider society? Why was the text produced?

**Contextual analysis**

Engaging with this analytic category, I considered what Carvalho (2000) termed a “comparative-synchronic analysis,” or analysis of representations via texts compared to other representations covering the focus issues during the same period and from alternate sources. Within the “historical-diachronic analysis,” I explored what the significance was to the
sequence of discursive constructions of an issue. How did representations of reality impact on subsequent ones? How were they reproduced or contested? Was there any data regarding context (i.e. triggering events, etc.)

**Researcher Philosophy, Positionality and Assumptions**

It is important to engage with my positionality as a researcher, including perspectives and assumptions which shape my research agenda, efforts, and outcomes. My research interests aim to add to the scholarly body of knowledge in the areas of the social and cultural foundations of education. I hold as a primary goal the contribution of scholarship at the intersection of critical studies and higher education to challenge inequities expressed within and through the academy. My expectations for research are to put forth what Patti Lather (2010) poses as “a complex web that builds capacities for micro-possibilities” (p. 92), and therefore are consistent with a criticalist agenda.

Within the exercise of qualitative research, including critical discourse analysis, the researcher is considered one of the primary instruments, responsible for data collection, analysis, and interpretation (Creswell, 2013; Denzin & Lincoln, 2003), a tool through which data is mediated. I therefore proceeded with an understanding that who I am was integrally tied to the questions I chose to research. The parallel, intersecting, and sometimes contradictory and context specific subjectivities I occupy have significance on my research topic, practice, and decisions. Drawing from my multiple subjectivities, I engaged with the research through my positions as a student in an institution of higher education, as a Student Affairs professional practitioner and administrator, an instructor and educator, a self-identified feminist, and an emerging critical studies scholar interested in contributing to the field of the social and cultural foundations of education.
In her documentary film, “Reassemblages” (1983), Trinh Minh-ha addresses engagement with research and states, “I want to research not ‘about’ but ‘nearby’.” I have spent the last sixteen years of my professional career as a staff member of a women and gender center at a public research university working toward the facilitation of social justice and structural inequities embedded within the institution and the extended community. I began my interest in the power of the collective voice of protest as an undergraduate student in the 1980’s, publicly marching against apartheid, environmental hazards from nuclear waste, and women’s right to reproductive freedom. I have often participated in protests and demonstration on my campus relating to issues of personal importance, such as gender and sexuality based violence, immigrant rights, equal pay and the “living wage”, disability rights, and other areas touching on social disparities in my community. Generally, I have been asked by my university step out of my professional role while participating in these acts of civil dissent, as these were deemed outside of the scope of my role by my institution. However, I see these acts of resistance as intimately tied to the work of an institution of public higher education. My interest in deconstructing civility discourses is tied to issues of educational equity, democratic dialogue, inclusion, and multiculturalism.

While I am attempting to “reveal myself” within the study, Patti Lather (2007) troubles “the possibilities for ‘coming clean’ in practices of researcher reflexivity (p. 17).” In addition, taking up a poststructural perspective, I challenge any essentialist readings of a unified subject, including my own. It is hard to know how specifically my multiple positionalities constructed through discursive and material realities will render me. For example, I acknowledge shifts among positions of “insider,” “outsider,” or “outsider within” (Dwyer & Buckle, 2009) positions, which reflect relational and contextual changes, and different positions of power in
relation to the institution. I occupy multiple positions, including student, staff member, adjunct faculty, and administrator within a higher education institution. I readily acknowledge a neutral-free agenda with a lens of social justice as issues of my own emplacement related to role negotiation will impact exchanges with the data. I concede the “trouble” (Lather, 2007) of representing the complexities in researching/writing about complex phenomena such as socio-discursive practices. Integrated in this exploration of my researcher positionalities was a consideration of issues embedded within, and organized through, scholar John Creswell’s (2013) adaptation of Guba and Lincoln’s (1988) model of issues related to research philosophy along the domains of ontology, epistemology, axiology and rhetoric.

**Ontology.** An analysis of my ontological grounding is pivotal in articulating my research philosophy, as the very idea of what can be known, what exists or what is real remains controversial. I draw from an ontological perspective informed by the ideologies of critical theories and poststructuralism in particular. The impact of this grounding includes my understanding that, veering away from a positivist tradition, there is not a single reality or truth which can be “found”. Impacted by criticalist and poststructuralist traditions, I believe realities are multiple, and sometimes simultaneous, and may even be contradictory. I understand that “truth” must be seen as fluid and dynamic, and layered, influenced by the social, cultural, political, and historical recognition of such.

Truths then are contingent on a number of factors including the context, such as space and time, and relational issues formed in part by the subjectivities of the knower. This is made more complex with the influence of, and circulation of, power, and the intersection of power with and through various social identity markers, such as gender, race, class and sexual orientation. Moving from an ontological grounding based on this critical and poststructuralist
conceptual framework, I reject positivist notions of validity based on the notion of a single truth discovered through an objective and neutral researcher. I assert that some level of ambiguity within the research process and outcomes is to be expected. This ontological foundation informs my research approach which frames research as inquiry cognizant that what can be known is always partial and in flux. My selections to magnify some elements of campus civility campaigns undoubtedly results in the absence of other elements. While partial, the purpose of my scholarly inquiry is guided by the notion that inquiry is productive, often serving as an opportunity to create and draw attention to, and perhaps even interrupt or fracture, dominant discourses and by extension practices which uphold power imbalances.

Subjectivist Epistemology. From a critical poststructural tradition, I proceed into scholarly inquiry with an assumption that knowledge can be accessed through a variety of mechanisms including discourse and texts, which inherently privilege particular standpoints while marginalizing others. Within a critical poststructural project, I challenge that claims of who holds knowledge, and how historically knowledge is determined and verified have roots in power relations and domination (Foucault, 1980; Harding, 1991; Hill Collins, 1990; hooks, 1994; Kincheloe & McLaren, 1994; Smith, 1990.). Donna Haraway (1988) suggested, “Objectivity cannot be about fixed vision when what counts as an object is precisely what world history turns out to be about” (p. 588). Haraway (1998) pointed to a knowledge which can only be known through the mediation of the knower, and is not ahistorical, but situated, shaped, and understood via the lens of a particular space and time. How we understand ourselves is relational, and how we come to know is through experiences which are situated, constituted, and negotiated in and with an oppressive structural framework that devalues some, while privileging other knowers and their “truths.”
Axiology. I understand research as made up of integral and equally significant pieces of process and product, which cannot be neatly separated out. My research interests in the area of civility, higher education, and educational policies and practices flow directly from my personal experience as a gendered, raced, classed and othered being delineated along a series of subjectivity markers, in which I occupy, and am read, through some positions of privilege, while others are experienced or read as from a disadvantaged position. My research agenda is one that aims to add to the scholarly body of knowledge in the higher education and the social and cultural foundations of education. Drawing from a professional career marked by a concern for social justice and capacity building, I hold a central goal of contributing in some way to challenge power inequities within higher education institutions. I see my researcher role as a facilitator/advocate who would like the research process and product to engage with and through the discourses to expose practices of higher education that are often obscured as part of the natural landscape of the institution. By probing the context and implications of discourses expressed in “commonsense” everyday practice, I hope to expand the possibility for agentic thought and action.

Rhetoric. John Cresswell (2007) noted, “Qualitative researchers tend to embrace the rhetorical assumption that the writing needs to be personal and literary in form” (p. 18). As such, I am present in the research documents, and include passages of writing in the first person. I draw from the language and words of the texts as primary sources and engage with the definitions and language, including idioms or metaphors from the texts. I include some direct quotes and passages from the texts to allow the reader the opportunity to discern connections and determine credibility of my interpretations. I am open to the possibility of producing data which points to contradictory or competing “truths.” As Shulamith Reinharz (1992) contended, I do not
present “variability as a reflection of ‘poor quality data’ but rather as a valuable reflection of reality” (p. 19), understood as part of the richness and value offered through critical discourse analysis. Similarly, Patti Lather (2007) cautioned against the presentation of a “tidy text” (p. 90) and advocated for a qualitative alternative research tradition to reveal places of insecurity about our holding up “truths” for purposes of audit. In this study I work to honor data, despite how “messy” (Lather, 2010).

Conclusion

The objective of this study is to explore campus civility campaigns targeted to students. This study made use of critical discourse analysis (Fairclough, 1989) to explore how civility was discursively constructed, what rationalities and assumptions undergirded the texts, and how university students were constructed and situated with and through the civility discourses. This study was guided by these purposes, as well as from critical scholarship regarding key theoretical and methodological facets of critical discourse analysis. I outlined the study scope, data set, and intentions regarding data selection that used purposeful sampling. The texts consisted of “naturally occurring data” (Wodak & Meyer, 2009) drawn from a U.S. public research university that had published civility materials online.

The data analysis method I employed relied on a multi-layered approach placing micro (text), meso (institutional and discursive), and macro (socio-cultural) analysis in conversation. Using a specific model for method adapted from Anabela Carvalho (2000, pp. 21-26), I engaged the basic analytic techniques of critical discourse analysis outlined by Fairclough (1989) and Gee (2014) by providing a textual analysis, as well as a contextual analysis. Given the prominent role of researcher reflexivity in critical discourse analysis, I provided insights as to my positionality as a researcher, and ways I am aware that my perspectives and assumptions impact my research.
agenda and process. The two subsequent chapters will describe and interpret the data, and offer my thoughts regarding the data significance and implications.
CHAPTER IV

PRESENTATION OF FINDINGS

Introduction

What started as an account in which an administrative “Call for Civility” and a celebratory International Festival event would evolve into a civility campaign that would later include as part of its history the Chancellor stepping down, diversity offices being defunded, and students heading to the state capitol to challenge lawmakers. With this case study, I investigated the construction and significance of a student-focused university-sponsored civility campaign. Conducting this critical reading and exploration, I examined what complex negotiations are interwoven into the particular education and social practice of the “Civility and Community Initiative,” a civility campaign at Scarlet Oak University.

Central to the direction of this investigation, I explored civility representations, rationalities, and negotiations of student subjectivities of this campus program and engaged discourses. The main body of the chapter offers the descriptive outcomes of the applied analysis. The results of the “Critical Discourse Analysis Analytic Tool” (Appendix A) I developed, which was extended from Carvalho’s (2000) process for multi-level analysis outlined in the methodology section, were used as the organizing principle applied to the presentation of the findings.

In response to the three principle research questions, I begin with an analysis of the grammatical and lexical features. Within this textual analysis, several areas of study (listed
as subheadings on the analytic tool) are presented including: surface descriptors and structural organization, an examination of objects, actors, language and rhetoric, discursive strategies including narrativization; positioning; and legitimation/delegitimation strategies, and ideological standpoints including, normative standpoints; implicit assumptions; rationalities reflected, etc. Following this section, I present the findings from the contextual analysis, involving a comparative-synchronic analysis to investigate the representation of the text compared to other representations, and a historical-diachronic analysis to consider the significance of sequence of the discursive construction of the issue of civility in the university campaign.

**Scarlet Oak University and the “Civility and Community Initiative”**

In 2011, Scarlet Oak University, a co-ed, residential, public-state-funded research university with approximately 30,000 students, launched a civility campaign called the “Civility and Community Initiative.” Materials related to this primarily student-focused civility initiative continued to circulate and be released through the 2016 fall semester. Analysis of the data gathered revealed the campaign consisted of various activities, which included the establishment of a campus Task Force, implementation of a dedicated website within the broader institutional website, campaign videos, administrative notifications sent directly to the students, staff, and faculty, adoption and incorporation of a civility statement to be included on all syllabi, and specialized programming, such as integrating the topic of civility and community into first-year student orientation, a common reading experience for first-year students, and special civility-focused forums or events mainly sponsored through Student Life departments, such as the International Festival, Diversity Dialogues, and the Black Issues Conference.
Textual analysis

The first focus of analysis examined the textual characteristics of the data. More specifically, this included: an examination of the surface descriptors and structural organization of the texts; the objects constituted by the texts; the texts’ actors; language and rhetoric; discursive strategies and processes; and ideological standpoints, rationalities, and assumptions. In Table 1, labeled Textual Analysis Results, summary data is provided that encompasses each of the analytic categories in this section. Following the table is more detailed description of each category.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
<th>Examples from SOU Civility Texts</th>
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</table>
| **Surface Descriptors** | Date & Author (i.e. institutional standing, indicators of who produced text, etc.) | Many dates & authors attributions left absent  
Chancellor is most frequently recurring source of texts  
135 total texts  
- 2 areas of multiple textual treatment: celebratory texts & University crisis response  
- Typically brief texts-420 word average  
Integration within multiple sources: website pages, flyers, videos, official statements, etc.  
Textual engineering via:  
- personification of University  
- presupposition  
- representation of University as unified source of authority  
- slogan-style phrases |
| Text quantity      |                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Text placement     |                                                                                  |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| Structure and language |                                                                              |                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| **Objects** (Carvalho, 2000) | Similar to topics or themes, but it emphasizes that objects both reflect and construct through & with the discourses | Civility as:  
- unity in spite of difference  
- function/extension/expression of community  
- response to diversity  
- element of safety  
- condition for, extension of, & threat to freedom of speech |
| **Actors** (Carvalho, 2000) | Actors as subjects (they do things) & objects (they are talked about); includes who was mentioned, quoted, or referred to; how they were represented; representation of social relations & identities | The University  
- usually actor as subject  
- personalization, personal pronouns, emotional appeals  
- represented/constructed as paternalistic, educative leader  
Chancellor (& key administrators)  
- power & import  
- direct, 1st person statements  
- experts via credentials  
- differentiation based on status  
Within-group representations  
- usually represented as monolithic (i.e. students, faculty, staff)  
- some hierarchical distinctions (i.e. athletes, administration, leaders, scholars, SGA, etc.) |
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<th>Category</th>
<th>Characteristics</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Actors (Carvalho, 2000)</strong></td>
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<td>SOU departments/official groups</td>
<td>• tasked with the official business of civility development, engagement, and management</td>
<td>• many are “diversity” groups or offices of the institution</td>
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<td>SOU Faculty</td>
<td>• main representation via Faculty Senate</td>
<td>• classroom managers</td>
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<td>• indirect support of students</td>
<td>• expert “models of communication”</td>
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<td>SOU Staff Members</td>
<td>• largely absent in campaign</td>
<td>• oversight of programming &amp; lower level administration/managerial tasks</td>
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<td>SOU Students</td>
<td>• Usually actor as object</td>
<td>• Self representations &amp; constructions of activists acting on behalf of marginalized &amp; to resist oppression</td>
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<td>• Alternately constructed as: potential, unaware civility violators (“young charges, young people”; obedient self-managers; protesters threatening civility &amp; unity</td>
<td>• Unofficial campus diversity work</td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td>• Self representations &amp; constructions of activists acting on behalf of marginalized &amp; to resist oppression</td>
<td>• Main representation through Diversity Matters Coalition</td>
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<td></td>
<td>• Used institution’s language to ‘talk back’</td>
<td>• Used institution’s language to ‘talk back’</td>
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<td>SOU student groups</td>
<td>• Unofficial campus diversity work</td>
<td>• Used institution’s language to ‘talk back’</td>
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<td><strong>Language &amp; rhetoric</strong></td>
<td><strong>Tone</strong></td>
<td><strong>Examples from SOU Civility Texts</strong></td>
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<td></td>
<td>Variety of text tone</td>
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<td>• Brief, conversational, intimate (i.e. videos with talking heads speaking directly to audience)</td>
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<td>• Quasi-formal official University-released statements &amp; dedicated civility webpages</td>
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<td>• Technical group reports (i.e. Faculty Senate minutes, Task Force minutes, etc.)</td>
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<td>• Informational &amp;/or sensational-external new sources</td>
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<td>Category</td>
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<td>Examples from SOU Civility Texts</td>
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<td><strong>Language &amp; rhetoric (continued)</strong></td>
<td><strong>Figures of style: Metaphors:</strong> conveys a set of arguments; conventional metaphors-help text consumers make quick content decisions; persuade by through creativity, interest &amp; readability; decrease complexity</td>
<td><strong>Metaphors of:</strong></td>
</tr>
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<td></td>
<td><strong>Figures of style: Understatement &amp; Overstatement</strong></td>
<td><strong>Understatement used to downplay controversy (i.e. “potential bias incident”)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Figures of style: Adjectivation</strong> (heavy description)</td>
<td><strong>Overstatement used to represent consensus (i.e. “all” “every” “always”)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Definitions/Conceptualizations of civility</strong></td>
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<td><strong>University-issued texts:</strong></td>
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<td><strong>SOU &amp; civility through positive subjective adjectivation (“committed” “proactive” “inclusive”)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Infrequent use of negative adjectivation (mainly only used “hostile” to describe what civility negates)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>State legislators</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Heavy reliance on negative subjective adjectivation (“indecent” “inappropriate” “extreme”)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Civility as responsibility</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Civility as courtesy (“Putting your empty disposable cup in a trash can”)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Civility as virtue (“doing what you know is right, and acting on it”) (both reflected in formal SOU definition)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Civility as dialogic model (“say no with civility”)</strong></td>
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<td><strong>While outside traditional conceptualizations: civility as value-added soft skill (“essential to our students and our institutional success”)</strong></td>
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<td>Incivility</td>
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<td><strong>Defined as breach of civility</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Text focus on individuals &amp; individual acts, not patterns or structures</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Characteristic</td>
<td>Examples from SOU Civility Texts</td>
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<td>Discursive strategies (intervention in order to achieve a certain effect or goal) &amp; discursive processes (&quot;consist of wider effects on discourse &amp; on its relations to social contexts&quot;) (Carvalho, 2000)</td>
<td><strong>Discursive Strategy: Narrativization</strong> –“constructing a sequence of (predicted) events and (anticipated) consequences” (Carvalho, 2000)</td>
<td>Narrativization of civility as a new or renewed resource or tool, introduced by a powerful source (the University or state legislators), and then applied to resolve problems, ultimately resulting in improvement through regulation and societal cohesion (i.e. “civility is the way forward” “civility can be restored”)</td>
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<td>Discursive Strategy: Positioning- “constructing social actors into a certain relationship with others, that may, for instance, entitle them, or not, to do certain things” (Carvalho, 2000).</td>
<td><strong>Discursive Strategy: Legitimation- “justifying and sanctioning a certain action or power, on the basis of normative or other reasons” (Carvalho, 2000)</strong></td>
<td>University-sanctioned authors, i.e. the Chancellor, President, SGA representative, etc., positioned as the speaking experts with prescriptive knowledge about the ‘good life’ &amp; how to constitute it; Students made intelligible as regulating self-managers or alternately social change agents</td>
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<td>Discursive Strategy: Legitimation- “justifying and sanctioning a certain action or power, on the basis of normative or other reasons” (Carvalho, 2000)</td>
<td><strong>Discursive Strategy: Politicization/De-politicization- “attribution of a political nature or status to a certain reality” (Carvalho, 2000)</strong></td>
<td>Legitimation by citing external experts, circular references to the University, or SOU or ‘peer institution’ official practices; emotional appeals reinforcing SOU affiliation (“university family” “SOU spirit”)</td>
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<td>Discursive Strategy: Narrativization –“constructing a sequence of (predicted) events and (anticipated) consequences” (Carvalho, 2000)</td>
<td><strong>Discursive Strategy: Politicization/De-politicization- “attribution of a political nature or status to a certain reality” (Carvalho, 2000)</strong></td>
<td>Politicization of civility campaign as related to accountability, funding, public trust (i.e.”free speech” “hate speech” “appropriate speech”)</td>
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<td>Discursive Strategy: Positioning- “constructing social actors into a certain relationship with others, that may, for instance, entitle them, or not, to do certain things” (Carvalho, 2000).</td>
<td>Civicity as diversity &amp; inclusion viewed by students as social justice anti-oppression work on behalf of the marginalized</td>
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<td><strong>Discursive Strategy: Politicization/De-politicization- “attribution of a political nature or status to a certain reality” (Carvalho, 2000)</strong></td>
<td>Legislators represented need to contain civility diversity &amp; inclusion work on behalf of constituents who viewed as the practice as inappropriate &amp; performance of ‘political correctness’ only (“sick &amp; tired of this ‘pc’ stuff”)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discursive Strategy: Narrativization –“constructing a sequence of (predicted) events and (anticipated) consequences” (Carvalho, 2000)</td>
<td><strong>Discursive Strategy: Politicization/De-politicization- “attribution of a political nature or status to a certain reality” (Carvalho, 2000)</strong></td>
<td>SOU de-politicized civility, diversity, &amp; inclusion as self– evident &amp; non-controversial</td>
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<tr>
<td>Category</td>
<td>Characteristics</td>
<td>Examples from SOU Civility Texts</td>
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| Discursive strategies (intervention in order to achieve a certain effect or goal) & discursive processes (“consist of wider effects on discourse & on its relations to social contexts” (Carvalho, 2000) (continued) | Discursive Process- Discourse Structure: domination of terms of a debate (Carvalho, 2000)  
Discursive Process: Discourse Institutionalization: transformation of institutional structures &/or practices in a way that embodies a certain discourse (Carvalho, 2000) | Civility described, framed, & interpreted with, for, &/or against the concepts of unity, diversity & community, & related terms of oneness & differences  
Institutional and codification of the civility discourse via:  
- formation of official organizational bodies (i.e. Civility and Community Task Force, Office of Diversity & Inclusion);  
- communications channels (i.e. dedicated civility campaign website);  
- ongoing programming (i.e. adoption of a civility and community portion to the annual New Students and Family Programs orientation);  
- official policies & procedures, (adoption of a standardized civility statement for all course syllabi, civility statement in the Student Code of Conduct and the University bias reporting system) |
| Ideological standpoints                                       | Ideology as system of values, norms and political preferences, linked to a program of action via a given social and political order; ideology is normative, political, & axiological (Carvalho, 2007) | Accountability: Individual & Social Responsibility  
- Higher education as a ‘public good’ (“If we’re going to make progress, higher education is critical”);  
- Higher education as part of a ‘knowledge economy’ (Civility as “true education” for the global market);  
- Orientation through administrative rationalism (“I hope top University officials take quick action to resolve this issue, and if they don't, the legislature will most certainly weigh in”);  
- Competing discourses of diversity through social identity neutrality (“We are all human beings”) and diversity as social consciousness/justice  
- Freedom of speech/expression (rational individuals dialogue & “free” exchange of ideas) |
Surface Descriptors and Structural Organization

The Scarlet Oak University’s civility campaign documents spanned from 2011 through 2016. They were carried under the conceptual umbrella as the campus “Civility and Community Initiative,” and indicated a level of campaign cohesion across several years. This portion of the investigation examined the span of the civility texts, and considered multiple features of the surface and structural organization of the data, including date, author, and text quantity, placement of the text, the text structural features, such as headings and subheadings, and the particular language choices in constructing the texts.

Within the five-year timeframe, the single most published author of these campaign materials was the high-ranking University Chancellor specifically, credited with authoring eleven documents. The majority of the remaining authored documents were typically published by an administrator, staff, or faculty of the University and was related to their official role. Student authored civility texts were limited, but included a few articles in the campus student-run newspaper and other documents. An atypical text in that it had many shared student authors, the “Civility Means…” document contained 708 posts contributed through submissions online via one of the dedicated web pages.

In reviewing the Scarlet Oak University documents and websites for quantity, it was evident that the texts were not typically lengthy. Excluding the reports and minutes from the Civility and Community Task Force and other groups and committees, whose documents ranged from two pages to thirty-four pages and were therefore atypical in length, the texts ranged from being comprised of 89 words to 1353 words, with only 420 words on average. This result was somewhat counterintuitive. Given that this was only approximately the equivalent to a page and a half for a double-spaced typewritten page (https://www.reference.com), this would appear
inconsistent with the high import and priority of the campaign stated by the institution. For example, at its kick-off the campaign was described as an “effort to ensure that civility is an integral part of the university community.” The campaign was also labeled a mechanism “to help make civility an essential and highly-valued campus characteristic.” This, however, was belied by the brevity of the texts. The brief length of the material also was surprising given the complexity of the concept of civility. This shortness of the texts may be reflective of the trend in higher education to use marketing that mirrors the private sector advertisement industry, and the influence of current college students’ exposure to online media styles that often feature brief textual material (Davis, Deil-Amen, Rios-Aguilar, & Gonzalez Canche, 2012).

Another significant feature of the Scarlet Oak University civility texts was that the dates of many of the items, and the specific author or authors of the documents, were absent. For example, particularly those items that were subsequently built into institutional structures, such as University-hosted civility website pages, one of the primary civility information sources for students, were left with no attribution of author or date of construction. This suggested to the reader the texts’ solidification as part of the institution and everyday “natural” practices, something that just appeared, and thus, obscured the concept of textual intervention based on author choices. This omission of the authors and dates limited what may be key elements in allowing the reader to contextualize and evaluate the data, making the consumer of the text more reliant on taking the text as truth. References to the collection of the university-sponsored civility activities and texts as a “similar initiative,” as opposed to campaign or other descriptor, both implied novelty, and de-emphasized the presence of text management by the producers of the items.
With regard to the number of texts devoted to a particular civility-related issue, of the more than 130 texts, including 77 online University-sponsored civility documents or webpages, and 58 additional related materials outside of the campaign proper, i.e. publications from other sources, only two topics became the overt focus of multiple texts: 1) celebratory texts and texts focused on University gaining formal recognition, and 2) textual treatments of University response to crisis, and University response to negative publicity. Instances of celebratory texts including discussions of the initial implementation of the civility campaign, texts lauding the University for receiving several awards from various organizations for the production of civility-related campaign materials, and texts on recognition for “proactively addressing diversity and civility” in the materials on university rankings by US News and World Reports.

Examples of textual treatments of University crisis response included those in which the University addressed repeated acts of incivility by members of the campus targeted toward members of the LGBTQ+ population. Illustrative of this was a University-issued statement, “Last week’s vandalism of a flag at the LGBTQ center is being investigated by campus police. Such acts are not consistent with the values of our community… The university is committed to supporting an environment in which tolerance, civility, freedom of expression, and responsible citizenship are integral parts of our learning experience.” Similarly, multiple University civility texts issued public statements of concerns following negative publicity regarding the University’s settlement of a Title IX sexual assault-related lawsuit. After former claims of “indifference to sexual assault” were filed by multiple students, for example, the Chancellor issued calls for civility and made the statement, “No university is able to prevent every incidence of students, faculty or staff using bad judgment. But SOU’s goal is to continue to create
awareness, educate and prevent discrimination and abuse, and be prepared to properly handle such situations when they arise.”

The texts’ placements reflected integration and reinforcement of the campaign within a variety of materials and information sources. For example, text placement included two campaign videos each under two minutes and incorporated into articles and located on the YouTube channel, six dedicated civility campaign web pages, eleven campus newsletter articles, eight notifications sent to University members, more than fifteen Task Force and committee reports and minutes, and materials on other campus websites (i.e. Division of Student Life, Student Government Association, academic departments, Department of Athletics, Office of Communications and Marketing, etc.). Off-campus placement of the texts included, among others, the local city newspaper, an article in the nationally distributed Chronicle of Higher Education, and a mix of several other online forums.

Regarding the text structure, Carvalho (2000) suggested the importance of the title in conveying the message carried in the texts, as it “marks the preferred reading” (p. 21) of the text. Ifantidou (2009) clarified the impact of titles, offering, “Precisely because headlines consistently underrepresent, or over-represent, and hence misrepresent, news stories, readers’ previous knowledge and sophisticated reading strategies are claimed to be critical in retrieving the explicit or implicit meaning conveyed” (p. 700). Paying particular attention to the civility items published through Scarlet Oak University, some trends became apparent that reflected textual engineering through language devices such as: personification of the University, presupposition, and use of slogan-style phrases.

One notable language practice was the personification of the University or its offices, with titles such as “University Takes a Look at Diversity” and “SGA Calls for Everyday
Civility.” What are actually bureaucratic institutions or administrative structures are characterized more appealingly as capable of human action and capacities. In addition, presupposition was a feature built into the titles. For example, there was an assumption implied in a universal understanding of “everyday civility,” an ambiguous term positioned here as common sense. Similarly the title, “Thank You for Your Support of the University this Legislative Session,” suggested that in fact, all the readers were unified in their feelings of support.

Other titles cast the University through presupposition of assumptions of the institution as a powerful agent, either stated or implied, mandating future action from the readers. Some examples of titles in this category included: “Tell Us: What Does Civility Mean to You,” “A Call for Civility,” “Diversity and Inclusion: The Way Forward”, and “Maintaining Civility.” In addition to suggesting a simplified, flat version of civility-related negotiations, these titles positioned Scarlet Oak University as a unified source of authority in a logical and reasonable position to offer guidance. Many of the texts’ titles also served in implicating the University as a powerful agent, and simultaneously implied a sense of urgency for action, while offering vague temporal markers. While a case could easily be made that these are general truths, within their elevation as titles such as “A Time for Responsive Leadership,” “A Time for Civility,” and “University Leaders Must Address Practical, Cultural Issues,” the texts were framed with a persuasive intent to imply unique need, tapping into fear or crisis narratives and discourses.

Another notable result reflective of the use of particular language devices in the surface and structure of the texts was the incorporation of slogan-style phrases of few words repeated throughout many of the texts. For example, in the “A Call for Civility” video, which echoed the title of the administrative notification with the same name (introduced at the campaign kick-off),
the longest line in the piece was only seven words. Much of the video featured students simply stating single words as complete statements, i.e. respect, acceptance, etc. Olivier Reboul (1979) referred to slogans within education discourse as “short-cut rhetoric” in that “a slogan is not only a brief phrase, but a phrase which is too brief for the meaning it conveys” (p. 300). In the case of the Scarlet Oak University civility campaign, these linguistic structural features were used as a foundational element of the campaign texts. The principle tagline given to coalesce the various texts was the ambiguous and superficial phrase made up of three short pieces: “One Campus. One Community. Celebrate the Differences.” In contrast to robust and complex linguistic constructions, the primary campaign materials relied heavily on short catch phrases, and little text devoted to elaboration.

An additional example of this type of frequently recurring short, slogan-style structure was the incorporation of the phrase “a campus welcoming to all, hostile to none” echoed across many of the campaign texts. In addition, this phrase highlighted another linguistic structural feature, which was the use of absolutes. In this case the exaggeration “all” and “none” were used for a normalizing effect, implying an existing all-encompassing dominant group. Similar sample excerpts were reflective of this type of hyperbole. These included the statement in a campus newsletter article on the civility campaign, “Students, faculty, and staff from all areas of campus worked together,” the declaration in a committee report that, “We all contribute to an environment that makes all people feel welcome and respected,” and in a campus newspaper article following an open civility forum as part of the university sponsored campaign, “All panelists and attendees agreed that engaging in courteous discussion and productive debate would improve civility on campus.” Such types of overstatement were frequently invoked,
supporting the representation of a unified campus and further naturalizing binary group representations (all/none, no one/everyone, etc.).

**Objects**

A number of broad and specific “objects” were identified in the civility campaign. “Objects” is the term selected by Carvalho (2000) to signify something similar to topics or themes, but which emphasizes a theme or topic that it both reflected and constructed through and with the discourses. Through discourse, objects acquire meanings understood to have characteristic attributes and contingent significance within a particular context. Those objects found within the Scarlet Oak University civility texts included: civility as unity in spite of difference, civility as a function or extension of community, civility as a response to diversity with related concepts of intercultural; global; and international, civility as related to safety, and civility and free speech. Often, these objects were introduced in the texts in a method which combined and reinforced more than one object at a time, taking up multiple objects as mutually reinforcing dimensions.

One of the most prominent objects found throughout the texts was the community, often linked with unity. For example, in the First Years Studies course required of all freshmen, instruction on civility was placed within the “Community” module. As mentioned earlier in the chapter, the name assigned by the campus administrators to the campaign was the “Civility and Community Initiative,” establishing the integral connection of the two concepts, and illustrating the object, or represented and constructed theme of community. This was reinforced via the home page of the dedicated civility website which posed, “Our differences are not something to fear or set us apart. Our differences are what push us forward and make us better.” The use of “us” also pointed to a state of community. “Difference,” the text emphasized, was not about fear
or distance. However, framed this way, it established this line of thinking as a common existing perception. This website reflected a stated institutional valorization of “difference” (a broad category not expounded upon.). Another example of the object of community was how the topic was solidified with the campaign tagline: “One campus. One Community. Celebrate the Differences.” This strategic use of language reinforced that at the core of civility and this campaign is unity. Noted was the use of “one” repeated for emphasis and effect which centered the object of community. After emphasizing unity or oneness positioned as a desired feature, the catch phrase then introduced the concept of difference. While the concept of difference could stand in contrast to unity, here it took on a similar reading. Although it may appear to have addressed difference directly, the implication continued in the logic of this slogan was that despite difference, community understood as unity was of overriding import. Within this object of community, difference was subsumed by the unity of community, and was left ambiguously unclarified.

Other examples of the object of community reflected and constructed in the texts included the statement from the Chancellor, “While we have many differences, we have much more in common,” which was also repeated in other campaign materials, such as one of the videos. Within this example, the use of “we,” the personal plural pronoun representing the subject, and the possessive description “our,” were representative of textual features commonly invoked to support the notion of unity and community. Also, within this phrase, the idea of differences was acknowledged with the introduction of “while,” which suggested a subtle negative framing of difference. It further drew the implication that unity, the preferred state, has prevailed.
Another instance illustrating the object of community and unity as a recurring textual feature was found in the statement, “We connect for the benefit of all our community members.” The verb chosen was connect, an expression signifying the bringing together, elaborated in the final portion of sentence with the declaration of “all our community.” Similarly, one of the texts featured the observation, “When one of us suffers injustice, we all do.” Here what was textually suggested was that a collective experience or consciousness exists. This framing also obscured inequalities and variance of risk, exposure, and experience with suffering and oppression, combined with an overemphasis on unity and the implication that all have, or will have, suffered.

These common objects, themes of community and unity, reflected and constructed in the civility discourses and texts were not only invoked by campus administrators, but the University’s students as well. For example, on the dedicated civility campaign “Civility Means…” of the total 708 student responses, one of the most common of the response themes with more than 100 related responses, involved the discussion of sameness or unity, often with the added notation of being unified in spite of difference. Similarly, a statement by the Chancellor posed, “Overall at this university we are community. We help those within our community regardless of race, color, or creed.” In this case, identity differences were dismissed as irrelevant, in favor of emphasizing unity. One variation on this theme found in numerous posts stated, “We are all human beings.” This election to state what should be obvious reinforced the need to employ civility as a recognition that all the population is unified under membership in the human race. Another student submitted, “Civility is putting differences aside and coming together as a community.” Again, what was elevated was civility as diminishing the import of difference, set up then as the opposite of unity, in favor of linking as community. A similar submission exemplifying this theme was the post, “Civility is being an active and accepting
member of the community despite differences between you and your fellow (University nickname).”

Interestingly, given the ambiguity of “community,” the objects of unity and community were taken up across different actors, despite their varying positions of power and relation to the institution. A memorandum sent to all students, staff, and faculty from the University’s Chancellor posed, “Our nation is strongest when we stand together, even when we disagree.” This standard of harmony in the face of difference was established as a necessary expectation and need related to civility. This line of presentation was also reflected in an article on the topic of civility and a post-presidential election student protest. The article included an illustrative comment from a Scarlet Oak University student directed in reference to his disapproval of the dissent, and his calling for a different path of action from his peers who were protesting. His citation in the text stated, “We are one nation, and in the coming days and weeks, I hope we will act like it.” In this case the perspective offered was that a threat to the unity, also extended to the nation as the broader encompassing community, had been introduced from disunity, or the expression of the protestors in civic engagement making known their opposition to the election results. Meanwhile, a protester joining the campus Native American Student Association local rally to contest the construction of an oil pipeline in North Dakota also drew on politicized civility, unity (i.e. described as “solidarity”), and community (“the people”) discourses. She stated:

I wanted to be here in solidarity. We have a country that’s built on slavery and oppression. Whenever there are outrageous attacks against oppressed people it is our duty to fight then. Your fight is our fight. When the people are united, we will never be defeated.
This student engaged with different and fluid constructions of community-as a country, as a campus, and as an activist, among others.

The civility texts were also often framed through a relationship with objects of “diversity” and “diversity and inclusion,” supported by “multicultural,” “international,” and “global,” as relevant topics, and as an extension of the diversity work of the university, institutionalized as part of the campus structure and practices. For example, the placement of the dedicated “Civility and Community” website was found as part of the broad university “Diversity” tab. Similarly, the civility campaign was introduced under the Student Government Association’s “Diversity Affairs” web page. The Civility and Community Task Force suggested hosting a “Celebration of Diversity and Community.” The text of the Task Force report elaborated:

One way to demonstrate a commitment to campus civility and community is to publicly appreciate differences among faculty, staff, students, and external constituents; Thus, the Task Force recommends the development and implementation of an annual university-wide tradition where members of the campus and important external constituents share aspects of their backgrounds and/or cultures through song, dance, art, food, etc. Suggested partners for this event included the International House, Office of Multicultural Affairs, and “other relevant groups.” Mirroring this melding of civility with diversity and inclusion, the Division of Student Life annual Diversity Report text stated, “As a Division, we are committed to influencing the intercultural, diversity, and civility competencies of each student on campus.”

Positioning civility and diversity as inextricably tied together, both diversity and inclusion were listed as the first two of ten Civility Principles, the remainder of which were:
dialogue, collegiality, respect, knowledge, integrity, learning, awareness and response. Also, the civility principle, “Learning” was defined specifically with a focus on diversity clarified as, “We believe that learning is an interpersonal growth experience that fosters appreciation for diversity.” Diversity, inclusion, and civility were commonly portrayed in broad strokes.

Common descriptors throughout the campus-endorsed civility texts reflected a surface exploration of these issues, largely de-politicized. For example, phrases within the texts commonly referred to diversity within non-controversial terms. For example, the texts de-emphasized diversity as structural inequalities, diversity as dissension, or community fragmentation. Instead incorporated into the structure was a focus on diversity as a backdrop for civility through the language of: “diverse backgrounds,” “diverse viewpoints,” and the campus as a “diverse landscape.” Regarding the type of diversity, most often “diversity of opinions,” “diversity of individual and collective abilities and achievements,” and “diversity of thought,” along with “cultural diversity” was employed in the civility campaign texts. Only vague references to compositional diversity were incorporated in the texts, as well as “inclusion,” characterized as diversity-related engagement. “Equity” or “inequity,” however, were not terms found with this semantic pairing in the University-constructed civility texts. Diversity based on differential access to resources and privilege, or structural oppression and marginalization were also omitted from the civility campaign texts. Diversity lectures proposed as part of the civility campaign included "Men of Character," "Women of Character," and "Celebrate Your Heritage,” ultimately exploring the connection of diversity to civility in way such that it was likely to be generally endorsed, or even unnoticed, in its social acceptability.

Civility was also positioned as aspirational, a diversity related skill that needed to be developed in students. For example, within Academic Affairs, a notification from the Scarlet
Oak University Provost posed that an institutional focus area was “fostering diversity and reinforcing civility in the classroom.” A campus newspaper article authored by a student described, “The C & C Initiative is a major theme on campus that preaches diversity, inclusion, and acceptance.” Her choice of “preach” indicated the acknowledgment that these civility-related concepts were tied to the institution’s agendas. One of the stated goals of the Student Government Association was cited as being “proactive in addressing campus concerns regarding civility and cultural awareness.” In a related stance, in the Division of Student Life, the “Courage to Climb” award was established to recognize “those who show promise in the areas of research, community service, promotion of civility and inclusion, leadership development, and campus involvement” again, tying the combination of civility and inclusion into the infrastructure of the institution. A notification jointly authored by the University President and Chancellor offered, “Diversity and civility are essential for our students and our institutional success,” emphasizing the need of students to have the “ability to work in a global economy.”

Diversity was constructed alternately as an asset to civility and community, and as complication or even obstacle. For example, a campus committee report regarding the civility campaign proposed that “Diversity is what pushes us forward and makes us better.” In response to “Civility means...,” a student described, “It is the realization that the diversity of this world is what makes it beautiful.” In contrast, however, an article included a citation from the University President suggesting, “Fear and uncertainty across our borders and protests and polarization at home form a backdrop on our campus affecting complicated issues ranging from financial survival to diversity.” Similarly, while discussing the need for civility on campus, a University Systems Vice President concluded, “The University exists inside a larger community and they bring their baggage with them.” In this case, diversity was constituted as something outside, a
type of “baggage,” posing challenges to the imagined cohesive campus community, and thus, culling the need for “civility” as a corrective measure. This imagined unified campus community and the introduction of diversity concerns was echoed in a public statement from the Chancellor who suggested, “We should be able to disagree without creating a hostile environment.” This statement did not clarify hostile for whom. In addition, in the selection of “creating,” the statement moved from the assumption of a present state currently experienced as hostile-free by the campus population.

Some students pushed back on the discourse constituting diversity and civility as institutional code, offering, “Civility means doing away with ‘diversity,’ ‘political correctness,’ and any attempts at forced civility, which by definition is NOT civil.” Student activists also organized a group to protest their perception that the University was being unresponsive to diversity issues, forming the Diversity Matters Coalition as a “broad diverse coalition dedicated to intersectional action on behalf of diversity and inclusion at the University.” While continuing to embrace the language of diversity and inclusion, some texts from external and student-generated sources shifted the civility and diversity discourse however, to construct alternate, but concurrent objects of campus “diversity” and “civility” centered on negotiation and conflict based on social identity differentiation.

Positioned by campus produced texts as outside of the officially endorsed civility campaign activities, students’ acts of protest invoked much stronger language regarding dissent and disharmony. For example, in the text entitled “List of Demands” presented to the campus administration, among those the students explained, “The University must honor inclusivity by following the Disability-centric approach- Nothing About Us, Without Us.” They further added emphasis by stating, “This must be embraced by the university on a systematic level.”
Students then openly engaged with identity-based politics, and shifted the object to include systems based dimensions. Similarly, in a post-Trump presidential election rally, the Diversity Matters Coalition student members expressed “Students of color, mentally and physically disabled students, LGBTQIA+ students and gender nonconforming students, non-Christian and religious minority groups experienced a hostile and unwelcoming campus climate.” This revealed a construction of a civility based on rights of the population, civility framed as responsibility to act on the part of the institution, and diversity and inclusion defined in a way that extended to encompass marginalization based on social identity and related power differentials.

Another object constructed through the discourses of the campaign civility texts was that of safety. Within the texts, the administration emphasized the need for safety as one of “top priority,” and civility as a general remedy to concerns regarding safety. As illustrated in this comment by the University President in the local newspaper elaborating on issues of student conduct and campus civility he proposed, “We have renewed our commitment to setting the standards for campus safety, awareness, conduct, and disciplinary procedures.” In this case, the path to civility was via both awareness, although clarification specifically regarding awareness of what was left unanswered, and official and diffuse institutional procedures. Similarly, after several reported rapes on campus, and the subsequent University settlement of a Title IX sexual assault lawsuit made public, the University “appointed a commission to proactively deal with these issues,” later tying these “issues” to safety, civility, and education efforts. While acknowledging the “safety concerns,” the University de-emphasized anything unique to the campus structure or culture specifically, never using the word rape or rape culture, for example.
Resonant of this construction of safety and civility, in another quote the University President suggested, “On our campuses, like all others where thousands of young people live in close quarters and where students are presented daily with choices, bad judgments are going to be made, and incidents are going to occur.” Here again, while appearing to bring forward safety as an issue worthy of discussion, it was described vaguely as “incidents,” as opposed, for example, to safety threats, violations, crimes, etc. Use of the term “incidents” implied isolated rather than patterns of behaviors, despite the fact that, in the summary reports there were multiple “incidents.” For example, in the fall of 2016, 37 incidents from August through November reported included a variety of acts which involved: harassment, bullying, threats and intimidation, destruction of property, vandalism, and acts of bias based on religion, race, ethnicity, national origin, sexual orientation, and gender identity and expression.

In the introduction to the Student Life web page dedicated to “Incidents of Bias,” the text read, “The University is committed to maintaining a safe environment grounded in civility and respect for all members within the campus community.” Following this, civility education is listed as a potential sanction for violations in the Student Code of Conduct. The materiality and specificity of violent and oppressive acts related to the lack of safety or safety threats on campus is obscured in these civility campaign and related texts. Although these texts bring attention to “civility and safety,” these issues are addressed in a sanitized fashion, centered on reporting to official channels. Furthermore, the University is positioned as providing “proactive,” “fair,” “consistent,” and “timely” response to violence and safety concerns, and not implicated as an actor of safety violations, crime, violence, etc.

Alternately, the texts circulated via other external sources and student-produced campus documents offered a contrast to the way in which the University sanctioned texts
constructed safety and civility by providing more detail and stronger description. For example, after guiding a campus tour for visiting Black high school students from across the state in which banana peels were thrown at the tour bus and group of visitors, the student ambassador who accompanied them was quoted in the city newspaper remarking, “It was jarring.” She added, “A light bulb went off in my head that I'm Black and somebody did something to me because of something I couldn't control - the color of my skin. It made me feel Black. It took away my individuality.” The emphasis on feeling and embodiment of her experience was emphasized in her statement. Similarly, the impact of safety issues and the import on daily experiences was expressed in a student tweet from the campus LGBTQ+ advocacy center encouraging, “Marginalized students, your safety is all our responsibility. Use (hashtag) if you need someone to walk with, anywhere, anytime.” Another report published in an online LGBTQ+ journal discussed a transgender student leaving the University after allowing her image to be used in “pro-diversity” materials. Subsequently feeling unsafe and facing harassment the former student was quoted, “Honestly, I just couldn’t handle the pressure. I just couldn’t take it.” The details in which these student statements reflected safety diverged from University authored texts in their depictions, not through abstraction, but in exposure of the impacts on the individuals. In addition, at least indirectly, they rooted these experiences in larger-scale social inequities.

The civility texts also worked in creating the object of freedom of speech/freedom of expression. Of note, this was the issue in which faculty members were most strongly represented in relation to the civility campaign texts. Concurrent, and even competing, significations were working through and toward the construction of this object.
One construction within this dimension was that of freedom of speech/freedom of expression as an ideal component of civility. For example, on the first page of the “Civility and Community Task Force Final Report,” the citation quoting political theorist Ernest Boyer (Boyer, 1990) was highlighted for inclusion, offering, “A university is an open community, a place where freedom of expression is uncompromisingly protected and where civility is powerfully affirmed.” The establishment of the import given this concept, positioned as an ideal, was developed through the use of strong language such as, “uncompromisingly,” and “powerfully.” Hosted by the Faculty Senate, the “Free Speech and Diversity Forum” framed free speech as part of the “historical values for the search for truth, but may conflict with our efforts to foster a safe campus.” The event further described, “This forum will examine ways that we protect free speech rights while also creating a campus that is ‘welcoming to all and hostile to none,” adding, “The University’s “Civility and Community Principles” will serve to frame the discussions. In this case, freedom of speech was introduced as both a rational and moral value, linked closely to civility and safety, both of which were set up as conditions of a collective, public good. In a statement in which the Faculty Senate acknowledged their commitment to freedom of speech, they provided, “We also believe that many marginalized groups, who have historically been excluded from academic conversations, can be silenced or made to feel unsafe under the rubric of “free speech.” The need for a balance was emphasized in the texts between freedom of expression/speech, characterized as “open”, and campus safety, as an articulation of institutional and social order.

Throughout the Scarlet Oak University civility texts, freedom of speech was also constructed and positioned as an obligation to address a social ill. For example, in one of the limited instances in which, following negative publicity regarding violations committed by
students, oppression (i.e. homophobia, racism) was named directly in one of the campaign videos. The piece encouraged, “Let's take a stand against apathy, incivility, homophobia, victim-shaming, bullying, and racism. Because if we don't say something, no one will. Because we're (University nickname). And (University nickname) speak up.” Reflective of these campaign messages, a student posted, “There comes a responsibility to make sure others are being civil. Meaning if you see some disturbing behavior going against the morals of civility, you stand up and say something or you are as bad as the offender.” These constructs positioned “freedom” of speech and expression as interchangeable with “responsibility” as such, with the rationale of acting in service to the community.

Freedom of speech in relation to Scarlet Oak University civility related texts was also represented as a right within the conditions of civility, interestingly, by a variety of actors. While their political and other affiliations varied, and sometimes appeared to be in opposition, a diverse group of campus members’ use of discourse, and rhetoric invoking freedom of expression or speech was similar. One case illustrating this featured a letter to the editor published in the campus newspaper. The article included statements reflective of fear and dislike of Muslims, and contained statements such as “Between 15 to 25 % of all Muslims are likely to stab, disfigure, maim, behead, murder and massacre non-Muslims to make Islam the only system of governance in a country.” Following the run of the article, the paper received numerous critiques for providing a public forum for what they viewed as a harmful platform taken up by the author. In response, the student Editor-in-Chief posted, “The letter was an “expression of free speech protected under the First Amendment,” further commenting, “It is not in our interests to squelch that opinion just because it does not align with our own or could be offensive to groups on campus.” The rationale she offered pulled from her understanding of the article publication as an
extension of her entitlement as a member of the community trusted with decision-making, and an
effect of what she asserted were rights in a civil society to free speech.

Similarly, during a post-presidential student protest, a self-described “Trump supporter”
admonishing his peers for their statements critiquing the figure offered, “I simply wanted to
exercise my free speech. The other side was being lashed out against, and they also deserved an
equal voice.” His word choice of “exercise” and “equal voice” was used to emphasize freedom
of speech as related to agential action. At this same event, protesters contesting the recent
election of Donald Trump held signs and chanted, “I will not stop speaking Spanish. Hate is not
an opinion. Silence is violence!” A diverse group of campus actors enacted the discourses
forming the object of freedom of speech as a right, a natural extension of their agency.

Civility itself was also framed as a threat to freedom of speech/freedom of expression, as
a limit placed on an individual’s rights. As one student offered in replying to what civility
means:

I hope that the call for civility is not an excuse for suppressing dissent, different points
of view, and the freedom to disagree. I hope that the free and sometimes contentious
exchange of ideas does not become synonymous with the absence of civility. I hope that
calls for civility are not a means to enforce censorship.

This sentiment was a concern echoed most frequently however, by faculty members affiliated
with the University. Recorded in the group’s minutes was this notation regarding a memorandum
sent to the University Chancellor and President:

The memorandum highlights many of the concerns among some of the members of the
committee with the enforcement of the student violations of rules regarding civility and
the community. The committee did not include this matter in its reports because some
members of the committee believed that this issue is outside the committee’s mandate and permitted authority.

Many of the Faculty Senate minutes throughout the campaign continued to reflect apprehensions regarding the campus civility and freedom of speech issues, i.e. concerns regarding the campus bias incident response protocol potentially interference with free speech, and the lack of a University-endorsed and publicized freedom of speech statement and policy.

An extended and related normative discourse incorporated in texts across a range of actors was that which constructed and reflected civility as a necessary type of desired surveillance and management to regulate freedom of expression/freedom of speech perceived as speech or action deemed as problematic, unwanted, or unsafe. These types of undesired speech were described variously as speech or expression which was “extremist,” “inappropriate,” “contentious,” “offensive,” “uncivil,” and as “hate speech,” among others. Illustrative of this logic, a student admonished her peers in an online civility text stating, “You all need to check the appropriateness of comments. Civility is censorship!” Determining the limits and boundaries of sanctioned speech was also reflected by student activists concerned about the resulting harms of speech they described as bias and hate speech. For example, a representative from the Diversity Matters Coalition responded to the “anti-Muslim” newspaper article noting, "This xenophobic and factually inaccurate rant was a flagrant violation of the civility standards that the University has set forth.” Another student agreed, posting, “Firstly, hate speech is not protected under the First Amendment. Any publication has an obligation to not publish content directed at demonizing a group of people...” These excerpts reflected the complicated campus negotiations of freedom of speech and civility found within the texts, and the assertion that silence, or lack of
action, are also actually types of speech or expression. In addition, the texts highlighted the often subjective nature of freedom, as well as truth or fact.

Five years into the introduction of the Scarlet Oak University civility campaign, state legislators engaged directly with these campus issues as they passed a law with the provision that "prohibits state funds to promote the use of gender neutral pronouns, to promote or inhibit the celebration of religious holidays, or to fund or support sex week." Lawmakers who supported this restrictive legislative act argued that posts by the campus Office of Diversity and Inclusion website while labeled by the University as “pro-inclusion,” were in truth a “political correctness” or “PC” that embodied anti-decency and was harmful to the community. For example, a University alumni and state senator proclaimed, “People all over the Country are sick and tired of all this political correctness. It is going to an extreme that the overwhelming majority of my constituents and the American people are opposed.” In response to suggestions encouraging the use of gender-neutral pronouns, another state representative replied, “I just think that when people pay their taxes, they would rather have it go to a university so that people can learn something. Not be brainwashed into some gobbledygook.” Similarly, a spokesperson from the Governor’s office showing support of the censoring legislation declared the university as having "gone off into issues it didn't need to be focused on." Thus, freedom of speech and expression was challenged in practice according to the determination of what was relevant and appropriate speech and action by those in positions holding authority. Although educational worthiness is a subjective, variable, and fluid view, this concept was positioned as a key justification in the determination of what speech was free or protected within this understanding of a civil community.
Actors

The analysis within this category incorporated an investigation of the texts with respect to who was mentioned, quoted, or referred to, and how they were represented, including the representation of their social relations and identities. Carvalho (2000) proposed, “Actors are then both subjects - they do things - and objects - they are the talked about” (p. 24). Within the Scarlet Oak University civility campaign texts, there were patterns in the textual selections and omissions regarding various actors relevant to the construction of discursive meaning.

One of the central participants within the University-sanctioned civility campaign texts was the University itself, positioned as an actor, and referred to most often by an abbreviated naming, such as the University initials, e.g. “SOU,” as well as “our university,” “our community,” or “the (iconic University landmark),” in favor of an alternate, such as “the institution,” “higher education facility,” or other monikers that could have been chosen. This selection of naming and addition of the plural personal pronoun “our” served to minimize a feeling of de-personalization. It also enhanced the positioning of the consumer of the texts through an implied belonging, or invitation to associate through a shared history and tradition with Scarlet Oak University. Similarly, campus members were frequently referred as a collective as “the campus nickname,” used with effect to develop and tap into an emotional connection to Scarlet Oak University.

Groups were generally represented as actors in monolithic within-group categories in the collective including “students,” “faculty,” “staff,” and “administrators.” These reflections of delineations between groups were made within this discourse of a higher education institution and reinforced vertical hierarchies to categorize its members. For example, administrators are also employees, and staff members, but the attribution of power and/or authority is connotated

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within the use of “administrator” as a distinction. Likewise, academic deans are also faculty members, but this was a distinction made as well. This use of hierarchical categorization was also drawn more specifically as the texts reflected the introduction of an actor via their institutional title.

The individual cited most frequently specifically in the texts was “the Chancellor” or “Chancellor (surname),” as this was a signal to power and import of this actor, and by extension, the messages he was conveying. The Scarlet Oak University president, Vice Provost of Diversity and Inclusion, were also mentioned and quoted frequently. In addition, other status positions were often mentioned but, interestingly, frequently omitted the person’s name, reductively representing them instead through their function in relation to the civility work, such as, “Faculty Senate President,” or “Task Force Chair.”

The texts issued through the University regarding the civility campaign often constructed the University or its administrators or official figures as actors as subjects, and primarily positioned students as actors as objects. For example, throughout all of the documents, it is unusual to have direct statements written in the first person. However, within the multiple notifications attributed to being authored by the University Chancellor or the President, atypical of the other texts, many of the statements included those positioned from the first person as well as the collective. Statements such as “I invite…,” “I am asking…,” “I am proud…,” “I am troubled…,” were indicative of their positions reflected in the attribution of agency in this language choice. These textual features revealed assumptions that these administrators’ points of view would be taken as significant to others and also was reflective of the social relations organized around perceptions of power hierarchies.
The University Chancellor, President, administration, and University were connoted as experts via formal credentials, and were commonly constructed as acting paternalistically on behalf of the community, or the “University family,” as rescuers or mediators. This was illustrated in the published statement by the Scarlet Oak University President, “Our driving force is doing the right thing in the best interests of the university and our students.” Similarly, another comment described, “Our challenge is to graduate tomorrow’s citizens and leaders, who, because we make our campus a better place, will make the world and our country a better place.” This group of actors was developed in the civility campaign texts as a “creative leadership” represented as initiating change, addressing problems, and maintaining control. For example, the Chancellor “challenged students to promote civility” in response to the problem of incivility, the University President “appointed a commission to proactively and effectively deal with these issues,” in response to the Title IX sexual assault lawsuit. Similarly the texts construed the Vice Chancellor “invites students and other members of the campus community to talk openly…” the University was “called in to intervene”, and the University Chief of Police “has made and will continue to make surveillance improvements.” Statements within the civility campaign authored from this group of members with high-ranking positions within the University often began, “We believe…,” “We foster…,” “We value…,” or “We encourage…” emphasizing the estimated value placed on the influence of the speaking subject and their assumptions of speaking for a community.

A multitude of university-organized committees and departments were also ongoing actors represented as tasked with the official business of civility development, engagement, and management in the texts. Many of these actors were designated as the various “diversity” groups or offices of the institution. Those groups or offices represented as primary actors included: the
Civility and Community Task Force, the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, the Council for Diversity and Interculturalism, the Office of Multicultural Student Life, the Bias Education Response Team, the Central Programming Committee, the Faculty Senate, the Diversity Advisory Council, the LGBT center, the Black Cultural Center, the University Libraries Diversity Committee, the Commission for Women, Safe Zone, the Commission for LGBT People (interesting that there is an addition of “people” as a needed feature in this naming), the Office of Veteran Student Services, and the Office of Disability Services. Other departments or areas represented within the texts included the Office of Communications and Marketing, the Division of Student Life, Dean of Students Office, the Office of the Chancellor, and the Division of Academic Affairs. Within these categories, were the distinctions of “Task Force,” “Commission,” and “Committee,” which denoted not only functional differences, but carried connotations regarding power and authority as well. For example, members of the University “commissions” or “Task Force,” were appointed by a top ranked administrator, and were characterized as representing “key stakeholders.” Therefore, membership in this group conveyed implications of prestige and power, unlike membership in a committee, which was more widely accessible and reflected cross-membership determined by compositional diversity of campus offices.

Paralleling the inclusion of many departments and groups associated with the diversity tasks of the University, student organizations with a focus on diversity, inclusion, equity, and identity politics were also featured in the texts. However, these representations and citations of largely were included in the texts authored outside the university sanctioned texts. Most frequently, the “Diversity Matters Coalition,” was cited. This group formed as a coalition, which held connotations of informality and ‘grassroots’ organizing, in response to perceptions of
institution-wide concerns. The group’s stated agenda was to collaborate with others to encourage “intersectional action.” Specific group members cited in the civility texts included the Sexual Empowerment and Awareness Team which organized Sex Week, the Progressive Student Alliance (or “PSA”), the Women's Rugby Team, the Women's Media Group, the Black Student Union (or “BSU”), the Master's Social Work Organization (MSWO), the OUTstanding Planning Committee, the Muslim Student Association, the Filipino Students Association, the student chapter of the National Association of Black Journalists, the Native American Student Association, the OUTGrads, and Showing Up for Racial Justice (SURJ).

Interestingly, the Student Government Association (or “SGA”), although a student organization, was represented similarly to the manner in which University administrators were represented. For example, in support that the SGA was “proactive in addressing campus concerns regarding civility and cultural awareness,” the organization website offered that this was “accomplished through legislation put through the Student Senate in SGA,” mimicking action through official channels. The SGA student representatives, particularly those who composed the SGA Executive Council, were named specifically as actors within the civility texts. Resonant of the university-sanctioned civility texts, the SGA President was quoted as saying, “As the university works to get closer to the top 25 mark, the students need to look at diversity and understand the importance to our own campus.” In this statement, the SGA representative was positioned as aligned with the University and suggested the implication that that when this SGA representative speaks about the students in the abstract, that he is excluding himself.

Regarding “students,” hierarchical distinctions were also reflected with reference to actors of the civility campaign texts. Distinctions connoting special group status membership
included “leaders,” “scholars,” and “athletes,” group affiliations signaling elevated status and influence within the institution. For example, at a walk-out protest challenging state defunding of campus diversity programs, media covering the event made special note of the participation of some of the University’s football players, naming them individually. Athletes from across the campus were also named and incorporated as spokespersons in the University-produced civility campaign videos. The Student Government Association, which hosted a civility forum, was also cited in campaign civility texts, along with the College Republicans, and College Democrats.

Generally, however, representations of students in the civility texts differed from the representations of administrators and campus leadership. For example, less frequently named specifically, were the leadership of the Diversity Matters Coalition, or other members of the student groups, with the exception of when a student served on a diversity-related panel or program. In that instance, the student was presented, e.g., as Jane Doe, Women’s Media Group. The texts in those cases represented the individual as serving as a representative who spoke for the entire identity category. The Diversity Matters Coalition and their affiliated groups were also frequently referred to as “the protesters,” positioning the students as acting to oppose, and much less frequently as “student activists,” which would alternately position the students as acting in favor of a particular agenda or set of actions.

Scarlet Oak University students were represented predominantly through limited actor depictions. Students were largely represented as potential, but unaware, violators of civility in need of education and guidance from the institution. For example, students were spoken of as “young people,” or “young charges,” and encouraged to “conduct themselves in a manner that represents the university,” “adhere to the principles of civility and community” as set forth by the university,” and “urged to voice uncivil behaviors to campus officials.” By “practicing
tolerance,” students were also encouraged to be self-regulators responsible for embracing and applying the campus civility messages. Consistent with this depiction, one of the civility campaign videos posed, “An education doesn't teach you WHAT to think. It teaches you HOW to think. It teaches you to step back and realize that you may be wrong.” According to indications in the campaign materials, students should simply “lead by example,” or, quoting a state senator and alumni, “Be civil and encourage others to do likewise.” These representations in the texts of students in need of monitoring their own behavior was extended to regulation of their “community” as well, emphasizing that students should report violations by their peers.

Students represented as protesters were constructed variably through competing representations as both engaging as an unofficial extension of the formal diversity work of the University, and as acting outside this frame and at odds with the institution. The texts regarding civility authored through the institution frequently referred to the Diversity Matters Coalition, and occasionally other student organizations, as “meeting” and “in conversation” with various campus officials. These descriptions implied typical business interactions, rather than using alternate descriptors such as “challenging,” “arguing,” or even “negotiating” that would have emphasized dissent and disunity. The protesters were often spoken of as having “held an event” and trying to “raise awareness of the issue.” The selection of “held” as the action term was a general and non-descript word de-emphasizing strategy and knowledge of the protesters in favor of alternate words that would have connoted in the text the students’ strategic action, planning, and/or authority, such as “organized,” “structured,” etc.

This orientation of appearing non-controversial and working within the tactics sanctioned as acceptable by the University was sometimes taken up by the student protesters themselves in the texts. For example, subsequent to a student protest of the killing of Michael Brown in
Ferguson, Missouri by a police officer, a student was quoted in the newspaper as stating, “This isn’t meant to be a controversial event, only an event to increase awareness and let student voice their opinions.” However, this statement denoted power relations in the selection of “let,” implying the granting of permission from an authority source, and that a special event was needed to allow for student expression. Following interaction between a group of the protesters and the Chancellor, a text conveyed, “They told him [the Chancellor] students have worked hard and advocated the ‘right way’ with letters, calls and visits to lawmakers.” This statement reflected an acknowledgment in the text by the students themselves of the delineation of a ‘right way’ from the perspective of the institution to negotiate the issues specifically by calling on those tactics that engaged working within the current administrative structures.

Depictions in external sources, and those authored by the members within the “protesters” groups, offered alternative representations to the collegial relations construed in the campus texts. For example, an external source depicting this group as the initiators of conflict, a text spoke of “A swarm of liberal, violent protesters carrying signs, communist flags, and megaphones blocked the main stairs.” The comment featured the selection of “swarm,” a term chosen over crowd or large group to carry negative connotations of threat and danger given that this word is typically applied to the unwanted movement of a great number of insects. This depiction also paired liberal with violent, constructing the two as naturally linked. Another external source represented, “Students chanted, ‘Diversity matters!’ and staged a walkout.” Use of the word “chanted” relayed an implication of shouting, and “staged” suggested the presentation of something dramatic or unreal.

In contrast, members of the student activist groups themselves represented that they served in the role of advocates on behalf of “marginalized” students, drawing attention to their
understanding of power differentials on campus. A student elaborated, “It started with the
gender-neutral pronouns, but when the holiday-inclusivity backlash happened, that’s when we all
decided to really band together.” Here the student conveyed ongoing problems and “backlash,”
which encouraged further organizing. Similarly, the local newspaper noted, “Students grew
frustrated with his [Chancellor’s] responses to their pleas for him to publicly denounce
legislation that would defund the Office for Diversity and Inclusion.” Selection of the words
“frustration” and “pleas” indicated an emotional connection to the issues for the students, and an
acknowledgement of power differentials that left them at a disadvantage within the interactions.
The social relations between students and “the administration” were often represented by the
students as negotiations to highlight what the students perceived as needs across a broad
spectrum. This was illustrated by the utterance of one student activist who was quoted in the text
as stating, “They [the University administration] are trying to wear us out. I'm tired. But I'm not
giving up.” Far from representing the student action within the collegial frame represented in the
University-sanctioned texts, this statement revealed tensions in the student activist and
University relations as at odds. It also represented a University administration actively working
counter to the student interests. Student action was described here by the activist as taxing work,
but worthy, given the importance of the goals for which the students expressed a commitment.

“Faculty and staff” were other actors represented in the civility-related texts. Although
typically spoken of together, distinctions were made in the representations between these groups
within the texts, while monolithic representation was construed in describing within-in group
membership. For example, “faculty” were frequently positioned as advisors, i.e. serving on
committees or other groups. Illustrative of this was a text statement regarding the announcement
of the civility campaign, “We’ve done the research, we’ve talked to faculty and staff and we all

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agree this [civility and diversity] is an important issue.” Specifically, faculty were described as “models of communication” and “facilitators” of learning within the classroom. The University adopted a statement incorporated on all syllabi, and faculty were responsible for ensuring that they exposed students in their classes to the statement. It began, “Civility enhances academic freedom and integrity, and is a prerequisite to the free exchange of ideas and knowledge in the learning community.” Similarly, one of the texts construed, “Civility is tied to teaching and learning inside and outside the classroom.” In addition to making an assumption that inside and outside the classroom are bound and discreet categories, throughout the texts it was asserted that the primary faculty role with regard to civility was not to incorporate complex civility issues in the teaching of their own courses, but primarily through classroom management techniques and the reporting to campus officials acts of incivility they had witnessed or heard reported.

The faculty as a group, particularly through the Faculty Senate, was also reflected as working indirectly to support students via their election to voice concerns regarding free speech and the civility campaign. While not widely published in many texts, more than 1000 faculty members signed an online petition directed to the state legislature which read, “Let's stand with our students in standing with the Chancellor, by endorsing this faculty version of the student petition already gathering hundreds of student signatures.” While both the student and staff petitions clarified they were not an endorsement of the chancellor or his actions, they were specifically a stance against his removal by state legislators based solely on his support of diversity and inclusion initiatives. In contrast, staff members were largely absent within the depictions of actors from the civility campaign texts, other than being referenced indirectly through the offices tasked with oversight of “programming,” and lower level administrative and managerial tasks such as policing, discipline procedures, etc.
One unexpected group who became primary actors within the Scarlet Oak University civility campaign texts was state legislators and high-ranking governmental officials. In the early stages of the civility campaign, many state officials were positioned as providing support, and legitimacy, given their authority and roles of power within formal structures. Civility was positioned as consistent with the maintenance of an ideal of social harmony in the community. At a panel on civility and governance held on campus, members, including the governor, senators, and congressmen, shared their thoughts, which included a resonant lament by a congressman who declared, “We're in a culture where civility is regarded as a weakness.” Another legislator was quoted in the text as adding, “Let's be clear, compromise is not a failure of principles, it's the only way to govern. And some people think that compromise is a failure of your principles, but it's not. It's civility.” A summary statement regarding unity and accord across the state concluded the panel as it was “agreed that while national politics in Washington, D.C., might be very contentious and stalemated, politics in our state has always been civil, and its politicians have always tried to work together.” This general support of civility assumed both an endorsement of compromise in the face of disagreement as part of sound governmental action and civility as a source of pride in an assumed unified state community. Clarification regarding who should compromise, under what circumstances, for what purposes specifically, and to what degree was left unclarified.

However, as differing orientations and stances toward action emerged within the state “community,” the texts later reflected a shift in the state officials’ relationships with the University and its civility, and diversity and inclusion, programs and services. As conflict or tensions arose, legislators represented themselves as acting in the name of civility “to the people of the state” to intervene to address concerns regarding what was represented by the legislators
as University inefficiency and excess. For example, at the request of students, the campus "Stop Bias" protocol was modified by University administrators to make the "reporting process transparent and more visible." A state representative publicly questioned the move, offering, "I'm just hoping we're not setting up a website to complain about every social ill." He questioned the need for the system and indirectly the competence of the University students and personnel to make that determination. An implication drawn from this textual representation was that concerns likely to come through the system were not legitimate.

As the civility discourse emphasized diversity and inclusion as objects of the campaign, legislators were publicly vocal regarding their opposition. One legislator sponsoring a bill, which later passed to defund any use of state funds toward diversity and inclusion programs or services stated, “The University, and specifically the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, in my mind and my research, has a history of repeat offenses. … Personally I don't trust the University to fix the problem on their own." Through this crisis narrative set-up, he positioned the University as having committed offenses, and contested the integrity of the University. He also simultaneously positioned himself as an expert having done “research,” and as someone who was interceding to ameliorate problems of social fragmentation heightened by the University as part of its civility, diversity, and inclusion efforts.

This line of logic played out in numerous statements and coverage of the exchanges between state legislators and various University members featured in external source texts. For example, following the defunding of University diversity and inclusion programs and services, another legislator provided, "Nothing opens the closed minds of administrators like the sound of pocketbooks snapping shut.” Legislators were positioned throughout the external source texts as acting with urgency based on having the authority, and in this case, the power of decision-
making linked to resource dollars, for the benefit of restoring order. Punitive measures, e.g. “pocketbooks snapping shut” were positioned as a type of intervention by the legislative figures acting to “open closed minds,” and therefore represented as acting on behalf of the public good. Another example was illustrated in a state Representative’s exclamation following University posts regarding holiday inclusiveness and promotion of gender-neutral pronouns:

This kind of hyper-political correctness is not representative of the *University nickname* spirit that our state has come to know and love, and it has no place on the university’s campus. Between these offensive, Scrooge-like guidelines, and the school’s much-maligned attempt at regulating gender-neutral pronouns, it is past time for the Chancellor to get a handle on the university’s affairs or make way for someone who can.

Through these type of textual representations, the relationship of the legislators to the University and the extended community was described through these exchanges regarding civility as that which positioned the legislators as needed accountability managers. Specifically, legislators were positioned within the texts as acting to protect the interests of citizens by curbing the “political correctness” embodied in diversity and inclusion programs and services which posed a threat to the moral development across the state.

**Language and Rhetoric**

Within this analytic category, language aspects and writing style were considered in relation to the identification of key concepts and to wider frameworks, and included an analysis of the vocabulary used. Specifically, forms of adjectivation, as well as metaphors and other figures of style employed in the text as objects of persuasion, were analyzed. The investigation of language and rhetoric also reflected how civility was defined, and what
conceptualizations of civility were constructed or omitted within the Scarlet Oak University civility campaign texts.

The styles of the civility texts varied, depending on the materials’ intended use, audience, and placement. A large majority of the University-generated civility campaign principal texts were brief and conversational in tone. This included the two videos and the “Civility Means…” webpage that invited submissions from students to respond peer to peer as an open conversation in their own words. In the videos, various members of the campus were featured addressing the camera and intended audience-their university peers-directly. Also, the speakers in the video were viewed from close-up, implying a level of intimacy and ongoing conversation with the viewer.

Other documents were quasi-formal in nature, such as the majority of the notifications from the University Chancellor and President. These brief documents with minimal content reflected an impassioned tone, presented from an insider position as a member of the University community to other members. Typically these notifications were issued in response to what was viewed as a publicized crisis, such as a violent campus act, lawsuit against the institution, loss of funding, etc. These texts often began with a brief response directed to address the problem, then quickly shifted to a focus on action steps taken by the University administration. They then concluded generally with sharing a positive take on the qualities of the University community, or an optimistic future as a result of the action or positive University characteristics. Webpages targeted to students, such as the dedicated “Civility and Community” webpages on the University website, also made use of a quasi-formal tone. These pages typically featured strong visual graphics, and limited accompanying text often highlighting a slogan or catch phrase, reminiscent of a business print advertisement style designed for mass attention and appeal.
Another group of texts made use of a technical style, such as the numerous Task Force, campus teams, committees, and other types of group reports. These reports, such as meeting minutes, etc., were typically many pages in length and were text heavy. They also featured layered text, such as headings with bullet points, and mirrored organization via formal procedures, such as Robert’s Rules of Order or other parliamentary procedures. Official website pages hosting policies and procedures regarding civility and student conduct and discipline, or violation reporting systems, also made use of technical style. These texts included many references to acronyms, people, groups, documents, prior events, or policies that relied on reader knowledge of these many entities, occurrences, and institutional members and structures to fully comprehend. This suggested that these texts were not intended for mass public consumption.

News sources from outside the University community, namely those from the local and state newspapers, and some online education journals, took an informational tone. Approached from the perspective of an outsider, these texts mainly focused on featuring events, people, or documents associated with the civility campaign and texts with an emphasis on “conflict,” “tensions,” or “controversy.” Following a headline indicating such, the articles often opened with a summary introduction placing the issue of civility and Scarlet Oak University in a broader frame, connecting to other issues, such as education, finance, etc. These articles were often presented as informational, but were typically short in length. While introducing a few facts or statistics, these texts generally relied heavily on opinions or judgements introduced through cited direct quotations. This feature added interest for a broad readership, and often left the conclusion as an implied question regarding the outcome or best path for action. While opposition was explored within these articles, the texts usually reinforced representations that were reductive, collapsing complicated negotiations across many actors and domains into issues between two
opposing entities, such as the University versus the student protesters, the University versus the state legislators, or liberals versus conservatives, for example.

Throughout the civility texts, metaphors were also used as tools by a range of text producers in framing and constructing meaning. In studying mass communication rhetoric, Victor Ottati and Randall Renstrom (2010) suggested “Metaphor serves as a concise expression that conveys a set of arguments that elicit persuasion in the direction advocated” (pp.785-786). Many of the metaphors used within the campaign and related texts built these leading arguments through use of the theme of nature. Illustrative of this, the voiceover in the University-composed campaign video targeting students urged, “Let’s cast a light on inequality and injustice,” equating the university population as a powerful positive natural force exposing social ills. Another text described campus as a “diverse landscape.” By drawing on this particular phrasing, the campus was represented as a natural, but inviting, and even contained, or controlled, environment. It also positioned diversity as a non-threatening campus backdrop or context. Making similar use of a nature-related metaphor, only in this case, one that reinforced a negative construction, a legislator critiqued the campus administrators and students for the organization of Sex Week. He spoke of his concerns regarding the event as evidence of the “erosion of common decency.” Here again, the argument being levied was that sex education was a topic unbecoming and inappropriate for a public domain and university. The actions of the University administration and its students were narrated as a sweeping force, and one that was destructive of a solid, decent, and moral foundation.

In a recent study of print texts, communications scholars (Burgers, Konijn, Steen, & Lepsma, 2015) posed that use of conventional metaphors, those familiar to readers, provided a way for the readers to quickly make decisions regarding the content. In addition, they were also
persuasive by increasing creativity, and therefore, interest or readability, and by decreasing complexity. Metaphors that connoted embodiment were used as such, constructing the texts with persuasive appeal in support of particular agendas. For example, a student award related to the civility campaign honored students described as those “who show promise.” The intangible promise, indicative of an optimistic imagined future, was represented as a tangible object, something to be demonstrated by the students. Drawing on embodiment metaphors, the University President praised the institution, commenting, “Our campus stood up for the value of diversity,” personifying the University in a human act of standing up, or taking action. Similarly, the Chancellor suggested the values of civility and diversity, “have become core,” connoting that these abstract values were relevant to becoming part of the University as a subject actor.

In defining what civility meant to them, students also invoked metaphors describing embodied experiences. Examples included statements such as, “Civility means making no one feel like the ‘elephant’ in any room,” “Civility is to put oneself in another’s shoes,” and “Civility means looking past all labels and tags to see the uniform humanity in every person.” Within each of these, the complex and abstract conceptualizations were conveyed through the lens of an emotional embodied experience, e.g., wearing another person’s shoes, or having shared or common experiences; feeling like an out of place object, or object of discussion and gaze (elephant); or being categorized (tagged or labeled) reductively, instead of recognized as complex and as a whole human. Another example of textual use of persuasive embodiment metaphors was found in a legislator’s comment in defense of his opposition to a campus diversity event. He described that people were “sick and tired,” a generalization implying a visceral negative response by an entire state community.
Another common category of metaphors used in the civility-related texts were those of movement. The Vice Chancellor for Student Life proposed, “Civility is an ongoing journey, instead of a concrete destination.” In this case, the representation was of civility through a positive frame of moving via a journey, associated with wanted travel, discovery, etc., and set against being immovably fixed, or stuck, in concrete. Another comment by a faculty in responding positively to the University-produced campaign civility video was that it “can serve to open the door.” This description connoted action or movement, with the idea of opening as enlarging opportunities, i.e. for learning, dialogue, etc. Textual metaphors with negative connotations of unstable or uncontrolled movement were also utilized, in particular, to student dissent. For example, in response to students organizing their opposition to funding cuts, a local newspaper stated that they were “causing a stir,” while another reported that student protests had begun to “flare up” i.e., like an unwanted fire. The metaphor of movement was likewise applied by the University President as he called upon leaders to address the “important cultural issues swirling all around us,” suggesting disorientation or disorder.

Similarly, the application of understatement was often used in shaping text meaning. Repeatedly throughout the Scarlet Oak University civility campaign, acts of hate and aggression, along with controversy, were understated within the University-produced texts. For example, some of the texts referenced various “potential bias incidents” that occurred on campus. This diction presented a minimization of violent acts which were patterns, not isolated “incidents” given their profusion, and not “potential” acts, given that they had already happened and been reported as directed toward particular marginalized identity groups. For example, over the span of two months, numerous acts of violence suggesting a pattern of targeted maltreatment included an assault of a gender non-conforming student, a rock thrown through the window of the
LGBTQ+ center, defacement of university property following the Trans Day of Visibility, and several different occurrences of symbolic rainbow flags displayed at the LGBTQ+ center being taken and replaced with signs bearing the message, “Fags Get AIDS.” Following these acts, in a notification the University Chancellor called for civility and stated, “You have expressed concern and frustration that those cases remain unsolved.” His choice of concern and frustration belied intensity, and were selected in favor of other words, such as fear, despair, resentment, rage, etc.

Likewise, regarding civility and diversity and problems on campus followed by student protests, a student was quoted in the campus newspaper stating, “There are bad apples in very barrel. People who make the group they associate with look horrible. But we can’t base our opinions of an entire group on the actions of a small portion of a particular group.” In this case, again we see the use of understatement by the text emphasizing a “small portion” regarding discrimination as isolated and not the norm. Through the use of this metaphor, the text implied that it is natural and common to expect some people in a community to commit acts of violation. The University President de-emphasized urgency and severity as he described “sensitive challenges” in his address, referring to the Title IX sexual assault lawsuit levied against the institution and the state legislators’ defunding of all diversity and inclusion programs and services on campus. In the final report, the Civility and Community Task Force offered a suggested solution to address incivility, commenting, “Finding the appropriate way to express disapproval of uncivil behavior and to change the culture may be as simple as saying, ‘Hey, that’s not cool.’” Another instance of underatement was the application of “quiet indictment” to describe a student campus protest that lasted more than four hours and attracted more than 100 students in response to a publicized police shooting of a Black man in Ferguson, Missouri.
Another rhetorical tactic applied by a variety of actors in building particular significations of the civility texts was the use of overstatement. As discussed in an earlier chapter section, the use of absolutes (such as all, every, always, etc.) in describing the integration and support of the civility campaign reflected overstatement in service to represent a unified endorsement of the civility campaign by the University population. In addition, overstatement was reflected in the University-issued statement, “The University encourages the exchange of ideas through every aspect of campus life.” This inaccurately implied that all topics, decisions, and actions were open for debate, counter to the typical operations of a large institution which was structured through vertical hierarchies and a dense network of many laws, policies, procedural guidelines, and other formal operational elements. Similarly, text statements such as one released by the University Systems Office described the University administration as “unequivocally committed” in support of civility, diversity, and inclusion efforts. This overstatement construed that support would come without question, despite indicators to the contrary, via the establishment of a Task Force, a multitude of committees, and other affiliated University groups set up to consider the merits or lack thereof, of campus civility, diversity, and inclusion programs and services. In addition, in contrast to the statement, the University administration acted in opposition of this purported “unequivocal” commitment during times of tension. For example, the University opted for the removal of a message encouraging use of gender neutral pronouns after state legislator opposed the post, and for the campus defunding of the student-led Sex Week in response to pressures by state legislators threatening to cut the institution’s funding.

Overstatement was also used to portray the need for intervention and civility programs in response to social problems affecting the community. For example, a legislator condemned the Sex Week programs planned by students at Scarlet Oak University as “horrifically disturbing”
and “unforgiveable.” A student drew on crisis discourse and the need for regulation of student subjects via civility to avoid apocalyptic outcomes, stating, “When that expectation of self-control is taken away, and people are allowed to blame bad behavior on drugs, impulses, religion, environment, peers, etc., then people become like animals and civilization itself breaks down.” In a similar fashion, state legislators characterized a post by the University Office of Diversity and Inclusion website suggesting making holiday celebrations inclusive of faiths outside of Christianity, as the “war on Christmas.”

In addition, the use of adjectivation, or heavy description, was another form of textual engineering for persuasion used in the civility campaign. In particular, the use of subjective, positive adjectives were applied with repetition throughout the University-constructed texts. In describing Scarlet Oak University campus climate, consistent with the framing of the Civility and Community campaign with an emphasis on the institution as simultaneously a unified community, but one that “celebrates differences,” adjectives applied included: “diverse,” “open,” “welcoming,” “safe,” “inclusive,” “supportive,” “cooperative,” “respectful,” “friendly,” and “collegial.” A secondary theme of this application of adjectivation in support of describing this campus climate, was the positioning of Scarlet Oak University as an institution of “excellence,” supported by the frequent use of descriptors such as “top-tier,” and “high-quality.” Similarly, University administrators were written as being “committed,” and “proactive” actors, the students as “highly valued” by the campus community, and the civility campaign as “integral,” “constructive,” and “effective.” Notably absent from the descriptors emphasized in the University texts were “equitable” or “accessible” for example.

The use of negative adjectivation was used infrequently in the University-produced texts. The principle negative adjective applied within the texts made use of the term “hostile,” in
defining what type of environment the campus was not. While not employed in the University-sanctioned texts, the student activists often spoke of “marginalized” communities in describing specific social identity groups on whose behalf they were advocating. In contrast, the group of legislators relied heavily on the use of subjective negative adjectives in describing civility-related issues. For example, in speaking out publicly in opposition to programs and posts regarding campus diversity and inclusion programs and services, the state legislators applied adjectives such as “indecent,” “inappropriate,” “liberal,” “extremist,” “horrifically disturbing,” “ridiculous,” and “divisive.” These negative adjectives were used in supporting their arguments in the texts for action needed on the part of the legislators in restoring lost order and control.

Typically within the Scarlet Oak University-produced civility campaign texts, as well as texts from other sources, “civility” was left undefined. However, within a few of the formal documents of the University campaign texts, e.g., on the “About” page of the dedicated website, within the Civility and Community Task Force Final Report, and as part of the mandatory syllabus statement, a definition was included. The published definition was put forward to the Chancellor by the Civility and Community Task Force, and adopted formally by the University. Citing freedictionary.com, civility was defined as “an act of showing regard and respect for others including: politeness, consideration, tact, good manners, graciousness, cordiality, affability, amiability and courteousness [thefreedictionary.com]. Ultimately, civility is treating others as we would like to be treated.”

While the adoption of this definition of civility was established early in the campus campaign as the uniform definition, it was rarely referenced directly in the texts. The majority of texts and speakers quoted across sources generally did not clarify the definition of the term, but overwhelming framed “civility” in terms of responsibility (and not as a right). In addition, in
examining the texts, it was evident there was variability regarding the meaning of civility for the various authors and actors represented. As discussed in Chapter Two while there may be some overlap, there are four general categories indicative of the way civility has historically been commonly conceptualized. These categories include: civility as courtesy, politeness, code, and manners; civility as socio-political foundation for civil society; civility as virtue; and civility as dialogic/conversation model.

Each of these conceptualizations was commonly articulated within the Scarlet Oak University civility campaign and related texts, with the exception of civility as a socio-political foundation for civil society. The definition formally adopted by the University primarily reflected civility as code and courtesy and also introduced civility as virtue. Across the civility texts, civility was presented as sanctioned behavior, or the avoidance of socially unacceptable behavior. Exemplary of this understanding of civility, a student proposed, "Putting your empty disposable cup in a trash can instead of throwing it on the sidewalk is civil." Other students shared behavioral indicators of lack of civility, which included booing at sporting events, use of profanity, and not holding the door open as someone passes through, among others. Similarly, in his syllabus, a professor elaborated on civility stating:

As part of civil behavior and courtesy, please come to class prepared to stay in the room for one hour and twenty minutes without leaving. In order that everyone receives a quality education in keeping with the payment of tuition dollars and in order that the taxpayers’ contributions are well spent, common courtesy must be the norm in this class.

In addition to civility as tied to these procedural norms contributing to a “quality education,” this faculty member placed civility within a transactional framework, extended from the exemplification of certain behaviors as obligatory given the public funding of the University. This author drew on
assumed universal understandings of decorum in his reference to “common” courtesy.

Many examples also abounded throughout the civility campaign and related texts that reinforced the concepts of civility as a virtue connected with morality, and related to qualities such as respect, family values, religious piety, sacrifice, and restraint. For example, one of the campaign videos proclaimed, “Civility is doing what you know is right, and acting on it.” Interestingly, while key to this statement’s meaning, “right” was not elaborated, nor any examples provided, as if there was universal agreement regarding the signification of this subjective concept.

Extending from this conceptualization, mutual respect, or the ‘Golden Rule’ of “treating others the way you want to be treated” as noted in one of the campaign videos, was the most common student reply to the open-ended question of the meaning of civility, with nearly 400 of the just over 700 student posts clustered around this response. Criteria for judging the conditions or recognition of mutual respect was not elaborated. Related definitions of civility included “accepting others” (156 posts), being “nice,” or “kind” (86 posts), and “not judging people,” mentioned in 53 of the posts. Illustrative of these examples was the statement, “Civility means giving people the benefit of the doubt when they are rude or grumpy. Let it go, assume they have troubles bigger than you, and smile at the next person anyway.” This response conceptualized civility within a non-controversial lens of general affection, rather than placing civility within the construct of more complex relationships, such as within a frame of justice. For example, responses suggesting that civility equated to “niceness” reflected a superficial treatment of civility, bearing a lack of precision or delineation of criteria or distinguishing features of social relationships marked by civility.

Another common conceptualization of civility put forward in the campaign and the
related texts was civility as a dialogic or conversational conceptualization related to behavior of communication. Echoing this understanding, for example, a campaign workshop panel for “cultural enrichment” offered as a key topic how you can “say no with civility,” and “how body language conveys civility.” Another civility-themed panel aimed to teach students “to talk openly but respectfully about complex issues that impact their lives and their campus experience.” Similarly, one of the campaign videos urged, “We learn from one another through our conversations and our willingness to list and accept one another’s viewpoints.” Likewise, in one of the texts the SGA framed civility as “productive debate and courteous discussion.” The issue of productive of what and for what was not expanded upon explicitly in any of the campaign texts. A notification from the University Chancellor called for civility “to engage our peers in and colleagues, even though we disagree, in respectful and constructive dialogue.” Within the texts, however, civility and the complexities of communication were not explored deeply. There was no inclusion, for example, of dimensions such as the sources and functions of silence, or emotion, in communication interactions.

While falling outside of the most common conceptualizations of civility often identified in the literature, in the Scarlet Oak University texts, civility was also conceptualized as related to a value-added soft skill that students should obtain. This was often framed as a competitive edge, reflected in the SGA statements such as the “need for civility as the University gets closer to the top 25 mark,” or a quote from the University President that the purpose of civility programs was to “reinforce the behaviors that have served them [the students].” Similarly, in a notification the Chancellor suggested, “Diversity and civility are essential for our students and our institutional success” and required as part of operating in a “global economy.” Civility framed in this manner was presented through the language of student “success” and productivity.
Critiques of the concept of civility were largely absent in the civility campaign and related texts. A handful of examples were found, however. Suggestive of inhibiting power differentials or fear of consequences for dissent, these critiques were offered as anonymously authored. One of the areas of critique was that the call for civility was a call for the suppression of dissenting perspectives, and therefore, something unbefitting of the work of the University. For example, in response to defining civility, a student post suggested, “A university seems like a funny place to tell people to play nice and not rustle any feathers. Somehow I think previous generations would roll their eyes.” Along those lines, another proposed:

Civility can mean that no one is brave enough to have convictions and stand for what they believe to be true. It can mean blurring the lines until there is no truth. It can be a fancy word for political correctness …

In addition to the idea that civility was invoked to censor or obscure truth, there were also a few critiques that suggested civility was being used as a distraction and was not applied to substantive needs. For example, a response to the campaign video published online offered:

I hope that as a part of the Civility and Community Initiative the university pays close attention to some of its most marginalized members: low-wage workers. This video is nice, but we can’t build our community on the backs of poor people who are disproportionately women, and especially women of color. Unless we pay attention to those folks, we’re not actually going to be able to claim that we have in any way transformed our community.

This anonymous comment leveled various points of critique regarding the Scarlet Oak University civility campaign, including the lack of substance of the campaign and inability of the campaign to serve a needed function to be truly generative of transformed social relations.
In contrast to the conceptualization of civility via what civility does or should do, incivility was demarcated typically through the examples of breaches or absence of civility. In the final report from the Civility and Community Task Force, the members acknowledged this ambiguity and offered a guide in determining incivility as follows:

Incivility is not always easy to identify. One’s judgment as to what constitutes incivility should take into account the following:

1. Intensity of language or behavior;
2. Whether the behavior is isolated or repetitive;
3. Whether there has been a request to stop the behavior and how recent that request has been made;
4. Whether the behavior was provoked;
5. The extent to which behavior of others should be addressed at the same time.

While not directly defining incivility, the University-endorsed texts commonly described the need for civility as an antidote to “acts of bias” or “incidents of bias,” which were generally spoken of in abstractions. However, words such as “oppression” and “privilege” were never included in these texts. The use of “hate speech,” “harassment” and “discrimination” were used only occasionally, and in reference to the codified language of laws, policies, and procedural guidelines.

Rarely drawn on in the University-authored texts, local newspaper, or state newspapers, was strong language such as “structural bias,” “discrimination,” “violence,” or “inequity,” despite the integration of “diversity and inclusion” to the conversation and campaign focus. The rare exceptions to this were the acknowledgement of “racism” and “homophobia” in notifications from the Chancellor directly following highly publicized acts of aggression on campus targeted
toward Black students and LGBTQ+ students. Also absent from the texts in delineating civility and incivility were discussions of any of the Scarlet Oak University practices, policies, histories, or structures that contributed to incivility, or served as a barrier to civility.

However, reports and minutes from specific diversity and inclusion affiliated groups (i.e. Commission for Women, Safe Zone, Commission for LGBT People, etc.) did make use of terms such as “racism,” and “homophobia” as references to incivility. Interestingly, also, while the University documents did reference “first generation students,” classism and poverty were never addressed in any of the documents. This was despite the state having nearly one-fifth of the population living below the poverty level, and some communities of color in the state having more than a quarter of the population falling below this mark. In contrast, some of the student activist-produced civility related documents, such as those from the Diversity Matters Coalition, included a much broader address with explicit references regarding acts of campus incivility across a range of identities, citing among these “xenophobia,” “sexism,” and “religious oppression” at the university.

**Discursive Strategies and Processes**

Overwhelmingly throughout the civility campaign and related texts, opinions, values and judgments made the bulk of the text, while the texts were only minimally supported by the occasional inclusion of supporting fact. In building the texts, discursive strategies, i.e. narrativization, positioning, legitimation, and politicization, were instead used as devices to produce particular understandings and interpretations of the social world. For example, the deployment of narrativization emphasized the presentation of social actors expending agency by “constructing a sequence of predicted events and anticipated consequences” (Carvalho, 2000, p. 24). In the case of the Scarlet Oak University civility campaign, the narrative that was reflected
throughout the texts was civility as a project for improvement of individuals, the institution, and the extended community. The sequence was projected as the presentation of civility as a new or renewed resource or tool, introduced by a powerful source, such as the University or state legislators, and then applied to resolve problems, ultimately resulting in improvement through regulation and societal cohesion.

In support of this narrative, for example, the final report of the Task Force suggested, “Although the University has had an espoused commitment to civility and community since its inception, the Chancellor’s Civility and Community Initiative provides a new mechanism for promoting civility in intentional and visible ways.” This emphasis on the campaign as new, called into action by the University, and distinguished by being intentional and visible was consistent in other texts as well. For example, the Provost’s website endorsed this narrative with an ideal future orientation as it described civility as “the way forward.” Similarly, the Chancellor called for a “time for civility,” elaborating, “We have a unique opportunity in the coming days, weeks and months” in response to campus political unrest. Resonant of this, following other crises he contended, “I am asking for a renewed commitment to civility.” He emphasized in yet another notification, “Civility can be restored,” and again in another, “Our differences are what push us forward and make us better.” All of these textual references suggested a narrative of progression through civility called upon by the University to a positive outcome for the betterment of individuals and society. This message was carried consistently throughout the University-authored texts. The campus dedicated campaign website also made use of this narrativization offering, “By demonstrating civility and living out the principles, we all contribute to making our campus an even better place to live, work, study, play and ultimately grow.” This forward orientation, simplified narrative invoking civility as remedy, and resulting
ideal outcome, was reflected in other campus-sourced texts as well. Illustrative of this, the SGA President asserted the need for “everyday civility” on campus, and concluded, “If we reignite positivity then problems can be solved,” reflecting the narrative carried throughout.

Building this storyline, the campaign texts made use of the strategy of positioning by developing the relations of social actors involved through this particular context and frame. The campaign texts largely positioned the University-sanctioned authors, i.e. the Chancellor, President, SGA representative, etc., as the speaking experts. The University and University administration were self-positioned as fulfilling managerial duties in their address to students from a benevolent, moralistic, educative, and paternalistic location. Furthermore, this narrative positioned the University and its speaking administrators as imbued with prescriptive knowledge of what the good or ideal life was, and how to constitute it. Within this frame, the subjectivities made intelligible to students were as previously uninformed, but willing, recipients to become obedient self-managers through this top-down charge to embrace civility. Alternately, they could become intelligible subjects through positioning as resistors to the imposed recommendations and practices of the institution, or relatedly, change agents acting on behalf of, or as member of, “the marginalized” who were speaking back to the administration and institution.

These narrative and positioning strategies throughout the texts employed particular points for legitimation as a supportive discursive strategy. Carvalho (2000) proposed, “Legitimation consists in justifying and sanctioning a certain action or power, on the basis of normative or other reasons” (p. 23). In the case of the Scarlet Oak University civility campaign, the texts drew on legitimation through citing external experts, circular references pointing to the University or other official University-endorsed practices, and emotional appeals drawing on, and reinforcing, University affiliation. Examples of legitimation within the civility campaign texts pointing to
expert external sources included the Chancellor’s reference to a prestigious alumnus and former member of the University stating, “I want to take this moment to share advice from the late Scarlet Oak University alumnus and senator, who said, ‘Be civil, and encourage others to do likewise.’ Other civility texts included direct quotes from higher education student development and policy scholars Dr. Alexander Astin and Dr. Ernest L. Boyers, philosopher and political theorist Edmund Burke, and publications from higher education professional organizations, such as the American Fraternity Association (AFA), the Association of College Unions International, and NASPA- Student Affairs Administrators in Higher Education.

The texts also pointed to current or former University structures, or those of other higher education institutions for legitimation. Examples in this category were illustrated in statements such as this one in the Faculty Senate Minutes noting the Chancellor, “drew attention to his recent memo on civility and his assemblage of a task force that would work over the summer to address campus civility.” Analogous references were made in the Civility and Community Task Force report statement, “The Task Force drafted the ten principles of civility based on research on effective initiatives on other campuses across the nation,” and the inclusion of a list of other institutions with civility campaigns as an endorsement to sanction the initiative at Scarlet Oak University. Similarly, references throughout the texts to “peer institutions” as well as references to previous, present, and future University strategic plans were used as leverage to promote the civility campaign.

A final area of legitimation was an emotional appeal to University affiliation. This was illustrated in this statement found describing the civility campaign on the website, “Scarlet Oak University’s Principles of Civility and Community and the values and practices they entail have long been a part of our history in what we know to be the University nickname
Spirit.” Many other references throughout the civility campaign likewise appealed to being a part of the spirit or community of the University by citing landmarks, traditions, or nicknames associated with belonging to Scarlet Oak University.

In addition to the use of discursive strategies of framing, narrativization, positioning, and legitimation, politicization, or “attribution of a political nature or status to a certain reality” (Carvalho, 2000, p. 23) of civility and related issues contributed to the construction and sense-making of the texts. While the University worked to downplay controversy and de-politicize civility as normative and unambiguous, the activist students as well as external sources, participated in the politicization of civility and the civility campaign texts and activities. For example, dissenting student voices, as well as state legislators in opposition to the related policies or practices, charged that calling for civility was a move engendering ‘political correctness.’ This was an indictment that the civility campaign reflected an inauthentic attempt at appeasement, and was therefore, not about substantive and needed change for improvement.

Tied closely to the issue of civility throughout the campaign were the issues of diversity and inclusion. These topics were politicized via debate regarding the nature and function of diversity and inclusion in a bounded community, which ranged from the campus, social identity groups, or the state and extended community. Within the core of the debate was the meaning of social difference as alternately a causal source of conflict or as an intrinsic good, and the relationship of diversity and inclusion to either the differential or preferential treatment of specific groups relative to power, authority, and privilege. Related to this politicization was the exploration of civility in regards to accountability, and by extension, funding and the public trust. Another related politicized
issue involved civility and questions related to “free speech”, “hate speech”, and what constituted “appropriate” speech.

The textual analysis also revealed these issues were related to the discourse processes of the Scarlet Oak University civility campaign and related texts. Within these texts, discourse functioned with regard to meaning construction, and in relation to macro-contexts of the socio-cultural and political domains. One effect seen was that of discourse structuration, defined by Carvalho (2000) as “domination of the terms of a debate” (p. 24). Civility was overwhelmingly described, framed, and interpreted with, for, and/or against the concepts of unity, diversity and community, and their related terms, such as oneness and differences.

Similarly, discourse institutionalization, or “the transformation of institutional structures and/or practices in a way that embodies a certain discourse” (Carvalho, 2000, p. 24), was part of the discursive processes also seen. In particular, the civility discourse was institutionalized as the University formed organizational bodies, such as the Civility and Community Task Force, among others, communications channels, such as the dedicated civility campaign website, and ongoing programming, such as the adoption of a civility and community portion to the annual New Students and Family Programs orientation to accommodate and implement practices related to civility and as an extension of the campaign. The civility discourses were also embedded and enveloped within the official policies and procedures, illustrated by the adoption of a standardized civility statement for all course syllabi, and the inclusion of a civility framework within the policies and procedures regarding the Student Code of Conduct and the University bias reporting system, manifesting as normalizing effects through their codification and institutionalization.
Ideological Standpoints

Within this textual analysis, the fundamental political and normative ideological standpoints were also explored. Throughout the Scarlet Oak University campaign and related texts, implicit assumptions and rationalities, resulting in sometimes competing ideological stances, were circulated which both reflected and produced significance related to the wider political, social and economic contexts. This analysis adopted the interpretation of “ideology” espoused through the critical discourse literature, and illuminated by Carvalho (2007, p. 25) who noted:

I understand ideology as a system of values, norms and political preferences, linked to a program of action vis-à-vis a given social and political order. People relate to each other and to the world on the basis of value judgments, ideas about how things should be, and preferred forms of governance of the world. In other words, ideologies are axiological, normative and political.

For example, the ideological commitments advanced within the texts and conditioned through the civility discourses exposed assumptions regarding how society should be organized, the role of the state, and the relationship of higher education and the university in relation to its members, as well as to broad society, among others.

One such illustration of this was the assertion of higher education as a ‘public good,’ predicated on assumptions of the meanings of both ‘public,’ and ‘good.’ Illustrative of this was the statement by the University President regarding the role of the University to society, “If we’re going to make progress, higher education is critical.” A similar statement on the institution dedicated webpage explaining the civility initiative offered that a key campaign purpose was the “development of a civil community which leads to better the world through teaching, research, and service.” A primary component of this ideological stance was built on the
discourse of “community,” including aspects such as how the community was understood as bounded, and who was considered included within the community.

A related ideological standpoint within the texts was the University as part of a “knowledge economy” (Biesta, 2007). Assumptions and orientations within this ideological frame expressed in the texts were extensions of neoliberalism, conceptualizing knowledge, and the application of civility as part of that knowledge, as a commodity or good of value in the marketplace. This included an emphasis on globalism, and students as “global citizens” capable of interacting effectively with others from a variety of cultures in the academy, and later, upon graduation, in the workforce. This stance was also supported in the references in the texts to civility as a value-added soft skill, part of a “true education” linked to “student success” measured by productivity, and institutional rankings and indicators of marketplace competition.

Administrative rationalism was another ideological premise articulated within the civility and related texts. John S. Dryzek (2005), in applying discourse analysis to issues of the environment, defined this orientation as one in which the administrative state, experts, and managers are emphasized with regard to problem solving. He elaborated that within this, “The state is motivated by public interest defined in unitary terms,” and draws on the “key rhetorical devices of a mixture of concern and reassurance” (p. 89). Discourses of officialism, managerialism, efficiency, and governmentality were used in the development of administrative rationalism throughout the texts. Illustrative of this underlying ideological stance, in response to a post on the website of the campus Office of Diversity and Inclusion, a state legislator offered, "It is difficult to believe that such a ridiculous suggestion as gender-neutral pronouns would be published on a university website without leadership's approval."
To me, it suggests a lack of institutional control.” Another state official further elaborated, “I believe the Senate Education and Government Operations committees should investigate and review… State taxpayers should not expect to be paying for this kind of stuff.” Another legislator comment concluded, “I hope top University officials take quick action to resolve this issue, and if they don't, the legislature will most certainly weigh in ...” Similarly, discourses of crisis and the ‘new order’ were amplified through the text narrativization of crisis as disunity or dissent, followed by leadership intervention for progress defined as action that would result in stability or a return to the status quo.

Diversity through the lens of social identity neutrality was also present as an ideological stance within the civility campaign and related texts. One example of this was supported through the discourses of ‘color blindness,’ or “the racial ideology that posits the best way to end discrimination is by treating individuals as equally as possible, without regard to race, culture, or ethnicity… It focuses on commonalities between people, such as their shared humanity” (Williams, 2011, para. 2). Supporting rationalities were built through a discourse of unity and social harmony as a normative community ideal, in spite of, or irreverent of, diversity or differences. While the texts spoke of “celebrating differences,” this message was attached to, and ultimately subsumed by, the imperative of “One campus. One community” as the tagline rhetorically echoed consistently throughout the campaign. Fashioned from this stance was the implicit assumption that all participants are equal within the institution, and by extension have equal rights, and responsibilities in addressing civility.

A competing ideology woven into the texts was that of diversity as a social justice concern, largely taken up by the student activist groups. This orientation highlighted differences as pertinent to social identity construction, along with issues of equity/inequity.
based on social identity group memberships. This orientation surfaced within statement such as one by a student protester who noted, “This campus is already incredibly violent to people of color, the LGBTQ people.” Another statement featuring this ideological stance was illustrated in an argument posed in an online student-authored article opposing plans by the Governor for outsourcing campus jobs:

The struggle between the Governor and the campus workers is a struggle of the big guy versus the little guy, working-class David versus fat cat Goliath. I implore the student body to get active and take a stand for those who work so hard on our behalf. It will be an uphill battle to secure the jobs of campus workers, but it’s a battle that needs our help.

Assumptions asserting the value of exploration and acknowledgment of privilege and power differentials at the micro, institutional, and macro-levels was fundamental to the logic frames within this ideological stance.

A related ideological stance which emerged in the analysis of the Scarlet Oak University civility campaign and related texts as a point of negotiation was that of freedom of speech and expression. This discourse extended from the imprint of historical political liberalism, and focused on the assertion of individual rights, protections under of the law, and a limited democratic society. Discourses within the analyzed texts related to this orientation included those that circled around the valorization of individual and social responsibility and accountability. Implicit within these frames were assumptions placing dialogue and the “free exchange of ideas” at the focal point, engaging presuppositions of rational individuals, as characterized in Enlightenment theories, engaging in debate. Central to these ideas was an assumption regarding the nature and accessibility of “freedom.”
Contextual Analysis

In addition to applying the textual analysis, as recommended by Carvalho (2000), a contextual analysis was also applied to the investigation of the Scarlet Oak University civility campaign. In particular, the texts were investigated via a comparative-synchronic analysis to provide not only an exploration of the texts themselves, but to also place those texts in relation to representations from other sources at the time of production and consumption of the texts. A historical-diachronic analysis was conducted as well, positioning the texts in comparison to the meta-context, including the perspectives of the historical, political, and social contexts.

Comparative-Synchronic Analysis

With a goal of multi-level analysis rendering a rigorous investigation of the Scarlet Oak University civility campaign, related texts that were not authored through the University and labeled specifically as part of the Civility and Community Initiative were examined to fully explore the production, circulation, and negotiation of relevant discourses as represented in other sources. External texts, such as those from the SOU area local newspapers, as well as other media sources that responded to, or engaged with, coverage of the University civility campaign practices or related events or programs were examined for comparison to revealed congruities or incongruities in textual treatment of the data. Part of her analytic guidelines, Carvalho (2008) suggested, “Researchers should take simultaneous discourses into account as comparison contributes to critical analysis” (p. 164). Carvalho (2000; 2005; 2007; 2008) advocated incorporation of this tactic as an opportunity within critical discourse analysis to cross reference alternative textual constructions to identify non-static inter-discursivity.

Scarlet Oak University’s civility campaign was not isolated from the encompassing discursive environment in which this education and social practice circulated. As has been
explored in the review of literature in an earlier chapter, the civility discourses of SOU were part of the construction and reflection of broader discourses aimed at, and enacted through universities. While not exhaustive, a comparison of the context in which the “Civility and Community Initiative” was situated provided additional insights regarding the status quo, and the SOU civility campaign in relation to these circulating discourses.

For example, in 2011 when Scarlet Oak University launched its Civility and Community campaign, the civility discourses were at a heightened level of presence across the nation. Media coverage featured an amplified resurgence of texts lamenting the need for civility, often citing incivilities which ranged from rude comments made on the internet, to acts of violence against targeted marginalized communities. Discourses of civility were circulated throughout both the scholarly and popular press, particularly following widely publicized crises. SOU was not alone in launching a campaign entitled “Civility and Community Initiative” that year, as, at a location in the Midwest, this campaign, resonant with that of SOU’s, was initiated via “a call to action designed to restore decorum and a respect for divergent opinions throughout the state.”

The rhetoric mirrored that of the Scarlet Oak University campaign in many aspects, with its “call to action,” and description emphasizing restoration, decorum, and respect. The post-crisis context was also resonant. The text stated, “It comes at the dawn of a contentious Congress, weeks before the state legislature convenes and against a backdrop of acrimonious debate about immigration, gay rights and fiscal discipline.” The mayor of the state capitol city elaborated, “We have to speak with measured tones, with great respect for people.”

Within the SOU civility campaign launch year, discourses of civility were often applied post-crisis, positioning the need for civility as a legitimate concern and reasonable response. For example, following a 2011 mass shooting attempting an assassination of a Congresswoman and
leaving eleven people dead, in a public address carried across news feeds including the widely-circulated *New York Times*, President Obama called for a “new era of civility” (Cooper & Zeleny, 2011). In response, later that same year the National Institute for Civil Discourse was established under the guidance of former presidents George H. W. Bush and Bill Clinton.

It was perhaps no surprise then that a ‘snapshot’ of civility discourses in 2011 would represent discursive continuities within civility discourses and their enactment via campus campaigns at institutions of higher education across the nation. Another state flagship university in the Midwest announced its civility campaign just months prior to the Scarlet Oak University civility campaign. After repeated acts of violence toward LGBTQ+ youth, and subsequent suicides among this population, this university’s Office of Multicultural Affairs representative stated, “When civility is present, a community such as ours becomes a healthy and rewarding place to live and work. Without civility, the community fails to thrive, and we lose the sense of pride that is important to our vibrancy.”

Like campuses across the US, a similar appeal introducing a civility campaign that year at a university on the west coast was described as “spearheading an effort to bring awareness to, and open up dialogue about, civility and social responsibility in responses to recent local and national hate crimes and suicides.” This post-crisis campaign echoed that of Scarlet Oak University and many others with its stated intent “to inform incoming students of the diverse perspectives and inclusive environment we promote,” and invocation of a diversity and inclusion frame.

Similarly, under the auspices of “Achieving the Dream,” a civility campaign launched on another campus in 2011, was described by the following:

Measures will be implemented and sustained to create a safer, more friendly
environment— an environment that is more conducive to student success. This initiative will be placed under the direction of a Civility Task Force, comprised of members from every area of campus life.

Again, this reflected design similar to the Scarlet Oak University campaign in its top-down administrative authorization, establishment of a civility Task Force, emphasis on campus culture, and descriptive language using hyperbole (i.e. every area of campus life), focus on safety and a welcoming or friendly environment, and student success as key characteristics.

Many texts in publications such as *USA Today*, the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, and the *New York Times* featured content describing campus civility campaigns, and that same year, *In Search of Civility: Confronting Incivility on the College Campus* by Kent Weeks (2011) was released, highlighting the prevalence of civility campaigns emerging as common practice to address social ills in the field of higher education. Thus, the widespread presence of civility discourses helped to propagate the concept of viability of campus civility campaigns. However, a few texts also introduced challenges regarding these campaigns, providing opposing civility discourses. For example, a policy activist was quoted as suggesting:

> Civility is an important value. But at the same time, it can’t be made the paramount issue in a free society because there has to be a space for people who have intense feelings in a way that communicates the urgency and depths of feeling that lies behind their opinions  (Zagier, 2012, para. 13).

This reflected questions circulating regarding the civility campaigns’ viability given concerns of incompatibility with freedom of speech and the democratic process, issues which surfaced in the SOU campaign.

While the majority of the civility-related texts at the national level and from state to state
often reflected discursive similarities, a comparison of texts constructed by Scarlet Oak University, compared with those from the local paper or external online sources, for example, reflected disparities in the treatment of the civility campaign and related campus practices and variance regarding community consensus and unity, or lack thereof. For example, a local paper reported on exchanges regarding an SOU student protest by describing, “Tensions were high, and things even got violent. A fight erupted where the university was called in to intervene.” This contrasted greatly to the SOU Chancellor notification covering the same event, which minimized controversy. The Scarlet Oak University notification provided no information regarding a fight or rising tensions, and simply summarized, “The University Police reported no arrests were made at the protest,” creating a very different understanding of the event.

In another example, texts from sources other than those officially endorsed through SOU reflected wide differences in framing and representation of a same event with regard to a student letter on the topic of Muslims published in the SOU campus newspaper. Headlines in the city and state news journals, as well as a public statement from the student activist group Diversity Matters Coalition reflected titles and content such as, “The University Office of Diversity and Inclusion was the Subject of Controversy Itself.” These texts highlighted dissenting perspectives, and labeled the article as a type of “anti-Muslim” hate speech.

In contrast, however, were statements from Scarlet Oak University that did not address the issue as controversial, nor mention any particular group or agenda. SOU instead distanced the institution from the event, stating the campus paper was editorially controlled by students and not managed by the University. Following the release of this official statement on the University website, administrators were unavailable for comment. Taking an alternative stance, the campus newspaper editor offered the letter not as anti-Muslim, but as a testament to the
objectivity of the journal. She proposed, “The staff members all have the community's best interest at heart as they allow all sides to be heard and as they share the news in an unbiased way. They make sure to never question their integrity or disrespect anyone different from them,” framing the issue as one of advocacy on behalf of diversity of opinions.

Similarly, while a wide range of media outlets produced texts that covered the Scarlet Oak University’s settlement of a Title IX sexual assault lawsuit, they did so with much variance as to representation and discursive framing. For example, the SOU perspective was shared via a released official statement emphasizing the University’s strong and appropriate response to meet student needs and uphold civil behavior. Accordingly, the Chancellor stated:

No university will be able to prevent every incident of students, faculty or staff making bad judgments. Like many institutions we are not perfect, but our goal is to continue to be the best we can be at creating awareness, educating, and preventing discrimination and abuse in any form, and to continue to be equally prepared when it does happen and to deal with it promptly, sensitively, fairly and effectively. We’ve come a long way in recent years, and we are working every day to be even better. Our first priority is the safety and well-being of every member of our University community.

Reflecting a parallel de-emphasis on blame or guilt by the University, and a minimization of any concerns regarding patterns or campus culture, the University President issued a statement noting, “I continue to say that one incident of sexual misconduct is one too many. But, unfortunately, on a college campus, these incidents will happen.” Later he concluded SOU agreed to the settlement on behalf of the campus community and as a sound financial move, “to prevent the further toll it was going to impose on all involved, and the resources an aggressive defense would take away from our core mission and ongoing legal expenses for the next several
years.” Likewise, the Department of Athletics, which was named as an offender in the lawsuit, held a press conference led by the head football coach. He shared:

Our hearts, our thoughts and our prayers go out to the alleged victims. We feel for them.

We are constantly educating our players. We are constantly trying to prevent anything like this from happening. That's our role as coaches. That's our role as parents.

This stance also reflected an emphasis on strong leadership on the part of SOU, emotional concern for the alleged victims, and carrying out a paternalistic obligation to provide protections for the community.

In strong contrast, however, were the discursive strategies and meanings built through texts not authored or officially endorsed by the University. In these texts from local and state journals and news sources, descriptions included language emphasizing controversy and unresolved widespread problems. Citations included a discussion of the “explosive lawsuit” not through the lens of administrative mastery, but as a problem with campus culture, as a “massive civil rights lawsuit,” and as an acknowledgement of a “20 year history of alleged sexual and criminal misconduct.” Texts produced by students regarding the event described an “intolerable situation,” “sexist rape culture,” and “need to address ongoing sexual violence,” consequently centering the issues in contrast to the University texts within a discursive frame of individual and collective rights, oppression, and campus culture. Thus, a comparison of SOU civility texts to those of alternate sources revealed a dynamic relationship of the discursive reflection and construction of civility. Carvalho (2008) posited, “Looking at alternative constructions of the same reality (such as different media reports) is a helpful strategy. It is important to make ideologies manifest because they involve fundamental motivations and justifications for keeping or changing a certain status quo” (p. 171). Applications via a comparative synchronic
lens to the data provided an additional layer of analysis from which to reflect on the discursive convergence and divergence within the civility frames, and the subsequent symbolic meanings that are not always readily visible, but inherent, in discursive practice such as the Scarlet Oak University civility campaign.

**Historical-Diachronic Analysis**

Following Carvalho’s (2000; 2005; 2007; 2008) guidelines for a robust discourse analysis, a final field of investigation was applied to the texts. Using a historical-diachronic analysis, insights were provided in part by identifying ‘critical discourse moments.’ Drawing from the work of Chilton (1987) and Gamson (1992), Carvalho (2008, p. 166) articulated ‘critical discourse moments’ as key events in which discourse is stimulated or brought forward, sparking commentary across various domains and sources, and thereby shaping discursive meaning. In addition, the Scarlet Oak University civility campaign and related texts were inspected for elements of discursive reproduction or contestation across an extended timeframe. Accordingly, as represented by the following Table 2, “Timeline of ‘Critical Discourse Moments,’” relevant to Southern Oak University civility campaign, data is presented regarding context, including triggering events, exploring moments prior to and across the span of the civility campaign to the current timeframe.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Description</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>November 5, 2008</td>
<td>Following the election of President Barack Obama, cotton balls are found littering the campus Black Cultural Center.</td>
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<tr>
<td>February, 2010</td>
<td>During a campus visit by Black high-school students to the University, banana peels are hurled at the visitors by some University students.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Spring, 2010</td>
<td>University Chancellor convened a campus Civility and Community Task Force.</td>
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<tr>
<td>August 23, 2010</td>
<td>The final report of the Civility and Community Task Force was completed.</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 11, 2011</td>
<td>The Chancellor issued a notification calling for civility. The Civility and Community Initiative campus website and first campaign video were also launched.</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 15, 2011</td>
<td>The campus International Festival included the “Celebration of Civility and Community” kick-off event.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fall, 2011</td>
<td>The University adopted a definition of civility; Incorporation of civility and civility principles into codes, policies and procedures.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 8, 2012</td>
<td>An announcement was issued regarding the hiring of the University’s first Vice Chancellor of Diversity and Inclusion to begin in 2013.</td>
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<tr>
<td>March, 2013</td>
<td>State legislators threaten to defund the University in opposition to the student-organized Sex Week stating the event did not support sexual health or “diversity” but promoted “perversity”; The University pulls promised state event funding.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 7, 2013</td>
<td>Students organized and implemented the first of the subsequent annually held campus Sex Week using private donations.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>July, 2013</td>
<td>The LGBTQ+ center became a unit administered under the newly hired Vice Chancellor for Diversity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 22, 2013</td>
<td>Faculty Senate hosted a campus Freedom of Speech Forum.</td>
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<tr>
<td>December 3, 2014</td>
<td>Following publicized campus violations regarding bias and discrimination, hate speech, bullying, sexual assaults, homophobia, and racism, the Chancellor issued a notification encouraging civility.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August 25, 2015</td>
<td>The campus Office of Diversity and Inclusion posted a message encouraging the use of gender-neutral pronouns and the need to not make assumptions regarding people’s gender identity.</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 4, 2015</td>
<td>The campus Office of Diversity and Inclusion removed the post regarding use of gender-neutral pronouns.</td>
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<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>September 28, 2015</td>
<td>A state lawmaker publicly questioned salaries relevant to campus diversity programs. The second university-produced civility campaign video was released.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 3, 2015</td>
<td>State legislators asked for the resignation of the Chancellor and the Vice Chancellor for Diversity and Inclusion following the inclusive holiday celebration post.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 8, 2015</td>
<td>Students organized a campus “study-in” to challenge critiques by legislators of the Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, and the Office of Diversity and Inclusion based on their efforts in favor of supporting diversity and inclusion efforts on campus.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>December 14, 2015</td>
<td>The Sexual Empowerment and Awareness Tennessee (SEAT) and Black Student Union (BSU) proposed separate “List of Demands” relevant to campus climate concerns for LGBTQ+ students and students of color.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mid-January, 2016</td>
<td>SEAT, BSU, and other student organizations joined to form the Diversity Matters Coalition, combining and expanding the “List of Demands” addressed to campus administration to include disability rights, bias response reform, and comprehensive campus inclusivity training using an intersectional approach.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>January 29, 2016</td>
<td>The Diversity Matters Coalition members were scheduled to meet with campus administrators. The administrators did not attend, citing a miscommunication regarding location. The students then held a “sit-in” in the Chancellor’s office.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>February 4, 2016</td>
<td>Rescheduled meeting among Diversity Matters Coalition and Chancellor was held for students to present the “List of Demands.” The students hold a “teach-in.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>February 25, 2016</td>
<td>Diversity Matters and other campus members hold protest at the campus athletic center regarding their concerns related to the University’s response to a Title IX lawsuit against the University relevant to campus sexual assaults.</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 3, 2016</td>
<td>Students publicly declare support of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion and gaining over 1000 signatures. The Diversity Matters Coalition urged students to contact state legislators to discourage funding cuts. The University releases a statement that legislative actions for defunding is ‘clear and concerning.’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 5, 2016</td>
<td>Student athletes and other students organized a “walk out” of an athletic event after chanting and holding signs marked “#MyDiversityMatters.”</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 8, 2016</td>
<td>A group of students lobbied at the state capitol against the Governor’s plan for outsourcing many staff positions and making budget cuts to defund the campus Office of Diversity and Inclusion of state funds.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>March 21, 2016</td>
<td>The Chancellor sent a campus notification providing an update on the Title IX sexual assault lawsuit.</td>
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<tr>
<td>March 31, 2016</td>
<td>LGBTQ+ student organizations host a Trans Day of Visibility event. Following the event, a campus landmark is defaced.</td>
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<td>Date</td>
<td>Description</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 19, 2016</td>
<td>The state House of Representatives passed an amendment shifting some funding for diversity-related offices and programming, with a portion to reallocate to “In God We Trust” law enforcement decals, and the remainder to “minority” engineering scholarships; The Diversity Matters Coalition organized a “die-in” on campus to protest state diversity-related budget cuts and concerns about campus climate for marginalized students. Some students opposing the protest responded by displaying Confederate flags in campus windows.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 20, 2016</td>
<td>The State Senate passed another amendment shifting all campus diversity funding only to minority engineering student scholarships. The Diversity Matters Coalition leadership met with University administrators regarding a “List of Demands” and University action steps and encouraged the release of a public statement by the Chancellor condemning the state legislature’s defunding of diversity programs. The Chancellor instead proposed to contact legislators directly.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 20, 2016</td>
<td>Bill signed into law reallocating all funds for the Office of Diversity and Inclusion and supported services and programs for fiscal year 2016-17 into scholarships for minority engineering students; The law prohibited the use of state funds &quot;to promote the use of gender-neutral pronouns, to promote or inhibit the celebration of religious holidays, or to fund or support Sex Week.”</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>June 21, 2016</td>
<td>The Chancellor issued a statement that he will “step down as chancellor and transition to a faculty position” in the following academic year.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>August, 2016</td>
<td>Students reinstate LGBTQ+ center on campus as student-funded and run.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September 15, 2016</td>
<td>Native American Student Association and others protest the North Dakota pipeline.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>September, 2016</td>
<td>Numerous acts of vandalism are committed against the LGBTQ+ center, including a rock thrown through a window, pride flags stolen and replaced with “Fags get Aids” flags, and attempted assaults.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>October 24, 2016</td>
<td>The campus newspaper published an opinion article citing that one-fifth of Muslims are likely to ‘behead, maim’ etc. and are working to make the government a state of Islam. Student groups including Diversity Matters Coalition speak out against the article as “anti-Muslim” hate speech. The campus newspaper editor responds to criticisms by responding that running the article is in line with free speech.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 9, 2016</td>
<td>The Chancellor issued a notification to ask for civility from campus members regarding the presidential election.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>November 10, 2016</td>
<td>Hundreds of students gather to protest and counter-protest post-presidential election results. Organizers report wanting “to create a space for people who are frustrated and struggling to gather.”</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: This list is not meant to be exhaustive of all civility-related events at Scarlet Oak University, but representative of events significant in shaping the circulating civility discourses.*
In addition to considering the import of context in shaping discourses, the application of a historic-diachronic analysis allowed for an examination of the contingent nature of a discourse in the development and evolution of texts. The provision of an investigation of significant critical discourse moments provided an inventory framework in which to reflect on triggering discourse elements, as well as pointing to prior texts, while simultaneously highlighting how new constructions of meaning emerge as the texts are shaped by, and are shaping of, constructions of reality and discourses in a constant state of becoming. This was evident in probing the texts of the Scarlet Oak University civility campaign and related texts, and exploring how representations of reality impacted subsequent ones.

The porous boundaries of the civility discourses were permeated by past and present discourses. For example, the texts spoke to both current and prior texts in their references to “controversy,” “backlash,” and “fall out,” terms which inherently placed these issues in relation to other discourses, events, or texts. Similarly, local and national discourses of crisis and the need for civility establishment and renewal were imprinted on the Scarlet Oak University civility discourses. As part of broader disciplines, especially present throughout the texts, the University civility discourses engaged references to other civility higher education initiatives and the institutional language reflective of the field, such as that regarding diversity and inclusion. Similarly, the civility references and discourses employed by the state legislators and other governmental officials were reflective of, and contributed to, a broader landscape of political rhetoric.

The data also revealed two significant interesting findings regarding the civility discourses taken up by the students, indicating both the persistence and morphing of local and national discourses. For example, the student activists’ naming of the Diversity Matters
Coalition and use of “My Diversity Matters” as a protest mantra tapped into the circulating discourses associated with the Black Lives Matter movement. It also pointed both to connection to a larger politicized agenda, while, in the reference to “My Diversity Matters” made visible the needs and identities of individuals that were also part of marginalized groups experiencing structural disadvantage. Similarly, other student protest language reproduced and contested circulating discourses. In the student march and rally opposing the newly elected U.S. President, the students carried signs and chanted, “America was never great,” drawing from, yet challenging, the endorsed “Make America great again” political nationalistic campaign rhetoric used by the candidate.

The texts also represented the student reproduction and contestation of discourses produced by the University. Using the language of the institution, the students took up the discourses, but applied that language to talk back to the University. For example, in the Diversity Matters Coalition’s “List of Demands” they introduced, “These are steps to, in the spirit of the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, make the University a campus that is welcoming to all, hostile to none.” In their repeat of the frequently invoked “spirit” and campaign language, “welcoming to all, hostile to none,” the students parrot back the language as a challenge to the University administration. In doing this, they reposition themselves as the authority doing the asking for action, claiming this language as a tool for their own agenda and contesting the structures and practices of the institution. Similarly, the student activists issued a statement to the University administration suggesting, “We call on the University community to reaffirm our commitment to supporting our Muslim fellow students.” The students mimicked the Chancellor’s civility campaign language in their use of “call on,” notation of the University as a community, and ask for a “commitment,” while again pointing
this directly back at the University itself to achieve the action steps in support of their activist goals.

**Conclusion**

The findings in this chapter assessed the discourse across various domains to offer a descriptive analysis regarding a university’s civility campaign. By placing the linguistic and contextual features of the discourse in conversation, the descriptive results revealed varying degrees of continuity and discontinuity across micro, meso, and macro-level domains. Using the tools of critical discourse analysis, the Scarlet Oak University civility campaign texts were explored with regard to the application of strategic selection and omission of particular frames, features, and terms. The data helped to describe how “civility” was discursively constructed within the texts, what rationalities and assumptions served as underlying supports, and how the University students were constructed and situated as educational subjects with and through the civility discourses.

One area of investigation was the textual analysis, describing grammatical and lexical features. Findings related to surface descriptors and structural organization reflected the integration and reinforcement of the campaign through a variety of materials and information sources, often supported by brief texts with no author attribution, contributing to the understanding that these texts and the discourses were a natural part of the institutional fabric. To build appeal, the University was often personified in the texts, and represented as a powerful, yet familiar authority figure. The texts were largely built via short-cut rhetoric of slogan-like phrases, and made use of the normalizing effects of absolutes, i.e. every, all, etc.

The analysis also provided results in regard to the discursive construction of objects and actors within and through the texts. Similar to themes or topics, the objects both reflected
and constructed via the civility campaign and related texts included unity, community, difference, diversity, inclusion, and safety, and freedom of speech or expression. The primary actors in the civility texts mentioned, quoted, or referred to were the University itself, the institution’s administrators, faculty, staff, students, and University organized groups and departments, and state legislators. There was variance in how these different actor groups and their social relations were represented. These groups were typically presented in monolithic terms, with the exception the University top-ranking officials, who were often described individually via their titles, such as Chancellor, President, etc. The University and state legislators were typically construed as actors as subjects, capable of doing things. In contrast, students were predominantly conveyed as actors as objects, talked about. The students were characterized generally in two fashions, as sources in need of regulation and as subject actors as “protesters.”

The findings in the area of language and rhetoric of the Scarlet Oak University civility campaign and related texts provided insights as well. The tone and writing style of the texts varied depending on the source, intended audience, and use of the texts. For example, texts targeted to and by students were often conversational in tone, whereas the University reports from committees and other groups were technical, notifications from the University were generally quasi-formal, external sources, such as newspapers and other journals were informational in style. Rhetorical devices employed in the civility texts made use of metaphors, and specifically metaphors of nature, embodiment, and movement, as well as understatement and overstatement. The University utilized subjective, positive adjectivation in their representation of the institution, while, in contrast, state legislators used negative adjectivation in their representation of the University and of the diversity and inclusion programs and services in
particular. Of significance, civility was represented through and with the texts as courtesy, politeness, code, and manners; virtue; and as a dialogic/conversation model.

In addition, the discursive strategies and processes were examined and results indicative of significant civility text features. Strategies of narrativization were employed to suggest a sequence of significance which suggested presence of a crisis, followed by (University or state legislator invoked) intervention of civility, and then a subsequent improvement or return to social cohesion. Through this narrative and within the University-sanctioned civility texts, the University was positioned as a speaking and benevolent expert, and students as alternately obedient self-managers, conflict-producing resisters. The student-authored texts proposed an additional framing of student activists as social change agents. The campaign civility texts relied on legitimation strategies of drawing on textual citations of figures of status, as well as circular pointing to the University’s own policies, practices, and history, as well as other institutions of higher education, to sanction and endorse the discourse. Furthermore, emotional appeals to University affiliation were strategically utilized. The University worked to depoliticize the issues related to civility through a minimization of controversy or representation of dissent. Conversely, both the students and the state legislators actively engaged in a politicization of the discourse, particularly related to issues of diversity and inclusion. The findings related to discourse effects included discourse structuration relevant to unity, diversity, and community, and discourse institutionalization, expressed in the building of offices and groups, as well as communication structures to accommodate and incorporate the civility discourses into the University educational practice.

The results pointed to ideological standpoints in the civility texts which reflected political and normative orientations. Assumptions and rationalities built through and with the texts
emerged in the various, and in some cases competing, ideological orientations which included: higher education as a ‘public good,’ the University and higher education as a “knowledge economy” (Biesta, 2007), and administrative rationalism, supported by officialism, governmentality, and managerialism. Additionally, diversity was constructed through the lens of social identity neutrality, and in contrast, as entrenched with social identity and as a social justice concern. Freedom of expression and speech as a primary right was a final ideological component revealed in the textual analysis results.

A secondary application of investigation was that of contextual analysis. The results reflected alternate, and often contrasted representations of the same events or issues, varying depending on the sources and their different standpoints and agendas. A historical-diachronic analysis providing meso and macro-level analysis, placing the texts in conversation with those of the broader institution and social, political, and economic domains. Key ‘critical discourse moments’ were identified across a span of time, revealing among the results, various crisis-related triggers, producing points in which the discourse was heightened and further shaped. One interesting finding was both the endurance and transformation of the civility discourse across a range of actors and time sequence. In the following and final chapter, I will discuss these findings via an explanatory and interpretive lens, and offer implications for future research and practice.
CHAPTER V

DISCUSSION AND SUMMARY

In recent years colleges and universities throughout the United States have begun implementing civility campaigns ostensibly to create a more inclusive campus culture. Applying the systematic methodology of critical discourse analysis to explore the civility campaign of Scarlet Oak University provides an opportunity to make visible the taken for granted or hidden, assumptions, values, and properties of a campus civility campaign. As a socially committed research paradigm, Carvalho (2000) proposes, “I think that discourse analysis ought to say something about how social action (or inaction) is engineered through discourse” (p. 20). Critical discourse analysis is used in this study to explore both textual and contextual characteristics of the campaign, with the intent to expose governing assumptions and rationalities in which the Scarlet Oak University reflects and is rooted, and the assumptions and rationalities this discursive and social practice simultaneously generates. This research illuminates the normalizing dominant discourses enacted through and with campus civility campaigns, and explores these issues in relation to important concepts regarding the function of higher education to civil society. This enables the gathering of important insight regarding how, under what conditions, and for what ends and purposes, these civility campaigns are constructed and signified, and the implications of these civility campaign applications on campus culture, social relations, and the formation of student subjectivities.
Discursive Construction of Civility

In understanding discourse, or “language in use,” it is important to examine the relationship of how discourse is represented, conceptualized, and signified, and the implications of these decisions and outcomes. Power is inextricably tied to all aspects of civility discourses, from definition to application. How civility was constructed is value based and culturally situated or embedded. What elements were considered worthy of inclusion, the parameters around delineations of civility, the language used to frame civility, and the voices and perspectives that predominated, were all elements considered as part of this critical discourse analysis.

Defining Civility

The ambiguity and lack of clarity of the concept of civility has been cited widely in the literature as the term has been referred to by scholars as “imperfect,” “vague,” “porous,” and “fuzzy” among others (Carter, 1998; Edwards, 2011; Ehrenberg, 1999; Hall, 1995; Herbst, 2010; Peck, 2002; Sapiro, 1999; Scott, 2015). Therefore, one of the key interests of this study was to explore how “civility” was discursively constructed within the related texts of the Scarlet Oak University civility campaign, including an examination of how civility was defined and represented. In taking up Laine’s (2014) acknowledgment of the “false universals and entrenched thinking” (p. 71) in defining civility, this study poses a recognition that the meaning of civility and civil society varies depending on, among other things, the social location of the knower and doer. Exploration of the signification of civility throughout the campaign then was key to the study as scholarly intervention by rejecting facile, decontextualized, and romanticized understandings of civility in favor of acknowledging the contingent, complex, and shifting nature of the concept.
Through a review of the scholarship regarding civility, four enduring historical conceptualizations of civility were determined. These spoke to the different “senses” of civility (Johnson, 2007), an observation indicating that civility can be portrayed as transgressing the boundaries of domains, such as those of politics, communication studies, and ethics. The four common broad conceptualizations of civility as outlined in the scholarship included: 1) civility as courtesy, social conventions, manners, and rules; 2) civility as a socio-political foundation for civil society; 3) civility as a virtue; and 4) civility as a dialogic/conversation model. While civility is often a contested or obscured term, in the Scarlet Oak University “Civility and Community Initiative,” it was defined openly in twenty-one words in the description of the campaign as “an act of showing regard and respect for others including: politeness, consideration, tact, good manners, graciousness, cordiality, affability, amiability and courteousness.”

Three Legacies and Their Critiques: Civility as Courtesy, Virtue, and Dialogic Model

Consistent with the literature, in the case of the Scarlet Oak University civility campaign and related texts, the formal definition of civility provided by SOU reinforced the understanding of civility as courtesy and social codes. This treatment of civility both upholds and reflects a conceptual lineage that authors such as George Washington and his Rules of Civility & Decent Behavior in Company and Conversation (Moore, 1926), and later P. M. Forni (2002) and his modern-day twenty-five Rules of Considerate Conduct, along with many others, have contributed. However, the citation provided by SOU for this definition was merely a reference to an online dictionary. Although the campaign was predominately targeted to students, this shallow definition appears inadequate and out of sync in providing clarification of a key component of a program implemented by an institution of higher education which purportedly
has standards of scholarship that hold up deep learning, intellectual discourse, and encouragement of multiple perspectives. Scarlet Oak University chose to provide this basic definition framing civility as courtesy at the onset of the campaign, instead of promoting a discussion of the alternatives.

Thus, it was not surprising that, when asked about the meaning of civility, students readily provided examples such as throwing away a cup in the trashcan instead of the street, holding open the door for someone, and not booing at sports events, as examples of civility in practice. Most campus and extended community members would likely agree that these are desirable behaviors. However, I question this framing of civility as it is unlikely to fully articulate any capacity to be used as a heuristic to address complex campus community challenges. This would support, in part, the critiques as outlined by Zurn (2013) and others (Carter, 1998; Edwards, 2011; Ehrenberg, 1999; Hall, 1995; Herbst, 2010; Peck, 2002; Sapiro, 1999; Scott, 2015) in the literature that reducing civility to being polite presents civility as a vacuous and indeterminate signifier.

This surface representation of civility was reflective of Edwards (2011, p. 3) notation that civil society and civility are ambiguous due, in part, to the proliferation of various definitions and understandings, their lack of connection and comparison to others understandings, and because the assertions that are often suggested for how civility functions and what the resulting implications of its application are, is inconsistent with the complexities and discontinuities of real-world applications. The Scarlet Oak University “Civility and Community Initiative” is also vulnerable to these critiques.

For example, there were no direct mechanisms as part of the campaign to acknowledge central tensions or merits existing among competing theorizations of civility, or the
complications and multiple dimensions of balancing individuals’ needs with communal needs, and divisions of the private versus the public interests. Another category of critique by scholars (Boyd, 2006; Calhoun, 2000; Evers, 2010; Kurtz, 2010; Mill, 1978; Zurn, 2013) was that civility is epiphenomenal, or not only unrealistic, but a type of stand in for the issues that are truly valuable regarding the nature of human relations and social cooperation. This also appears a critique fair in its applicability to the Scarlet Oak University civility campaign as well. The civility campaign failed to offer a case study or “real-world applications,” such as challenging the students to consider what makes civility difficult, or even undesirable, when there is no consensus, as is often the case in a campus such as SOU marked by plurality. Throughout the run of the civility campaign, students held public protests and expressed opinions and beliefs at odds with their peers, the institution, and state legislators. However, these events did not appear to be embraced as enactments of civility in the University-endorsed texts.

Relevant is Zurn’s (2013) critique that invocations of civility are often stand ins for “mild consensus and a bland unanimity” which “simply misunderstand democracy as a kind of polite talking session, a well-run graduate seminar responsive to the force of argument and reason which divert our attention away from the inequalities (and privileges) that radical scholars expose” (pp. 352-353). Throughout the campaign, there was evidence of effort in the selection of representations of civility being put forward and translated by the University in particular ways that was not focused on exposing inequities, power and privilege的不同。Instead the campaign rested predominately on representations of action as the responsibility of individuals to embrace “collegiality” and “respect.”

With regard to the enduring legacy of civility as virtue, SOU also joined scholars such as Stephen Carter (1998) and Clifford Orwin (2011) in endorsing this conceptualization of civility.
Virtue was framed predominately in the civility campaign as self-regulation. The focus of the campaign was largely centered on civility as individual, and by extension social responsibility. Students contributed that civility meant applying the ‘Golden Rule’ of “treat others the way that you want to be treated” and as the University encouraged, “doing what you know is right and acting on it.” Of course, one of the challenges is consensus regarding what is “right,” as clearly the orientations regarding what is best and should take priority regarding action steps vary immensely across social actors.

The historic conceptualization of civility as a dialogic model also took on a particular tenor at SOU within this frame. Resonant of understandings of civility as rhetorical procedures, or “skills of reasoned discussion,” (Hanson, 2011, p. 200) and “appropriate communication-related behavior” (Lane & McCourt, 2013, p. 17), the campaign referenced civility as ways “to engage our peers in and colleagues, even though we disagree, in respectful and constructive dialogue” for example, or the “free exchange of ideas.” Important to consider is Schudson’s (1997) observation regarding the “romance of conversation,” or Boor Tonn’s (2005) warning against the “cult of conversation.” A key concern is who benefits in these dialogues. This is especially salient with reference to education practices such as the Scarlet Oak University civility campaign, which establish “constructive” dialogue as a priority. The risk of this campaign and other similar university programs is limiting what counts as “constructive,” as dialogue is always generative of something, whether that be reproduction of the status quo, pushing against it, or other negotiations of meaning.

The SOU “Civility and Community Initiative” privileged an idealistic “feel good” approach that may have inappropriately redirected attention and energies from marginalized communities who have unaddressed material needs resulting from structural inequities which
should be rectified. Instead of the students, University representatives, and extended community placing needed resources and energies on projects such as the dismantling of oppressive institutional structures and policies, these groups were instead urged to simply engage in “dialogue.” This dialogue practice often serves to help educate only the dominant group, or provide the dominant group a space to be reassured that they are part of the solution, instead of part of the problem. Dialogue was extended within the civility campaign as a principle route to civility. However, who decides what is respectful is determined by those who hold authority. Notwithstanding, the impacts of those decisions are understood as differentially beneficial or correct depending on one’s perspectives.

Similarly not explored adequately were the complexities of dialogue. In his chapter “The Limits of Dialogue as Critical Pedagogy,” Nicholas Burbules (2000) exposed a variety of competing and sometimes contradictory commonly practiced models of dialogue used in education settings. He pointed to how the “prescriptive tradition” regarding dialogue has often not taken into account how idealized forms of engagement may elicit contrary effects, or may not be realistic depending on the context. For example, issues such as the role of silence, emotion, agenda setting, and group dynamics, among many others, are facets of the communication exchange process. The benefits of dialoguing when there are competing investments is not exposed or explored directly within the university-produced campaign. What is possibly lost then are opportunities for productive disruption. As scholars (Kennedy, 2012; Sarat, 2012; Warner, 2000) have aptly pointed to, speaking out regarding slavery, on behalf of civil rights, and for recognition of sexual orientations along a spectrum, were once labeled as unacceptable speech. One of the potential dangers, as Zerilli (2014) has suggested, are “the ways in which what has
been taken by dominant groups to be uncivil behavior, has been crucial to enlarging the democratic process” (p. 131).

In this case of the SOU campus civility campaign, speech and expression became openly codified and surveilled, subject to normative guidelines with an illusion that the students have consented via unspoken social contract to this set of relations. The SOU civility campaign called for rhetorical moderation in place of an alternative framework, such as the nurturing of a discerning and informed community skilled in the “culture of argument” as advocated by Herbst (2010). What was not fleshed out in the campaign is how to proceed given the variance of risk, privilege, belonging, and social location of the dialogue participants.

Civility and the Paradox of Unity and Diversity

One of the principle defining characteristics of civility supported or identified as important through the campaign included civility as unity in spite of difference, civility as community, and civility as related to diversity. Within these constructs, a normative civility was positioned in the University campaign as a desired universal. Civility was conflated with unity and community, and supported via language strategies throughout the campaign texts. Through linguistic choices, civility was articulated via metaphors, understatement, and overstatement, for example, making use of the hyperbole of absolutes, such as all, or everyone, which built a false representation of consensus in support of ideas.

Interestingly, while diversity was a key feature tied to civility in the campaign, it was presented through an ethos of tolerance and assimilation positioned as leading to unity and a community of desired social coherence. The civility campaign itself was framed by the University as an extension of the official diversity work of the campus. While the campaign tagline concluded with “Celebrate differences,” diversity and differences were clearly subsumed
by the more pressing and primary message to unify. Similarly, the Chancellor encouraged, “Overall at this university we are community. We help those within our community regardless of race, color, or creed.” This theme of unity forged via social identity neutrality was echoed by students, including one who posted, “We are all human beings” without any further explanation of what it entails to be fully human and in relation to others.

**Semantic Engineering and Strategic Omissions**

While the brief definition of civility was given and incorporated into the official materials of the campaign, the Scarlet Oak University reliance in carrying the signification of civility was left largely on those presumed “commonsense” understandings of civility and incivility, as exemplified by textual references in the campaign to “everyday civility.” Other omissions in the area of the texts’ structures were significant as well. In the majority of the university-authored and distributed campaign texts, the dates and authors of the texts, particularly those items that were subsequently built into institutional structures, such as University-hosted website pages, were absent. This absence suggested a solidification in the institution’s everyday “natural” practices, and obscured the concept of textual intervention based on the author choices, as well as limited the data which would have enabled students to contextualize and evaluate the texts. Thus, the civility texts were positioned as apparent truths.

The brevity of the majority of the SOU endorsed texts, with only 420 words on average, or for example, the two campaign videos which both were under two minutes in length, was counter-indicative of any approach which might consider robustly the complexity of civility. Similarly, the civility texts relied heavily on the integration of short-cut rhetoric, employing slogans made up of phrases of a few words repeated throughout many of the texts. Noted earlier was the observation by Olivier Reboul (1979) that “a slogan is not only a brief phrase, but a
phrase which is too brief for the meaning it conveys” (p. 300). For example, the brief campaign
tagline, “One Campus. One Community. Celebrate the Differences” however, stood in as a
principle foundational element with little elaboration, and was used to coalesce the various texts.

In addition, within these three primary campaign representations of civility as courtesy,
virtue, and dialogic model, some elements were discredited, downplayed, or omitted. For
example, not included was civility as a viable path for social justice, democracy, or a strong
commitment to a plurality of ideas. Although one of the public goods that higher education often
speaks to is contribution to a participatory democracy and civic engagement, curiously absent
within the SOU civility campaign was civility directly positioned as relevant to the maintenance
of the politically associated citizenry of the nation/state. For example, one absence was that the
Scarlet Oak University civility campaign did not elevate the role of students in matters such as
those regarding civic duties, or their responsibilities regarding obligations to an extended polity,
or expand upon the complicated dimensions of the struggle for meaning and the interrelationship
of knowledge, power, and signification. Students were rarely framed as “citizens” or spoken of,
or to, with regard to their engagement in an extended community, with the exception of
participation as ‘global citizens’ in the workforce. Despite the SOU mission dedicated broadly
“to enrich and elevate the citizens of the state, the nation, and the world,” the civility campaign,
with its strong emotional appeals based on campus affiliation and University tradition, cultivated
an orientation through a bounded community that implied a uniqueness or separateness to a
degree of the campus from the broader socio-cultural and political arenas.

Furthermore, the University downplayed controversy and attempted to de-politicize
civility as normative and unambiguous, especially as tensions throughout the campaign between
the University and state lawmakers carried implications for financial loss for the University.
Throughout the campaign, key omissions and selections regarding text construction, content, and deployment pointed to a strategic use of the campaign as broadly, but not deeply, conceptualized. The civility campaign was positioned as in service to uphold the status quo, rather than delving substantively into relations or structures that could potentially cause social disruption.

Civility as it was defined and represented in the campaign, along with the varying civility discourses, were also ultimately implicated in setting institutional priorities. Fairclough (2001) proposed, “The values of textual features only become real, socially operative, if they are embedded in social interaction, and discourses only become real, socially operative, as parts of institutional and societal processes” (p.117). Outside of the large imprint the signification of civility through the campaign had on the formation of social actors, which will be discussed later in the chapter, one of the primary ways that the civility discourses were embedded into the fabric of the University was via institutionalization of civility in official policies and procedures, such the mandatory inclusion of a civility statement on all course syllabi, and the inclusion of civility in the Student Code of Conduct regarding “bias incidents” and “hate speech.” The civility campaign prompted the creation of many University formed groups and offices, largely positioned as extensions of the university work to address diversity. In addition, communications channels, including the dedicated civility campaign website, and ongoing civility programming, solidified the discourses being codified and institutionalized.

**Civility Campaign’s Underlying Rationalities and Assumptions**

Also of interest in this study and consistent with the assertion in the field of CDA that discourse does ideology work, this investigation engaged with an analysis of underlying assumptions and rationalities present in the campaign and discourses. Reflected through, and constructed within, the Scarlet Oak University civility campaign, some associated fundamental
political and normative ideological standpoints were evidenced throughout the discourses and related texts. Explicit, implicit, and sometimes competing, circulating assumptions and rationalities simultaneously reflected, and produced, meaning. Regarding the SOU civility campaign, another form of this research project as intervention is in the denaturalizing of ideological content.

Like civility, ideology has been the focus of extensive debate regarding its precise meaning (Gerring, 1997). This study drew on Carvalho’s (2007) interpretation of ideology as “a system of values, norms and political preferences, linked to a program of action vis-à-vis a given social and political order… ideologies are axiological, normative and political” (p. 25).

Advanced throughout the civility campaign and related texts, and conditioned through the civility discourses, were assumptions regarding how society should be organized, the role of the State, and the relationship of higher education and the university in relation to its members, as well as to broad society.

**Historicity**

Critical discourse analysis scholars contends that discourse is historical. General descriptions of the term historicity offer that it is “historical actuality” (i.e. https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/historicity). Within critical discourse analysis, the assertion and grounding of a concept within historicity is a salient task, especially one that has conceptual breadth and historically rhizomorphic characteristics. For example, John Flowerdew (2012) advocates for an account of historicity in critical discourse analysis. He cites Blommaert (2005) in the exposing of ‘layered simultaneity’ to explicate how discourse is constructed and encountered, offering, “It takes place in real time, but discourse nevertheless carries with it different layers of history, layers which participants may not be aware” (p. 22). Similarly, Aditi
Bhatia (2015) suggests that discourse analysis consider historicity as it “provides for a recontextualization of past knowledge and experience with present day action” (p. 3).

The historicity of civility via a discernable conceptual lineage of civility is a cornerstone from which to begin to explore obscured assumptions upon which the SOU campus campaign rested. The Scarlet Oak University civility campaign, while not explicitly expressed, reflected and enacted a bricolage of historical theorizations of the term. Ideas such as those regarding the ‘good life’ were a resonant topic explored by philosophers in the Classical Era. For example, Pericles theorized a civil society in which, similar to the SOU civility campaign calling on students to rationally embrace the enactment of civility as a responsibility, the members of a community would subordinate their own interests voluntarily. Likewise, Plato’s ideal citizen was imagined as guided by reason and therefore capable of moderation of private self-interest in order to serve a cohesive community. Later, in the Age of Reason and through the Enlightenment, there was a resurgence of these ideas via “contractarians,” or philosophers suggesting encompassing social contracts, although scholars such as Hobbes, Locke, and Rousseau varied as to opinions with reference to the nature of humankind and the specific characteristics of the social covenant that would bring about societal cohesion. In addition, the concept of unity as an idealized function of a delineated community, such as the expressed Scarlet Oak University “One campus. One community” refrain, was one reminiscent of those circulated through other philosophical stances regarding civil society.

The SOU rationale for the establishment of the University campaign was consistent with that found in the single existing empirical study conducted on campus-wide initiatives to promote civility (McDougal & Moore, 2012). The primary reasons given by institutions for establishing a civility campaign included campus student conduct concerns, incidents at other
universities educations, and perceived national events signaling incivility (p. 6). While approached alternately from an aspirational appeal or from a University-issued imperative, the SOU civility campaign was primarily positioned as a response to the crisis imposed via the ‘incivility spiral’ both locally and in the extended community. This was not surprising given the nature of inter-discursivity, the seepage of circulating discourses of crisis into university practices, and a circuitous legitimizing of practices across universities mindful of rankings by pointing to practices at “peer institutions.”

Accountability

One of the overarching, yet polyvalent and multi-faceted, themes regarding rationalities across the civility campaign and civility discourses, stemming in part from these early conceptualizations, was that of accountability. This was articulated through the reproduction of conceptual frameworks of civility as courtesy, civility as virtue, and civility as dialogue. In his piece “Bureaucracy and Its Limits: Accountability and Rationality in Higher Education,” author Mark Murphy (2009) suggests:

The development of an accountability culture is only the latest way in which the tension between higher education and the State has played itself out. While the question of autonomy versus control is certainly a strong focus of contemporary debate, it is still the same question asked by Weber over 100 years ago (p. 693).

This notation citing the sociologist and political economist Max Weber’s concerns regarding the deference of education institutions to the government posed central complicated questions regarding what accountability should look like, and in service for what purposes. These were apparent negotiations taken up in the relationships of Scarlet Oak University across various spheres, including questions of accountability of SOU to its students, accountability of SOU to
the State/government, accountability of SOU and higher education to the extended community, and accountability of SOU to market concerns.

A primary question then in which the Scarlet Oak University civility campaign was entangled was to whom or what, is, or should, the university be accountable? An important factor in negotiating sense-making regarding accountability of higher education to the public was as Jandhyala B.G. Tilak (2006) has suggested, that modern universities are awkwardly “between the State and the market” (p. 293). One orientation was that of a public sector institution responsive to social democratic visions that valorizes accountability to the State/government and extended community. An alternative framework working through and with the SOU civility campaign was the university as accountable and responsible to the market, emerging as a corporate style institution accountable to its members (clients) and funding sources, which may be private consumers or the State. An ideological standpoint within the texts framed through an orientation privileging neoliberalism was the assumption of the University as central not to a “knowledge democracy,” but to a “knowledge economy,” conceptualizing knowledge, and the application of civility as part of that knowledge, as a commodity holding value in the marketplace (Biesta, 2007). Resonant of this strand of ideology, some of the focus within the SOU civility campaign emphasized the application of civility as a soft skill in the global economy engineering students as vocationally prepared “global citizens” ready to enter the workforce and be “productive” via labor in the global economy. The SOU civility texts reproducing this orientation also emphasized the civility campaign as providing an edge regarding marketplace competition and improved institutional rankings by marketing the civility campaign as a value-added feature at SOU.
Another manner in which the strand of accountability rationality was mirrored and enacted in the campaign was in representations of higher education for the ‘public good,’ an orientation taken up by the University, and established on assumptions of the meanings of both ‘public,’ and ‘good.’ Regarding the role of the University to society, for example, the University President asserted that higher education was “critical” and key to “progress.” One of the campaign purposes distributed through the dedicated campus civility website was the “development of a civil community which leads to better the world through teaching, research, and service.” In this case, the University positioned itself as a vehicle of the public good, but the indicators of what counts as good were left ambiguous. What is considered better, or progress, for example? Given the emphasis on harmony and unity circulated through the campaign, the conclusion could be drawn that the ideal, or good, was such that there was no controversy or dissent among its members. Important to note, however, is that this was negotiated simultaneously with an ongoing broader counter-narrative of institutions of higher education as an instrumental socio-cultural resource in the nurturing of critical thinking applied to positive social transformation, largely via knowledge development and intellectual rigor sharpened through an open exchange of ideas (Giroux, 2002; Sandel, 1996).

An additional key ideological stance engaged in the negotiation of accountability which was a component for consideration in the Scarlet Oak University civility campaign and related texts was that of freedom of speech and expression. Concurrent, and competing, significations in the texts and circulating discourses included freedom of speech/freedom of expression as an ideal component of civility, represented as both a moral and rational value. This was illustrated in the campaign content, such as the inclusion of the statement in the civility principles, “A university is an open community, a place where freedom of expression is
uncompromisingly protected and where civility is powerfully affirmed.” The logics of freedom of speech in this construct were linked closely to civility and safety, translated as collective, public goods. However, balance was emphasized in the texts between the “openness” of freedom of expression/speech, with campus safety, recognized through institutional and social order.

Freedom of speech was also constructed and positioned as an obligation to address a social ill. This was exemplified by a student statement which clarified, “There comes a responsibility to make sure others are being civil. Meaning if you see some disturbing behavior going against the morals of civility, you stand up and say something or you are as bad as the offender.” Responsibility and accountability were then conflated with freedom to act in service to the community. Alternately, freedom of speech in the campaign and related civility texts was also signified as a right or entitlement within the conditions of civility, an ideology asserted across a range of actors, often with opposing stances.

A primary point of contestation within this rationality is in distinguishing if there is a legitimate function in determining speech that is permissible and acceptable, from speech that is harmful or offensive. And if so, who has the legitimate authority to make those claims and decisions? As an extension of this logic was assumptions regarding civility itself as a threat to freedom of speech/freedom of expression, and a limit placed on an individual’s rights as well as threat to the democratic collective process. Conversely, a related normative discourse incorporated in the campaign texts signified civility as an authorized and desired surveillance and management to regulate freedom of expression/freedom of speech perceived as speech or action deemed as problematic, unwanted, or unsafe. These complicated negotiations of freedom of speech within the discourses and texts highlighted the often shifting and subjective nature of civility and freedom, as well as truth. Throughout the enactment of the civility campaign, the
entanglements and layers of accountability discourses were defined through a dynamism and contingency of positionality and place or “status geography” (Williams, 1996, p. 86).

In addition to the accountability of the University to various interests, the civility campaign moved from, and to, the terrains of student accountability to the University, to each other, and to the State. The campaign explicitly signaled a call for students to measure their own behavior and those of their student peers, positioning compliance as a benefit to the students themselves, via positive character development, and for “safer” campus communities. Additionally, the state lawmakers called upon civility, coded also as “decency,” to restrict the speech and actions of the students and the University, thus invoking an accountability to the State. Civility and extended diversity efforts at SOU were frequently labeled by the legislators as “going to an extreme,” and “brainwashing.” These legislators’ interference with these efforts consequently resulted in State funding cuts to student programming and campus diversity offices, including personnel cuts, and ultimately the stepping down of the Chancellor. As elected officials, the legislators offered that they were acting on behalf of an accountability to the best interests of the State, to ensure the values of their constituents was enforced, and to monitor the use of spending of public funds. Thus, freedom of speech and expression was challenged in practice by attacking the speech as lacking educational worthiness or relevance, and ultimately allegedly posing a threat to a civil community, highlighting the extremely contingent nature of “freedom” and “accountability” within these exchanges.

**Administrative Rationalism**

Administrative rationalism, defined as an orientation in which the administrative State, experts, and managers are emphasized with regard to problem solving (Dryzek, 2005), was another ideological premise articulated within the civility and related texts. Consistent with the
literature in this area, the state was represented as serving the public, defined in unitary terms, and the central linguistic strategies drawing from a fluctuation of authority concern to reassurance (Dryzek, 2005, p. 89). As noted earlier, scholars such as Elizabeth Brulé (2015) have warned how strategic applications of the civility discourse are used to constrain the community in the promotion of self-surveillance under a guise of student responsibility and choice. She cautioned:

> The push for balance, respect and civility is closely linked with the university’s managerial technologies of risk assessment, use of space policies and surveillance measures. The conflation of personal safety with ideas of fairness and inclusion is highly problematic. Not only do calls for balance and inclusion lead to increased surveillance and regulation of student activist activity, they also obscure the ways in which a corporate service sector framework is being used to silence marginalized student voices (p. 164).

Underlying discourses of officialism, managerialism, efficiency, and governmentality were used to amplify notions of crisis, and the subsequent new order of civility in response. Interestingly, both the University and the State legislators drew heavily on this ideological framework, although the two groups were often at odds as to the ideal strategies for ensuring civility and the maintenance of a civil society. Within the texts, the two groups produced self-representations of efficient leaders drawing on their expertise and authority to respond to the ‘incivility spiral,’ preserve the status quo, protect the interests of the public/community, and resolve crises.

**Diversity**

The contested notion of “diversity” was also present as an ideological stance within the civility campaign and related texts. A primary component related to this framework was built on
the discourses of “community,” or the public in question. Assumptions from which the campaign moved was that campus membership was translated into community, or a sense of belonging and/or affiliation. Thus, civility discourses served to have a normalizing effect on how the community was understood as bounded, and who was considered included within that community.

In particular, diversity was largely reproduced throughout the SOU civility campaign through the lens of social-identity neutrality, including discourses of ‘color blindness,’ and other frames that presume individuals are judged as human beings without regard to social identities. This supporting rationality emphasized unity and social harmony as a normative community ideal, in spite of, or irreverent of, diversity or differences. Although “celebrating differences,” was connected to the campaign tagline imperative of “One campus. One community,” rhetorically echoed throughout the campaign was the false assumption that all participants are equal within the institution, and by extension have equal responsibility, access, risks, etc.

Inherent in these social identity neutral positions which the campaign reinforced was the problematic message that those aspects including gender, sexuality, race, ethnicity, ability, national origin, and many others, are superfluous and invalid. This then promotes a level of erasure of the self, as these aspects of understanding self in relation in particular are extremely salient to individuals’ becoming and being. These identity neutral approaches also collude in discourse minimizing structural oppressions of racism, sexism, homophobia, etc., in favor of a discourse focused on individual acts of harm. Melanie White (2006) suggested that steps to “mobilize civility reflect the desire to consolidate and reinforce social expectations in order to achieve a common ground in the face of social difference, rather than to create the conditions for destabilizing and challenging the content of “good citizenship” (p. 459). White (2006)
confronted the dangers of this minimization of plurality in the name of civility as an effort to uphold a normalized, universalist imagined community that delegitimizes those members falling outside of the dominant ideal.

A competing ideology expressed within the civility discourses and related texts was that of diversity as a social justice concern, mainly introduced by the student activist groups. Underlying assumptions within this framework valorized an acknowledgment of privilege and power differentials at the micro, institutional, and macro-levels. A fundamental rationality within this orientation was a logic frame that student dissent at SOU was an expression of civility as an opportunity to challenge an oppressive status quo on behalf of marginalized individuals and communities. Interestingly, students from these groups absorbed the civility discourses, but reframed the language taken up by the administrators and State leaders to strategically ‘talk back’ and challenge the University and State to enact equity programs and mobilize resources on behalf of marginalized students and communities.

Civility Discourses and the Construction of Educational Subjects

Hegel (1931/1807) proposed, “What is ‘familiarly known’ is not properly known, just for the reason that it is ‘familiar’” (p. 92). The application of critical discourse analysis to this study provided an opportunity to inquire how students were constituted and situated with and through the civility campaign as educational subjects. Regarding the presentation of actors and how they are represented and signified discursively Carvalho (2000) pointed out, “Actors are then both subjects - they do things - and objects - they are the talked about” (p. 24). Throughout the Scarlet Oak University civility campaign and related texts, the discursive circulations were instrumental in articulating the civility campaign as education practice. However, the civility campaign and circulating discourses can be understood as social practice as well in that
“Discourse is socially constitutive as well as socially conditioned – it constitutes situations, objects of knowledge, and the social identities of and relationships between people and groups of people” (Fairclough & Wodak, 1987, p. 258). This final research question regarded the implications of the discursive on student subjectivities, including the taking on of the subject positions formed in and with civility discourses has implications for the students’ cognitive, affective, and phenomenological self-assessment via situation in particular discourses.

While the civility campaign was presented as pertinent to the entire campus, the focus of the messages were overwhelmingly targeted to “students,” represented as a monolithic collective. Thus, predominantly students were subject to the campaign and civility messages. Some of the university-endorsed campaign materials, such as the videos, featured students delivering the messages peer to peer. The other primary mechanism provided for students to shape the official campaign messaging was via the dedicated civility website page portal “Civility Means…” in which more than 700 students submitted their response to this online standing prompt. This was an interesting strategy as the student respondents themselves engaged in largely reproducing and strengthening the University-produced messages calling for adherence to social and moral codes.

Authorizing normative discourses advocating for particular courses of action, the civility campaign texts are likely to have influenced the students in their roles as education subjects and social actors, as “these norms enact peculiar kinds of discipline upon participants’ efforts to argue their convictions” (Kurtz, 2010, p. 12). Indicative of this, even though the website allowed for anonymous online posting, and therefore a presumed mechanism to offer messages counter to those endorsed by the University, few students engaged with this opportunity. However, it is possible that a type of resistance may be read through a lack of participation as well, given that,
while 700 posts shows some engagement with the campaign, this is still representative of a small portion of the total student population who had the option to respond to the prompt.

The SOU campaign texts often constructed the University or its official figures as acting subjects capable of doing things, and in contrast, primarily positioned students as actor objects talked about. The Scarlet Oak University Chancellor, President, administration, and the University were personified and represented as experts based on formal credentials. They were commonly constructed as acting paternalistically on behalf of the community, or the “University family,” as rescuers or mediators. On the other hand, the language features of the texts were designed to appeal to students through an implied belonging, or invitation to associate through a shared history and tradition with Scarlet Oak University. For example, references to students were made via the collective as “the campus nickname,” to develop and tap into on an emotional connection to SOU. Presumptions were also made regarding these students that it was necessary for the University with its “Call for Civility,” among other notifications, to invoke an initiation of civility expressions on campus.

**Obedient Self Managers and Self Regulator Subject Positions**

The campaign alternately approached students with the messaging from vacillating positions, using linguistic appeals from both aspirational and constraining frames. Students were mainly represented as potential, but unaware, violators of civility in need of education and guidance from the institution and its experts, who, as the campaign video indicated should “step back and realize that you may be wrong.” As such, students were positioned specifically of as “young people,” or “young charges,” and encouraged to “conduct themselves in a manner that represents the university,” “adhere to the principles of civility and community as set forth by the university,” and urged to “voice uncivil behaviors to campus officials.” The paths made for
students to exert an agency was as civility self-regulators meeting the SOU standards by “practicing tolerance,” “leading by example” or by embracing the ambiguous imperative to “Be civil and encourage others to do likewise.” Representations of students accountable for monitoring their own behavior was extended to their “community” as well, as reporting incivility violations through formal and official mechanism was emphasized.

Reflective of the discourses conceptualizing civility as morality, approximately 400 of the just over total student posts supported an endorsement of civility as mutual respect, or the ‘Golden Rule’ of “treating others the way you want to be treated.” Related primary definitions of civility offered by the students included “accepting others” (156 posts), being “nice,” or “kind” (86 posts), and “not judging people,” mentioned in 53 of the posts. The majority of any specific action steps that the students offered were illustrative of statements also based on civility as courtesy via social niceties, such as prompts to smile or not be grumpy, or holding the door open for someone. These student responses reflected civility discourses in their understandings of becoming ideal practitioners of civility by choosing to steer away from controversy and charged exchanges, in favor of developing and participating in social relationships marked by pleasantries and courtesy.

A consistent narrativization (Carvalho, 2000), or cohesive discourse sequence, was carried throughout the texts. This discursive strategy presented civility as “the way forward,” a new or renewed resource or tool, made possible, by the University (or state legislators) calling upon the students to enact individual and social responsibility as a solution to resolve the crisis of the ‘incivility spiral.’ The narrative proposed that ultimately civility as self-regulation would result in the ideal society, one in which plurality and dissent was subservient to cohesion.

Intelligible subjectivities for students as characters within this narrative sequence were
primarily as previously uninformed, but emerging obedient self-managers capable of transforming themselves, the campus, and the extended community via an embrace of civility. The Scarlet Oak University President offered, “Our challenge is to graduate tomorrow’s citizens and leaders, who, because we make our campus a better place, will make the world and our country a better place.” Thus, within this future narrativization, the students, in the same way children are often characterized as in transition to adulthood, were positioned through a state of becoming, in a loop of development as leaders, citizens, and full persons in the making.

**Group Affiliation Subject Positions**

Throughout the campaign, however, some categories of students were made intelligible through their affiliation with particular groups. Representation of students as “leaders,” “scholars,” and “athletes,” were groups distinguished as such, signaling the elevated status and influence within the hierarchies of the institution. Treated with reverence and import, these students are often perceived to contribute positively to the University, particularly in the era of impression management in higher education. As such, these students were often cited in the texts as a source of legitimation. Similarly, the Student Government Association (or “SGA”), was named specifically as a group of actors within the civility texts. Interestingly, the discourses taken up by this group of students was strongly resonant of that of the University administration in their calling on civility from the students, reflecting an alignment more closely with that of the University leadership than to the broad group of their student peers.

**Resistor and Change Agent Subject Positions**

In addition to the articulation of subjects as self-regulating social actors, the civility texts and discourses made intelligible subjectivities possible through positioning as resisters to the civility discourses, or relatedly, change agents acting on behalf of, or as member of, “the
marginalized,” who were speaking back to the administration and institution. These various subject positions were articulated within the discourses through a false dichotomy, as if they were mutually exclusive, rather than coexisting. Students, such as the members of the organized Diversity Matters Coalition and their affiliated groups who stated they were working with a goal of “intersectional action,” were frequently referred to as “the protesters,” positioning the students as acting to oppose, and much less frequently as “student activists,” which would alternately position the students through an agentive status, working toward a particular agenda or set of actions.

Student protesters were constructed variably through competing representations as engaging in an unofficial extension of the formal diversity work of the University, and as dissenters at odds with the institution, and by the legislators as in conflict with civility and the State. However, the University, eager to downplay controversy and invested in their representation of community as unity and social harmony, often represented the negotiations of the students and the administration as engaged with the day to day business of the University, de-emphasizing the students’ strategic action, planning, collective organizing, and/or authority. This non-controversial approach of working within the University system via sanctioned tactics labeled by SOU as advocated the ‘right way’ was sometimes taken up by the student protesters themselves in the texts.

Throughout the civility campaign, both the University in their “diversity” efforts, and student organizers working on behalf of non-dominant communities were publicly called out as disruptive and dangerous by the State legislators, who particularly used their authority to restrict funding to the University as a method of regulation. Law scholar Julia Kuhn (1996) challenges a shift in accountability asking, “But who exactly is causing the disruption? Perhaps it is not the
dissenter, but rather those who are reacting to the dissenter” (p. 106). Responses from lawmakers critiqued efforts, such as those to host a campus-wide Sex Week with discussions about women’s health, LGBTQ+ issues, hook-up culture and sexual violence; encouraging the campus to include gender-neutral pronouns; or the inclusion of religious diversity in holiday celebrations as extreme, outside the bounds of education, and even indecent. For example, in response to Sex Week, a legislator publicly stated, “If those people who organize this thing want to have it, hey, let them get off campus. They can go out there in a field full of sheep if they want to and have all the Sex Week they want.”

Many statements such as these from the State representatives constructed representations of the students as deviant subjects and posed a complicated question regarding who is, and deserves to be “human,” or the full subject. A corollary to this question concerns who is constructed and understood as exterior or excepted from this humanity. Within these discourses in the name of civility is the construction of subjectivities positioned as marginalized and outside of community, not worthy of membership on campus, the extended community, or humanity.

Victim Subject Positions

While not explicitly articulated in the campus civility campaign and related discourses and texts, however circulating alongside those, were the formations of subjectivities of student victims, shaped through the less developed discourses and narratives of incivility. The campaign moved around these student victims, such as those pelted by banana peels in a racialized act of aggression, or Muslim students labeled as barbaric terrorists in the campus newspaper. Evans, Davies and Rich (2009) examined the body-culture nexus and posed:

…with notable exceptions-the body’s presence as a flesh and blood, thinking, feeling, sentient, species being, a ‘body with organs’ whose very presence-moving, growing,
changing over time-is generative of a meaning potential to which both the self and others must respond, has remained in the shadows (p. 392).

Students, such as the rape victims who withdrew from SOU after suffering institutional Title IX misconduct, or members of the LGBTQ+ students, who were assaulted and whose pride flags were replaced with flags stating “Fags get AIDS,” were rendered invisible or partial in these texts and discourses.

Throughout the campaign, patterns of oppression were not engaged directly, and the students were spoken about as mere abstractions as calls for civility often followed, typically reiterating how the institution would not tolerate such acts. Unfortunately, however, acts of bias and hate, extreme examples of incivility, continued to be reported throughout the run of the campaign. The implications on the formation of student educational subjectivities becomes pointed as some students bodies, interestingly talked around, or over, in the discourses of civility, community, and diversity, pose a threat or danger to the highly valued unity. The campaign centered individual responsibility to maintain the proscribed norms, minimizing or negate threats of disruption to social harmony, and further maintain the school institution as a positive and collegial environment. Not squarely fit neatly into this campus feel good civility were students labeled perverse by governmental representatives for trying to organize sexual health programs, or students, such as the transgender undergraduate who left the institution after being subject to abuse following being featured in pro-diversity campus materials.

Implications for Future Research

Critical discourse analysis is a theoretical and methodological frame that has, in recent years, been applied to the field of education, particularly as qualitative research paradigms have become more understood and accepted within academia (Rogers, 2005). However, more research
using critical discourse analysis is needed in the sub-field of higher education to provide a critical lens to education practice with its complex human interactions. Colleges and universities profess commitments to meeting elevated standards of broad contributions within contexts of ongoing social, political, and economic challenges of the field (Manning, 2015). Not unlike Scarlet Oak University, institutions of higher education typically hold organization missions with focus areas such as contributions to equitable civil societies, supporting the democratization of knowledge, and robust intellectual debate and progress (Morphew & Hartley, 2006). Given these high ideals, critical discourse analysis is especially situated as a means for scholarly inquiry to examine how particular actors assemble a line of reasoning, and how this line of reasoning and extended practice reflects or repositions broader socio-cultural and discursive influences. CDA is well suited to investigate what kind of statements or practices become commonsense, posturing as self-evident truth through the strategic engineering of rhetorical methods and propagated through discursive, and by extension, social practices.

Critical discourse, however, does not consist of a unitary methodological or theoretical approach. One of the strengths of this research framework is how it allows for flexibility and inter-disciplinarity in its applications. For example, this study employed the particular techniques adapted from the approach developed by Anabela Carvalho (2000), who has produced an extensive body of work applying critical discourse analysis to environmental communication. Using her methods allowed for a comprehensive study compatible with the goals focusing on a robust, in-depth examination in the presentation of multi-level analysis of a single institution case study.

Other approaches could be successfully applied that may reveal other dimensions of universities’ engagements with conceptualizations of civility. For example, a Foucauldian
“archeological method” (1961, 1963, 1966) could center the role of governmentality as a particular analytic and apply historical and philosophical inquiry to the field of analysis in the development over an extended period of time regarding the relationship of education sites and the conceptual lineage of civility and civil society. This could extend or challenge some of the results from the application in this study of Carvalho’s (2000) relevant tools of contextual analysis, such as the comparative-synchronic analysis, and the historical-diachronic analysis.

Similarly, some of the related strategies of James Paul Gee (2010), another prolific critical discourse analyst, may aptly be applied to explore similar domains, however using different tools, to gain additional data. This would be interesting to determine if the use of alternate tools, while designed to capture similar kinds of data, would render similar findings. For example, From his *How to do Discourse Analysis: A Toolkit* (Gee, 2010), the “Making Strange Tool” could be applied as the those engaged in the communications “should try to act as if they were outsiders,” In a similar fashion, the “Vocabulary Tool” (Gee, 2010) could be used to assess the types of words (content words, function words, informal words, etc.) that were being employed in the university civility texts. Similarly, the “Why This Way and Not That Way Tool” (Gee, 2010) could assist in the exploration of why particular actors “build and design their messages in a certain way and not in some other way.”

While outside the scope of this dissertation, future research would also be beneficial that would allow for the application of comparative analysis. Civility and its relationship to higher education is grounded within many foundational values, such as the tension of balancing autonomy of individuals with the common good, safety concerns balanced with the desire for vigorous intellectual debate, concepts which are privileged historically in academia. Thus, a case could easily be made that the area of civility campaigns, practiced now by hundreds of
universities expending financial and human resources to their execution, is deserving of more attention and scrutiny. Despite campuses across the nation are implementing these civility campaigns, and engaging with this particular enactment of education and social practice, the civility campaign application is widely under-researched.

Only a single empirical article, a research brief published five years ago by the Education Advisory Board, was discovered by this researcher addressing campus civility campaigns specifically. In their findings in “Campus-Wide Initiatives to Promote Student Civility,” McDougal & Moore (2012) found a lack of quality and sufficient assessment, citing the difficulty campuses had in evaluating the effects and effectiveness of a campus-wide campaign. Most often used by the twelve institutions featured in the study were simply attendance records at events and anecdotal evidence used to determine the success of the campaigns, and only two of the institutions in their study used formal surveys for the assessment of specific events. Most significant, however, was that not one of the campuses completed an evaluation of the effectiveness of the entire civility campaign.

A starting point for gaining more empirical data may be the encouragement of campus-based research of their own practices. Consistent with the “culture of evidence” espoused by universities, practitioners on campus could begin to clearly delineate and assess some civility campaign outcomes-i.e. those focused on student learning outcomes, what students will do as a result of the civility campaign interventions, the impact on the campus-i.e. less acts of violence, greater number of civil protests, etc. In addition, campus culture data has been underutilized in this regard. Campus culture studies could be applied to determine baseline knowledge and attitudes regarding expressions and acts of civility and incivility on campus, as well as information regarding “diversity” and “community.” Interestingly, Scarlet Oak University
announced that in the spring of this year, they will employ an outside consultant to conduct this type of research at SOU. A future investigation could place the findings of this study in conversation with this campus culture data for gathering additional insights, and material regarding the perceptions of the social actors and contexts of the civility campaign, including indicators of an ‘incivility spiral,’ and validity for the need for an intervention of this type.

A study expansion is warranted as this is the first study of its kind of which I am aware. An area of interest that I would have liked to explore via in-person interviews, but which was outside the scope of my study, is hearing the evaluations, experiences, and impressions of the civility campaign from the various actor groups on campus, including students, staff, faculty, administrators, as well as legislators. Questions could be posed, for example, regarding the resistance strategies of the student activists, and how they interrogate these actions in regards to civility and the interaction of the campaign. In addition, the supplementation of interviews to provide the application of mixed methodologies may be successful in adding meaningful layers to the findings. Conducting interviews to ask, for example, how these groups define civility, what they believe the civility campaign should or could accomplish, and the impact they believe the campaign has, would be of great interest. It would be fruitful to discern how students perceive the civility campaign, such as whether it is regarded as institutional performance, or is seen as relevant to their lives. Given that, within the institutional context students often suffer from a “social dys-appearance” or “othering” resulting from discontinuity between the “body lived out” and the “object-body defined and delimited by a foreign-gaze” (Leder, 1990, p. 96), such as that manifested in institutional surveillance, gathering ideas and opinions directly from the students would be especially meaningful data.

The multi-faced and complicated nature of the concept of civility, along with the
widespread use of civility/incivility rhetoric and civility student-focused campaigns within university settings, creates a civility discourse both hyper-visible and invisible, primed for further investigation. Considering the focus of CDA on the circulation of power, possible determinations could be made regarding similarities, and/or differences, in responses based on status geography within the institution, as well as along the lines of social subjectivities. Additionally, research, while not unique to the field of education, often produces contradictory results. Of particular relevance when there is a sufficient body of data built would be the implementation of meta-analysis or meta-synthesis, which could produce salient findings regarding widespread patterns of practice implemented by universities, taking into account higher education is a distinctive and particular discipline within education.

While concepts such as “generalizability” are not a strong fit for qualitative research, this study does point to useful questions to begin applying needed criticality to the topic of action and interactions regarding university civility campaigns. As I explored the data, much of the findings were resonant of the practices I have been witness to on the campus in which I employed, although the particulars are not identical. This study supports CDA as a valuable tool capable of producing a profuse amount of data to investigate “naturally occurring” language use (Wodak, 2008; van Dijk, 2007) present within higher education institutions. The findings provide an opportunity to place in conversation detailed, close inspection with that through a ‘big picture’ lens, to explore connections, continuities, and discontinuities. This critical discourse analytic work provides an entry point for investigating the shifting, historically contingent characteristics and expressions of civility concepts and categories dominating universities, and the bearing of these affiliated practices and conceptualizations on the formation and adoption of student subjects. Critical discourse analysis, a research paradigm committed to the exploration of social
problems and power dynamics, seeks to engage knowledge connections, and as such, could also be enhanced with alliances formed among higher education practitioners and critical discourse analysis scholars.

**Implications for Practitioners**

In addition to the provision of some future research directions, as a theoretical and methodological research paradigm committed to social struggle, critical discourse analysis can offer recommendations salient for future practice. This study carries implications for consideration relevant to the field of higher education and for university practitioners and other professionals impacting the field of higher education, such as policymakers, stakeholders, and government leaders. Key “take-aways,” or practical considerations, for higher education practitioners include the following recommendations:

1. Use the lens of criticality to gain significant insights and offer needed alternative orientations and perspectives;

2. Implement campus culture climate surveys and other foundational research before, during, and after the exercise of campus-wide initiatives;

3. Determine and assess process and operational, student learning, and climate outcomes, to advance effective and efficient multi-layered approaches;

4. Engage students as resources, not simply targets of campus programs, policies, and practices;

5. Make use of the wealth of institutional and community resources to strengthen capacities, build inter-connections, reflect sound resource stewardship, and build sustainability through natural supports;
6. Promote identity-consciousness, not ‘colorblind’ and other identity-neutral perspectives, to promote inclusive practices and avoid perpetuating marginalizing hierarchies of dominance.

The Lens of Criticality to Gain Insights and Offer Productive Counter Narratives

Some of the issues emerging from this finding relate specifically to what Benjamin de Mott (1997) speaks of as the “seductive” orthodoxy of civility through a “vocabulary of common good, civic trust, communal participation, and social capital,” concluding that “seductiveness isn’t substance” (p. 12). While it is very appealing for institutions to seek out a “magic bullet” to address complex needs, it is unrealistic to approach the multi-faceted tensions of human relations via a single intervention. Negotiations of important weight, such as institutional responses to the strain of competing interests, including the balance of developing a socially cohesive community with those that engage and nurtures plurality, or negotiate the maintenance of autonomy with accountability, for example, are likely to result in messy relations and negotiations not possible to be resolved quickly or easily through a uniform and singular approach. There is a fine line between setting up ideals versus unattainable promises that cannot be kept, and therefore become only a rhetorical performance. While this may serve some institutional needs, it certainly does not address root issues substantively.Given the ubiquity, and therefore normalizing power, of civility discourses, implementing a skeptical frame that interrogates basic assumptions before adopting practices is recommended. A narrow exploration has been found in traditional approaches that proceed from a top-down perspective, such as that of the SOU civility campaign and resonant with initiatives at other institutions across the country. These often limit creativity and possibilities by beginning with familiar narratives and techniques.
Critiques coming out of critical theories should not be instantly dismissed, but attention given to their consideration, such as who we are “consciously or unconsciously including or excluding through what we may perceive as benign language” (Pasque & Harris, 2013, p. 144). Civility campaigns have been critiqued as marginalizing and anti-egalitarian, resulting in the disciplining, silencing and erasure of student subjects within institutions. As noted, Cris Mayo (2002) contended, “If civility requires leaving unspoken things that would disturb placid social interactions, the practice of civility will necessarily leave out those whose presence disrupts the bias that presumes their absence” (p. 79). Institutions should be mindful of the negative consequences for students and the campus community of relegating public and structural concerns to the interior of private negotiations. Applying a critical lens to the issues provides an opportunity to open up generative counter narratives and approaches.

**Campus Culture Climate Surveys and Other Foundational Research**

New higher education “initiatives” often proceed from an ahistorical framework, and strategic “epistemologies of ignorance” (Tuana, 2008). However, as scholars such as Boyd (2006), and Calhoun (2000) have suggested, civility is embedded in a historicity and lineage operationalizing the concept to delineate the “civilized” (typically those members with access to power and authority) from those deemed as not civilized (i.e. barbaric, such as indigenous communities, communities of color, and other non-dominant communities). Thus, civility is often enacted to create normalized subjectivities of ideal (good student/citizen), and by extension, non-ideal social actors, further marginalizing the already marginalized, and perpetuating hierarchies of dominance.

The study findings, while preliminary, suggest the possibility that it may be important for universities to spend more caution prior to the implementation of new wide-scale programs and
initiatives. The “research” that universities often undertake is using circular logics, and looking for ideas and affirmation from the practices of peer institutions, who likewise have looked to other peer institutions as data sources. While this has some merit, it poses limitations as well, especially given that, at least in the area of civility campaigns, there is insufficient data to warrant an endorsement and legitimation of these practices.

Within this vein, Laura Nader (1972) encourages a ‘studying up’ approach as, “Studying up as well as down would lead us to ask many ‘common sense’ questions in reverse” (p. 6). Working from taken for granted stances, implementation should be preceded with exploration of the logics and rationalities underpinning higher education practices, such as consideration of basic questions of, “Who benefits from these arrangements?” and “Is unity an ideal state?,” for example. There is now an abundance of campus climate literature, tools, and professionals that can be used to develop a baseline prior to, during, and after implementation of campus-wide initiatives that are capable of providing meaningful information regarding context and specific individual institutional needs areas.

**Assessment of Process and Outcomes for Integrated, Deep Initiatives**

Determining and assessing process and operational, student learning, and climate outcomes, are needed to advance efficient and effective approaches, acknowledge complexities, learn from errors, and build capacity-building and sustainability. While the Scarlet Oak University civility campaign was broad, it was not very deep in its reach. SOU implemented predominantly surface level initiatives and programming, but did not provide a layered and truly integrated approach to exploring civility. Difficult institutional cultural shifts may be called for that normalize transparency about problems likely experienced by many universities, not as
deficits that need to be addressed via quick fixes in response to crisis, but as part of the reality and complexities of daily practice of higher education.

However, this is apt to be a difficult task as universities are fearful of the vulnerability of honestly acknowledging problems which may be viewed as weakness. Institutions of higher education now are often caught up in a corporate orientation and striving to remain competitive in the market. Universities also have to answer to external sources, such as policymakers and legislators, who hold decision-making authority, but are not intimately familiar with the work and philosophies of higher education. It may be necessary for universities to work harder and smarter towards forming alliances with community leaders and helping to inform and mobilize the public in support of institutions of higher education. As was consistent with the previous study conducted by McDougal and Moore (2012), SOU did not appear to have implemented assessment measures or outcomes. However, members of universities are often capable of building and implementing these, as routine and ongoing assessment has become a norm throughout higher education.

**Students as Resources, Not Simply Targets**

Consideration should be given to what role students have within this matrix of accountability and civility. Higher education has adopted the historical notion that it is a legitimate function of the university to implement social control over the student subjects and guide student moral development. Reflection should be spent then in understanding the ways that this will shape their learning experiences and relationships to the institution and each other. While universities often enact practices based on flat interpretations of students from pessimistic orientations as potential or actual violators of code, or as passive ‘blank slates’ to be shaped at the institution’s will, this belies the reality of students as complex beings, with complex histories
and experiences. Students are often addressed in monolithic terms, but are a varied group of individuals. While the SOU Diversity Matters Coalition students may have been impatient with wanting quick resolve to their list of demands, the focus areas of their requests were not incompatible with the ideals purported by the institution.

Throughout the campaign, students generally appeared to be an undervalued resource. A key method for addressing the perceptions of campus crisis and incivility at SOU was via this civility campaign based on administrative rationalism and overt managerialism. No evidence was gained through the study that pointed to, as might be expected from a university with traditions of intellectual democratization, a deep consideration of other options. Maintaining pro-social campus student conduct was guided predominately by inculcating student self-regulation, instead of, by contrast, encouraging a state of debate, for example, as advocated by Herbst (2010) who argued the importance of building a “healthy culture of argument.” Attention should be paid to elevate the roles or needs of the subjects interacting with, and being written and read, as subjects through civility policies and practices. Vacillating from romanticized or vilified positions, students were approached not as co-constructors of solutions, but situated as sources of the problem, or docile uninformed bodies who would unquestioningly take up the imperatives laid out by the university.

**The Wealth of Institutional and Other Resources (i.e. Faculty, Staff, Community)**

The present study also raises the possibility that institutions ironically may not make efficient use of their own internal human resources. For example, although faculty, described as “models of communication” and “facilitators” of learning within the classroom, were asked to serve on committees regarding the civility campaign, there was no indication that their areas of expertise were engaged in developing strategies, drawing on research of best practices, or
implementing creative approaches to problem solving. The SOU civility campaign highlighted problematic assumptions within academia regarding the treatment of domains of learning as discreet and bounded, such as inside the classroom, versus outside the classroom, or extracurricular, slighting the dynamic nature of knowledge formation and application across borders. The University did adopt a statement incorporated on all syllabi, and faculty were responsible for ensuring that they exposed students in their classes to the statement, but other than a common book read event, it did not appear that even in the domain of the classroom and formal learning that civility was integrated into coursework. Additionally, although this was a civility campaign implemented within a university, faculty from the related areas of education, philosophy, and political science were not given key leadership positions in the development of the campaign, thus overlooking, and underutilizing, sources of scholarship readily available.

Similarly, staff were curiously absent in the representation of the campaign, other than through their roles as administrative reinforcement of codes through vehicles, such as the campus judicial office, and via limited programming through the area of Student Life. Given the ongoing contact that many staff members, particularly in the area of Student Life or Student Affairs have with students, this is another untapped resource. Staff members are often not regarded within the broader institution not as educators, but as skilled laborers. However, these staff members are often a great source of knowledge regarding student development theories and practice, and other areas of scholarship that could contribute to innovative problem-solving approaches.

While universities often engage with notions of “town/gown” relationships, presuming a separation of the extended community as distinct and apart from the bounded university community, the boundaries are porous. If the university has become remote in the perceptions of
the community, then this signals a complex problem worthy of attention and address, and begs for efforts to be committed to representing the university as in and of the community. Higher education often approaches the broader community through deficit frameworks, missing out on opportunities for mutual support. However, a strengths based approach to community engagement allows for reciprocity in the exchange of ideas and other resources, and works within the purported ideals of the missions of higher education toward the democratization of knowledge and community capacity-building.

Identity-Consciousness, not ‘Colorblind’ and Other Identity-Neutral Perspectives

Another key issue with implications on practice that emerges from the findings points to the treatment of “diversity.” Institutional vocabularies and practices regarding plurality are still insufficient, or in need of reform. An Association of American Colleges and Universities report (Milem, Chang & Antonio, 2005) indicates that diversity on most campuses is reflected through “islands of innovations with too little influence on institutional structures” (p. vii). This is reflective of Scarlet Oak University and their struggles. There has been a resurgence in student activism and protest, with much of the debates focused squarely on issues circling the concepts of diversity. Diversity has historically been approached by higher education institutions as simply compositional diversity, or subsequently, as multicultural diversity. These models seem inadequate paradigms now to sift through the complex negotiations happening on campuses regarding civil society.

In a recent Washington Post article (Amenabar, 2016), the author describes a “new language of protest” and offers, “Just as the social turmoil of the 1960s generated new vocabulary — turn-on, sit-in, sexism — this latest wave of activism and upheaval is adding to our lexicon, with terms such as safe space, trigger warning, micro-aggression and cultural
appropriation” (para. 3). The combinations of findings from this study provide support for challenging institutional approaches that uphold identity-neutral conceptual models of diversity. Education scholars, sociologists, and other researchers (i.e. Bonilla-Silva, 1997; Choi, 2007; Delpit, 1988; Feagin, 1993; Frankenberg, 1993; Gordon, 2005; King, 1991), warn of the threats that this ideology poses. For example, Gordon (2005) suggests, “Colorblindness is a bid for innocence, an attempt to escape our responsibility for our White privilege. By claiming innocence, we reconcile ourselves to racial irresponsibility” (p. 143). Despite evidence that these identity-neutral discourses and strategies are actually counterproductive in affirming students and dismantling structural inequities, they persist in university-endorsed initiatives such as the Scarlet Oak University civility campaign. What I am suggesting is an investment by higher education practitioners to identity conscious and social justice approaches that offer students and other members of the campus an opportunity to explore the fullness of self and civil societies, and make evident the structural supports that form the foundation for marginalizing particular communities.

Summary

Communications scholar Aimee Carillo Rowe (2005) proposed, “Doing our homework is about making the familiar strange, of revisiting home to unearth what is at stake in its making (p. 16). This research, relevant to the disciplines of higher education and the social and cultural foundations of education, offers a counter discourse to the reductionist treatment in academia regarding the use of campus civility campaigns by offering a study which infuses critical inquiry into the intersection of civility and education, and by extension, social practice. CDA offers a theoretical and methodological framework responsive to exploratory, descriptive, explanatory, and interpretivist orientations as a form of intervention. As the struggle over meaning is central
and reflective of the ideals of public education for the “common good,” application of a critical discourse analysis to the practice of a university civility campaign contributes to transparency and insight as to the unique role of higher education in participating, shaping, reproducing, and/or contesting the circulating civility discourses, now enacted through the practices on campuses across the nation.

The study findings also raise intriguing central questions regarding the nature and extent of accountability, and the compatibility of this overarching concept to democratic ideals. To whom is the university accountable? Likewise, the students, and the State? While these are often not considered as part of the formula in planning university initiatives, these are not rhetorical questions, but rest at the foundation of policy and practice development, and require careful attention and consideration. This study highlights the precarity experienced by various actors involved in, or impacted by, the campaign. For example, legislators threatened to, and ultimately did, cut funding and personnel as the university strived to implement initiatives that even slightly challenged the status quo, via the introduction of language or concepts outside of those dominant discourses.

Yet, does this absolve the university of its accountability to meeting student needs? Students lost services and dedicated programs, and many students, especially those from historically marginalized communities, remained vulnerable and insecure as the institution was unable or unresponsive to meeting their needs, from basic safety requirements, to complex needs of development of self via an affirming of their intersectional subjectivities. The refrain from legislators, as elected officials, was that they were acting on behalf of their constituents. If this was the case, it may be necessary for universities to work harder and smarter towards forming
alliances with community leaders and helping to inform and mobilize the public in support of institutions of higher education.

The university has historically positioned itself as a resource to the extended community and a ‘public good.’ Fulfilling this promise involves delving deeply into the entanglements of complex concepts and social relations. This entails a multi-layered approach, honoring transparency, and the inter-connectedness inherent in higher education practice. This work must not be limited to offering surface special events, but must instead engage exploring admissions procedures, probing university policies, building layered and integrated ongoing programming and courses, and use of other thoughtful and intentional tactics. Whether civility campaigns can be used successfully as a viable resource to address the complex and multi-faceted challenges facing modern colleges and universities remains a question unanswered and summons the call for future scholarly inquiry.
REFERENCES


250


APPENDIX

ANALYTIC TOOL


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Item Identification</th>
<th>_________________________________</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Textual Analysis</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Surface descriptors and structural organization</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Author (institutional standing, ideological commitments, indicators of who produced, etc.)</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Text quantity</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Placement of the text</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Typical or atypical text?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Text structure-headings/subheadings</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are things said? Language emphasized, de-emphasized, or omitted</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Objects</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Similar to topic or theme) but which objects does the text <strong>constitute</strong>?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What is emphasized and de-emphasized?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What events/specific issues are associated to the broader issue under consideration? What events or issues ‘originate’ a particular text?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Actors</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Who does the text mention? Which individuals or institutions are either quoted mentioned?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Actors as subjects - they do things</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>- Actors as objects - they are the talked about</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How are these actors represented?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>How is the image of <em>social</em> actors built? How are their <em>relations and identities</em> defined?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Whose perspective seems to dominate?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Language and rhetoric</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Any forms of adjectivization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Writing style: e.g. formal/informal, technical, conversational</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Metaphors and other figures of style employed (i.e. an emotionally charged/appeal to readers' emotions, etc.)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>What and how does the text reflect issues as objects of persuasion?</td>
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<tr>
<td>Are civility and related terms defined? If so, how?</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>What conceptualizations of civility are reflected?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discursive strategies and processes</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Narrativization strategies</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Positioning strategies</td>
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<tr>
<td>Legitimation/de-legitimation strategies</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Politicization/depoliticization</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of facts/opinions/value judgements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Selection of facts/opinions/value judgements</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ideological Standpoints</strong></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Political/normative standpoints reflected in text</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Implicit assumptions in the text producing/reproducing unequal power relations/relations of dominance</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Rationalities and ideologies reflected</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
**Contextual Analysis**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Comparative-synchronic analysis (analysis of representation via a text compared to other representations)</th>
<th>Cross-referencing different sources, authors; alternative depictions)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Historical-diachronic analysis (significance to the sequence of discursive constructions of an issue)</td>
<td>How did representations of reality impact on subsequent ones?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>How were they reproduced or contested?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Any data regarding context (i.e. triggering events, etc.?)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>