

Tokenism or Genuine:

A Case Study of Harvard University's DEI Policies

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Abstract

In this thesis, I discuss the effects and legitimacy of Harvard University's DEI policies following the 2023 United States Supreme Court decision that canceled affirmative action in college admissions throughout America. The study employs double methods; content and discourse analysis methodologies to carefully and critically examine Harvard's DEI initiatives, focusing on whether these policies are genuinely inclusive or merely tokenistic (only perform to include). The analysis reveals complex results: While Harvard University has made commendable efforts in the diversity of the student body concerning socio-economic status, geographical distribution, and admissions and support, there remains a problem of window dressing diversity; that is inclusivity without the full integration of the minorities. These findings imply that Harvard needs to ensure that small groups of students not only participate in the decision-making process but also have significant capacity in such a process. The paper sums up with suggestions on how Harvard University could potentially further enhance its DEI policies and practices to deliver a better diverse, equitable, and inclusive student community. This thesis was done in the hope of being able to contribute to the ongoing research to stop the conflict on diversity to achieve true transformation in higher education and to analyse the opportunities and challenges for diversification toward authentic integration after the era of affirmative action.

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Chapter 1: Introduction

DEI (diversity, equity, and inclusion) policies have emerged as an important condition of higher education policies in the United States of America. Some of the important terms that were mainly used in these efforts include “affirmative action”, a policy that seeks to give an opportunity to disadvantaged minority groups in society through the use of “race” in admission to universities (Anderson, 2023). However, affirmative action was and still has been a subject of litigation and criticism, even after the 2023 United States Supreme Court decided to terminate such policies that adopted race as a main factor in college admissions, and instead encouraged higher educational institutions to modify merit-based admissions.

Affirmative action was meant to initially address the long history of racial discrimination and promote minority groups in school environments. However, this action was oppositely discussed as a form of shallow inclusivity that people falsely believe by merely representation or “tokenism” rather than supporting what is true diversity. Rosabeth Moss Kanter introduced the term “*tokenism*” in her book “*Men and Women of the Corporation*” published in 1977 to explain how an organization “pretends” to include minorities in its system, yet the minorities are left helpless and alone without further plans to include them into further process. As stated by Darling-Hammond et al. (2020), tokenism entails actions that mimic change but in fact, sustain or hide inequity and give marginalized students a false narrative of a sense of belonging somewhere, but end up leaving them isolated and unappreciated their presence, therefore, deepens the root of the real issue.

The decision of the 2023 Supreme Court of the United States in *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. Harvard College and the University of North Carolina* represents a new phase in the legal treatment of affirmative action in college and university admissions. This decision led institutions to question the efficiency of their DEI policies and look for other means of attaining diversity not through race-conscious strategies for enrollment. As one of the most active and passionate advocates of affirmative action Harvard University has also become one of the most scrutinized and debated universities in terms of shift in admissions policy.

This thesis aims to assess and re-evaluate Harvard University's DEI policies in the aftermath of affirmative action cancelation by the Supreme Court ruling in 2023 as a follow-up of the changing progress. The primary research question is: Do the DEI policies at Harvard University foster good inclusivity or are they merely tokenistic? In order to answer this question, the study utilizes content and discourse analysis to assess the credibility and impact of such policies and public information provided by the institution. The analysis of prior literature shows that there is a lack of extensive research on DEI policies in the context of the post-affirmative action period (Bleemer, 2023). This literature gap means that the research question should be more general and open-ended, involving trends, topics, and examples from real-time practices to determine the level of effects of DEI policies at Harvard. This approach is more helpful and will provide a nuanced understanding of how such policies work (or should work) and the extent to which they actually achieve the goal of inclusion.

Affirmative action was the key instrument that has been used before the 2023 decision to promote DEI in American universities. In the case of Harvard, affirmative action was a tool and an instrument of ensuring that people from underprivileged background get an opportunity to be given equal education as those who were privileged from birth (Lam &

Swarthmore College, 2020). However, affirmative action ban forced Harvard to seek new DEI policies that are based on equity. A 2024 survey at Harvard University reveals that the institution has broadened the definition of diversity, encompassing economic class, experience, and culture due to social and legislative pressure. However, there are several questions regarding the effectiveness and genuineness of the new DEI policies in the organizations (Ovink and Murrell 2022). Consequently, this thesis aims to shed light on the general understanding of DEI policies at Harvard. Thus, critical race theory and intersectionality are used to determine whether the strategies of Harvard's DEI are performative or transformative (Mejia et al., 2018). By analyzing the findings on the diversity frameworks, institutional public news, diversity quotas, feedback from minorities, and other diversity sessions, this study seeks to determine the truth behind those policies.

In this comprehensive thesis, the study entails a content and discourse analysis of DEI policies within Harvard's primary sources by analyzing the statements, documents, and public messages published by the institution itself. These are such important methods that can be used to identify major themes, rhetoric, and narrative strategies to determine the works' depth and sincerity. This analysis shall be used to evaluate the extent of effectiveness of the DEI policies at Harvard. Chapter 2 – Literature Review – offers an extensive analysis of the criteria for assessing DEI policies with a focus on tokenism and presents theoretical frameworks and prior studies. It also identifies the research restrictions and limitations in extant literature, which in turn justifies the current research. Chapter 3 focuses on the methods employed (content and discourse analysis) and provides the data gathered with the help of these methods. It also highlights why these particular methods were adopted and how they assist in responding to the research question. This chapter includes the analysis tables (Table 1: Overview of Harvard's DEI Policies Post-2023, Table 2: Content Analysis, and Table 3:

Discourse Analysis). Chapter 4 provides the findings of the study, with consideration of a balance in both the mere tokenistic and sincere attempts to include DEI policies at Harvard. It also presents the results, with an emphasis placed on the institution's strengths and weaknesses (points that can be seen as tokenism). Finally, the chapter offers suggestions for the improvement of DEI policies and discusses the limitations of the study and future research directions that may be used not only at Harvard but at other higher institutions.

By structuring the thesis in this manner, each chapter will systematically address critical aspects of the research, ensuring a comprehensive and coherent analysis of Harvard's DEI policies. This integrated approach aims to provide a balanced perspective on Harvard's efforts to promote diversity and inclusion in a post-affirmative action landscape. This approach of dividing the thesis will ensure that the critical components of the research are handled in a consecutive and logical sequence hence allowing for a coherent analysis of Harvard's DEI policies. This integrated approach will ensure that the topic is well covered with a balanced perspective measuring that Harvard has put in place in the post-affirmative action era to ensure diversity and inclusion are well highlighted to prevent the wrong path leading to tokenism.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

This chapter provides the literature on DEI policies, affirmative action, and tokenism to offer an extensive common ground for understanding the development and implications of these DEI policy concepts in the higher education field. The literature is organized based on the historical development of affirmative action, institutional reaction to recent legal amendments, and theoretical perspectives in assessing DEI practices. The chapter concludes by providing the framework for assessing tokenism in DEI policies which will be employed in the upcoming chapters.

2.1 Historical Context of Affirmative Action

According to the Office of Diversity and Inclusion, 2023, affirmative action remains one of the most contentious policies in the United States of America, particularly in college and university institutions for most heated debates. These policies were initially formulated in an effort to correct the skewed demographics of racially and economically marginalized groups in selective schools. Harvard University has been in the middle of these debates, and in most cases, the facility has been adopted as the reference point of the country. In the past, Harvard had policies to counteract discrimination in education that affected African Americans and other minorities. Another important aspect is the university's role as an initiator or as a part of affirmative action; it has responded to and influenced the overall social and legal tendencies (Office of Diversity and Inclusion, n.d.).

UCI, 2023 addressing the roots of affirmative action in the U.S. can be traced back to the Civil Rights Movement of the 1960s. This period was the starting point of legislation such as the *Civil Rights Act of 1964*, which aimed to counter systemic racial segregation and discrimination that were one of the most infamous eras in American history once and for all.

Affirmative action policies were introduced as a means to ensure that historically marginalized groups, particularly African Americans, could gain equal access to the same doors of opportunities in education and employment that had long been denied to them throughout the states. In the context of higher education, affirmative action was meant to create a new wave of student body with a more diverse and inclusive academic environment by considering race (especially African-Americans) as a factor in admissions decisions (UCI, n.d.).

Harvard University is one of the oldest and the most renowned universities in the United States; moreover, it could be stated that this university has played an essential role in the development and implementation of the policy of affirmative action (Caplan, 2023). These policies demonstrate that the university has made attempts to achieve diversity and inclusion by admitting students with different characteristics. However, it is still important to note that Harvard has not been completely clean from the issues of affirmative action. The university has for many years been in legal complexities and under public scrutiny over its policy of applying race as a discriminator in admissions. These have opened the debate on affirmative action in higher education and made it clear that this is not a simple process and is still a topic of discussion today (Caplan, 2023).

2.2 Supreme Court Ruling of 2023

In the light of the Supreme Court ruling in 2023 as explained by Howe and Amy-Howe (2023) the admission policy in institutions such as Harvard had to start thinking out of the box in order to achieve a diverse student body. The judgment ruled that race-based affirmative action policies were no longer legal, thereby leaving institutions with the task of finding new ways of coming up with policies of affirmative action that are not race-based. These changes

are highly significant when it comes to the overall approach to diversity and its management. However, the decision is also seen to have a negative impact on the diversification of students in top universities as a result of implementing this new system. The Supreme Court's affirmative action opinion has continued to be a contentious issue and has given rise to many more legal and social issues regarding DEI programs (Flath et al., 2023).

The decision of the Supreme Court in *Students for Fair Admissions, Inc. v. Harvard College and the University of North Carolina* (2023) is a monumental one in the annals of affirmative action in the United States (Grossman et al., 2024). The case was filed by an Asian American student organization that accused Harvard University of discriminatory policies in the admission process as it provided higher preferences to other minority groups (Grossman et al., 2024). The Court of Appeal's ruling that it is unconstitutional to continue with race-based affirmative action policies was grounded on the provision of the Equal Protection Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment. The decision has compelled colleges and universities to look for other methodologies for increasing the representation of minorities in their institutions without regard to race.

As Pita and Meyer (2023) pointed out, there are implications of this decision for university admission throughout the country, and as a result, institutions might turn to other facets of diversity, such as economic background or exposure (News editor, 2023). Although this change may be beneficial in some ways, it may not be enough to address all the structural barriers that affirmative action was meant to address. The above ruling has contributed to the change of the diversity policies that have shifted from a race basis to an overall assessment of the candidates. However, there are some arguments that have been made to the effect that

these other approaches may not be as effective in producing the same amount of diversity that race-based affirmative action was meant to.

2.3 Institutional Responses to the Ruling

To the ruling, Harvard was quick to restate its commitment to diversity as a worthy cause to pursue. The new shifts in this regard are that, at the university, there are shifts in the policy of DEI not solely in race and gender but also in the economic and geographical diversities and the evaluation of the applicant's accomplishments and barriers. According to the information from Harvard Graduate School of Education (2023), there are new developments and changes that have been made to expand more opportunities for students of different demographics to be in Harvard and at the same time maintain the diverse Harvard student population without using race as a factor. Nevertheless, there are some questions concerning the efficiency of the above-mentioned approaches. But one needs to ask if the steps that Harvard has taken are indeed useful in making up for what was lost when racial preferences were no longer allowed or if they are just the result of new legalities (Greene, n. d.).

In response to the ruling by the Supreme Court, Harvard has undertaken a policy review and DEI programs on admissions. The university has committed itself to maintaining enrolment diversity through several approaches that include; recruiting more students from various groups, increasing the number of scholarships, and a more elaborate evaluation of the students in aspects of their economic status and achievements. These are the measures intended to ensure that diversity will continue to be at the heart of Harvard's educational mission regardless of the end of race-conscious admissions.

However, due to these changes, new discussions have emerged regarding the effectiveness and/or appropriateness of the new DEI policies at Harvard. According to some critics, the elimination of race as a factor, and the same degree of diversity achieved through affirmative action may not be easily attainable. Moreover, some individuals think that the new policies will negatively affect some populations or that they do not eradicate the structural racism that minorities face in learning institutions. It will also be important when Harvard has to transform itself according to such changes that the make-up of the students and the overall diversity of the university is given close scrutiny.

2.4 Theoretical Frameworks for DEI Evaluation

Referring to the theoretical frameworks such as those presented by Mejia et al., (2018), one can obtain a theoretical perspective through which the challenges of DEI can be viewed and analyzed. These frameworks negate the deficit thinking and provide the liberating frameworks of education that embrace emancipation and diversity. Applying these frameworks to DEI at Harvard provides an understanding of how such policies can bring about the desired changes in the institution. They also explain how Harvard can expand on its efforts to provide a diverse and inclusive environment for all. According to my perspective, these critical social justice frameworks are required to further the change at Harvard and make the process less of a show of diversity and inclusion.

When it comes to interpreting the goals that DEI efforts have towards eradicating systemic prejudice, such Critical Social Justice Theories (CRT), and Intersectionality are helpful. CRT, for instance, holds that when contemplating race and racism, other types of oppression like classism and sexism cannot be overlooked. This perspective is required in an effort to determine if DEI policies are real or if they are simply virtue-signaling “tokenism”.

Intersectionality refers to how different forms of discrimination combine to intensify the suppression of minority groups as described by Kimberlé Crenshaw (Columbia Law School, 2017). It is possible to use these frameworks to determine whether Harvard's DEI policies align with these intersections adequately.

Mejia et al. (2018) argue that DEI initiatives should aim to go beyond just the numbers to diversity the population; otherwise, it will simply be a diversity theatre; instead, such efforts must work towards enacting change that would empower diverse populations. This entails ensuring that the students in school are afforded equal chances irrespective of their origin, color, sex, or disability. Thus, by applying the critical social justice approach, Harvard can ensure that DEI is not just a buzzword but also a part of practice, which would result in the formation of a diverse and equal campus community.

2.5 Identifying Tokenism in DEI Policies

In an effort to assist future researchers in understanding the topic better, I have narrowed down some criteria from my own evaluation based on many studies and put them in Table 1 includes a list of signs of tokenism in DEI policies. Some of these criteria include representation without power, surface-level inclusion, diversity quotas, feedback ignorance, and event tokenism. For instance, incorporating minorities who do not possess real decision-making power or simply including minorities to have them on the organization's roster and to lure them into the organization are other examples of tokenism. From the above criteria from various literature, it is possible to evaluate if Harvard's DEI policies are genuine or just a form of performative wokeism.

Elaboration on Criteria for Identifying Tokenism

Only Representation (No Power):

This criterion focuses on other areas where the institution employs minorities and yet they cannot make decisions. This is commonly observed when the token representation is granted a seat on a committee or a board while not empowered. For instance, Darling-Hammond et al. (2020) expounded on how representation can be a tactic for diversity without transformation. Such representation can be counterproductive for the advancement of diversity by providing a mere illusion of equality instead of actual equal opportunities for people of color in leadership positions. Although it is possible to hire minorities to fill strategic positions this is not true diversity because minorities selected in such positions have no power to decide. Token representation is particularly risky in higher education since it may result in policies and decisions that are not sensitive to minorities' needs and issues. For instance, getting a Black professor and assigning him/her a seat in the diversity committee or hiring a Black professor but denying him/her the power to make decisions on the committee nullifies the power of the committee. It seems that minorities should not only be present and their issues addressed but they should also have the right to decide about their inclusion.

Surface Inclusion:

Therefore, surface inclusion can be described as a process of change that aims at ensuring that minorities are included in an organization or a program, but in a very rigid and mechanical way. Wolbring and Nguyen observed that simply increasing the number of minorities in a company or educational institution is insufficient to promote diversity and inclusion. This strategy does not eliminate the source of issues and can result in a fragmented society where various groups battle each other. DEI strategies therefore should not only focus on the

employment of women and other marginalized individuals but must strive to promote inclusiveness.

One of the most famous types of diversity management is called ‘surface level diversity’ which means that an organization hires or admits a diverse social group with the hope that they would be able to meet the diversity quota but does not make sure that the company has what it takes to make them fit well or at least become a part of the organization. This may lead to a scenario where DEI initiatives are fully brought in terms of the number of people but not in terms of what they are truly used for. For instance, a university may have a goal of increasing the enrolment of minority students; however, the university may not arrange for mentorship, tutoring, and cultural sensitivity activities to support the minority students; the minority students may feel that they are on their own once they finally get in but are completely ignored even though the university has a diversity drive; the drive, therefore, is not as effective as it should be.

Diversity Quotas:

Like most other systems, proportional representation based on fixed percentages and quotas for minorities also has its benefits and demerits. On the one hand, quotas can be useful as they help bring diversity into organizations, at least quantitatively. On the other hand, there is evidence that quotas are also detrimental as they promote stereotypical thinking and do not seek to eliminate inequity. Nora (1996) noted that if steps to eradicate discrimination are not taken then quotas may perpetrate a cycle of tokenism. This is why one can stress the idea that it is more important to design better opportunities for success for everyone rather than diversity targets. The issue with quotas is that it means that the person is hired or promoted due to a quota that had to be filled to meet the diversity standards of the company or an

organization. This may also lead to other groups developing resentment since they may consider quotas as an unfair means of distributing resources. DEI policies should ensure that every student or staff member is given equal chances and that the policies do not concentrate on their past or present experiences; however, DEI policies should also eradicate discrimination and barriers that were set to lock out specific groups of people.

Feedback Ignorance:

One way through which people can be sure that their input is not being valued is through tokenism, and one of the ways of identifying it is through failure to respond to feedback from minority groups. An effective DEI policy needs to have a feedback mechanism that would allow the organization to gather feedback from the entire community and act upon it. Gazetteterrymurphy (2024) notes that it is critical to pay attention to and respond to minority groups' issues to promote diversification. Institutions that fail to address this feedback stand a chance to continue with the tokenism culture and in the process end up neglecting the very groups they have set out to assist. It can be done in different ways, for example, there can be no channels through which minorities can voice their discontent or there can be channels, but the feedback is not taken seriously and no action is being taken. For instance, a university may have diversity questionnaires, but no actions are taken from it. Such an issue may cause the minorities to feel disengaged and unappreciated hence the lack of a positive response to actions taken by the authorities.

Tokenistic Event:

Organizing events in celebration of diversity without follow-up action is also another form of tokenism. In the article titled 'The Trouble with Diversity Events' published by the Harvard Graduate School of Education in 2023, the author explains that such events can be reduced to

tokenism if they are not part of a long-term campaign for change. That is why the concept of inclusion is not limited to one-time annual, and even monthly, celebrations. Event tokenism means that the institution stages cultural celebrations, diversity awareness, or similar activities to indicate the inclusion of minorities in the institution but does not integrate such efforts into the core of the institution’s operations and practices (Karakaya, 2021). Such events can be effective in raising awareness and creating visibility, but they can also be criticized as being cosmetic if there are no other efforts made to deal with the problems. For instance, it is significant to commemorate Black History Month; however, it should not be limited to that but should be an ongoing process of acknowledging and combating discrimination and inequalities of Black students and employees.

Table 1: Tokenistic Detective Criteria

Criterion	Description	Example (Literature)
Only representation (no power)	Minorities are presented but have no power in decision-making	Darling-Hammond et al. (2020)
Surface inclusion	Only numbers matter, not meaningful approaches	Wolbring & Nguyen (2023)
Diversity quotas	Quotas without implying underlying inequities	Nora (1996)
Feedback (Ignorance)	Do not accept feedback from minorities	Gazetteterrymurphy (2024)
Event of Tokenism	Events without follow-up study, action	Harvard Graduate School of Education (2023)

Integration into Subsequent Analysis:

They will be used in the following chapters as the set of guidelines for the assessment of the DEI policies at Harvard University. By applying these criteria, the analysis will find out whether the policies are genuinely inclusive or just a facade.

This chapter has offered an overview of the literature on DEI policies, affirmative action, and tokenism as follows. It has described the background of DEI approaches in higher education and the legal shifts that have occurred in the past few years. The criteria for tokenism assessment and the theoretical frameworks described in this chapter will be applied to the analysis of Harvard's DEI policies in the following chapters. This foundation will help in assessing the merit and credibility of these policies and by extension, the present and future discourse on diversity and inclusion in higher learning institutions.

Chapter 3: Policies on DEI at Harvard: Techniques and Strategies

In this chapter, it is paramount to identify the tools that can be used to assess DEI policies at Harvard University after the eradication of affirmative action. The analysis is structured around two primary methodologies: Two main approaches that can be used in the context of the analysis of the data which were collected from the web are content analysis and discourse analysis. These methodologies work on different forms of primary sources including official documents, reports, and statements of Harvard University to corroborate the accuracy and efficiency of the DEI policies.

DEI policies have been on the lips of many institutions of higher learning, including Harvard University, and the university has been at the frontline in the implementation of DEI policies. Many recent legal shifts, such as the Supreme Court's decision to do away with affirmative action, have made Harvard reconsider its DEI plans and reorganize them. This section of the thesis aims to analyze the DEI policies of Harvard in terms of content and language to assess the level of commitment, sincerity, and possible performative nature of the DEI statements.

Content Analysis

Content analysis is a method of studying textual material in which the investigator isolates particular elements in the texts and then measures them. This method helps to identify patterns, themes, and the mere existence of DEI-related information within Harvard's official records (Brandon et al., 2014). Harvard's EDIB Strategy Page, GSAS Admissions Policies, and the Diversity and Access at Harvard College are some of the sources of data for this analysis. A content analysis through Table 1 will reveal that criteria have been developed based on the evidence sources that I collected and found common keys that most of them have as their policies; namely, Socioeconomic Diversity, Geographic Diversity, Holistic Review, and Support Programs.

Content analysis is useful for this study since it will enable examination of the text content of DEI policies at Harvard. This approach is useful because it allows one to measure the intensity of DEI themes and elements in the policies and practices of Harvard University, and thereby, get a numerical measure of how much the university values diversity and inclusion. It aids in answering the research question since it assists in ascertaining the authenticity of the DEI policies and whether they are genuine or window dressing (Liao & Hitchcock, 2018). The content analysis through Table 2 gives more overviews to detect tokenism by using criteria: Visibility and Coverage, which focuses on how often and to what extent particular topics are mentioned; Framing and Representation, examining how the issues and the individuals are portrayed; Gender and Equality, which looks into the representation and treatment of diverse gender; and Themes and Patterns, which identifies the recurring topics and trends in the content.

Data Collection and Analysis

The data was collected from the following primary sources: Harvard's Office for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion & Belonging Strategy Page, which contains information about the strategic actions geared towards promoting EDIB. Also, information was collected from the Harvard Graduate School of Arts and Sciences (GSAS) Admissions Policies to know the admission requirements and procedures. Further information regarding diversity was also sourced from the Diversity and Access of Harvard College Admissions where there is information on various recruitment strategies. Moreover, the study considered the general strategies and programs of Harvard's EDIB Office to determine the overall efforts of the university toward EDIB. To this end, the information gleaned from these sources was used to

ascertain whether or not DEI was being discussed and if so, how often, and how it was being portrayed.

Table 1: Overview of Harvard's DEI Policies Post-2023

Policy Aspect	Description
Socioeconomic Diversity	Special attention to students with low economic status
Geographic Diversity	Admission of students from different parts of the country/ regions/ world
Holistic Review	Assessment of applicants’ achievements and difficulties
Support Programs	Programs designed to help students overcome academic and personal barriers

Source: Author’s own analysis based on Harvard University's DEI documents (2023-2024).

Table 2: Content Analysis of Harvard's DEI Policies

Criterion	Example/Excerpt	Source
Visibility and Coverage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Harvard's EDIB strategy prominently features DEI initiatives and goals for increasing diversity. - The admissions policies document outlines extensive support programs and DEI visibility. 	<p>(Strategy, n.d.), (Introduction, 2023)</p>
Framing and Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The holistic review process ensures diverse student representation and comprehensive applicant evaluation. - Geographic diversity initiatives frame the representation of students from various regions. 	<p>(Diversity and access, n.d.), (Harvard University Office for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging, n.d.)</p>
Gender and Equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Policies supporting gender equality and representation are detailed in the admissions policies document. - Gender representation in the admissions process is highlighted in the holistic review description. 	<p>(Introduction, 2023), (Diversity and access, n.d.)</p>
Themes and Patterns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Strategic themes in DEI efforts are highlighted in Harvard's EDIB strategy document. - Recurring themes in support programs and admissions policies are outlined in the admissions document. 	<p>(Strategy, n.d.), (Introduction, 2023)</p>

Discourse Analysis

Discourse analysis (Table 3) looks at how language is employed in texts to represent and negotiate social realities and specific meanings. This method is useful in determining how DEI policies are portrayed at Harvard, the philosophies behind them, and the power relations that they portray. The documents that were used in the content analysis are the same and include the following; Discourse analysis is crucial to this study as it helps to understand not only the literal meaning of Harvard's DEI policies but also its implications. This way, the language, the rhetoric, and the narrative techniques offer the chance to examine the truthfulness and the purpose of such policies (Petty & Pope, 2018). This approach assists in answering the research question since it identifies if the DEI policies are substantial or just symbolic.

The areas of focus in the discourse analysis included Representation and Narrative Construction to determine how various groups in society are represented and the kinds of stories that are told about them. Furthermore, the study focused on Rhetoric and Language Use in order to determine the manner in which language is used and how this affects peoples' perceptions and attitudes. The study also focused on Power and Ideology in order to determine the hidden power relations and the ideological assumptions that underlie the policies and practices. Last but not least, Performance and Legitimacy were used as a lens to assess how or whether actions and policies are implemented and if they are seen as genuine attempts at inclusion. Information was obtained from the same main sources as specified above. The process included finding specific quotes and examples that would demonstrate how DEI policies at Harvard are built and promulgated.

Table 3: Discourse Analysis of Harvard's DEI Policies

Criterion	Example/Excerpt	Source
Representation and Narrative Construction	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - How DEI policies construct narratives around diversity and inclusion and represent different groups. - Narratives on diverse student representation and comprehensive applicant evaluation. 	<p>(Strategy, n.d.),</p> <p>(Diversity and access, n.d.-a)</p>
Rhetoric and Language Use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Specific language and rhetoric used to discuss DEI policies. - Language and rhetoric in the admissions policies document. 	<p>(Strategy, n.d.-b)</p> <p>(Introduction, 2023a)</p>
Power and Ideology	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Discussions around power dynamics and ideological perspectives in DEI policies. - Ideological underpinnings of DEI strategies and their implications for institutional power structures. 	<p>(Diversity and access, n.d.-b)</p> <p>(Harvard University Office for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging, n.d.)</p>
Performance and Legitimacy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Evaluating the performative aspects of DEI initiatives and their legitimacy in practice. - Legitimacy of DEI policies as reflected in official statements and public documents. 	<p>(Strategy, n.d.-c)</p> <p>(Introduction, 2023b)</p>

Literature Support and Framework

The following policies are analyzed with regard to the theoretical frameworks and empirical evidence. According to Fischer and Massey (2007), the following is a conceptual framework that may be applied for the purpose of assessing the effects of affirmative action on higher education: They pointed out that it is not only necessary to consider the effects of such

policies with regards to the students' diversity and inclusion but also the second order consequences.

However, as Rubinstein and De Medeiros (2014) pointed out, DEI policies risk replicating neoliberal logics which offer individualized solutions rather than systemic ones. This lens is important in determining whether Harvard has started the process of revolutionary change of DEI policies or is just a reaction to one. Based on the works of Arcidiacono et al. (2022a, 2022b) one can get an idea of how DEI programs work in the context of recruiting and admissions of minorities. The study of Massey and Alexander on the application of Asian American and African American students to Harvard gives a very clear example of the subtleties and perhaps discrimination in these processes which are important for the decision of the impartiality of the policies of Harvard. In the article, Iyer (2022) outlines the social-psychological challenges that DEI policies encounter, including backlash from the dominant identity status. This means that an individual must be in a position to identify the causes of such resistance so that he/she can work out how best to deal with resistance to change. Belaia et al. (2021), and Jhun et al. (2019) are the sources that contain the authors' opinions regarding the long-term effects of DEI policies and the connection between the methodology. They also stress the need to evaluate the effectiveness of such interventions as well as their viability for further sustenance in relation to change. In the article, Rubinstein and De Medeiros (2014) attempt to convey how DEI policies can reiterate neoliberalism, which advocates for individualism as a means of addressing inequity. This is relevant in understanding if DEI policies at Harvard University are really revolutionary or are simply meeting the demands. Based on the synthesis of Arcidiacono et al. (2022a, 2022b) this paper aims at discussing the effects of DEI regarding the recruitment and enrollment of minority students. They outline such matters and possible bias in these processes that are crucial for assessing Harvard's actions, as well as the type of discrimination of Asian

American and African American applicants. Therefore, Iyer (2022) examines the psychological and social costs of DEI policies in light of the reactions from minorities. Such dynamics have to be made known to be in a position to fight for strategies that could be used to tackle such opposition. In their research, Belaia, Belaia, and Rogaten (2021) and Jhun, Kim, and Lee (2019) illuminate the methodological connection and the outcomes of DEI policies in the long run. Their work supports the idea that such measures should be evaluated regularly and altered, so that change is possible and for the benefit of all.

Policies discussed in this paper include the following: The following are the relevant theories and prior research findings on these policies. In order to further explicate the given phenomenon of affirmative action in higher education, Fischer and Massey (2007) suggested a framework that can be employed to describe the impacts. They also emphasize that their job involves assessing the increase in student enrolment and the impacts of their policies on diversity and inclusion. Rubinstein and De Medeiros (2014) also pointed out that DEI policies can reassert neoliberalism, which is a belief system that holds that there are people with particular issues that must be addressed by particular solutions. It is important to bring this perspective in order to understand how sincere Harvard is about DEI, whether they are performative or if they embrace DEI as a revolutionary change. Arcidiacono et al. (2022a, 2022b) offer some information on the effects of DEI on the recruitment and enrollment of minority students. The problems stated and the prejudice seen in Asian American and African American applicants provide information about the effectiveness of Harvard's practices. Iyer (2022) focuses on the reasoning behind why DEI policies are resisted, and why the societal psychological processes are a threat to the implementation of such policies. For these reasons, the various dynamics that may be involved when it comes to the identification of the above-mentioned opposition should be understood. In the article by

Belaia et al. (2021) and Jhun et al. (2019), there are findings about methodological connections and consequences of DEI policies in the long term. Their work focuses on the evaluation of such programs and integration of change with the aim of increasing sustainability and integration of change.

The subsequent chapter expounds on the method employed to evaluate Harvard's DEI policies particularly, content and discourse analysis. With this in mind, it would have been possible to give an account of the effectiveness and legalities of the said policies based on the specific characteristics of the policies identified from the analysis of the two approaches. The results of these analyses will be presented in the following chapter where I will present the conclusion of the study, the strengths and the weaknesses of DEI practices in Harvard, and the recommendations.

Chapter 4: Results, Discussion, and Conclusion

It is quite challenging to assess DEI policies at Harvard and the analysis shows that while the university has attempted to enhance DEI, its efforts are insufficient. The following points are noted based on the data collected until May 18, 2024, through content analysis: The documents dedicate most of their discussion to socioeconomic diversity, geographical diversity, the integrated model, and support programs. Hence, it is possible to infer that Harvard has a concern for the student population by SES in as much as it tries to prove that the money is being released to alleviate the effects of economic strain on students of color. Similarly, geographic diversification is also possible by using strategies that are aimed at the shortage of regions that may not have enough staff. The above methods used by Harvard to admit students include achievements, and, from the list, it can be seen that Harvard wants to admit a diverse class. With regard to academics and counseling, the delivery of tutoring services also proves that the institution is ready to make sure that all the students are provided with all the support they need to succeed in their endeavors.

Table 1: Overview of Harvard's DEI Policies Post-2023 (Retrieved May 18, 2024)

Policy Aspect	Description	Frequency in Documents
Socioeconomic Diversity	Increased focus on applicants from diverse economic backgrounds	20
Geographic Diversity	Emphasis on admitting students from various regions	15
Holistic Review	Comprehensive evaluation of applicants' personal achievements and challenges	18
Support Programs	Initiatives aimed at providing academic and emotional support	22

The results of the content analysis show that DEI documents at Harvard prominently display DEI programs and objectives to indicate a firm commitment to DEI. This approach is aimed at the promotion of a balanced and inclusive enrollment management process by considering various aspects of applicants’ diversity in the course of the holistic review. Policies regarding the admission of students are properly articulated and respond to the issue of gender equity in that they encourage the admission of students of both sexes and seek to create a balanced student population in terms of gender. The reviewed strategic documents reveal the concerns with equity, diversity, and inclusion as being significant in Harvard’s institutional values and processes.

Table 2: Content Analysis of Harvard's DEI Policies (Retrieved May 18, 2024)

Criterion	Summary of Findings	Source
Visibility and Coverage	The EDIB strategy documents prominently feature DEI initiatives and goals, reflecting a strong institutional commitment to diversity.	Harvard University, 2024
Surface InclusionFraming and Representation	The holistic review process is designed to ensure diverse student representation, evaluating a wide range of applicant characteristics.	Diversity and Access, n.d.
Gender and Equality	Admissions policies include clear guidelines and support for gender equality, promoting balanced representation.	Introduction, 2023
Themes and Patterns	Strategic documents highlight recurring themes of equity, diversity, and inclusion, underscoring the importance of these principles in institutional practices.	Strategy, n.d.

The analysis of the discourse makes it easier to grasp more concrete issues in communication and the use of these policies. It also challenges the concept of diversity as a tokenism, where the mere representation of diversity by having people of color and diversity quotas yet they are not integrated. For example, statements like *"Harvard University is committed to fostering a campus culture where everyone can thrive, a key to which is ensuring that we each experience a profound sense of inclusion and belonging."* are illustrative of commitment but lack any signs of decision-making decentralization across the diversity of people, suggesting tokenism. Similarly, such phrases as *"Our student body represents a wide range of backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives"*; thus, it has students of different origins, backgrounds, and viewpoints are signs of shallow and indefinite attempts at inclusion.

However, the critique also points out some real inclusionary practices to show Harvard's genuine intent at inclusion. This can be seen, for example, by full-need financial aid; this shows that an institution is committed to creating a diverse campus for students of different economic backgrounds because the financial barriers to entry have been eliminated. The programs that are aimed to recruit students from areas that are not represented in the institution also help to address the geographical diversity as well as the diversity of human beings. The admission model that is used in this case is the holistic model, which entails that applicants are evaluated using a number of factors, and therefore makes the process of selection fair as well as rewarding and diverse. However, the availability of a diverse range of academic and co-curricular support services relevant to students' needs is also necessary to ensure that all learners feel welcome.

Table 3: Genuine DEI Practices at Harvard (Retrieved May 18, 2024)

Criterion	Direct Quote	Source	T/G
Representation and Narrative Construction	<i>"Harvard University is committed to fostering a campus culture where everyone can thrive, a key to which is ensuring that we each experience a profound sense of inclusion and belonging."</i>	Harvard University, 2024	Genuine
Rhetoric and Language Use	<i>"Our student body represents a wide range of backgrounds, experiences, and perspectives."</i>	Diversity and Access, n.d.	Tokenism
Power and Ideology	<i>"Harvard is committed to increasing the diversity of its student body through targeted recruitment efforts."</i>	Harvard University Office for Equity, Diversity, Inclusion, and Belonging, n.d.	Genuine
Performance and Legitimacy	<i>"We regularly collect feedback from our community members to inform our policies and practices."</i>	Introduction, 2023	Genuine

To avoid any ambiguity, it is important to point out that all the information and quotes used in this analysis were obtained from Harvard University's official website on May 18, 2024. They could have been no longer published or developed; this might be the reason that Harvard might be in the process of refining and possibly fortifying their DEI policies to be more realistic. This means that Harvard is likely to adopt new policies that were not favorable in the past in supporting diversity, equity, and inclusion.

In the context of the content and the discourse of the identified texts, a rather complex picture of the DEI policies at Harvard is revealed. On one hand, there are matters of simple representation, which are still problematic to this day, such as representation and diversity and hiring a diverse candidate only to make it seem like you are inclusive. On the other hand, there are some genuinely positive aspects of Harvard's approach in some areas, such as financial aid, recruitment, and enrollment from different regions of the country and world, holistic admission processes, and student services.

Full-need financial aid is perhaps the most effective method of demonstrating the institution's commitment to issues of socioeconomic diversity while recruitment programs that target specific areas assist in developing geographical diversity among the student population. The approach to admission is very fair and comprehensive because it does not only consider a few factors that determine the ability of the student to be admitted. Moreover, such services as tutoring and or counseling for students with individual learning requirements also promote a supportive learning environment within the campus.

However, there are still some issues arising with regard to how one can ensure that such groups are not only included but also have some say. The general population needs to move from, what has been referred to as, 'lip service' to diversity to genuine inclusion of diverse persons and groups. It is, therefore, necessary to encourage feedback mechanisms to bring policy changes and diversity events should have tangible actions and policies that accompany them.

Based on the analysis of the case, it is possible to conclude that Harvard has significant advantages and some drawbacks in its DEI policies. In the meantime, there are several deficiencies in the aspects of financial aid, recruitment, holistic admissions, and support programs which can be considered tokenistic. So, by enhancing actual DEI activities and eliminating the symbolism of DEI at Harvard, students of all backgrounds will benefit from a more diverse and inclusive learning environment. This work however has a disadvantage in that it only focused on Harvard University hence the findings may not hold for other universities. I could have been limited by the access they had to internal documents and data; this may have restricted the scope of the study; this study analyses policies and practices till the present and does not reveal future changes.

Future research should involve administering surveys to even more universities with the view of comparing the results as this will help in identifying the effectiveness of DEI policies and the potential hurdles that are likely to be faced. It is also important to the future of DEI practices to conduct longer-term assessments of DEI policies, including the impact of such policies on student outcomes and organizational culture. Thus, it is crucial to identify the social and psychological factors that may lead to resistance to DEI initiatives in order to develop strategies for addressing such resistance. As these limitations have been identified and the research is carried forward, the scholars can contribute to the improvement of better DEI policies in higher education institutions. Not only does the incorporation of these wider components help make more sense of Harvard's DEI policies, but it also sets out a framework for analyzing and discussing the next steps.

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