AN INTERSECTIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON DIVERSITY IN ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATORY AGENCIES: A CASE STUDY OF WOMEN OF COLOR AND THEIR LIMINAL POSITION OF IDENTITY IN SOUTH FLORIDA

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ABSTRACT

AN INTERSECTIONAL PERSPECTIVE ON DIVERSITY IN ENVIRONMENTAL REGULATORY AGENCIES:
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Diversity statistics from environmental agencies nationwide reveal overall growth and improvement in gender and racial composition of employees. However, although women occupied over half of leadership and staff positions, most were white women. The Regulatory and Economic Resources office, an environmental regulatory agency in south Florida, is exceptional as a majority of their employees are women of color. Although there has been continuous development of diversity initiatives by environmental agencies nationwide, perspectives of how women of color are experiencing the environmental workplace are underrepresented when reporting diversity data.

My study aims to understand the complex role of diversity in environmental regulatory agencies, from the perspectives and experiences of women of color in South Florida. Specifically, I researched how women of color in the environmental workplace navigate the liminal position of their identities in relation to discourses of diversity. The project opens out onto the complexities of race, gender, class, nation, and other systems of difference. My case study was based in the Regulatory and Economic Resources office

in Miami-Dade, FL and I used a mixed-methods approach that includes semi-structured interviews and discourse analysis to explore my research questions. The study consisted of degree holding, self-identified WOC, most of whom emigrated to the U.S. over a decade ago. My research is situated within the scholarship of feminist studies, environmental sociology, and critical American studies. The study seeks to apprehend how diversity has emerged as an institutional practice, and the significance for women of color's identity negotiation within environmental regulatory agencies.

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INTRODUCTION

In 2011, the Obama administration issued Executive Order (EO) 13583, Establishing a Coordinated Government-Wide Initiative to Promote Diversity and Inclusion in the Federal Workforce, reiterating the importance of maintaining a diverse workforce as seen in previous EOs (EO: 13171, 13518, 13548, etc.) and requiring federal government employers to develop strategic plans in their human resources departments to reflect priorities stated in "the Constitutions and laws of the United States of America" (2011; Taylor, 2014). Building on the Equal Opportunity Act of 1972, every government department and affiliated agencies continues to amend their standard operating procedures and hiring procedures themselves in response to issued EOs. The Office of Personnel Management has developed and circulated literature and strategies for "unlocking federal talent" that guides human resource departments to be able to identify and create a diverse and inclusive workforce (2014). Although diversity statistics from agencies nationwide reveal overall growth and improvement, gender and racial diversity in higher level positions remain largely insignificant and inadequate (Taylor, 2014; Davidson, 2018).

Taking a closer look at environmental agencies (EAs), the *State of Diversity in Environmental Organizations: Mainstream NGOs, Foundations & Government Agencies* report found that women occupied over half of leadership and staff positions (Taylor, 2014). However, most of these women were white women (Taylor, 2014). Despite their efforts and growing interests and implementation of diversity strategies, government

agencies continue to fall short of overall expectations. The manner in which these institutions frame their diversity initiatives to current and incoming employees is directly correlated to who is recruited and retained in the workforce, and is an important factor to consider (Cundiff et al., 2018).

Women of color (WOC) represent a minority group who are underrepresented in the environmental field overall. Numerous studies show WOC in professional institutions encounter various forms of resistance to their professional advancement resulting in self-regulation and general discouragement that lead to declines in health, self-confidence, and more adverse effects (Ahmed, 2012; Ahmed, 2017; Lee, 2018; Gutiérrez y Muhs, 2012). Taylor found that "promotions go primarily to White females. Women of color are still on the outside looking in, along with their male counterparts" (2014). Furthermore, national attitudes around racial controversies characterize WOC as overly emotional, invalidating or diminishing their lived experiences (Blake, 2019). Viewing these controversies in the localized setting of environmental workplaces, WOC encounter intersectional forms of clandestine racism and other systems of difference which pressure them into remaining silent about their experiences.

The Miami-Dade County Department of Regulatory and Economic Resources (RER) is a public environmental regulatory agency (ERA), a type of EA, that is federally mandated by the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) to monitor and enforce environmental laws and regulation. Miami-Dade's population is demographically diverse; 88.7% of the total county population are non-white race/ethnicities and 52.2% of the total residents are born outside of the US (U.S. Census Bureau, 2017). Given the high

racial and ethnic diversity in this county, the diversity and inclusion standards prioritized by government organizations is feasible. RER is exceptional having attained a workforce that not only mirrors demographics of their county, but shows women occupy as many positions as men do. People of color (POC) comprise 78.5% of RER's total employees; 39.2% of those POC are WOC.

RER is able to recruit an undeniably diverse workforce although the agency relies on a single online diversity training course to foster diversity and inclusion. Furthermore, *how* those who embody diversity perceive these trainings and encounters in the environmental workplace is unaccounted for in the research literature. Although WOC are statistically represented, their perspectives are elided. After the online diversity training is complete, the employee receives a certification to which they communicate to their supervisor and then move onward with their regular work schedule. This leads to taking a closer look at how individuals receive this information and furthermore, how WOC, embodied representations of diversity, navigate the environmental workplace in this diversity context.

Statement of the Problem

Working in environmental agencies, WOC are among the most affected by diversity initiatives. They negotiate their identities within the larger context of environmental values, such as conservation, that are congruent with their workplace (i.e., enforcing environmental laws and regulations) and further based on their social and professional positioning (Lee, 2018). In addition to pressures to match expectations of

environmental attitudes and work performance, these women have to navigate around intersecting issues of gender, race and ethnicity (Ahmed, 2012; Ahmed, 2017). Diversity initiatives and subsequent trainings add to this performance obstacle course; WOC are expected to maintain this aspect of institutional culture as well. However, when faced with discrimination in the workplace, they often do not report the incident and are encouraged to remain silent because it would hinder their professional career in multiple ways (Parker & Funk, 2017). WOC are met with barriers and they themselves are seen as barriers by other employees when they do speak up. These transfiguring barriers become visible, their invisibility is maintained to preserve the social space in favor of efficiency, or the women themselves are seen as barriers to efficiency (Ahmed, 2012; Ahmed, 2017; Lee, 2018). WOC in the environmental workplace are faced with unique, intersectional barriers that are often overlooked within the institutional diversity discourse.

Generally, diversity trainings are intended to create a culture of acceptance. However, these trainings do more harm than good. The language of diversity initiatives is inherently divisive and reproduce social hierarchies that benefit white men (Ahmed, 2012). It frames WOC as atypical and does not address root issues; these trainings do not challenge the structure of these institutions to construct a pathway of success for WOC, or POC generally. It reorients minorities as placeholders for diversity (Ahmed, 2012). Diversity programs should aim to break down existing social hierarchies and creating a system that justifiably places POC at the forefront of the conversation.

As previously stated, WOC are bombarded with expectations in the environmental workplace that are unreasonably conglomerated. They must navigate multiple identities

to get through their 9-to-5 shift and it proves to be exhausting. They self-regulate by saying less and doing more to get ahead in the field while their counterparts are privileged to operate without constraint. Diversity programs encourage colorblindness and advocate political correctness over justice and equity (Ahmed, 2012; Ahmed, 2017). Diversity and environmentalism rhetoric are enmeshed in the environmental workplace and functions to depoliticize issues around diversity, inclusion, and equity by individualizing a responsibility that should collectively burden the nation. However, diversity is inherently political as it became legislated, making it a State matter (Federici, 2004). This discussion within the environmental workplace is met with this same compounded expectation negating the social issue of diversity. WOC especially bear this burden and risk being made invisible as they embody diversity, traversing the precarious landscapes of ERAs.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to understand the complex relationship between the role of diversity in ERAs, and address gaps in research and knowledge by examining the under-studied perspective of WOC working at RER.

WOC who choose to enter the environmental field have expectations of attainable promotions, availability of high level management positions, and the opportunity to contribute to developing diversity initiatives in the workplace (Taylor, 2018). However, these expectations are often displaced and postponed. As group consciousness continues to grow, ERAs must prepare to make structural changes to facilitate an environmental

workplace that not only shows they value WOC employees, but also prioritize an equity discourse. Diversity programs as they are now, strengthen the divisiveness of difference; employees are expected to ignore difference and encourage colorblindness and political correctness (Ahmed, 2012). Moreover, the experiences of WOC need to be brought to the forefront of the discussion on how to form this dynamic discourse of justice.

To understand how WOC navigate the environmental workplace with the given diversity discourse, I took a mixed methods approach. I conducted 9 semi-structured interviews with degree holding, self-identified WOC, most of whom emigrated to the U.S. over a decade ago, occupying different divisions and positions in RER. To explore how RER's online diversity training, the agency's only tool to foster diversity and inclusion, was perceived and affected how WOC navigated the environmental workplace, I asked questions and had conversations around themes of personal experiences with: environmental values, immigration, leadership, and social dynamics between coworkers. I also did a discourse analysis of secondary documents that include RER's diversity training materials, standard operating procedures, organizational restructuring goals and mission, and more literature produced by the agency.

The purpose of the interviews and discourse analysis was to investigate how, if at all, diversity trainings impacted how these employees navigated the environmental workplace and to what extent. By accounting for the actual lived experiences of WOC in this setting, this provided context not only to restructuring diversity programs and the workplace itself but also unfolds new avenues of how to do intersectional research. This

study opens out onto critical analysis of race, ethnicity, class, gender and other systems of difference with emerging bridges between academic disciplines.

Research Questions

1. What is the role and function of diversity in environmental regulation agencies?
    a. How – if at all --is RER facilitating diversity in the workplace?
    b. What is the relationship between diversity and identity in an institutional setting?
        i. What are the perceptions of WOC within the agency? How do they identify themselves within the agency?
        ii.

Significance to the Field

As stated previously, my research contributes to the greater works of feminist scholarship. Scholars have called for filling the gaps through intersectional analysis. Narratives of WOC are wholly understudied in academic studies and are rarely a point of entry in qualitative analyses (Crenshaw, 1991; Politics & Gender, 2007; Choo & Ferre, 2010; Ahmed, 2012; Cho et al., 2013; Carroll, 2017; Cundiff et al., 2018). WOC are often quantified, limited to, and represented by statistical analysis without qualitative data to contextualize overall analysis; narratives provide interpretive information to supplement quantitative analysis (Choo & Ferree, 2010; Cho et al., 2013). Interpreting the

environmental workplace from the perspective of WOC centralizes their overall importance. Furthermore, their narratives invoke an academic activist type of approach to report findings that challenge the bureaucratic structures making daily life a struggle for WOC in the environmental workplace. I aim to fill this qualitative gap by placing WOC at the forefront of my research and yield a comprehensive analysis that supplements quantitative analyses. My research will contribute to the greater body of feminist scholarship by exploring complexities between institutions and the understudied perspective of their WOC employees as well as decoupling problematic ideologies associated with the establishment of ERAs.

Statement of Purpose

Having been born and grown up in Miami and pursued a career in environmental science, I have experienced and observed unacceptable behavior and treatment in the environmental field that are rarely problematized. Many members of my family have also followed this career path and have expressed the same sentiments. We have experienced classism, racism, and sexism in the laboratories we worked at and interacted with, but found it a facile task to dismiss. For myself, it was not until I began graduate school that I began to understand how awful and undeserving those experiences were. Looking back at my undergraduate experience, there were many fallacies asserting the omnipotence of objectivity and the structure of the degree itself, leaving little room to explore the complicated social implications of environmental issues. There was no space to

deconstruct as we were inundated with the task of memorizing, replicating, and constructing formulas and methods. As we adopted and praised the ethic and morale of Muir, Thoreau, and Descartes in our mandatory humanities class, Environmental Ethics, we would always conclude that people are the problem. In short, many graduates from the program moved on to secure jobs in the local Miami area, launched with this environmentalism that mystifies social realities.

Being involved in the field and having connections to ERA employees gave me an advantageous position to form my thesis research. My research questions formed through an iterative process of recollection and conversations with former colleagues and family members in STEM careers. Patterns around indifference to inequality and treatment in the workplace seized my attention and became the anchor of my research pursuit. My research site was made accessible through the help of a family member who has worked at RER for over 10 years; many of my interviewees were more than willing to participate in my research because of their work relationship.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There are several key components that I have identified are necessary to best approach my research questions: environmental sociology, diversity discourses, and liminality. My research was best supported by Ahmed's (2012) in-depth study on the institutional life of diversity initiatives in academic institutions. I applied her theoretical framework to my case study, an environmental institution. She begins with following events that led to the institutionalization of diversity discourse; she terms this method as a "practical phenomenology" (2012). Grounding her case study required dehistoricizing, demonstrating how events of the past perpetuate in the present and future, and I felt this was necessary for my own research. I begin my literature review with key themes around events that led to the institutionalization of environmental institutions, followed by the indoctrination of diversity discourses, and review literature around diversity discourses and liminality.

Environmental Sociology

The environmental history of the United States is nuanced with lasting ideologies of dispossession, exclusion, and intolerance. Further, the natural environment became a tool of power and used as political leverage that functions to perpetuate American ideals soliciting acculturation of U.S. citizens. Although environmental state agencies have been commissioned to conserve and protect the natural environment, it is enmeshed with this history and formed a particular environmental ideology (Francis, 2013). As the

Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) was established, environmental regulatory agencies (ERAs) were given the responsibility and authority to enforce and implement environmental policies.

Considering these aspects of ERAs and the discourses that inform them, it is necessary to investigate how an environmentalism that is both racialized and gendered was constructed and its lasting effects. However, there is some contention as these same agencies have developed towards maintaining a diverse employee population within ERAs itself. This literature is necessary to understand my research questions. Diversity discourses within ERAs are entangled within a history of environmentalism rooted in conservationist ideology. These movements are both racialized and gendered which function to exclude people of color (POC) and women.

Environmental state agencies are mandated to ensure the environment is sustainably managed. Those employed in these environmental state agencies are given the role of environmental enforcers and regulators. As the general population shifts from a predominantly white majority towards a minority majority, the environmental workforce has also shifted. This complementary shift brings institutional structures to the forefront, requiring organizational changes to facilitate spaces that deliberately support the success of POC entering the field. Furthermore, women continue to face intersectional forms of oppression that hinder their careers; WOC encounter unique barriers in ERAs contextualized by socio-historical conditions. A gendered and racialized history plays a role in how a distinct environmentalism emerges and is institutionalized in ERAs.

By tethering the separate histories of American environmentalism, race and gender relations, and U.S. immigration, I aim to situate my research in relation to the discourses WOC navigate in environmental workplaces. WOC negotiate the gendered and racialized discourses within environmentalism in relation to their identities even as their employing agency claims to facilitate a diverse environmental workforce. Ahmed (2012) reasons practical phenomenology is necessary to understand how an institution is institutionalized and follow the events that led to its institutionalization which determine its purpose and function. I followed Ahmed's (2012) process of dehistoricization to map out how an environmentalism particular to Florida was established, follow how its institutionalization connects to diversity, and how it manifests in my case study area.

Conservation Ideologies

The theory of ideology posits ideologies lead to a false consciousness, a mystification of complex systems, and fetishism (Rehmann, 2007). Conservation ideology functions as such. Environmentalists dogmatically justify socially erroneous environmental laws and regulations and are altogether distanced from social and economic realities (Germic, 2001; Taylor, 2002; Moore et al., 2003; Ebron, 2005; Egan, 2011; Hultgren, 2014; Taylor, 2016). Taylor (2016) scrutinizes the American conservation movement for its elitist, patriarchal, sexist racist, and classist ideological underpinnings. She methodologically deconstructs the conservation movement and discusses how conservation manifested in America. More notably, Taylor (2016) argues

the conservation movement served capitalist interests in economic development. By linking Taylor's (2016) argument to a neoliberal paradigm, the conservation still functions presently.

Although many scholars present thorough historical overviews of the conservation movement, historicization locates the discourse in the past. Their work risks co-optation by conservationists themselves and is used to demonstrate how modern environmental movements have evolved towards social equity and justice (Sturgeon, 2009). I combine Ahmed's (2012) practical phenomenology and dehistoricization and Taylor (2016) along with other scholars' comprehensive reviews of the conservation movement as on ongoing discourse. As stated previously, environmentalism is an extension of American ideology and therefore mobilized to function similarly, reproducing social stratifications. Foregrounding my research in a sociohistorical overview enables me to critically analyze how the conservation ideology manifests at RER and how it affects the role and function of diversity in the agency.

Neoliberal Political Rationalities

"*Social divisions which assume a distinctively racial or ethnic character can be attributed or explained principally by reference to* ***economic structures and processes***."

(Omi & Winant, 2015)

It is impossible to begin any theoretical analysis without a discussion of the role of capitalism and its legacy: neoliberalism. Acknowledging traditional orthodoxies on capitalism and keeping feminist addendums at the forefront of discussion, capitalism is perpetually present and sustains intersectional forms of oppression (Taylor, 2017). Capitalism was the means of transforming people into profitable entities. Building from Taylor's (2016) "business environmentalism," conservation ideology serves capitalist interests. In order to continue to maximize production in EAs, diversity was launched to homogenize and essentialize atypical bodies (i.e. POC). Neoliberalism provided logic and language for orienting the missions and goals for diversity programs that minimizes disruptive discourses aimed to identity difference and problematize essentialist logic. Furthermore, in this neoliberal paradigm, diversity is not only co-opted but also marketized and bureaucratized into institutions following an economic model focused on customer engagement and consumption of their services (Perry, 2018).

In a neoliberal discourse, naturalized immigrant groups carry assumptions and functions of globalization (Byrd, 2018). For example, the feminization of poverty and migration of the global south is embodied in the naturalized immigrant in the U.S.. Women and their bodies innately perform and align themselves with expectations generated by neoliberal markets and globalization. In my case study site, RER of Miami-Dade, there is an emergence of an ideological Global North and Global South that is framed by American ideology in a neoliberal discourse. Nearly all of the WOC interviewed were born in another country, emigrating to the U.S. in their late 20s.

Neoliberal discourses in this analysis sediment the interviewees in a role that embodies American ideology that defines the dichotomic Global South. In other words, the interviewees are sutured to Global South identities understood through the context of American ideology and therefore are limited by this framing when they physically relocated to the Global North. RER represents a borderland between these discourses as a site of encounter with conflicting ideologies. The environmental workplace is characterized by global neoliberal markets (international trade and commerce) and conservation (sustainability). Conversely they have hired a workforce that has been historically scapegoated as bodies of point source pollution and degradation (Egan, 2011; Gemma, 2009; Hultgren, 2014; Huynh et al., 2015). Further, these characterizations of the environmental workplace can also be recognized as a distribution center of eco-capitalism. Eco-capitalism is an example of the appropriative capability of neoliberalism to redress and perpetuate capitalism. My research will further unearth how ERAs have developed to facilitate employee diversity in service to continue towards economic development and how ideological underpinnings of its institutional structure mystify this process through neoliberalist individualization.

Women and Environmental Subjectivities

Through a feminist political ecology lens, women have been made into subjects and subsequently subject to identity (Federici, 2014; Glassman, 2006; Robbins, 2012). Instigated by white male bourgeois, the emergence of "mechanical philosophy" around

capitalist discourse led to creating a subject that is controllable, the world proletariat (McKittrick, 2006; Federici, 2010; Federici, 2014). Mechanical theories chimed on the dichotomy of the mind and body (Cartesian dualism). Scientific rationalization and objectivity became a normalizing tool. Further, this process assessed what was "normal" and prescribed that the body was a machine that needed to be managed through a combination of selves (i.e., self-discipline, self-management, self-regulation). This progressed the alienation of women from authoritative positions in society, their infantilization, and subsequent establishment of the "machine" as a model of social behavior.

Federici's (2014) analysis greatly influenced how I was able to rationalize WOC in ERAs as subject to an identity normalized within the workplace and make visible the process of their proletarianization. She provides a sociohistorical overview of women during the age of enlightenment during the European witch hunts (2014). Through her analysis, she models how elite, dominant classes functioned to delegitimize women's agency, render them powerless, and prescribe an ideal for women to become. In sum, natural science developed to restructure power relations, centralizing the needs and interests of white male elites. Institutions were designed to facilitate their success and consequently created a peripheral space for those who did not belong to this minor interest group. It was white male elites that defined the role of women and POC in society. Through my research, I identify these power relations through narrative of WOC in ERAs and contribute to the greater body of scholarship of feminist studies through collecting these narratives.

Inheriting Institutional Structures

The aforementioned categories of difference that formed this specific environmental ideology are still enmeshed in the institutional structures that inform environmental agencies (EAs). Dispossession, exclusion, oppression, and division is built into American experience. The EPA is the distributor of the environmentalism described in the first half of this paper. McMahon (2006) contributes to the discourse stating the EPA has been shaped and largely determined by the interests of political leaders. The EPA mission claims the agency strives to protect the environment, this expectation is undermined by political interests prioritizing economic viability (McMahon, 2006). In this way, social stratifications are perpetuated and justified by EA's responsibility to enforce environmental regulations. Environmental regulations are stringent in more affluent neighborhoods and lax in communities predominantly inhabited by POC (Pulido, 2000; Taylor, 2016). Sites of production place a disproportionate burden on those who cannot afford to refute the adverse health effects inherent in the production process (Pulido, 2000).

Presupposing the effects of this environmentalism are the agencies that enforce them. The function of environmental enforcement and regulation centralizes the importance of environmental protection but overlooks social implications. Furthermore, the lasting ideological implications of male-oriented assumptions align women with the environment spills over into the EA workplace. Gender divisions are reified in the

workplace and manifest as designated gendered spaces and roles (Massey, 1994; Rocheleau et al., 1996; Cresswell, 2015). As the environmental workforce diversifies, the assumption is that the institutional structure has to amend policies to facilitate a space that supports racial and gender diversity. In the following section I examine how executive orders and political policies commit to prioritizing diversity but still functions to preserve class, race, and gender divides.

Diversity Discourses

Diversity programs are a response to homogeneity in workforce composition, and they center dominant groups (e.g. non-POC; Ahmed, 2012; Ahmed 2017). Although racial and gender diversity appear to be exceptional at RER, it would be naïve to suggest POC no longer encounter barriers in the environmental workplace. Themes around how diversity affects self-perception, sense of place, and performance emerge from this diversity discourse. Experiences of WOC are overall underrepresented and would provide insight into the efficacy of implemented diversity programs and contribute to academic studies around complexities of diversity in the workplace.

Workplace Diversity

"Diversity can be 'treated as a superficial overlay that does not disrupt any comfort zones.'"

Ahmed (2012)

Diversity issues are magnified as the United States progresses towards a "majority minority" population (Toomey, 2018). In an interview with Yale Environment 360, Dorceta Taylor, author of Diversity in Environmental Organizations Reporting and Transparency, argues environmental organizations overlook POC and those that enter the workforce in this field experience "professional marginalization" (Toomey, 2018). POC are presumed incompetent, excluded and socially understood as disqualified from participating in professional and academic environmental spaces (Toomey, 2018; Taylor, 2018; Ahmed, 2012). Taylor's research and perspective speaks to the longstanding salience of diversity issues in environmental work altogether; POC enter into a legacy contingent on their overt aggressive exclusion (Taylor, 2002; Taylor, 2016; Taylor, 2018). Further, there still remains a diversity problem although diversity initiatives continue to develop since the 1960s (Cundiff et al., 2018; Taylor, 2017).

Dobbin and Kalev (2011) follow the development and transformation of anti-discrimination legislation to diversity initiatives in the U.S. beginning with the Kennedy administration during the 1960s. EO 10925, otherwise known as "affirmative action," aimed to proscribe discrimination based on "race, creed, color, or national origin" that prevented minority men from employment (Dobbin and Kalev, 2011). This directly opposed race and ethnic discrimination but failed to address sex and gender discrimination. Affirmative action led to a definite increase of POC entering the workforce and a system that supported their professional growth. Workplaces amended their policies to include "An Equal Opportunity Employer…" to comply with

nondiscriminatory EOs, however non-minority employees in the workplace environment was less forthcoming in their accomodation (Dobbin and Kalev, 2011; Taylor, 2002; Taylor, 2017; Taylor, 2018). Personnel responsible for aligning the workplace with anti-discrimination legislation communicated the market benefit and necessity of attaining a diverse workforce, encouraging firms to embrace these anti-discrimination commitments to "remain competitive" in the market (Dobbin and Kalev, 2011). Aligning with modern neoliberal rhetoric, communicating diversity as a market incentive, this supports my analytical framework to scrutinize the environmental workplace through an economic logic.

Later on, equal opportunity initiatives expanded to include women. Employers were encouraged to deliberately recruit minorities and women, subsequently providing the necessary training to enable professional mobility within the workplace (Dobbin and Kalev, 2011; Taylor, 2018). Furthermore, employers went so far as to strategize with minority groups in order to level the playing field, resulting in a steady increase of minority and women entering the workforce. Minorities and women still encountered barriers in the field although there was obvious effort to minimize transfiguring discrimination. The Reagan administration demonstrated the salient strength of American values rooted in exclusion and discrimination, detailed in the sociohistorical discussion of environmentalism, by challenging the importance and legitimacy of anti-discrimination legislation. Consequently, programs meant to equalize opportunities across social boundaries were received reduced funding; diversity initiatives took place of anti-discrimination programs. Diversity initiatives conglomerated specific programs directed

at singular forms of difference (i.e., race, ethnicity, sex, gender, class, etc.) and was embodied into a human resources department (Dobbin and Kalev, 2011). It is evident with each presidential turnover that discrimination is subject to the politics of definition, dependent on time and place, producing shifting baselines of equality for minorities and women in the workplace (Massey, 1994; Fracis, 2013). This developmental process contextualizes RER's commitment to facilitating a diverse workforce and gives reason to investigate how long-term WOC employees experience and navigate the environmental workplace.

From a social psychology standpoint, workplace organizations' diversity policies reveal levels of development and positionality regarding racial identity (Chrobot-Mason and Thomas, 2002). Racial identity is a key component to understanding how workplaces operate; workplaces may overlook issues rooted in racial identity, asserting organizational identity to take precedence in effort to avoid controversial discourses (Chrobot-Mason and Thomas, 2002). This makes my research area of South Florida an ideal setting to observe how the organization navigates diversity and whether there is an assertion of organizational identity from an ERA premise. There is a complex web of interactions in concepts rooted in environmentalism, identity, and distributions of power that require more analysis. My research will address these gaps to understand how institutions like ERAs function and its associated driving forces.

In sum, environmental enforcement and regulation goals centralizes the importance of environmental protection but overlook social implications. Executive orders and political policies are the catalyst of committing government agencies to

prioritize diversity but inherently preserve class, race, and gender divides. Both Ahmed (2012) and Taylor (2017) have identified a broad gap between "practice and theory/saying and doing" inherent in diversity discourses. Through the interviews, I fill this gap with narratives from WOC to contextualize this conceptual borderland to understand the mechanism of how diversity programs produce indifference evident at RER.

Self-Perception & Intersectionality

Literature around self-perception suggest individuals draw on external discourses to confirm identities (Ahmed, 2012; Carollo & Guerci, 2018; Chrobot-Mason et al., 2016). To illustrate the process of identity development, consider children of immigrants born in America, which I will refer to as first generation Americans. They are subject to both ethnic and American identity (Garter et al., 2014). Garter et al. (2014) propose that both identities are associated with pride and provide a sense of belonging. American society is the vehicle of American identity, whereas, parents are responsible for informing their American-born children of their experiences in their country of origin (Garter et al., 2014). The latter includes expectations of how first generation Americans will experience American society, which is conveyed either to mistrust other ethnic groups or how to cope with negative experiences (Garter et al., 2014). This bicultural upbringing leads to intersectional perspectives necessary for a more complete understanding of American identity and how it affects minority populations. Garter et al.

(2014) confirm that Asian American women are primarily prone to ethnic and American socialization; biculturalism suggests that both identities develop harmoniously but some scholars suggest it is not possible for both to exist simultaneously in an individual. Garter et al. (2014) also address gender, stating that immigrant parents "view their daughters as being primarily responsible for transmitting cultural and family values." This distinctive research further describes the complexities of individuals and their experiences in becoming. In my research, I consider themes around how WOC in ERAs experience how American ideology has shaped the workplace itself, how WOC navigate this landscape, and conversely how their perceptions of self develop in the process of their employment in light of diversity discourses.

Concepts around space and place suggest location is central to develop a sense of self (Massey, 1994; McKittrick, 2006; Valentine, 2008; Wright et al., 2012; Valentine, 2014; Cresswell, 2015). Cresswell's (2015) conception of space and place provide a contextualized framework to examine how the environmental workplace, RER, is a landscape contributing to individual self-perception. In the following section, I expand on how ERAs are a socially constructed landscape that frame a predetermined role fulfilled by WOC. Considering space and place in general, self-perception develops along lines of locality and temporality where definition is hegemonically determined (Massey, 1994). Given the historical underpinnings of environmentalism, ERAs have developed through an Edenic prescription of environmental maintenance. In order to return to this envisioned environment, restoration and maintenance plans are created and carried out by

the EA workforce. My research would speak to the necessary sub-liminal identities WOC operate through to carry out the actions for the restoration and maintenance plans.

Liminality

liminality [lim-*uh*-nal-i-tee]

the transitional period or phase of a rite of passage, during which the participant lacks social status or rank, remains anonymous, shows obedience and humility, and follows prescribed forms of conduct, dress, etc. (Dictionary.com)

Concepts on Identity

Identity, explained by Stets and Burke (2000), is developed through a reflexive process in which an individual categorizes themselves in relation to other social categories. There are two theories that incorporate the role of ideologies in identity formation: social identity theory and identity theory. Social identity theory describes an individual acknowledging their belonging to a social group. Included in this is the inherent characteristics present in social groups: "attitudes, beliefs and values, affective reactions, behavioral norms, styles of speech, and other properties" (Stets & Burke, 2000). Furthermore, social groups define who may or may not belong to a group, and an individual self-identifying with a social group enhances both the identity of themselves and that of the social group. McMahon (2004; 2006) supplements this framing by detailing the creation of the EPA's institutional culture that functions to homogenize

employees. These notions around identity inform which social groups are relevant for the purposes of my analysis; in this case, environmental regulator is the definitive group that forms and reinforces group and individual identity.

Identity theory is based on the individual realizing they are fulfilling a role in the social group; this is how the individual views themselves in relation to the standards set by the social group. As a result, individual behaviors are guided and subjected to social group standards (Stets & Burke, 2000). Coupled with how ideologies function to orient individuals in greater society, social identity theory is accompanied with expectations of how the role of an individual is to be fulfilled within the context of a social group. Belonging to a social group is packaged with the expectation that the individual will perform in alignment with group goals, beliefs, priorities, and so on. The reflexive process involved in identity development is completed as individuals are complicit to social group standards. I compiled these theories to form my interview questions to be able to understand how WOC view themselves within the niche social group of environmental regulators.

Furthermore, Wright et al. (2012) find that individuals in ERAs negotiate their identities in and out of work contexts. They explain how ideologies influence personal identity dialogically and situationally. Dialogical aspects occur while working and interacting with other people within a company. This provides context in which reflexivity is done by "positioning oneself in response to different identities without losing a sense of self" (Wright et al., 2012). Identities are situationally developed through conformity with a social group, in this case a company setting. Ahmed (2012) and

McKittrick (2006) touch on spatial analysis of socially constructed spaces. They demonstrate how identity and place are "understood in tandem as mutually constructed," providing a conceptual framework I implicitly use to explore the connection between identities of WOC working in the spatial boundaries of the environmental workplace (McKittrick, 2006).

METHODS

I took a mixed-methods approach to interpret data within my specific theoretical framework and address my research questions. This approach enabled me to explore intersectional perceptions, observe how diversity operates, and how identity is constructed in an institutional setting. Semi-structured interviews and document analysis supplemented emerging themes and contextualized causation. Interviews were transcribed, coded, and categorized based on emergent themes related to my research questions. My research was designed to be conducted in an ethical manner. I followed the Institutional Review Board (IRB) protocol aligning my research process for informed consent, gaining permission from RER's human resources department to enter the workspace and conduct interviews, and ensuring to there were no potential risks to my interview participants. I received approval from the IRB with the exemption number: 17-193 on May 8, 2018.

My research site was RER of Miami-Dade County located in South Florida. RER is a public state agency that has the overall responsibility to serve and maintain the county. Some of the agency's responsibilities include: permit and licensing processing, enforcement and compliance activities with their customers (residents) in regards to "building, zoning, planning, environmental, platting, traffic, and industry-specific codes and regulations," resilience planning, coordination and implementation (RER, 2017). As stated previously, this area's ethnic composition developed alongside a unique socio-historical background which affects the agency's diversity initiatives (Francis, 2013).

Furthermore, the agency itself has undergone several organizational changes which resulted in its conglomeration of county divisions and relocating into a single building at the county center. This movement and institutional compression follows neoliberal political rationale as it was an action purposed to reduce the appearance of government intervention in the county. RER is an ideal study site given these parameters and compiled complexity.

Semi-Structured Interview

I conducted 9 individual open-ended, semi-structured interviews with self-identified WOC employees of RER in South Florida to understand how diversity is understood and lived in the agency as well as how identity is situationally constructed (Carollo & Guerci, 2018). I recruited other interview participants within RER via snowball sampling. Although most of the interviews were done at RER, some interviews were conducted over the phone and public settings. Each interview ranged from 1 to 1 ½ hours in duration and were fully recorded, with their acknowledgement and consent, and transcribed. I presented each participant with an informed consent form, reading it together with them to ensure they understood the interview process. Furthermore, I communicated that they were able to stop the interview at any point if they became uncomfortable in any way. My questions led to discussions around diversity and the identity development process from three aspects: systemic functioning (daily tasks and responsibilities), organizational identity (social interactions within the agency), and individual identity (career history and aspects of their personal lives).

I approached coding with a quasi-grounded theory method and coded based on common reiterations throughout the interviews. To explore how diversity programs were perceived and affected how WOC navigated the environmental workplace I searched for keywords (i.e., diversity, race, gender, etc.). After coding the interviews, there were emerging themes around environmental values, immigration experiences, leadership, work ethic, institutional geography, and social dynamic between coworkers. I used quotes from these themes that reflect my conceptual schema in my analysis. I also did a discourse analysis of secondary documents pertaining to diversity programs in RER as well as their agency website to grasp how the agency projects diversity onto county residents.

Discourse Analysis

In addition, I did a textual analysis of policy documents and literature produced by RER. I analyzed and coded available documents based on emerging themes to understand how diversity is being communicated, who the target audience is, and how it is being addressed. Following Francis' (2013) discourse analysis, I was able to identify key elements within RER's institutional language and its effects on the agency's diversity discourse. Francis' (2013) discourse analysis ranges from an "interpretivist-critical interpretivist continuum" which allows for basic to critical analysis of how language is used. My analysis falls towards the critical interpretivist given the social, political, and environmental historical development embedded in ERAs, detailed in my literature review. Critical discourse analysis assumes "there is a political intent of discourse

embedded in the constructions each speaker has of who they are and their ideological beliefs that inform their understandings…" This was the most fitting methodological approach to interpret my interview and document data in a way that aligns with my overarching research questions. Themes that emerged from the document analysis related to how diversity was facilitated in the workplace and regulative language around behavior and conduct.

ANALYSIS

Generally, I've come to understand the environmental workplace as the provider of the broader context that controls, and confines, the diversity discourse. Looking at the developmental history of the environmental workplace in the U.S. through a liminal lens, we come to see the institutional legacy, inherent in RER and ERAs altogether, is both sub-liminal and overtly active. Analysis initially requires looking past the dualism between individual identity versus the identity of the space itself; it becomes a question of the lasting intentions the institution was founded on and positioning this at the forefront of the discussion. In overlooking this dualism, I investigate the unity of individual and institutional identity in the context of diversity. The environmental workplace is a space which essentializes difference in order to proceed forward towards productivity (Massey, 1994). In this way, diversity discourse functions to create an illusion of unity. By disseminating this message to the individuals in the workplace, those who embody difference/diversity are made identifiable and to an extent this makes them easier to avoid or dismiss once they have been categorized.

I draw on interviews with WOC that work at the RER to understand how individuals negotiate their identities in ERAs premised on this constructed environmentalism. Using theoretical frameworks around diversity, environmental sociology, and liminality, the interviews open onto, what I termed, an overall diversity complex. The interviews reach a saturation point, describing similar experiences and beyond that, several interviews overlapped in themes around immigration experiences,

personal work ethic, and spaces of encounter (i.e., the lunchroom, the conference room, and the cubicle). Although diversity programs have framed the workplace, it's boundaries are porous and I argue WOC embody the discourse.

First, I provide a sociohistorical overview as necessary foundation to my arguments. Second, I detail the institutional life of RER, how diversity is facilitated in the workplace, and how diversity actually operates through the experiences of my interviewees. Third, I discuss the relationship between diversity and identity in this institution. Throughout, my analysis is informed by feminist theories via Ahmed (2012). Furthermore, I conduct a critical analysis of discourses around diversity using Ahmed's (2017) feminist theory and analyze ERAs as a site of negotiation. Throughout, I map out RER and identify the role and function of diversity determinism, how diversity is made to be consumed, and how diversity training in this particular ERA creates a mechanism of indifference and its implications. To conclude, I explore liminal dispositions and the emergence of an individual/organizational "borderland" drawing on contextual data from interviews with WOC employees at RER (Anzaldúa, 2012).

Sociohistorical Overview

I begin this historical analysis looking at American ideology and how it functions to create a logic that justifies a gendered and racialized environmentalism. Given the complexity of my case study site, the region of south Florida, I rationalized that U.S. political discourses around immigration relations to be a key component to understanding

how this unique environmentalism persisted to preserve oppressive class divisions. Furthermore, south Florida is particularly novel in how immigration was approached in the late 1880s and early 1900s. Both state and federal government actions to mitigate immigration flow in the region has left Floridians with a salient ambivalence. The chronology of immigration in south Florida, specifically Miami-Dade, provides the necessary background to mobilize my analytical framework to look at how immigration events become characterizing contours of modern approaches to diversity. In sum, contextualizing how environmentalism proliferates and edifies inequality is necessary to divulge the pervasiveness of approaches to diversity management in the modern workplace.

American Ideology: A Gendered & Racialized Environmentalism

Environmentalism in the United States functions to reproduce class, race, and gender divisions and preserve forms of whiteness under the guise of conservation (Pulido, 2000; Taylor, 2016; Taylor, 2018). This is central to the power dynamics that my participants negotiate in the environmental workplace. Concepts like eugenics and neo-Malthusianism continue to undergird discussions of carrying capacity and the necessity of population control. The primary function of pseudoscience, for example, derived from and was justified by Generally, positivist scientific rationality developed to perpetuate a naturalizing logic that normalized racial inequality and subjugation (i.e., phrenology). Many scientific narratives revolved around human caused environmental fragility which contributed to create an orthodoxy around forms of difference, resulting in multi-

directional stratifications of class, race, gender, and sexuality (Germic, 2001; Kennedy, 2008; Keller, 2010; Egan, 2011; Hultgren, 2014).

American environmentalism is unique in that it is tethered to American identity, alloying environmental stewardship to the ideal American citizen. Theorists and naturalists that were at the helm of constructing this ideology were white, male, and often members of the elite class (Keller, 2010; Taylor, 2016; Pulido, 2000). They rendered their exterior experience in the physical environment into a social construction of nature; this was culturally internalized, forming American culture and identity (Peterson, 2001). Thomas Aquinas contributed toward an environmental ethic evoking a divine synecdoche that created a gendered hierarchy of the natural and supernatural (Keller, 2010). I mention Aquinas because his philosophy, popularized by American transcendentalists like Thoreau, combined concepts of masculinity, superiority, and divinity that justified a stratified society contingent on notions of dominance and dominion (Keller, 2010; Taylor, 2016).

Analyses of what it means to be human flourished in this direction. Francis Bacon, René Descartes, John Locke, Immanuel Kant, and more contributors developed an ideology that positioned "human and non-human nature" in relation to the philosophies of white male elite thought (Keller, 2010; Taylor, 2016; Pulido, 2000). This was a process of intellectual industrialization purposed to mechanize humans, enabling them to separate their mind from their bodies and subsequently subject the natural environment, and those who fell under the category of "non-human," to exploitation. As this body of reasoning continued to develop, complementary theories and discussion of

an environmental ethic surfaced. John Muir and Henry David Thoreau are well-known and largely accepted as fathers of environmental ethics, defining the wilderness, and subsequent environmental romanticism.

Environmentalism and conservation are concepts directly influenced by the fathers of the field; white men interested in escaping the entrapment of cities created a prescriptive, masculine ideal around environmentalism. This environmentalism synonymized the act of exploring the natural environment with masculinity and the ground beneath them with femininity in the way they described and documented their experiences. Contributors to this masculine environmentalism established an anthropocentric hierarchy. However, this anthropocentrism was contingent on conceptualizations central to male experiences.

The term "virgin wilderness" is an example of the implications of white male elite thought; women were coupled with the physical environment. Loaded with cultural and religious context, applying the status of "virgin" indicated that wilderness areas were meant to be viewed as sacred and in need of boundaries and protection. In this discourse, men were positioned as both the guardian and thief of virgin wilderness. Not only did this discourse unnecessarily sexualize non-human aspects of the environment but it created an order of thought that is phallocentric (Serano, 2007). A consequence of this rationality purports virginity to be a feminine characteristic and invokes a standard for women to maintain for their own bodies. Virgin wilderness, synonymous with purity, mobilized masculine ideals defined by white men that governed women's bodies. Conservation, for example, altogether is premised on a classification system that orders human and non-

human factors on a subjective scale of 'objective' assumptions that determine worth and leads to spatial and social organization. Given that ideologies function to orient individuals in greater society, the conservation ideology has created roles and expectations to fulfill (i.e., environmentalists, state/federal workers, marginalized people groups, criminals, etc.). National parks are an example of a sociopolitical landscape, nuanced with masculine ideas of dominance and control. This masculinized ideology recreates uneven geographies and marginalization that transcend commonly visible issues associated with co-opted conservation agendas; conservation becomes a tool that propagates dispossession. Sanctioning and prescribing "wilderness" areas legitimizes a socially constructed use of space as unchangeable and unchallengeable, limiting the sight and agency of those displaced.

Further, Hultgren (2014) follows the legacy and proof of nature as a social construction influenced by American ideologies of "nationhood, gender, race, sexuality, and class." These scholars advocate thorough investigation of ideologies of nature throughout American history to understand how the environment became, and remains, the means to frame and justify exclusion. The repercussions of a racialized and gendered environmentalism are a reproduction of hierarchical structures harboring hegemonic priorities that are inherently oppressive. Echoing earlier claims, these interests are primarily in service of the livelihoods and longevity of white men. In the United States, whiteness is preserved through conservation and restoration initiatives and environmental agencies. This form of power and privilege is the result of a complex historical environmental ideology that informs these institutions. These foundational ideas around

environmentalism are still negotiated by women of color in the environmental workforce in the twenty-first century.

Whiteness

Hegemonic perspectives and interests define the natural environment and dictate the use of natural resources. Whiteness is the dominant narrative that has constructed the "wilderness" and it continues to influence modern perceptions and understandings of the natural environment (Taylor, 2016; Hultgren, 2014; Germic, 2011). A popular juxtaposition is the commonalities built around whiteness and purity (Omi & Winant, 2014; Taylor, 2002; Taylor, 2016; Hultgren, 2014; Germic, 2011). The word association alone speaks to the conceptualizations of the opposite of whiteness. The concept of whiteness introduces the social construction of race and associated implications. White privilege, "a hegemonic form of racism," prevails through overt and institutionalized racism and is linked to environmental racism (Pulido, 2000). Whiteness and white privilege labor to reduce racial inequities to identifiable acts premised on individual intentions. However, they operate on both conscious and unconscious dimensions; whiteness manifests spatially (i.e., communities that are largely POC are located near environmentally hazardous and generally undesirable landscapes) and is reproduced by policies that exonerate effects of whiteness (i.e., zoning policies purposed to create racial stratifications geographically) (Pulido, 2000; Taylor, 2016). Pulido says it best: "white privilege thrives in highly racialized societies that espouse racial equality, but in which whites will not tolerate either being inconvenienced in order to achieve racial equality, or denied the full benefits of their whiteness" (Pulido, 2000: 15). Given the paradoxical

function of whiteness in relation to racial equality, diversity is at odds with the discourse of whiteness.

Diversity is the antithesis of traditional orthodoxies around the embeddedness of whiteness in nationalism and nationalistic values. Given that purity and whiteness are pillars to environmentalism in the United States, diversity initiatives should function to undermine and restructure environmental institutions. Racial identity is a key component to understand how workplaces operate; workplaces may overlook issues rooted in racial identity, asserting organizational identity to take precedence in effort to avoid controversial discourses (Pulido, 2000; Chrobot-Mason and Thomas, 2002; Ahmed, 2012).

The repercussions of a racialized and gendered environmentalism are a reproduction of hierarchical structures harboring hegemonic priorities that are inherently oppressive. Echoing earlier claims throughout this paper, these interests are primarily in service of the livelihoods and longevity of white men. In the United States, whiteness is preserved through conservation and restoration initiatives and environmental agencies. This form of power and privilege is the result of a complex historical environmental ideology that informs these institutions. Furthermore, the domination of whiteness is rarely problematized; the problem is often articulated problematizes POC, making them the culprit of a diversity deficiency.

Defining Ideal Femininity

These ideas formed roles for people to fill. In regards to women, they were given characteristics that further defined their role as environmental subjects. In the United

States, white women were privileged to wonder about the wonder communicated by white male naturalists (Taylor, 2016). Although they were given this freedom to theorize masculinity, it contributed to placing women subordinate to men; it reified that women were simply insignificant in relation to their male counterparts. Women embodied knowledge but were often discouraged from intellectual pursuits, being seen as frail and unable to have the capacity to deeply investigate scientific matters (Taylor, 2016). Women's destiny was tethered to childcare and other domestic work; gendered labor was unaccounted for and rarely thought of as a type of commodified labor (Taylor, 2016; Federici, 2004; McKittrick, 2006; Glassman, 2006; Ahmed, 2012).

In tandem to the natural environment, women's bodies and humanity were minimized while the purpose of the natural environment was to serve as a resource. Both women and the natural environment were hyper feminized and mystified when convenient (Taylor, 2016). There are shifting baselines of characterizations and standards of femininity and masculinity superimposed onto both women and the natural environment. However, there are spaces where the line of gender division is blurred, an example of acceptable gender fluidity as a convenience (Taylor, 2016).

Immigration

Immigration in the U.S. is enmeshed within American ideologies affecting American reception and overall attitudes towards their emigration. There are many moving parts that tend to reifying the definition of what it means to be American, and consequently stewards an urgency to preserve that definition. American exceptionalism,

for example, is the ideology that the nation is autonomous and superior to other nations (Germic, 2001; Waymer & Heath, 2016). This characterizes immigrants, as well as other nations, as dependent and subordinate. Immigrants then bear this generalization and become burdened with assumptions of their capability to erode what is American. Gleaning from Massey's (1994) description of the politics of definition, views on immigrants and U.S. immigration policy has changed depending on context (i.e. time and place). There is an agreed understanding that immigrants are fundamentally not American and threaten ideological purity (Egan, 2011; Gemma, 2009; Hultgren, 2014; Huynh et al., 2015). However, to this day, there are events in American history that require the active presence of immigrants thus continuously subjecting this population to political definitions that shift the domestic population's attitude towards immigrants (Pozzetta, 1974).

As stated in the previous section, American environmentalism developed through means of exclusion. Empowered by American ideology, environmental discourses created roles for immigrants as scapegoats, mystified economic point sources of environmental degradation, and fetishized the natural environment that led to justify social divisions (Egan, 2011; Gemma, 2009; Hultgren, 2014; Huynh et al., 2015; Germic, 2001; Sturgeon, 2009; Federici, 2004; Robbins, 2012). Environmental discourses are affected by this ideology, using language that shifts the blame of environmental degradation onto immigrant and minority populations (Egan, 2011; Gemma, 2009; Hultgren, 2014; Huynh et al., 2015). Components of the American identity are key to understanding the genesis of ERAs in the United States. American exceptionalism

justified governmental actions to perpetuate ideologies of purity and progress at the expense of minority people groups (Chomsky, 2016). There is a cyclic relationship between American identity and the distinct environmentalism that emerged from that discourse; the mutualistic relationship between the two work to justify necessary permanence, thus identifying what threatens that permanence (Talburt, 2000; Germic, 2001; Moore et al., 2007; Sturgeon, 2009).

Huynh et al. (2015) propose that American identity has three components: liberal political principles, attachment to the nation, and nativism. Liberal political principles are related to idealistic values like social equality, autonomy, liberty and democracy. Attachment to the nation is an emotional connection to America and can be demonstrated through patriotism and defending the country when faced with criticisms. These two components are considered a soft boundary of national identity based on subjective beliefs and serve as a metric for how more or less American someone is. Nativism, however, is a hard boundary of national identity, prioritizing what is necessary to be treated as a true American (i.e., speaking English and being born in America). Nativism is intensified by fear of diminishing national security and competitive labor markets (Friedman, 2016). People who emigrate to the U.S. are faced with this criteria and expectation of acculturation. However, this same criteria to become more American is paradoxical. Despite any best effort, immigrants remain cemented in place as out of place (Massey, 1994; McKittrick, 2006; Ahmed, 2012). Anti-immigrant groups emerged from influential, elitist institutions valuing and defining immigrants that would leave a lasting impression. Friedman (2016) recounts arguments from the Immigration Restriction

League (IRL), created in 1894 by three Harvard graduates, referring to immigrants as "undesirables." Further, the IRL stated it was impossible for immigrants to "participate in self-government or adopt American values" and immigrants "injured national character" (Friedman, 2016). Today these notions are nuanced in environmental discourses and these three components of American identity have a multiplicity of functions that brace institutional structures. Complementary to my research focus, I problematize environmental institutions as they are established within this developmental history and logic.

Environmentalist rationalization warrants to justify stringent immigration policies and contribute to the growing disdain of immigrant populations (Egan, 2011; Gemma, 2009; Hultgren, 2014; Huynh et al., 2015; Germic, 2001; Sturgeon, 2009; Federici, 2004; Robbins, 2012). Positivist rationalities characterizing scientific concepts are extrapolated from environmental discourse and espoused within legal processes (Federici, 2004). The process of an immigrant becoming a citizen of the U.S. is called "naturalization." Using this language perpetuates the impression that immigrants are not natural to the receiving country (in this case, the U.S.), and this developed the need for immigrants to demonstrate their loyalty through acculturation (Huynh et al., 2015; Sturgeon, 2009; Francis, 2013). Further, the relationship between Americans that have been in the nation over many generations and immigrants is characterized by intense oppression like "enslavement, deportation and dispossession and denial of land" (Taylor, 2002). The 1800s and 1900s were marked with continued oppression manifesting as forms of segregation in the workplace, academia, and residential settings (Taylor, 2002). The

construction of Central Park is an example of how built structures were intentioned to create barriers reinforcing social order; Germic (2001) explains that Frederick Law Olmstead designed Central Park to obscure and repress class conflicts. This demonstrates how immigrants have been subjected acculturation without the possibility of eventually achieving "Americanness."

As previously stated, American identity has incorporated environmental stewardship as a defining characteristic; this is one of the ways immigrants can participate to "become" American. However, federal authorities on immigration policy, like executive director of the Center for Immigration Studies, Mark Krikorian, argues immigrants "…[undermine] modern quality-of-life goals we embrace – preservation of open spaces, environmental stewardship, and protection of our national parks" (Gemma, 2009). Immigrants have negatively influenced environmental stewardship, as the IRL to Krikorian purport, and their involvement only results in the erosion of the American identity and environment. Gemma (2009) communicates that immigrants are transnational, maintaining ties with their country of origin, exacerbating nationalist doubts in acculturation. As demonstrated by major political leaders today and some American-born citizens, they are skeptical of immigrants participating in environmental stewardship, assuming that it is only a means to prove national loyalty although they still maintain ties to their country of origin.

Drawing attention to the language used in these conversations around U.S. immigration, it has contributed to an environmentalist ideal/system/program that utilizes scientific rhetoric. The clear consequence is that the language of this system inherently

functions to justify exclusion, assign demonizing characterizations, and diminish the legitimacy of people who have relocated to the U.S. It also functions to create a role and space of blame that methodically places immigrants. Furthermore, environmentalist rhetoric identifies immigrants as being absent of Americanness which reifies American ideology itself (Massey, 1994; Francis, 2013). This is especially important when thinking about diversity initiatives and who it was intentioned to benefit. Paradoxically, the model minority emerges from nationalist anxieties, providing an idealized role for immigrants to embody. The model minority exists between dueling discourses as they are accepted for contributing to and adopting American ideals and values but are phenotypically and culturally not American (Omi & Winant, 2015). As naturalized citizens of the U.S. choose a career in the environmental field, they demonstrate the "absented presence" where their bodies are visible and invisibilized when necessary, or convenient as per diversity programs (Ray, 2013; McKittrick, 2006; Federici, 2004; Foucault, 1984).

Immigration in South Florida

"...when God selected a home for man, He put him 'in that zone which embraces Florida...Florida should be the other Eden--the center of the world's glory!'"
(Florida Dispatch, 1881)

South Florida is a well-known diversely populated region. However this was not the case in the beginning stages of Florida's development of statehood. A survey of the history of immigration in south Florida demonstrates how American ideology manifests. This historical background contextualizes my case study area and shows how American

ideologies continue to function to the detriment of immigrant populations in this context. Also, it is necessary to understand how the Florida environment and American environmentalism are reifying tools of social hierarchies.

Backtracking to the mid 1800s, although identified as fertile agricultural land, the everglade swamps were ultimately uninhabitable and therefore underpopulated (Pozzetta, 1974; Walker & Salt, 2006; Esing, 2014). The beginning stages of development were underway from 1845 but halted in 1865 due to the ratification of the 13th amendment (Pozzetta, 1974). Slave laborers in the state abandoned recently established plantations and fields, exploring their new found freedom and economic possibilities (Pozzetta, 1974; Henry, 2010). This posed a barrier to state economic development and stewarded negative sentiments towards recently freed black Floridians, refusing to allow them to own land and further denying them wage positions (Pozzetta, 1974; Henry, 2010).

Influential agriculturists, typically white males, contended "Florida's greatest need" to be immigration to replace the previous labor force to work the land and acquire "capital" (Pozzetta, 1974; Chambliss & Cummings, 2012). Immigration was promoted throughout the state from as early as 1865 as a solution to the development standstill (Pozzetta, 1974; Esing, 2014). Recruitment programs from the Bureau of Immigration were created to attract all immigrants to the state. However, recruitment materials (i.e., pamphlets, magazines, etc.) were translated mainly into European languages in attempt to target and appeal to "desirable" immigrant populations. Incoming immigrants were expected to fill the positions abandoned by former slaves and submit themselves to a "tenant" system resembling indentured servitude (Pozzetta, 1974; Henry, 2010). Many

immigrants did not find this proposal alluring, as they emigrated for many reasons, and escape from indentured servitude was one of them (Pozzetta, 1974).

Over the next few decades there was a marked increase in immigration populations from around the world. Although this was the desired outcome of recruitment programs, there was backlash from "native" Floridians around perceived arising social instability negatively impacting the domestic population. They expressed feelings of entrapment as they were growing unwilling to compromise their idealized agricultural industrialization to appease the expectations of immigrants threatening their economic and social status (Pozzetta, 1974). Contracted immigrant workers were subjected to harsh working conditions that forwent promises made by recruitment programs. Immigrants were expected to adapt to a slave-like life, only differing because of the existence of immigrant service offices that held employers accountable for their mistreatment (Pozzetta, 1974). Through immigrant services, Florida commissioners suggested to employers and landowners to sell land to their immigrant workers. Floridians reacted in growing hostility towards immigrants and their attitudes toward acquiring this specific workforce drastically changed.

Both immigrants and "freedmen" were viewed with contempt and became dually associated (Pozzetta, 1974). The agricultural commissioner's report summarizes how white Floridian's regarded them both:

> *"...the classes of these people who emigrate are of the lowest order; socially, they are without recognition. Politically, they make up all the isms that afflict all peoples and menace all governments..."*

As time progressed, Floridians remained in unrest, demanding laws be put in place to control and limit immigrant entrance into the state. There was an uproar from white residents as immigrants began to settle in similar areas to black residents and co-mingle with them. A sense of urgency emerged among white Floridians as the Florida state chemist defined "the true American type" was compromised by "any admixture of foreign blood" (Pozzetta, 1974). Over time, the social landscape developed to minimize immigrant mobilization and overall influence in order to protect and preserve the "true American" ideal. Pozzetta (1974) illustrates this transition best stating:

> *"By 1910, Floridians believed that if the state were to retain its racial integrity, to preserve its unique "American" character, and to protects its cherished institutions, it now had no room for those foreigners who had earlier received an open and enthusiastic welcome."*

The result of this ongoing anti-immigrant discourse was an increasingly difficult and prolonged legal process for immigrants to gain citizenship. Throughout, we can see how American ideology exerts those three functions mentioned in the previous section and its consequences. Looking at the modern state of immigrant affairs, these same patterns and sentiments are present. Emigrating to the U.S. is viewed as an opportunity to escape dictatorships, prolonged effects of natural disasters, a chance to gain economic autonomy, and be able to express their opinions and form their own identities (Pozzetta, 1974; Portes & Stepick, 1985; Pine, 1994; Padgett, 2015; Rosenblatt, 2017). However, via domestic attitudes and onset economic recessions, immigrants have first hand experience of how abruptly these American ideological promises fall short upon arrival. The waves of

Cuban immigration from the 1950s onwards to Miami demonstrate challenges of overcoming this deeply entrenched American ideology.

"These were unwelcome immigrants, wanted apparently by no one and often lacking even families to receive them."

(Portes & Stepick, 1985)

Recent changes in immigration policy in this region are related to the mode and circumstance of how immigrants arrived. South Florida immigration policies continue to develop in relation to exodic events from Cuba and Haiti in the wake of violent, confining political regimes. Refugees and asylum seekers from as early as 1959 boarded boats en route to Florida to escape the political regime emerging from coups and civil revolutions (Pozzetta, 1974; Portes & Stepick, 1985). It wasn't until 1980 when Fidel Castro organized a government funded exodus to expunge Cuba's "undesirables" that gained national attention, shifting the view of Cuban exiles as political refugees to invasive immigrants (Montgomery, 1981; Portes & Stepick, 1985; Duany, 1999). Images of overcrowded boats arriving on the shores of south Florida gained increasing salience in the news, triggering a social response from Florida's domestic population requiring the nation to address the bursts of immigrant populations.

The U.S. welcomed Cuban refugees during the first two exodic events; those refugees were regarded as victims of communism and became symbolically valuable to the U.S. as an expression of the freedoms available in the country (Duany, 1999). Cubans in this emigration were from the upper and middle class and were successful in

developing a unique economic enclave upon their settlement in the Miami area (Montgomery, 1981; Portes & Stepick, 1985; Pine, 1994; Duany, 1999). Overall, they contributed to the local economy through entrepreneurial endeavours extending beyond tourism (Duany, 1999). Cuban women during this time made a notable contribution to the economy by occupying a high percentage of jobs in the local workforce (Duany, 1999). Their participation forged the way for socio-economic success of Cuban-Americans and further characterized the Cuban population as hard-working and dedicated to developing the local economy (Duany, 1999).

The later two exodus events during the 1980s were received with less enthusiasm. As mentioned before, Castro forced thousands of Cubans he regarded as degenerates, "worms," and "scum" of Cuban society off the island (Pine, 1994; Duany, 1999; Padgett, 2015). Although less than 5% of the people sent over were "criminals, mental patients and other deviants," this is what became salient in the news (Portes & Stepick, 1985). This group of Cubans were generally from the most impoverished areas of Cuban society, experiencing the most lack during the communist regime; they were less educated and more phenotypically diverse (i.e., "black and mulatto") than the former refugees (Duany, 1999). This contributed to growing animosity and doubts that this group would not be able to adapt to the local culture and degrade Miami's socio-economic development (Portes & Stepick, 1985; Duany, 1999; Chambliss & Cummings, 2012).

Cuban status changed from political refugees in need of sanctuary to burdensome immigrants eroding the environment and economy of Miami (Martin et al., 1995; Duany, 1999; Chambliss & Cummings, 2012). Over 140,000 immigrants arrived during this time

and narratives around environmental degradation began to resurface (Martin et al., 1995). Tent cities in south Florida linked these refugees with potential environmental harms and forecasted effects of population overgrowth and threats to biodiversity (Martin et al., 1995). Narratives of carrying capacity versus immigrant fecundity staged the landscape as a metric to justify and insist on reducing emigration all together. Furthermore, social stratifications along racial and ethnic divisions manifest as Haitian immigrants tried to settle in the U.S. (Portes & Stepick, 1985; Shell-Weiss, 2005). Unlike Cuban refugees, Haitians were basically interrogated for their emigration (Montgomery, 1981; Pine, 1994). They had to "validate their fear of persecution" and prove they were not relocating solely for economic promise (Pine, 1994). Unfortunately, this demonstrates a racial, ethnic, and class based bias that determines a symbolic value of different immigrant groups.

In addition, I want to give an example of how addendums to immigration policy directly connected to the environmental landscape. The Cuban Adjustment Act of 1955, better known by local residents as the "wet foot, dry foot" policy, stated that anyone who reached dry land from the ocean would be admitted into the U.S. and are permitted to file for citizenship. However, if patrollers found anyone who could not get past Florida beach shorelines, they were "repatriated" back to Cuba (Pozzetta, 1974; Portes & Stepick, 1985). As time went on, this regional policy developed to prolong the citizenship process and eventually refuse admittance into the country by 2017 (Montgomery, 1981; Portes & Stepick, 1985; U.S. Office of the Press Secretary, 2017). The shoreline was used as a boundary to control the inflow of immigrants into the country; the ocean became a

political actor in immigration policy. This demonstrates how the environment is a malleable ideological tool, in this case, utilized to restrain immigrant entry. Ideologies have the capacity to project onto non-human objects and actors.

There is little information on Cuban or other ethnic minority women during immigration waves. Aside from their considerable presence in the Miami workforce, there are only demographics and statistical accounts of these women. Overlooking the narratives and general qualitative observations of immigrant women adapting to life in Miami during this time presents itself as an opening for domestic populations to assert ideological assumptions, thereby casting roles and expectations onto this particular group. Duany (1999) partially attributes Cuban socioeconomic success to "unusually high participation" of women in the labor force. From this, it can be inferred that these women became characterized as desirable laborers; partnered with the logic of the naturalization process, acculturation would include embracing this role and associated characteristics. This in itself resembles a mode of proletarianization thus manufacturing these women as proletariats in a new labor force.

The Ecological Other

In sum, the U.S. has always been conscious of race and this contributed to a system of logic that influences the positioning of women of color in the environmental sector (Omi & Winant, 2014; Taylor, 2018). American environmentalism created the "ecological other" thus instituting a system of thought that characterized who was "favored as good for nature" (Ray, 2013). As Ray (2013) postulates, "the body has long been a site of

environmental practices and a marker of environmental virtue," this instigates critical analysis of those who have embodied the "naturalization" process and currently work in ERAs. This creates the framework for analyzing the experiences of WOC in ERAs and their embodiment within a seemingly paradoxical ideology. As many of these women in RER are naturalized citizens, this becomes the basis for critical theoretical investigation.

Institutional Life and Diversity

As discussed in previous sections, the modern environmental movement is grafted onto capitalist origins and further develops through a neoliberal paradigm. As a permitting agency, RER replicates mechanisms of capitalist value characterized by its bureaucratic structure and transactional nature; county residents are required to request permits from RER if a project affects the environment in any way. Some project examples would be: a homeowner wants to build a patio in their backyard or remove a tree from their property, a cement-making company wants to purchase another processing machine, a hotel wants to extend their waterfront dock, etc. There are documents on RER's website that provide checklists of environmental impact surveys required for the permit to initially be processed and exemption lists. These legal documents are complicated and the primary individual requires the interpretation of RER employees themselves, relinquishing their agency through the process in this way. Upon document analysis of RER permit checklists and guidelines provided to county residents, there is peculiar use of theological *and* scientific language; these documents use language

entangled with puritan religious values consistent with Federici's analysis of early capitalism (Francis, 2013):

> *"Removal of any tree which has been destroyed or effectively destroyed by an Act of God…"*

Within many of their documents county residents are referred to as "customers." This neoliberal language demonstrates the way that RER is structured within a business model. The language used to communicate diversity goals of the U.S. government in EO 13583 accompanied by the Government-Wide Diversity and Inclusion Strategic Plan reflect how forms of difference have been oversimplified, reoriented, and mystified in order to overlook specific forms of inequality.

> *"By law, the Federal government's recruitment policies should "endeavor to achieve a work force from all segments of society," while avoiding discrimination for or against any employee or applicant on the basis of race, color, religion, sex (including pregnancy or gender identity), national origin, age, disability, sexual orientation or any other prohibited basis."*

This statement acknowledges that society is segmented; there are visible divisions and specific people reside within these divisions and diversity is located within these divisions. It also communicates that diversity is a commodity that is exchanged for human and social capital.

> *"This is more than a legal or moral imperative; it is a business imperative for public service."*

Using neoliberal rhetoric, “business” stands in place for “economic” imperative which strategizes deliberately recruiting those who embody diversity to appeal to the economic-neoliberal agenda of the U.S. government. In this way, typically “othered” bodies are valued and commodified for the benefit of economic continuity. In attempt to solve the problem of inequity across race and gender in the workplace, EAs have adopted diversity trainings that focus more on ideas of politeness, overlooking critical racial and gender differences, encouraging colorblindness and keeping silent in supposedly trivial situations. These institutionalized practices create a mechanism of indifference functioning to perpetuate racial differences while denying they exist.

> *“And they didn't call it diversity training. They call, they at that point in time what they are doing they talk more about like equal opportunity type of thing. Not try to deal with, they talk about being politically correct.”*
>
> *"I think, though, it just is kept quiet. You know instead of creating a big issue out of it.”*

Furthermore, Miami-Dade mayor, Carlos A. Giménez, decided to combine all county divisions into this “mega-department” in order to convey the message that he was “downsizing the government” to the benefit of the county residents. This is a strategy demonstrative of a neoliberal political rationale; although government action appears to be limited, being physically condensed and relocated into a single building, county residents are dependent on the local government that limit their agency. I extend the narrative of the commons inherent in capitalist narratives onto RER. Following Federici’s (2004) description of the transfiguring ability of enclosures, the commons is Miami-Dade

county and RER acts as an environmental authority. RER is able to restrict residents' agency and commodify environmental resources through their permitting processes, conservation programs, and regulatory actions. Furthermore, RER reaffirms its own necessity to the county through the literature it produces with a baseline understanding that programs and actions from the agency are for the greater good while also connecting economic benefits of their intervention:

> *"Department Mission: To Enable Sustainable Economic Growth Through Smart Regulatory, Planning, and Resiliency Strategies and Business Expansion Initiatives"*

RER's civic duty to the county models modes of capitalist production and further demonstrates the lingering logic of neoliberalism. Neoliberal rhetoric extracts from early capitalist ideology, functioning to reproduce a modern primitive accumulation. Following analyses from other scholars, primitive accumulation is an ongoing process (Federici, 2004; McKittrick, 2006; Glassman, 2006). Applying this theoretical framework to RER, WOC's bodies undergo a social commodification accompanying what I propose is a diversity economy. This diversity economy is a liminal concept in and of itself. It is constantly in a state of transition and also functions to commodify bodies.

Furthermore, it is located in an ongoing discourse informed by the growing consciousness of minority populations that problematize American ideology. U.S. government divisions for diversity are in constant fluctuation as underrepresented and peripheral groups oppose and challenge national policies for their inclusion. However,

this push for equity has only resulted in social repositioning within the same system of governance, constrained by existing organizational boundaries. Although the outcome appears to increase individual agency of POC, diversity rhetoric produces only the opportunity to identify with a role that perpetuates a dominant narrative contrary to inclusion. This dominant narrative creates criteria determining who is and is not diverse. Those who embody this prescription of diversity are archetypes for the use of justifying neoliberal elitist agendas, in this case a conservationist neoliberal agenda.

Affirmative Action, Equal Opportunity, and Diversity

In 1963, the mayor of Miami-Dade streamlined affirmative action and equal employment opportunity and issued Administrative Order 7-6 requiring public county agencies to change their hiring policies to recruit POC. Although this was to directly benefit POC, the support to this structural change did not yet exist. One of the greater setbacks for POC entering the environmental workplace was facing aggression from white co-workers and managers. Diversity trainings became necessary for the basic function of preparing current employees for incoming and future POC employees. Furthermore, women applying for jobs in this department faced barriers based in gendered assumptions of their reliability depending on if they had children. An interviewee who has worked for the county since the early 1960s recalls issues around race and gender in the midst of this transition:

> *"So then there would be directives. You got to hire Black for this position. You got hire a Hispanic for this position. Never white [laughs]. But, in order to keep different factions happy you know they had to do that and most, everybody kind of*

> *got along but every once in a while it would pop up about "well you only hire Hispanics. Well, you only hire Blacks." I always watch from the outside."*
>
> *"I found the reason I wasn't hired was that I had three children and it was assumed that I would be out all the time because of having children. [...] The division chief or the supervisor that was hiring them, I think felt women with children, you know, maybe they had problems in the past of mothers calling out all the time because their kids are sick or something, but he didn't hire me. [...] That was like one of the things that made me really angry. How do you assume that just because I have children, I'm going to be less reliable, you know?"*

The department has since changed policies around sick days and allow their employees to negotiate alternative work times to accommodate mothers in the workplace. RER has altered their hiring process entirely to ensure the best candidate for a position is chosen based on a written and oral performance of hypothetical work scenarios. At the very least, the hiring panel includes a human resources representative and two division managers. Interviewees highlighted the institutional goals around diversity when they recalled the processes by which they were hired, including the diverse constitution of the hiring panels and the interview questions requiring a diverse perspective. They viewed this as a practical application and expression of the value of diversity in the workplace. One interviewee explains how the simple presence a human resources representative, focused on diversity, in the hiring panel functions to validate the whole process. The human resources representative demonstrates how certain characteristics or ideals can be embodied simply by existing and being positioned within this particular process in the agency. Here are a few descriptions of the interview process for technical positions in the water management department:

> *"Two were representatives of the personnel and three engineers interviewed me. And they prepare the questions in advance. So there are some questions about*

> *writing and some others more technical that you do to solve. And they give you a problem to solve, a simple problem to solve, a situation. So they have a structured interview so that makes you feel comfortable because you know everybody is given the same shot."*
>
> *"It will be, in my opinion, it's very good to have somebody from HR because they can validate that the process is being done correctly. You have to have the people in the panel score the answers and it's an average. So they go by whatever the candidates answer and the person that gets the highest punctuation they go with."*

Diversity is nuanced in the hiring process; diversity is valued through the constitution of the panel, standardization of the process, and interview questions. However it is also obscured through the seeming objectivity of the process which renders difference invisible. Furthermore, although there have been deliberate changes meant to level the playing field for job applicants, the process is contingent on honesty and dedication to fairness of the hiring panel. Diversity, in this circumstance, becomes an aspect of human resources. It becomes bureaucratized, a matter of risk management, rather than a broader imperative to transform the power dynamics by which whiteness, masculinity and other hegemonic American identities are centered.

The meaning, purpose, and function of diversity is lost in a discussion of human resources considerations relegated and limited to specific work activities or tasks. As some interviewees express, these fair hiring practices and standards remain superficial and are sometimes even ignored:

> *"[W]e had interviews one time and the woman that was the H.R. person from up there she was here for interviews to make sure we did it all on the up and up and you know you score based one to five or something. That time we had the interviews, she took all our scores. She wouldn't add them up in front of us. She wouldn't show us her scores. So it was kind of like the feeling that she wanted to go home, add them all up and then adjust her numbers to fit what- and you know*

> *that that was not right. But we didn't make a fuss and you know we'd let it go. I can't even remember who got hired at the time. But I remember we all, all the rest of us that were on the panel after the fact and said you know that's not right."*

Written into the agency's own standard operating procedures are policies and documents outlining the importance of a "fair" hiring process. Another interviewee describes her hiring panel for an administrative position that provides more insight to where diversity at the forefront is necessary:

> *"So it was a panel. And each one on the panel and they selected- I don't know how they chose who was going to be on the panel but it was people I would be dealing with. You know, when I, when they'd have panels at water and sewer we'd always have to have a Black, a Hispanic, a man, a woman. You know. Any combination of the above. It had to be a panel and it had to be diverse."*

However, these documents and policies around diverse hiring panels become an end in themselves. As Ahmed (2012) has observed in her work on the institutional life of policy documents, by focusing on what the documents do versus what they say we find that the document exists for itself. In this case, Administrative Order 7-6 manufactures trust communicated through the language of diversity but overall fails to genuinely transform underlying power relations; the policy becomes a "substitute for action" (Ahmed, 2012).

Diversity is woven through many of RER's organizational processes but it lacks depth and substance. The only instance diversity is a substantial stand-alone topic at RER is within a "valuing cultural diversity" training manual. RER becomes a site of encounter that uses diversity to facilitate contact with difference in proximity to borders of inequality. Given their achievement of a minority majority employee population, 78.47% POC, RER becomes exemplary. However, the interviews communicate diversity is

achieved through indifference, complacency, and a direct focus on workplace efficiency. This approach to achieving diversity is merely cosmetic, preserving systems of oppression.

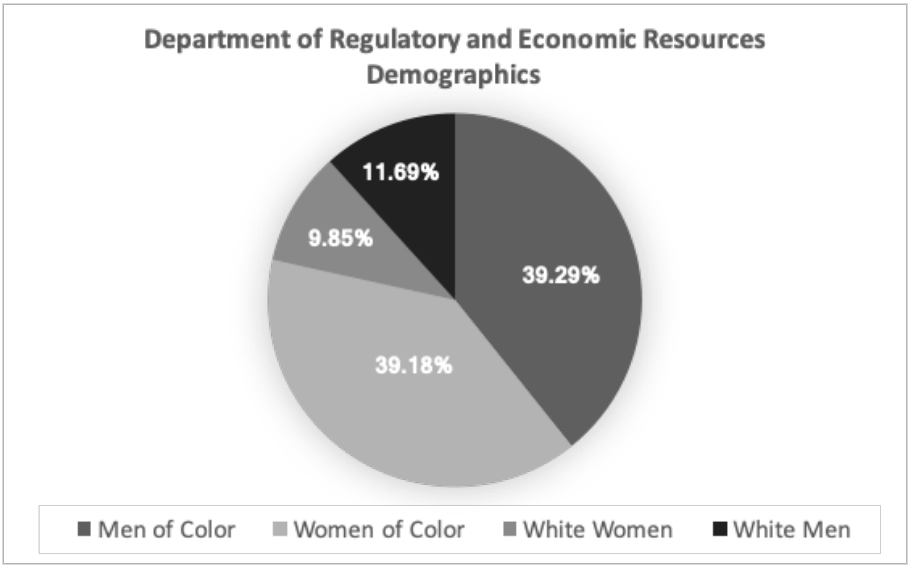


Figure 1 RER Demographics

Interviewees illustrate RER has an expectation of how much work must be done, a specific depiction of what work looks like, and communicate they are surveilling work efforts:

> *"And I get the job done. I mean it might not be. I might not look like I'm working, because I was told that. You know you look like you just, you're not like that guy who's always walking around the office and he just gets stuff done. Work is getting done. I just didn't show it."*

> *"[…] they said OK I was doing excellent customer service […] Sometimes I go for lunch at 3:00. My boss noticed it. So I got my, in two years, I got a promotion. He said, 'that's why. How you cared about the customers and everything, I am*

> *extremely pleased with that. It shows dedication.' And I was like, Okay somebody was watching." [edited]*

This exemplifies Cartesian dualism and mechanization of the body, integral in primitive accumulation instrumental to capitalist longevity. We can think of diversity as a market incentive and 'othered' bodies as embodied subsidies. In this way, they are made into valued subjects and therefore commodified. This alludes to a professional fundamentalism; individuals adopt a working identity provided by RER. It is necessary to epitomize rationalization, what is rational, for maximum efficiency in any workplace setting. This rationality can be described as a methodological, positivist approach to navigating the workplace that values non-emotional responses. Following this rationality, diversity training at RER aims to identify emotional responses to conflict which inextricably links negative emotions to diversity issues.

Another aspect of RER's diversity trainings is how often it is assigned to employees. According to my participants, RER diversity trainings used to be biannual and involve the workforce of entire divisions, if not the entire department. The trainings have been transferred to an online platform and made into an employee requirement; employees are required to take the trainings when assigned by RER's human resources department. As time progressed, the training requirements became less frequent. If an employee was interested in taking this training, they would have to file a request to take general diversity trainings with the county rather than with the agency. A few interviewees who have worked with RER for over 20 years describe how this training requirement developed over time:

> *"...well the first time I went [to a diversity training], that was like a classroom kind of setting. Now it's all online."*
>
> *"To make sure that you watched the video [laughs] you get quizzed all along the way and everything. Yeah. And every county employee has to take it and it may not be every year but you know every once in a while you have to take it over like a refresher course."*
>
> *"Diversity, I go to special training because I want to be up to date. So yes I've taken courses. The human resources department in the county, they offer those. And anybody can ask their supervisor to attend those trainings. [...] They also offer online training. You can take those are your pace [...]"*

I revisit how often trainings are assigned because it demonstrates how the agency, or at least RER's human resources division, assesses its own success. The assumption that diversity has been achieved settles in as the training requirements recede. Diversity trainings at RER are certainly regressing in frequency, however its content remains the same. Furthermore, diversity trainings used to be an entire workshop on its own and, as one interviewee describes, it is presented as part of a leadership training:

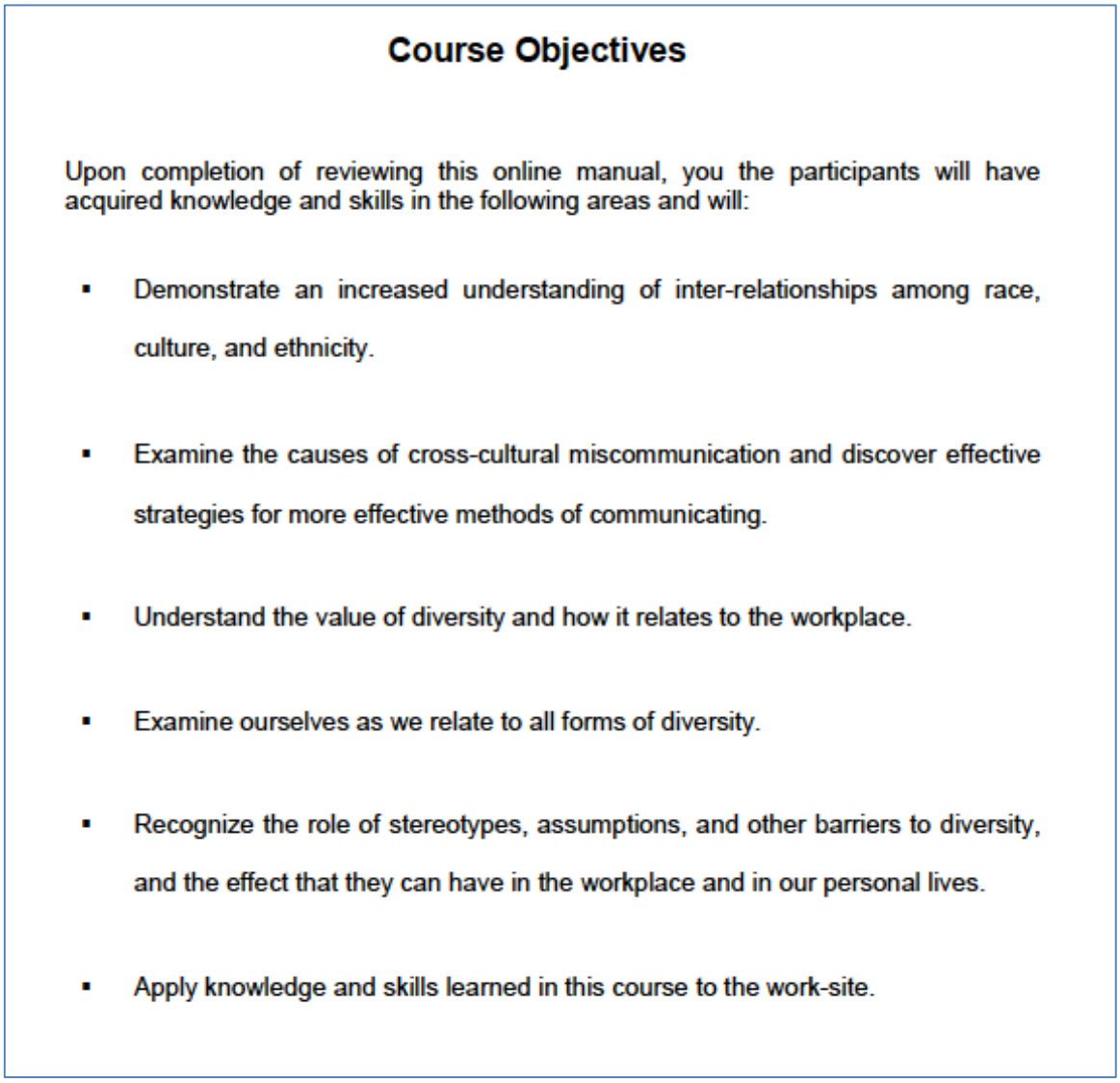
> *"The county gives diversity training. [...] We had lots of basic training they give. Especially leadership training and they give diversity training as part of it. Now they give diversity training as an online training for all the employees."*

Presenting diversity and leadership together implies diversity is a leadership skill. Upon initial inspection, this seems positive. However, this had to effect of centered diversity as an issue for dominant groups to gain competency with in order to reduce legal risk, avoid political confrontation and subsume diversity within a larger environmental goal still premised on white male hegemony. Diversity here is being co-opted by a structure which has not been fundamentally transformed by its inclusion. The diversity discourse at RER began as a discourse around understanding racial, ethnic, and gender differences,

undergoing several transformations. As the topic of diversity is handed off to human resources and leadership development, it has changed from recognizing difference to managing difference. Interestingly, the diversity training manual itself has not changed, however it is apparent meaning to WOC employees has changed as it has been absorbed into the agencies dominant discourses.

A Diversity Training

The name of the diversity training program provided at RER is "Valuing Cultural Diversity." It was produced by the county human resources department and no publishing date is found throughout the document, however it has been altered to reflect its transition to an online platform. The training begins with an outline of the course objectives:



Course Objectives

Upon completion of reviewing this online manual, you the participants will have acquired knowledge and skills in the following areas and will:

- Demonstrate an increased understanding of inter-relationships among race, culture, and ethnicity.
- Examine the causes of cross-cultural miscommunication and discover effective strategies for more effective methods of communicating.
- Understand the value of diversity and how it relates to the workplace.
- Examine ourselves as we relate to all forms of diversity.
- Recognize the role of stereotypes, assumptions, and other barriers to diversity, and the effect that they can have in the workplace and in our personal lives.
- Apply knowledge and skills learned in this course to the work-site.

Figure 2 Valuing Cultural Diversity Course Objectives

As discussed previously, diversity trainings emerged from the need to acclimate current employees and employers to an increasingly racially and ethnically diverse workforce. Based on the stated course objectives this is an ongoing work, however the rest of the materials do not match the objectives and my interviewees reflected on this incongruence. The expectations of an "increased understanding" is reliant on meeting

difference with indifference. There are different mechanisms of indifference that result from this diversity training. The diversity training is successful if the goal was to instruct employees with how to avoid noticing difference altogether. Doing diversity is done by doing nothing with the expectancy of miscommunication. These objectives also communicate diversity has economic value therefore justifying the need for diversity altogether; diversity *is* valuable and *valued*. One of the more troubling objectives is "...we related to all forms of diversity." Racial, ethnic, and gendered differences are incomparable; each is positioned in proximity to whiteness and maleness. In this case, dominant American racial narrative surface in this diversity manual by associating heterogeneity with the inherent risk of miscommunication. This section is followed by a section entitled "Diversity Teasers" with a picture of an elephant and the question: "HOW MANY LEGS DO YOU SEE?" (See Figure 2). Using an optical illusion implies the trouble with diversity is that it is like that of an illusion. It is intangible, difficult to define, and is a projection of individual perceptions onto an object. From the start, the implication is that diversity is difficult and illusive; diversity becomes difficult and illusive by defining it as such using an optical illusion (Ahmed, 2012). Additionally, this

portrays diversity as something that we learn to tolerate rather than something we are transformed by or which we must engage in a robust way.

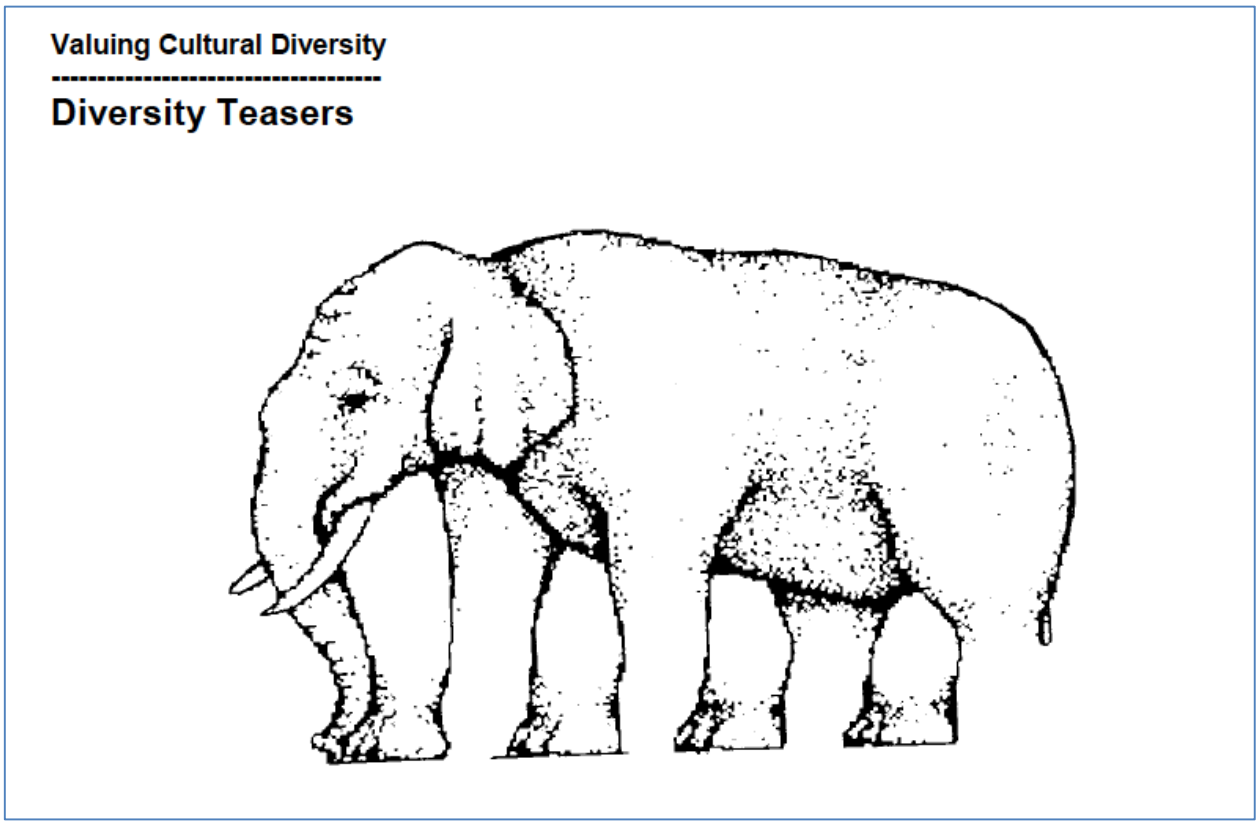


Figure 3 INCREDIBLE OPTICAL ILLUSIONS by Nigel Rogers, London, Quarto Publishing, 1998

The answer provided to the proposed questions is: “Trick question. Some people see 4 legs, some people see 5 legs, all the way up to eight legs.” The implication here is that of the former, this is an individual projection of perception and an attempt to define the object subject to that projection is a trap, a trick question. However, the manual goes on to describe perceptions as culturally constructed and are restrictive in this way;

assumptions arise from an individual's cultural positioning. The resolution to this optical illusion or the lesson from this activity is:

> *"A good starting point for valuing diversity is to view **everyone** as different from us, and as people about whom we can't make assumptions. Appearances are deceptive; people who appear to be very similar to us are often different, and those who appear to be very different can turn out to be quite similar."*

Ultimately, the narrative presented in this training around diversity is too simplistic. It is a post-racial narrative of racial tolerance which fails to disrupt white supremacist, capitalism patriarchy, to use bell hooks' turn of phrase.

Positioning & Embodying Diversity

McMahon (2004) echoes this same rationale, placing EAs as a space for identity negotiation. EAs facilitate a space where identity is negotiated by their employees. Different sectors or divisions become a space for subcultures. The success of the organization/agency depends on a baseline understanding across subcultures—agreeing with an organizational mission. Horizontal institutional structures prove to be counterintuitive, deepening (class) rifts of difference. Furthermore, literature around self-perception suggest individuals draw on external discourses to confirm identities (Ahmed, 2012; Carollo & Guerci, 2018; Chrobot-Mason et al., 2016). The external discourse women of color must navigate is one of environmentalism while embodying diversity. In RER, some interviewees describe moments where they faced discrimination and punishment for cultural diversity and hardships they find being a woman in a historically male dominated field.

> *"Someone brought it up to the county, to our supervisor, that she's getting bother with our language. Yes. And when I bring it up to the HR, HR punishing me that I'm not supposed to talk in my language. And they told me […] people here, they don't keep their mouth open while they're eating something. Maybe I do. And people Iranian people do in my country because they don't have [American] culture. And I think that's really the rude and this is like discrimination, totally discrimination. They're not allowed to say that to me. I'm still working for them because I need my job."*

> *"And being a woman, is a challenge. Sometimes I feel like, I am from another country and I'm a woman, it's a double whammy, it's a big handicap. And I am in discipline in engineering, a male dominated profession. So, you have to prove every day that you are good, extremely good. When a person, who is a supervisor and it's a man and he says something strong, yeah like that, they would say oh, he's a strong person. If it's a woman that is saying that, they would call me a bitch. That's what it is. So you have to be very polite. Extremely polite and being a supervisor is hard for a woman than a man."*

Women at RER have visiblized social barriers in EAs. POC have to navigate around these barriers because their livelihoods depend on their negotiation. They compromise their traditions and culture, adopting a modified version of American ideals embedded in the environmentalism EAs facilitate. They are faced with up keeping ideals and this further reproduces the dominant narrative that exclude them.

> *"Now they're judging me based on my nationality. They judging me based on, over like the location I was born. I have never judged based on those things when I was working for my company-- my country. It was totally different […] You never think about those issues. You just go and start working and whatever you are supposed to work. But here, you have to deal with two different things: the project and all those people that they want to tell you something that is kind of related to where you are from."*

> *"Women are, like, we have no choice. You know we had to leave the house and go out and help. Yeah, yeah, we're...we're a cool breed."*

However, many of the interviews I did at RER shows the agency to be in a transition to becoming an outlier. This is contingent on the personal dynamics between employees who facilitate a space that receives and embraces differences of race, ethnicity, and gender.

> *"But, they accepted me and they wanted me to be part of that. So. I think I really like DERM, and the way they accepting other people coming and working for them."*

> *"So they spent the first day, […] the project manager […] went to each cubicle and they introduce us and give us brief information about the person working in that cube and what projects they usually work on. So, I think it was a good introduction to bring people together and make us being accepted in that, like, environment."*

Making diversity criteria for institutions to uphold has the risk of facilitating roles (false consciousness) for POC and women to fill as placeholders for nationwide requirements. Although there are positions deliberately created, the space does not cater to POC and women. Because they become a requirement, institutions may oversimplify complex necessities that deliberately benefits POC and women. An interviewee describes how RER meets diversity standards:

> *"They would even bring in people from other departments if they needed to to get the quota, you know, the diversity that they needed."*

This shows how employees are aware that the government has made diversity necessary and their experience demonstrates how it's not necessarily to benefit POC, women, or WOC but to meet a "quota." Although there is no actual quota RER has to meet, the

interviewee understands the agency through a business model and must move employees around to appear diversified as a market benefit. It exemplifies women's consciousness of the agency's motives behind their professional (dis)placement within the office. Employee relocation/(dis)placement in attempt to meet this diversity quota risks productivity and efficiency altogether. Fractures widen as communication and project processes within operational divisions (i.e., air quality, wastewater management, accounting, etc.) are stymied by employee movement. Moving employees around to achieve well-rounded diversity appears to be a strategy of RER. Furthermore, these diversity initiatives prove to be a cosmetic, symptomatic solution to greater institutional problems as WOC are brought into the agency but their success and vertical movement is undermined by internalized biases (Taylor, 2014). In the previous statement, there is a clear acknowledgement of gendered roles within the agency that is not problematized in their diversity training. Employees internalize these biases and rationalize their positions within the agency.

Women of color are burdened with the task of facilitating identities that negate their racial and gender difference. They are negotiating tensions of discourses in multiple histories that are read on their bodies and they are negotiating them in different ways. The online diversity course teaches difference is a site of contestation and should be avoided. However, if difference is unavoidable it can be communicated in a more palatable way. As mentioned previously, some women were overlooked for having children. Today, RER has developed to accommodate mothers in their agency. Taking a closer look at motherhood, a typically feminized gender role, demonstrates how WOC are

simultaneously put into roles that negotiate motherhood to (de)emphasize their other forms of embodied difference. A few of my interviewees talked about the struggles of balancing their personal lives with their professional lives and how their children motivated their work ethic entirely.

> *"But then I realized that it's an example that you're setting for your family. When they see you going for the things that you're, you know, that you're trying to accomplish. If you- if you stop and you lay back what kind of example are you giving? [...]They'll see me as a role model that they will follow. I hope."*

Sometimes their children that gave them courage to speak up to their managers to barter their work responsibilities:

> *"I am so worried about my son [...] there was no aftercare in the school and there is no daycare nearby I can leave him. [...] I said, "No, I'm going to resign my job and I want to be at home when my son comes." And my boss said, "I believe in your skills and you will find a way to figure it out. Until then, if you have to leave at 3:00, 3:30, go ahead. Take your time until you find a place for your kid to do that all you go and feel comfortable or whatever it is. So don't be in a rush to resign your job." So that's what the accommodation is."*

However, other interviewees chose to quench their mother identity in order to match the work capabilities of their male counterparts or obtain certifications for promotions.

> *"I remember once where my son, I came back from the library and he was already in bed and I go to him to kiss him goodnight and he goes "Mommy are you going to live with us again?" So that broke my heart. Yeah but you know it's part of the sacrifice that you have to do if you want to be here and work at the same level that other people do when they have the same careers that you have. So it was hard but didn't kill me."*

Mothers at RER are phenomenal and RER has, to an extent, recognized the burdens associated with this identity and the roles mothers have in their children's' lives. However, these responses also invoke an idealized conception of what a working woman should tolerate and allow to be a burden. In the two previous quotes, the solutions to

taking care of their children was to either resign or sacrifice family time to focus on work. The latter mirrors that of Cartesian dualism necessary to carry on with her career. In this way she overlooks her own difference with others in the agency. Through this homogenization, she rationalizes "sacrificing" time with her children is necessary to keep up with coworkers. Another interview builds on this as she describes what she perceives to be a response to difference:

> *"You've got to be flexible. That's what happens in the department. Diversity is a good thing, it gives a lot of education on accepting other people for what they are. I mean, see through the difference to see the human behind, you know."*

Racial and gender difference is co-opted into this diversity discourse and in this way homogenized. This aligns with the online diversity training manual; it defines diversity as "an extremely broad term that people use to refer to all sorts of differences. Workforce diversity ranges from difference that can be concealed, such as a particular lifestyle, to differences that can't be as easily concealed such as gender or color." The implication here is all diversity is concealable, however some forms of difference are easier to conceal than others. The interviews validate diversity functions conceals, or obscures, difference.

Gender and race, or as RER's diversity training manual uses "color," is not easily concealable. The interviews that made claims of experiencing racial or gender discrimination were done outside of the RER office. However, interviews in the office either reported they have never experienced such discrimination or they have heard stories from other women in the office that have experienced discrimination. There was one particular interview demonstrating how difficult it becomes for WOC to navigate the

environmental workplace, characterizing the extent to which RER's diversity training frames the subsequent negotiation:

> *"And being a woman, is a challenge. Sometimes I feel like, I am from another country and I'm a woman, it's double whammies. It's a big handicap. And I am in discipline in engineering, a male dominated profession. You have to prove every day that you are good, extremely good. When a person, who is a supervisor and it's a man and he says something strong, yeah like that, they would say oh, he's a strong person. If it's a woman that is saying that, they would call me a bitch. That's what it is. So you have to be very polite. Extremely polite and being a supervisor is hard for a woman than a man."*

She makes the burden of being a WOC plain. There is no benefit being a woman, a person of color, or a former immigrant in an institution that is organized to sustain whiteness and maleness. This hegemonic structure entangled with American ideology, positions WOC in proximity to white male-centered conservationist ideals. The culminating point of this analysis is how WOC in RER negotiate their identity. Identity negotiation via semipermeability becomes a necessary (sub)liminal skill of WOC, given the presence of dueling discourses bracing ERAs altogether. WOC have tools that enable their ability to be an absent-presence in the agency and rationalize the necessity of these abilities. A possibility of a professional borderlands emerges as organizations place race relations in the workplace at the forefront of diversity initiatives. However, individuals in the workplace must also be willing to confront uncomfortably, as either as an oppressor or the oppressed, to form an alliance within difference. By flipping the dominant narrative on its head, the predominance of whiteness rather than the lack of diversity, WOC would give themselves permission to challenge their ERAs to do better.

DISCUSSION

In sum, RER's diversity discourse does not facilitate authentic diversity, but rather catechize women of color to sustain and maintain institutionalized forms of oppression. Environmental issues are easy to relate to because every human lives and are bound within the earth. The discourse built a platform for a diverse group of people to unite and perpetuate a message of the necessity of homogeneity using terms like unity to reflect holistic interactions. It becomes a common ground for a diverse group of people with diverse interests to come together and form a commonality. This is what makes ERAs unique; there are employees who embody different interests, have differing educational backgrounds, and work in different divisions but are encouraged to overlook race and gender issues to face environmental issues. From this perspective, environmental issues are capable of blurring the lines of distinction of class, race, gender, and sexuality thus reflecting notions of diversity determinism. Furthermore, ERAs are unique in the use and appropriation of environmental language. Most employees enter the workforce with a natural science degree, loaded with taxonomic, Latin names and biological concepts. It enables them to deflect social issues or reduce them to a science as a way of rationalizing the irrationality of facing discrimination and clear hierarchal biases in the workplace or simply to overt potential conflict. This strategic use of language echoes biological determinism and loans to consolidate diversity determinism.

Environmental language develops secondary functions as an audio jammer in that it obscures ongoing discourses on social blockades in the field (Ahmed, 2012). Reducing

social issues to a science risks oversimplifying and conglomerating individual experiences, rendering any movement to a standstill in the workplace. Women in the environmental workforce are encouraged to overlook their own differences and assimilate to organizational culture—an illusion of diversity is fulfilled. In this setting, a new body is created and women take on a new shape. Women negotiate within themselves and without themselves to adhere to quotas prescribed at their job. As one employee expressed, "we're all different when you're at a job." There is a level of (un)consciousness that is required to navigate the environmental workplace. Now that the workforce has diversified and includes more women, and WOC, it could be that the content of the diversity trainings has changed because diversity is embodied and furthermore fulfilled particularly at RER. Prioritizing diversity is contingent on how many women and WOC file grievances with human resources (HR) or request diversity training for themselves. The logic was given along with initial diversity trainings: everyone is a human and you must be polite and accept them. Political correctness materializes as a form of self-governance; all employees are different and must be accommodated by each other's acceptance. Employees are guided to avoid acknowledging difference. If no one sees it, it does not exist.

Diversity trainings lends oversight as a rationalization tool for long-term employees; the problem is located within the individual employee rather than social inequities barring career advancement, consequently leading to their resignation. Furthermore, mentorship at RER was described as an informal, self-driven process. Structured mentorship often increases retention of minority employees (Taylor, 2014;

Dobbin & Kalev, 2013). If mentorship were formalized, the chances of employee retention would improve and assure change is underway to facilitate the success of POC in the agency (Taylor, 2014). Diversity has many roles and is embodied in individuals; it can be a method of protecting existing barriers of including and facilitating a space and culture for POC and women can comfortably navigate (Ahmed, 2012). It is a nuanced concept and practice, functioning to appeal to and satisfy a multiplicity of actors. Furthermore, the domination of whiteness is rarely problematized; the problem that is often articulated problematizes POC, making them the culprit of a diversity deficiency. Ahmed explains these symptoms as part of the "phenomenology of whiteness."

In sum, WOC who work at RER are un/sub/consciously navigating the environmental workplace. Negotiations are made in proximity to the dominant culture embodied in the office building. In regards to diversity, there is a conceptual bridge between social diversity and biodiversity. As previously stated, environmental language inappropriately fuses environmental concepts with social issues and has the capacity to reduce issues to a science. Reducing women to "a cool breed" enables objectification and subjection to identities created by the ERA—to embody diversity, meet a quota, and report diversity improvement to HR. However, a new type of environmental employee is underway and they challenge forms of stratification with higher expectations of social responsibility from themselves and the workplace.

CONCLUSION: DECOUPLING, UNLEARNING, LEARNING, RESTRUCTURING

Thinking about the potential of diversity discourse as a disruptive discourse. Language determines potency of disruption. It is language that builds and constructs spaces; language becomes a system or a program that determines action or inaction based on the ideology. In this case, the environmental workplace is a manifestation of a socially constructed ideal; informed by the environmentalist ideological program, which affects WOC employees in a tangible way. They unintentionally reproduce divisiveness characterized by the environmentalism described in the literature review. The figures of speech and purposeful choice of words (i.e., "we're a cool breed") invoke biological determinism, inextricably linked to racial essentialism, demonstrating the pervasive abilities of the discourse to be consumed and embodied.

Feminist theory, sites of negotiation, and borderlands theory meet in the developing discourse of diversity. Diversity initiatives must be met with realistic standards rather than a rigid prescription of identifiable scenarios of discriminations. Diversity officers should be given the financial resources to invest in research and collaboration from WOC and POC to update current curriculum. Facing whiteness, purposefully engaging with non-POC, and using language that orients POC at the center of diversity trainings would bring idiosyncratic behaviors to the forefront, encouraging people to face their privilege and racial identities. A new environmental workforce could

emerge that embody equity, mandated to resist oppressive institutional structures. However, this is contingent on a co-mingling between individuals and the organization agreeing to form a point of reference that instigates cultural change in the ERA.

There are many social groups attempting to counter the dominant narrative by bringing inequity to the forefront of environmental discourses. A new narrative that centralizes the experiences of WOC would benefit EAs at large. A necessary change to the institutional structure informing EAs would be to reimagine environmentalism. The counter-narrative should bring perceptions of WOC that helped to shape and inform the environmental field and natural sciences. In the EAs themselves, Taylor (2014) suggests implementing mentorship as a way to assist the success of POC and women in the environmental workforce. Furthermore, diversity trainings should also shift to encourage POC to problematize nuanced forms of discrimination they alone experience rather than being made the problem themselves. As the population in the United States shift to a minority majority, structural changes that position the success of historically oppressed groups should be at the forefront of restructuring because environmental longevity will be facilitated by them.

LIMITATIONS

Although I was able to explore diversity through the narratives of my interviewees in RER using my theoretical framework, there were several limitations to my study. The first limitation is related to my number of interviews; although many of my interviewees reached a point of convergence in conversation, a greater amount of interviews would have provided enough information to do some quantitative analysis. Also, the interview location could have had an effect on interviewee responses. Many of the interviews were done in RER at the convenience of the interviewees. However, interviews done elsewhere were notably different and the interviewees appeared to be more open to discuss their experiences in the workplace. Again, a greater number of interviews with varied locations would have provided more information to create a sense of generalizability between interviewees and diversity discourses.

A second limitation is the amount of reflection I did after each interview. On days I interviewed 2 to 3 people, the duration of each interview did not allow much time for recollection. Although I took detailed notes throughout the interviews, journaling after each interview day would have contributed to my overall interpretive analytical process. Planning gaps between interviews would have allowed time to immediately process their responses, beginning a pre-analysis stage. Furthermore, my questions developed through the interview process; with each interview I was able to strategically ask deliberate questions about their perceptions on workplace diversity. Although this is an iterative

process, evaluating the effectiveness of the interview questions several times prior to the actual interviews would have led to more precise and applicable responses.

RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

Given that my thesis is based in a theoretically driven discussion, there are many recommendations for future research. A visual analysis of how diversity is presented in the materials found at RER would be a fruitful entry point of analysis. RER has a massive repertoire of current and past articles mentioning its own diversity as well as how county diversity is valuable. There is still much room to discuss particular spaces in the agency that facilitate or invoke certain identities. Office spaces are rarely researched under any circumstances. This is a promising avenue to contribute in-depth work. Limitations to the study could be minimized or eliminated if taken from a front-loaded approach beginning with the research design; plan to facilitate interviewee comfortability, time to process this information, and more deliberate interview questions.

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APPENDIX

Informed Consent Form

Social Dynamics in the Workplace Research Study

You are being asked to take part in a college research project in which I will be interviewing an individual to gain information about that person's experiences working for/with environmental regulatory agencies and environmental work in general. Please read this form carefully and ask any questions you may have before agreeing to take part in the study.

What the study is about: You will be asked a series of questions about your experiences working for/with environmental regulatory agencies and environmental work. The goal of this study is to gain insight on experiences of women of color with experience in this field of work/study. For the purposes of this study, women of color include those who identify as non-white or non-European. Further, examples of women of color include: Black or African American, Hispanic, Hispanic and Latino Americans, Asian, Indigenous Peoples, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander, etc.

What we will ask you to do: For this study, I will ask you open ended questions about your experiences with environmental regulatory agencies and environmental work through a semi-structured interview. We will not be using a scripted set of questions. The interview will take roughly 30 mins-1 hour. With your permission, I would like to audio record the interview and take notes.

Risks and benefits: We do not anticipate any risks to you participating in this study. There are no direct benefits to you for your participation.

Compensation: You will receive no compensation for participating in this project.

Research records will be kept in a locked file cabinet or password protected server; only the researcher will have access to the records. Data, including direct quotes from interviews, will be used in a masters' thesis and possible academic publications. Your name will not be associated with your answer unless you give explicit permission to do so. To give or deny this permission, please check one of the three boxes provided below.

- ❑ I give permission to be directly quoted with use of my name
- ❑ I give permission to be directly quoted without use of my name
- ❑ I do not give permission to be directly quoted.

Taking part in this interview is voluntary: You may skip any questions that you do not want to answer. If you decide to take part, you are free to withdraw at any time.

If you have questions following your participation in this study, please contact: Graduate Student Researcher Leah Ramnath, (954)-668-9050, lar106@humboldt.edu **or** Faculty Advisor Dr. Renée Byrd, at (707) 826 4563, Renee.Byrd@humboldt.edu.

If you have any concerns with this study or questions about your rights as a participant, please contact: the Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects at irb@humboldt.edu or (707) 826-5165.

You will be given a copy of this form to keep for your records.

Statement of Consent: I understand that the Investigator will answer any questions I may have concerning the investigation or the procedures at any time. I also understand that my participation in any study is entirely voluntary and that I may decline to enter this study or may withdraw from it at any time without jeopardy. I understand that the investigator may terminate my participation in the study at any time.

I have read the above information, and have received answers to any questions I asked. I consent to take part in the study.

Your Signature _____ Date _____

Your Name (printed) _____

In addition to agreeing to participate, I also consent to having the interview tape-recorded.

Your Signature _____ Date _____

This consent form will be kept by the researcher for the duration of the IRB approval