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Visual communication of and for minorities: interrogating the campus images in Iowa State recruitment/promotional materials

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Visual communication of and for minorities: Interrogating the campus images in Iowa State recruitment/promotional materials

by

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A thesis submitted to the graduate faculty
in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

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This is to certify that the Master's thesis of

Yasmin Adelle Blackburn

has met the requirements of Iowa State University
DEDICATION

To the people in this world who always had faith in me and who believed, more than I did, that I could succeed.

Dr. J. you know that you’ve been one of those people. The last six years wouldn’t have been possible without you and my mother.

And now especially my mother and best friend—Kathleen Adelle Blackburn. You have no idea how much you’ve meant to me over the years and how much you’ve done for my self esteem. I appreciate all of the sacrifices you made for my happiness and this thesis is for you. I hope that you’re proud. I love you MOM.
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ABSTRACT

Visuals are an integral and critical part of all recruitment/promotional materials. This thesis examines the role that visuals play in Iowa State University’s recruitment/promotional materials specifically as they pertain to minority students.

Twelve minority students of different American ethnic backgrounds were interviewed about the recruitment/promotional materials they received about Iowa State prior to their attendance. The interviewees were shown a selection of recruitment/promotional materials from different years and then asked to recollect what expectations were created about Iowa State when they received the materials. They were then asked how their actual experiences matched those expectations.

Using Stuart Hall as the main theorist, and through a small, non-representative sample of minority students, I’ve decided that the visuals used to attract minority students to Iowa State University may have an effect, mostly negative, on the experience that they have while attending Iowa State. The scope of my study was limited because of time and access to students. I also acknowledge that my interpretations of the data influenced the quotes I have chosen and the scenarios I focus on. In some cases, I let one person speak for all of the participants who said similar things because he/she said it best. However, despite these limitations, I do feel that some valuable information is provided that could help Iowa State represent itself to minority students as effectively as possible while still increasing recruitment and retention rates.

Ultimately Iowa State needs to be more representative in the visuals it includes in its recruitment/promotional materials and show a more accurate view of the university, in terms
of its diversity. In order for Iowa State to produce more representative materials, minority students must be included in the process by which the materials are generated.
CHAPTER 1. INTRODUCTION

In this introduction, I will begin with a discussion of the question I hope my thesis will answer. That discussion will be followed by a discussion of why this subject is important first to technical communication, second to Iowa State University, and finally to my own personal interests.

The question being examined

Using Stuart Hall’s theory of representation, I am interrogating the images in the recruitment/promotional materials provided to Iowa State University’s minority students prior to their admission. I want to find out if the materials may affect their perceptions and experiences. In order to do this, I conducted interviews with four current Iowa State minority students, four minority student graduates of Iowa State, and three minority students who once attended Iowa State but probably will not matriculate from Iowa State.

Why is this question important?

When I was in the process of deciding what the subject of my thesis should be, I looked around my environment and considered the things that were important to me. I found a number of different issues, but none as significant to me, Iowa State, my community—minority students—and technical communication as the issue of the responsibility incurred when communicating visually. The discussion that follows explains the importance of my study to all of the different parties mentioned above.
Importance to technical communication

Being able to communicate effectively is often talked about as the ultimate skill for technical communicators to master. How well communication is established depends on many factors: common reference points, the conveying medium, noise/interference, cultural differences, and the message. There are many other factors, but these are just a few and they are all very important in their own right in order to ensure that the communicative job is done as effectively as possible. One of the most important factors is culture, which is our next topic of discussion.

Linda Beamer does a case study that she calls the “Emperor and the Envoy.” The example that follows is a wonderful illustration of the effects of culture on communication. A delegation of English diplomats, headed by Lord George, went to China for a long awaited audience with Qian Long, the emperor of China. Neither culture knew much about the other. The English information about Chinese culture came from the Jesuits who were in China at the time. The English believed the Chinese would be happy with a trade agreement because that’s what the English wanted. The English had information about Confucius and many other scientific and moral advances that they superimposed on the Chinese as evidence of a technologically sound, moral society.

The reality of China at that time was far from the peaceful, tranquil vision the English had. People were poor and hungry. Hierarchies and the old ways of doing things were rigidly followed. There was always a threat to the throne because the emperor was not Chinese but Manchurian. The Chinese believed that the English were there to pay tribute to the great emperor. They were expecting great gifts as tribute and a special bow of
prostration called a *koutou*, which they did not receive. The Chinese also held the English in contempt because of their very ethnocentric view of the world.

With all of the misunderstandings, a communication breakdown was inevitable. The English arrived in China to see beatings in the streets, female foot binding, mistrust from the emperor of his "trusted advisors," and homosexuality. The Chinese learned that the English were a potential force to be reckoned with because of their navigational technology. Both parties were upset: the Chinese because they did not know about the technology the English retained and the English because they felt that they were given a false view of the Chinese by the Jesuits. Since the Jesuits were in China then, the Chinese must have controlled the information they disseminated, which was not the information the English had. As we all know from history, Chinese and English relations went steadily downhill after this encounter.

Beamer attributes this whole fiasco to a schemata model, shown in Figure 1, which she says shows how people usually communicate. "The encoded messages from one culture
to another may relate to an object or referent that both A and B recognize, but the semantic content or reference may be very different. Similarly, A’s or B’s idea of the other culture may be very different from the actual culture” (145). This situation is very important towards understanding the ways that communication can go wrong and how culture affects that communication. In the model, we see that each culture believes communication is occurring. In reality, the communication is being hampered by what each culture thinks is the correct knowledge about the other culture. Technical communicators should know that this example of communication breakdown is very common during communication, and communication is not always what we expect it to be.

Beamer’s case study shows the impact of culture on communication. Another factor is not mentioned above and not mentioned often in technical communication literature: the impact of the visual. Culture, however, shapes visual communication as well as textual communication. Nancy Allen says that “technical communicators are well trained in the verbal effects created by changes in language, but often are less well informed about the effects created by visuals” (93) —particularly, I believe, the effects due to culture. We take lots of classes on the proper inclusion of visuals in documents: the size, the color, the organization of many visuals, their placement in the document, and even the audiences the visuals are being used for. But, after the visuals have been placed and the documents printed, how often are the effects of the documents’ visuals on their intended audience(s) measured? Probably not often.

Prior available knowledge on the subject of technical communicators and effects of visual communication is sparse and is centered mostly around specific case studies like
Beamer’s. A tragic example is discussed in Ben and Marthalee Barton’s article “Modes of Power in Technical and Professional Visuals,” where they do not exactly discuss a visual but rather the effects of an event and its visual representation. The synoptic mode of power is defined using a quote from Roland Barthes, which says, “Pictures...are more imperative than writing, they impose meaning at one stroke[their emphasis], without analyzing or diluting it” (142). The example concerns the crash of NASA’s space shuttle Challenger, which went down in 1986. “The NASA commentator, watching the precise output of key numbers and words on the screen, sounded puzzled, saying, ‘We have lost the downlink: we have a major malfunction,’ while the millions of watching public, on site or in front of television sets, had seen that the shuttle was already totally destroyed by fire and explosion” (143). The people watching TV were understandably upset by the announcer’s casual disregard for what was obvious to them because they had seen it, but he had not. This shows how important and effective visual communication is and how it can affect an audience sometimes negatively. Barton and Barton’s case study, however, does not concern cultural effects.

A second approach to the subject of technical communicators and effects of visual communication, which also does not concern cultural effects, is represented by Tufte, who suggests a formula that can be prescribed when a visual is being designed or incorporated. He talks about data-ink ratio in the production of graphs and charts, which he refers to more generally as data displays. Tufte tries to make sure that readers can believe the visual information presented to them. He also would like for designers to feel comfortable producing what they believe are quality documents. However, I believe that his principles are purely perceptual because they focus on the audience and what they will perceive when
they see and use the visuals. Reader’s ease is the first principle. It is self-explanatory, but Tuft feels that data displays should be easier for the reader to process than say reading a chart. Document integrity is the next principle; Tuft feels that data displays should be truthful and not distort data to achieve any particular result. His final principle is clarity, which goes in hand with reader ease. A reader has the right to a clean, clear data display where the information can be accessed quickly.

Tuft basically says if you’re building a data display, you should be able to answer these questions above all others. How well does your display tell the story? How accurately does your display tell the story? In how little space? With how little ink? These questions work with Tuft’s data ink equation (57):

\[
\text{Data-ink ratio} = \frac{\text{data-ink}}{\text{total ink used to print the graphic}}
\]

How much thought does your display provoke? Did you lie? These questions work with Tuft’s lie factor equation (57):

\[
\text{Lie factor} = \frac{\text{size of effect shown in graphic}}{\text{size of effect in data}}
\]

Tuft’s equations are good and they are helpful, but since they only discuss perceptual effects of data displays, they are not helpful when deciding the impact of culture on visuals. D.N. Perkins says, “The average person’s views of pictures and picture perception is that the visual symbol functions as a sort of stand-in for the real thing….Pictures are easy to read because they resemble what they represent” (259). In other words, technical communicators should assume that unless told to do otherwise audiences will assume that when a picture is
put in place of, or in conjunction with, text they will believe the picture to be an accurate representation of the object. Technical communicators, however, also should recognize that culture is an important part of communication and that it affects audience perception.

Is this an important subject? Emphatically yes! In the articles and books that are available on the subject of political aspects of visual communication, there is a realization that, because visuals are immersed in culture, they do have a profound effect on people and their perceptions but that materials on the subject of culture and visual communication just do not exist. Technical communicators need to know how important the audience's cultural overlay on a visual can be, sometimes to the point that it is life threatening.

For example, in an article by Lee E. Brasseur and Torri L. Thompson, we see the effects of culture in the production of inaccurate visuals. They examined the effects of medieval medical representations of the female body and procedures for that body that were created by doctors who had no previous experience with an actual female patient and limited experience with the female form. They concluded that the visuals used endangered many women's lives because these visuals were inaccurate, but since they were pictorial representations by people who should know, other doctors, the pictures were accepted as fact. Even when the pictures did not match the actual body parts during a surgical procedure, allowances were made for the differences and, "thus inaccurate representations of the human body in anatomical texts would have necessarily carried over to the texts of surgical manuals and would have been literally inscribed onto the bodies of human patients" (210).

This is a rare situation, but one that shows the potential for human beings to be killed or to die because of inaccurate visuals and cultural biases. Brasseur and Thompson
encourage “modern technical writers, illustrators, and designers to become more aware that the visual choices they make reflect, consciously or unconsciously, their culture’s norms, behaviors, and expectations” (213). The medical doctor’s culture at the time was to suppress women and assume that since a woman was an extension of a man, then her body and genitalia must be analogous to those of a man as well. Our culture knows that to be untrue and can see the potential dangers.

I think Charles Kostelnick sums up the problems technical communicators face best when he says, “Pictures are imbued with a certain cultural knowledge that reflects the shared experience of viewers at a certain historical moment. Because this experience varies among groups of viewers, and over time, conveying practical information pictorially for a large, multicultural audience presents formidable barriers” (247). There is a large gap between what a technical communicator means and what the audience actually imposes on the picture. Even though we are trained to be able to communicate with all cultures, no one has the ability to experience all cultures and to know what others have experienced in order to tailor communications to them. And as technical communicators we have to remember that our audiences will assign their own links, what Stuart Hall calls articulations, to the visuals they see.

For example, Kostelnick talks about the effects a picture of a home could have on different audiences in his article, “Viewing Functional Pictures.” As shown in Figure 2, we see a drawing of a ranch style house. This house may contain familiar cues that some readers would understand but other readers would not be familiar with. Because this shared understanding does not exist, the other readers might not “understand or value its information
because they do not dwell—nor might they wish to be able to dwell—in this style of house. For these readers, the picture might diminish the credibility of the brochure or simply be regarded as anomalous” (249).

Along with their concern with visual communication and culture, scholars interested in the political aspects of visual communication are also concerned with power. Barton and Barton, for example, also have some other discussions about the political aspects of power and visuals in their article “Ideology and the Map: Toward a Postmodern Visual Design Practice.” The signified and signifier are terms for the thing and the rhetorical sign used to represent the thing. To illustrate the workings of the signified and signifier, a one-sided discussion of Huck Finn’s is reprinted. Huck looks at a map of the country where the states are delineated by colors. He maintains that he can tell where he is in the country by the color of the state because the two must coincide. According to Huck Finn, the signified and the signifier have an exact relationship.

Huck’s innocent viewpoint of the map is a very natural, common sensical approach. However, Barton and Barton feel that a map is an ideological document and therefore connected to power. A map is not the territory; it is made to represent the territory.
Recently, on a trip to Texas, I misunderstood that a short, straight line on the map meant a quick, straight drive. In reality, the drive was an hour and a half and the road had many twists and turns. The designers of the map had the power to make the road look much straighter than it really was in order for me to desire to use it. "Ultimately, the map in particular and, by implication, visual representation in general are seen as complicit with social-control mechanisms inextricably linked to power and authority" (Barton and Barton 53).

As ridiculous as this discussion of the road may seem, we have to acknowledge that less ridiculous examples exist. For example, a picture in a circular may show a diamond ring that costs one hundred dollars. In the picture, that ring is two times its actual size, far too large to cost only one hundred dollars. Inevitably, however, someone will go into the store to purchase the ring. By successfully marketing this ring, the merchant has succeeded in making society believe that the ring is necessary to their happiness and existence.

Barton and Barton define this process as "hegemony—a process by which certain definitions of reality attain dominance in a society, rather than a conspiracy on the part of the ruling group and a passive compliance by the dominated one" (53). This definition is followed by a definition of the rules of inclusion and exclusion. Ultimately, the article is about how important visuals are in the order of things. As technical communicators, we can privilege a visual to show certain things or omit certain things.

An example of this privileging and control is exemplified metaphorically by Barton and Barton's article "Modes of Power in Technical and Professional Visuals." The
the people in power and they have the power to see everything. The inmates have no power and cannot see anything including the guards who are watching them. The same thing happens with the production of visuals. The people who request their creation have the power to decide what they show and consequently what they omit. They viewers of these same visuals don’t have that power.

As I said earlier, the articulations that a viewer may bring to a visual are not always considered by technical communicators. There is pressure to produce and sometimes technical communicators bend and lose their ethical focus under the guise of being persuasive. Another contributing factor is the increased ability technical communicators have to distort, with the development of technology (Allen 88). Attractive, persuasive documents usually achieve the purpose of the contracting agency, but what about the audience? Allen says guidelines should be developed to promote the ethical and effective use of visual representations (88). This is the problem that will be focused on throughout the duration of this thesis: given the impact of culture and power, how can visual representation be done effectively, without sacrificing ethics? I will attempt to construct some guidelines based on my study and some research that will hopefully help technical communicators be effective and ethical in the future. This is an important contribution to the field of technical communication because as technical communicators we have to be aware of how we present images and the potential damages that can ensue.

*Importance to Iowa State*

As with many other universities, Iowa State is experiencing retention problems, the least of which are problems retaining minority students once they get to campus. My belief
is that the images and perceptions minority students have about Iowa State when they arrive conflict with their actual experiences and that this conflict may be a contributing factor to poor retention rates. Retention may be affected by a feeling of disappointment in minority student's visions not being realized, by not feeling wanted, and by feeling that they are not living up to the standards set up for them in the recruitment/promotional brochures.

A number of areas including recruitment may be affected by all of the unhappy people, whether they succeed or not, because they will not encourage their friends or family to come to Iowa State. I know that the whole recruitment and retention situation is far too complicated to nail down to one contributing factor, but I feel that if even one factor can be touched on and examined, then Iowa State can begin the process of dealing with that factor and potentially increasing the recruitment and retention rates of minority students that it committed to in the mid-eighties.

In the eighties, the Board of Regents set a mandate of 8.5% minority enrollment by 1991, according to a paper presented to the Board of Regents by Dr. George Jackson (1). Iowa State, attempting to achieve that mandate, developed a plan in 1987 called the 891 Plan. As stated by Iowa State University's president Martin Jischke in a speech on December 8, 1998, this is a very ambitious goal. "That's not an excuse, for I believe goals should be high. They should be a stretch. More importantly our diversity goals should reflect our role as a national and international university, not just a state or regional university."

I think part of the problem is what Iowa State considers success. In the same speech mentioned above, President Jischke was praising the increase in total minority student recruitment and retention. He said, "Over the past 10 years enrollment of under-represented
groups is up 30 percent, from 1,293 in Fall '89 to 1,687 in Fall '98; 5.1% in Fall '89 to 6.6% in Fall '98; and employment of under-represented group[s] faculty and staff has risen from just over 5.5 percent of our workforce to 7.5 percent.” These statistics as they are quoted are correct; however, the success has come at the expense of some minorities over others. After comparing the 1998-1999 ISU Fact Book, Dr. Jischke’s speech, and a paper written by Dr. George Jackson, I found that Iowa State has had some gains, but at what cost? Using figures for African American, American Indian/Alaskan Native, Asian/Pacific Islander, and Hispanic students, I found that the enrollment numbers show that Iowa State began active recruitment of some minority groups over others apparently to fix the low recruitment and retention statistics. African American and Hispanic groups showed a steady increase in enrollment numbers from 1971-1992 and then slacked off or even decreased until today. Meanwhile, the numbers for American Indian/Alaskan Native and Asian Pacific Islander have steadily risen over the period from 1994 until today. (Jackson; Jischke; ISU Fact Book)

Switching tactics from recruiting one minority group to another is a practice that Hall alludes to when he says, “The original critique of the predominant relations of race, representation and the politics which developed around it [race relations] have not and cannot possibly disappear while the conditions which gave rise to it[racism]-cultural racism in its Dewesbury form-not only persists but positively flourishes…” (“New Ethnicities” 442). I discuss this issue of race, representation, and politics in more depth in chapter three, but what it means is that the system that contributed the original low enrollment was not eradicated or fixed by the portrayals of minorities in the recruitment/promotional materials. It was only
patched over and remedied by the recruitment of a different set of minorities when the portrayals did not increase minority student enrollment numbers.

*Personal importance*

I entered Iowa State as a freshman in the fall of 1993. The promotional materials that were sent to me painted a picture of a campus that although challenging would be receptive to me as a black, Latin-American, first generation American. I received brochures that showed many pictures of minority students having lots of fun on campus while being involved in many of the activities. When I arrived, I discovered this was not the case. There were not many minority students and they were not having fun.

From my very first visit to the campus for orientation, I was overwhelmed by how few minority students I saw. I also began to worry about how well I would adjust to the environment of Iowa State. The attitude of myself and my fellow minority student peers was at the very least despondent and uninterested in Iowa State. Many of these students felt unwanted and unhappy about being in Iowa. Another prevailing discussion was the betrayal we felt because of our perception of being recruited under false pretenses. A large number of these students absented themselves from Iowa State after the first semester with a noticeable drop out rate every semester thereafter. I challenge that the images presented to minority students in Iowa State’s recruitment/promotional materials may contribute to disenchantment and subsequent absence from the university.

According to Stuart Hall’s articulation theory, the way images are presented can have an effect that technical communicators do not foresee or have control over. I believe that this happens with many of the minority students at Iowa State. I think that a lot of what they
believed they were coming into was presented by the university without sufficient thought given to how the images would be received. And if the effect of these images is a contributing factor, then I would like Iowa State to do something about it in order to insure that other minority students do not have some of the negative, preventable experiences that I had. I was strong enough to move past my disillusionment to finish not one, but two degrees. Everyone is not that strong, nor do they desire to push for what they want. If I can identify one barrier to obtaining an education that minority students on this campus face, then Iowa State can make moves toward eliminating that barrier.
CHAPTER 2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In the previous section, I discussed the reasoning behind my thesis and the lack of literature in the field of technical communication. The following section will examine the literature that does exist, first by examining literature available in media studies concerning visual communication, followed by an examination of Stuart Hall’s contribution to the theory of representation.

**Media studies**

The field of journalism or media studies has been in a tizzy since the early 1930s over the portrayal of blacks in advertising. In the beginning, roles for blacks were nonexistent. Then blacks were portrayed in subservient positions until today, when we are in token or symbolic positions. Consider this quote from Caroline Jones, the president of the Caroline Jones Agency, in a book by Dr. Marilyn Kern-Foxworth:

> Someone hands you a picture of your high-school class. The first thing you do is look for your friends to see how you look compared to them. Then you settle back and enjoy the picture as a whole. If you missed school that day and you’re not in the picture, you’d feel bad. But if someone arbitrarily cropped you out, you’d probably be angry. That’s how many blacks feel about much of the advertising presented about them. (131)

You may be wondering what the purpose of this quote is because the issue I’ve presented is the presentation of minorities, not their absence. I propose to take the quote further. What if, instead of cropping you out of the picture arbitrarily, someone pasted your picture in the book to make you feel better about not being in school that fateful day? It’s kind of reminiscent of the *Sesame Street* tune about one of these kids is doing their own thing, one of these kids is not the same. That’s what happens when someone tries to make up
for a past mistake by putting a Band-Aid on it instead of a splint. Everything just looks awkward. That's similar to what Iowa State's current minority students feel when they see black students in the recruitment/promotional materials that are sent out. They know that the campus does not have a large enough minority population to warrant the plethora of pictures, but the pictures exist and they are placed where they don't belong...where a lot of people missed class that day.

In the beginning of this section, I began by talking about the lack of minority representation in advertising and you maybe asking yourself now, "What does this have to do with her thesis?" Everything! In the past, we--minorities in general--were very focused on making sure that we were included, without stopping to think what consequences that inclusion would entail. As I will discuss later, minorities do not have the power to place themselves in these publications. Therefore they are at the mercy of the people who represent them without ever having walked a day in their shoes.

"Furthermore, many researchers argue that media portrayals of minorities tend to reflect whites' attitudes toward minorities, and therefore, reveal more about whites themselves than about the varied and lived experiences of minorities," (48) say Julia Bristor, Renee Lee, and Michelle Hunt concerning the images of African Americans in advertising. In other words, minorities become tokens instead of actual players. The term "token" can be defined in two ways, as a symbol of something that does not exist or as a pawn. Minorities are used as both. As a symbol of something that does not exist, they are usually the token put into a visual image to represent all of the other minorities who are not pictured. A black person stands for Chinese people, Indians, and Hispanics. The roles are interchangeable
because any of the minorities could fill in for the others. As a pawn, they are used to lure that
market. They are put into situations where their color will be appreciated because they have
been included and "recognized," but their representation does not serve any other purpose.
I’ll connect this to Iowa State. The images in their visuals are not reflective; they are meant
to attract minority students, but no real purpose is achieved because when the students arrive
at Iowa State they find out just how underrepresented they are. And then in the pictures, one
minority person per scene is enough to justify representation and inclusion. I know that Iowa
State does this to reach out to minority students and increase the number who attend Iowa
State, but it is an image created not a situation minority students actually experience when
they arrive on campus.

White reflections in portrayals of minorities are not the only way minorities are
disadvantaged by advertising. According to other media relations articles, minorities are
more likely to purchase a product when they are featured (Whittler 297; Whittler and DiMeo
37). Based on this fact, minorities have been the subject of a wide body of research that
exists concerning African American representation in product advertising. Researchers
examine if white people will still purchase products that are promoted by African American
consumers, if there is a correlation between people’s image of a product and its
representative, and if black people will be more likely to purchase a product because they are
featured using it. The answers to the questions above are yes, no, and yes according to
Tommy Whittler; William Qualls and David Moore; Tommy Whittler and Joan DiMeo; and
Carl Block.
It has become important to cater to a minority audience in order to obtain its business even if the representation is not real. According to an unpublished paper by Lucretia Carter, Ph.D. candidate, "there was a flurry of activity to multiculturalize [recruitment] books during the 1960s and early 1970s. (Giroux 12)" (Carter 1) This flurry came about to encourage minorities to purchase or use certain products. Also the use of minority representation is now acceptable where it wasn't in the 1930s because research says that companies will not lose their white customers if a black person uses the product.

Transpose this onto Iowa State University, which is a business. It is in the business of educating young minds. The Board of Regents determined in the 1980s that Iowa schools needed to increase their minority enrollment figures to 8.5%. In order for Iowa State to begin doing that, they needed to feature their intended audience using the product, meaning Iowa State's campus. In a videotaped lecture, Hall says, "No advertising images could work without being associated with it a kind of claim on identity. This is the sort of object that those sorts of people, in that kind of setting, or in that sort of setting are likely to use and wear." Basically, in order for any advertising claim to achieve its purpose, the audience has to identify with the person using the product. For minority students to believe that Iowa State is the place for them to be, they have to see someone who look like them using the product—the campus. However, the portrayal of the product usage is not completely accurate, nor is it flattering.

My research in media studies brought us through the early years when using minorities in advertisements was unacceptable and could have cost the company its white customer base. In the interim years, minority representation in visuals increased as an olive
branch to show minorities that they were included. Today, after much research and debate, it is okay to allow a minority to represent a product. Most times it is even required if minority clientele are being pursued because, if they do not see themselves using the product, then they will not use it.

**Stuart Hall**

Hall is renowned in the field of cultural studies. He provided me with the theories I will use to give meaning to the interviews I conducted. I will begin by defining representation. I will then move onto a discussion of absence and representation and, finally, to a discussion of power and representation.

**Representation**

Hall defines representation in two ways. The first is that “representation means using language to say something meaningful about, or to represent, the world meaningfully, to other people” (Representation 15); and the second is that representation is “an essential part of the process by which meaning is produced and exchanged between members of a culture. It does [his emphasis] involve the use of language, of signs and images which stand for or represent things. But this is far from a simple or straightforward process, as you will soon discover….Representation is the production of meaning through language” (Representation 15-16).

Hall has quite a few notions about how our views can affect how representation works, which is the reason why I chose him to be the major theorist on which this thesis is based. There are two definitions of representation, according to Hall. In a videotaped
lecture, "Representation and the Media," he says, "The traditional definition says that representation carries [the] notion of something that is already there."

Hall's personal definition differs significantly. He says, in the same lecture, that "representation [is] the way in which meaning is given to the things depicted." Hall describes the process of representation as being very complicated. Ideas like these are important for technical communicators. Consider, for example, a picture of two politicians speaking in close proximity to one another. Now, we may intend for that picture to depict friendship; however, a trash magazine could use it to depict a scandal of politicians fleecing America. Obviously things like this happen all the time because magazines like the Globe and the National Enquirer use one visual representations of an event to say many different things. It's all in their interpretation. Not only does Hall talk about the implications of images, but he brings up another point about how power is exercised in the media.

Groups that have the power have greater opportunity to be heard because they have greater accessibility to the media. Therefore, when people are in power, they control what images are presented of themselves (usually good) and what images are presented of others (could be bad or good depending on the relationship the power culture has with that particular other). In the same lecture mentioned above, Hall said that "messages work in complex ways and they are always connected with the way power works in everyday society....Communication is linked with power and those groups who wield power in a society influence what gets represented." These statements were made by Hall while discussing the number of messages an image can have and who controls the image. Power is
connected naturalization, our next topic of discussion, because the people with the power can control the way images are represented which is closely connected to representation.

According to Hall, naturalization is defined as "a representational strategy designed to fix 'difference,' and thus secure it forever. It is an attempt to halt the inevitable 'slide' of meaning, to secure discursive or ideological 'closure'" (Representation 245). Naturalization is also a strategy used by professional communicators to show a "vision," in order to persuade an audience to believe something. It works by closing off alternative representations.

**Absence and representation**

This next quote from Hall’s videotaped lecture is a nice segue into my next topic of discussion, which is the significance of absence when analyzing images. “Every image that we see is read in part by what isn’t there.” When something is not there, do we question why? Do we assume it doesn’t exist? Doesn’t deserve to exist? Or, do we not even notice depending on who or what is missing? Originally, the problem with representation in the recruitment/promotional materials was the lack of minority representation. As stated in my earlier discussion, a flurry then ensued to include minority representation in the materials. However, this representation was not altogether beneficial because the problems that created the lack of representation in the first place were not solved. If there are no minorities present, then you cannot create them by putting pictures of them where you hope they will appear.

As Hall states, “You can no longer conduct black through the strategy of a simple set of reversals, putting in the place of the bad old essential white subject, the new essentially good black subject” (“New Ethnicities” 445). The situation is more complex than simply
presenting a positive image in place of a negative, or presenting a different or new image, because the conditions that created the problem still exist. ("New Ethnicities" 449). Since that is the case, then the situation needs to be presented in its complexity. In another article, Hall tells us that inclusion does not mean that exclusion has been eliminated ("Allon" 303). The politics of race and representation cannot disappear while the conditions that created it still exist ("New Ethnicities" 442).

**Power and representation**

In our earlier discussion of hegemony, Barton and Barton said, “Prime targets for exclusion are members of the non hegemonic groups, what is commonly referred to in the critical literature as the Other” ("Ideology" 60). The dominant group has the power to control inclusion and exclusion, but in the case of Iowa State and recruitment/promotional materials minorities have been not been excluded, just redefined. Marxist literary critic Williams is quoted saying about the hegemonic process “[that] certain meanings and practices are chosen for emphasis, certain other meanings and practices are neglected and excluded….reinterpreted, diluted, or put into forms which support or at least do not contradict other elements within the effective dominant culture” (qtd. In Barton and Barton 53). People in power can represent, in any fashion, people who are not in power. As we can see from Williams, that representation can take many forms.

Can any minority be accurately represented without access to the power to represent? That is the question I pose. I say that is not a possibility and so does Hall. What actually happens is that the cultures being defined are defined through the eyes of the dominant culture.
The struggle to come into representation was predicated on a critique of the degree of fetishization, objectification and negative figuration which are so much a feature of the representation of the black subject...The cultural politics and strategies which developed around this critique had many facets, but its two principal objects were: first the question of access [his emphasis] to the rights to representation by black artists and black cultural workers themselves. Second, the contestation [his emphasis] of the marginality, the stereotypical quality and the fetishized nature of images of blacks, by the counter-position of a ‘positive’ black imagery. These strategies were principally addressed to changing what I would call the ‘relations of representation.’ (“New Ethnicities” 442)

Iowa State students are struggling to be able to contest the images that represent them. In order to contest the images they also need access to the representations in order to make the visuals more accurate.

In chapter 4, I will revisit the themes that I presented in this chapter: media portrayals of minorities in typical advertising materials, the reflection of minorities in white portrayals, and catering to a minority audience in order to obtain their business; and Hall’s assertions about representation being far from a straight forward process when culture is a factor, naturalization being a strategy to fix difference, absence where what is not pictured affects audience perception, and power being used to represent a group that doesn’t have power.
CHAPTER 3. EXAMINATION OF THE VISUALS IN RECRUITMENT/PROMOTIONAL MATERIALS

In this chapter, I will first describe the historical context behind the recruitment/promotional materials used by Iowa State from 1989-1997, in order to put my discussion that follows concerning my interviews in context. Then I will describe the visuals in the materials I used for my interview sessions, along with the articulations or linkages of those visuals to other representations.

Historical contextualizing of the materials

How are the recruitment/promotional materials for Iowa State and minority students produced? This question is interesting and complex. Phil Caffrey, director of admissions for Iowa State University, says that the materials are produced based on the past success or failure of recruitment.

In the early 1980s and the 1990s, the number of graduating seniors overall declined 33% (Caffrey) nationwide. Recruitment was down, and all colleges needed to work harder to attract prospective students. A consulting group, Communicorp out of Atlanta, Georgia, was hired and changes in the recruitment/promotional materials were suggested. Although, Iowa State wanted control over the changes that were made, an agreement was made to let Communicorp create materials that were more persuasive.

Communicorp came to Iowa State and interviewed students in order to find the “flavor” of the university. Communicorp produced the Viewbook that so many potential students received from 1992 to 1997. The photographic images in the recruitment/promotional materials that became Iowa State were created by Communicorp.
“However, these images may not have been accurate” (Caffrey). For example, the cover for all of the Viewbooks contained a picture of a black person who is and looks like an administrator conversing with two students on the steps of Alumni Hall. The picture is not inaccurate, but it’s not a common sight nor is it one that I have ever seen in my six years at Iowa State. I say this mostly because there are not many black faculty or administrators on this campus. And since teachers are so overworked, you rarely see faculty of any kind sitting shooting the breeze with students.

Different Viewbooks were created for the different audiences because people, prospective minority students, thought recruiting this way would be more effective. According to Caffrey, recruiters attended the SERO/NSSFNS and National Hispanic Institute (NHI) fairs in order to recruit students. The students who attended these fairs told Iowa State recruiters that they probably could not consider Iowa State because in previous recruiting materials, the presence of minorities on campus was not apparent and they felt the materials needed to be changed to reflect the minority presence and to establish whatever minority community actually existed at Iowa State.

**Description of the visuals in recruitment/promotional materials and articulations in those images**

In order to conduct a thorough interview, I used a number of different recruitment/promotional materials from a number of different administrative units and years. In this chapter, I will only focus on the materials that received the most attention during the interview process: an ISU Viewbook, a graduate studies brochure, a brochure from Minority
Student Affairs (MSA), a Multicultural Support Group (MSG) brochure, and an MSA booklet.

*The Viewbook*

The ISU Viewbook was used by the Office of Admissions from 1989 to 1997. All prospective students were sent some type of Viewbook because it contained the application for admission. The Viewbook is an 8 1/2 X 11 book. The cover and back are glossy cardstock. The first sixteen pages are glossy 8 1/2 X 11 pages, and the next fifteen are a parchment type of paper. The pictures, as shown in Appendix D, are in both black and white and color.

The pictures on the first few pages in the book are of people on Iowa State's campus doing ordinary, everyday things like studying, listening in class, or walking to class. What's very noticeable in the pictures is the absence of any minority students for the first six pages of the book. Then we have a picture of a black male not really doing anything; he appears to be holding the camera he was photographed with. Two pages after that we have more black male students, but they are in football gear on the football field so we cannot see their faces. This image can be linked the idea that black people are usually only recruited for some "superior" athletic ability and not for their educational prowess, so the absence of their faces is justifiable.

This stereotype of athletic ability and being black is reinforced by the absence of a different portrayal: for the most part, the images of minority students lack a connection with the work of being in college. There are no pictures of minority students in classes or studying, which are the main reasons most people come to college. The image created is one of minorities not being serious students because they are only shown performing on the
athletic field, getting on the bus or walking on campus, never actually in class. They are not always shown as athletes, which is positive, but they are not seen participating in the academically related activities either.

"Graduate Study...It Works for Your Future"

The "Graduate Study...It Works for Your Future" brochure used by the Iowa State University Graduate Studies Program from about 1994-1996 was sent to prospective minority graduate students as a recruiting tool. Only six panels of this eight-panel brochure are shown in Appendix A because a sufficient understanding can be drawn from the panels that are displayed. The pictures are diverse, showing minority students from a variety of ethnicities. On the cover, there is a picture of Dr. Carlye Tartakov, an African American professor in the Curriculum and Instruction Department at Iowa State University. There are other pictures of graduate students interacting with each other in front of the library, working outside of class on what appears to be classwork, interacting with younger children in a kind of teaching atmosphere, and enjoying family time.

These pictures give an aura of belonging. The people look happy for the most part and well adjusted. We also see them as a part of the academic atmosphere, which is absent from the Viewbook. However, graduate studies are automatically associated with extra work and academics, so it would be very unusual to omit visualizations of academics in the photos. Graduate students also have a different purpose for being in school. I would not say that a social life is foreign to us, but for the most part we have accepted the fact that our days of nonstop socializing are over. Another difference between the brochure and the Viewbook is the absence of any white students in the brochure except in the background of a picture where
a white professor is in the backdrop. This view is harmful because there aren’t really that many minority students on Iowa State campus. When incoming minority students see the brochures, they falsely believe that Iowa State has an abundance of minority students.

"Helping You Feel at Home"

The “Helping You Feel at Home” brochure used by MSA from 1995-1998 is a multi-page, full-color brochure that is about 3 1/2 X 7. It provided general information about MSA and the programs offered. The Office Admissions would send the brochure with its admissions information, and MSA would send it upon request, or to recruit new students. The brochures were also sent with recruiters on recruiting trips to give to prospective minority students. It is designed to be conveniently carried. The pictures in the brochure show full representations of minority students seemingly engaged in the day-to-day activities of being on a college campus. They are carrying books, smiling, and looking happy and studious. The impression of studiousness comes from the seven out ten featured people who are carrying backpacks or books and seem pleased about it. The students featured are from a variety of ethnic backgrounds: Mexican, African American, Hispanic, Asian American, Asian, and American Indian.

The pictures make it seem as if all minority student needs are well met by MSA. MSA is very helpful to Iowa State’s minority students, but MSA does not have the ability to solve all problems especially when they relate to specifics within college. The visuals also make it seem like multicultural events are an integral part of campus life, and that everyone participates; however, that is sadly untrue.
evokes a lot of emotion for a number of reasons that I will go into later. The picture shows six students in a pyramid formation. The picture brings to mind a couple of different scenarios; the first is that all minority students can lean on one another and we all can depend on one another. I get this image because everyone in the pyramid is essentially relying on someone else. The people on the bottom are relying on each other to relieve the burden of the people who are on top of them. And the people on the higher levels are relying on the people under them to hold them up. Another scenario brought to my mind is of cheerleading. I found this image the most interesting because of the lack of minority cheerleaders on Iowa State's cheerleading squads. There were a few for a while. During one year there were two, and one of them left the squad because of a numerous incidents that occurred where she felt that her presence was not wanted. The other one made captain and brought some other minority cheerleaders onto the squad with her, but when she graduated and left the squad went back to how it was in the beginning.

"Where Everyone Can Become Their Best"

The newer recruiting brochure used by MSA from 1998 through the present is a bright, full colored brochure that is 8 1/2 X 11. It provides general information about MSA and the programs offered. The brochure is utilized in exactly the same fashion as the "Helping You Feel At Home" brochure. The brochure was updated to keep up with the times and to accommodate the new director of Minority Student Affairs, Rafael Rodriguez. Again, the pictures in the brochure show full representations of minority students seemingly engaged in the day-to-day activities of being on a college campus. The front cover shows a minority student from almost every available American-ethnic background smiling at the camera. In
the brochure, they are carrying books, smiling, attending classes, and participating in extracurricular activities. The difference between this booklet and the previous one is that there are interactions shown between white faculty and students and minority students. The inside cover contains letters from Rafael Rodriguez and Martin Jischke welcoming minority students to Iowa State, encouraging their success and reaffirming the university's commitment to diversity. The rest of the photos show ethnically diverse programs on campus and involvement in all aspects of campus life. Again these pictures paint a picture of university life for minority students that is not wholly accurate.

As we have seen, the visuals used to recruit minority students to Iowa State overwhelmingly represent the campus as being ethnically diverse. This ethnic diversity is not true and may be harmful to the minority students who receive and look at the visuals as we will discuss in the next chapter.
CHAPTER 4. DISCUSSION OF RESEARCH

This chapter will focus on my study. I have talked about the field of technical communication and visual representations; media studies and minority representational strategies and progressions; and the recruitment/promotional materials used to recruit minority students. In this chapter I will apply Stuart Hall's theories of representation to interpret and discuss the interviews that I had with my subjects about Iowa State's recruitment/promotional materials. I will first cover the procedure I used for conducting my interviews, and then the results and a discussion of my interviews.

Methods

In the beginning, I had planned to go out to meetings and talk to students, explain my thesis, and then ask for their participation. I had planned to give my questionnaire to the students who were interested, ask for their responses to my questionnaire, and collate their feedback. However, as I narrowed down the questions I wanted to ask and the depth of the responses I was seeking, I realized that I would have to have a more personal interaction with my subjects. I had always planned to arrange the interviewees into categories of graduated, non-matriculating, and current students so that I could get as broad a sample of students as possible. I assumed that I could call people on the phone if I ran out of eligible people in any category on this campus.

After my first big decision about personal interaction, I decided to interview 60+ students. I wanted my study to be all-encompassing, but because of time restraints I narrowed my scope to 15 to 20 students. The students I picked were not a representative or random sample. I gathered names from personal experience, friends, and administrators. I
also spoke to a number of minority student groups about my thesis and asked who would be willing to participate. I gathered their names and phone numbers. When I got approval from the Human Subjects Committee to do my interviews, I called all of the people whose names were on my lists and arranged meeting times and places that my interviewees were comfortable with. All of this was done on a first come, first serve basis. Once a category had five names and interview times, I began to focus on the other two categories.

Eventually I set up five interviews with graduated and current students and three interviews with non-matriculating students. I was very successful finding people who were still on campus and who wanted to be interviewed. I was marginally successful at finding graduates. And I found that it was very hard to find people who hadn’t graduated and were not planning to come back. I decided to talk to people who had not attended Iowa State in three or more semesters and who did not plan to come back in the next year or so. It became a real challenge because people I knew who were out of school for years had suddenly re-enrolled in droves, which explains why I only have three people in that category.

As I said earlier, I arranged to meet my interviewees in a place of their choosing, either at home or on campus during the early evening. I came equipped with a tape recorder, the consent form, and the questionnaire. I talked to them freely about everything but the interview, explaining that I didn’t want to taint their responses. They were given the consent forms to sign, and while they signed them I put out copies of the brochures and pamphlets that I had collected. A few of these brochures and pamphlets came from my visits to various offices and departments on campus that were a part of admissions or that had a significant amount of initial contact with students prior to the beginning of their first semester. The rest
of the brochures and pamphlets were loaned to me courtesy of Lucretia O. Carter, who also
did a master’s thesis that focused on recruitment/promotional materials. When my
interviewees indicated they were ready to start, I started the tape recorder. Most interviews
ranged from 25 to 40 minutes. I asked questions that, as you can see from Appendix F, were
short, and I basically let my interviewees do most of the talking. After some discussion with
my committee members, I decided to transcribe the five to six hours of tapes I had
accumulated from my interviews.

Results and discussion

Before I begin this discussion of the results of my interviews, I would like to say that
this was a qualitative study and by no means representative of all minority students on
campus. The scope of my study was limited due to time and access to students. I also
acknowledge that my interpretations of the data are represented in the quotes I have chosen
and the scenarios I focus on. In some cases, I let one person speak for all of the participants
who said the same thing because they said it best. I do feel that some valuable information is
provided that could help Iowa State represent itself to minority students as effectively as
possible while still increasing recruitment and retention rates.

In the sections that follow, I will describe my interviewees first by giving an account
of the expectations that each had and their reasons for coming to Iowa State. Table 1,
categorizing their ethnicities, will follow this section, and then I will discuss representation,
absence and representation, and power and representation of minority students using the
interviews that I conducted. I will analyze the interviews using Stuart Hall’s theories.
Description of Interviewees

My first interviewee was Renae\(^1\). She is a mixed black/native American. Originally from Boston, Massachusetts, as an adolescent, she moved to Kansas City, Kansas, where she did the majority of her schooling. Before she came to Iowa State in 1992, she expected an atmosphere that would offer African American students a great deal of support from African American faculty and peers. Her reasons for coming to Iowa State were that she received the George Washington Carver scholarship, had a previous bad perception of another college as compared to Iowa State, and believed that as an African American her attendance at an all-white university would help her get a job.

I've known Renae for six years. She introduced me to Iowa State and became my first friend. It was interesting to me to hear her views on a lot of things concerning her attendance at Iowa State because she typically does not voice her opinions about things going on on campus and she usually seems happy to be attending Iowa State. I've never realized that she had so many experiences that were similar to my own.

My second interviewee was Carl. He is of mixed black and white parentage. He is from Mendota Heights, Minnesota, which is a suburb of St. Paul, Minnesota. He is from a Catholic, military school background. He had no real positive expectations about Iowa State because of an older brother's college experiences and because he felt he knew something of Iowa State through its close proximity to Mendota Heights and its athletic program. His reason for coming to Iowa State in 1993 was that he had a full scholarship. I've known Carl

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\(^1\) All interviewees were assigned pseudonyms and numbers to protect their identities.
since my second semester at Iowa State. He typically is a very unemotional sort of guy and that carried though in his interview.

My third interviewee was Maria. She is Latin American, originally from El Salvador. In her adolescent years she moved to Ames and attended school in Ogden, Iowa. Before coming to Iowa State in 1992, from previous experience and the promotional materials she had the mindset that college was for fun times and she was expecting Iowa State to be that fun place to be and to learn. She came to Iowa State because her family wanted her to stay close by in Iowa. I've known Maria for about five years. She has attended Iowa State on and off for the entire time.

My fourth interviewee was Georgia. She is originally from Chicago, Illinois, where she attended high school and took many Advanced Placement courses. Before she came to Iowa State in 1995, she was expecting to have organizations to join, people who looked like her, and a community atmosphere where she would be helped. She came to Iowa State because her father and mother really wanted her at Iowa State since it was very cheap and close to home.

I met Georgia when I was asking for volunteers to participate in my study. She is a very quiet person. During the course of her interview I was drawn to her experiences. The traumas that she experienced have not had as negative an effect as one would expect. She has persevered and is doing quite well. On the flip side, when she was recounting some of her more traumatizing experiences, she became extremely loquacious as her voice got lower. It was very difficult to transcribe her interview during those periods.
My fifth interviewee was Tonya. She is from Des Moines, Iowa, where she went to high school and took advanced classes. Before she came to Iowa State, she knew that she would be in an academically challenging, big-school environment where lack of money would be a problem. She came to Iowa State because it was close to home and she could get a cheap, good education.

Tonya and I have been friends since the end of my first semester here. She also surprised me during her interview when she expressed anger at her surroundings while she was at Iowa State and at the favoritism displayed to out-of-state students.

My sixth interviewee was Jerome. He is from Washington, D.C., where his high school was on a college campus and students were encouraged to use the city as a resource while taking college classes. Before coming to Iowa State in 1995, he didn’t have any expectations of the university as far as academics. He was, however, concerned about the lack of multiculturalism since he was from a very multicultural environment, but he thought that since there were so few minorities, the minority community would be much stronger and tighter than it was when he arrived at Iowa State. He came to Iowa State because the whole process was easy. He didn’t have to apply and he was offered a full scholarship. If he hadn’t taken the scholarship at Iowa State, then he wouldn’t have had the financial support from his parents to achieve his education.

Jerome is another quiet individual who spoke at great length about his experiences at Iowa State. Jerome is an avid students leader, but he works quietly and efficiently behind the scenes. I was surprised by how willing he was to talk and how much he had to say. I learned a lot about Jerome as an individual through my interview.
My seventh interviewee was Charlene. She is from Chicago, Illinois, where she participated in a very accelerated program from the 7th to the 12th grades. Before she came to Iowa State in 1996, she was expecting to have to work hard because she had had a lot of contact with her advisor, but she was still expecting a “welcome wagon.” She came to Iowa State because it was free and if she had paid for school it would have been too expensive for her to continue her education. In addition, her mother wanted her at Iowa State because it was close to home, and she wanted to be here because it was far enough from home that she could be independent. Finally, she talked to her advisor who made her feel comfortable.

I had no prior contact with Charlene before her interview. She seemed like a loner when I noticed her on campus two years ago and I never really got to know her. I regret that decision because she seems like a very interesting individual with a lot to say.

My eighth interviewee was Sandra. She is originally from Chicago, Illinois. She had many expectations about Iowa State before she came in 1994: a technology oriented environment, a lot of athletic opportunities, a very secluded atmosphere, a separation from her white peers because they would not want to be involved with her, and a sense of comfort. Her situation is unique in that she did not decide to come to Iowa State until the very last minute, almost the week before classes started. She came to Iowa State because of the great financial aid package that she was offered. Her parents were going to be paying about eight thousand dollars less for her to attend Iowa State.

I was Sandra’s Cyclone Aide when she came to orientation in June of 1994. Her mother pulled me aside and asked, ‘What was the real deal with this campus?’ I told her as much as I could. Sandra and I became friends when she came to Iowa State in August and
moved onto my floor. I was and am still in a sense her mentor, but my interview with her was an eye opener. She is usually a very happy individual and the tears that came out in her interview were surprising and distressing to me.

My ninth interviewee was Fia. She is of bi-racial Puerto-Rican/African American heritage. She is originally from a northwest suburb of Chicago, where she went to high school. Before she came to Iowa State in 1993, she expected college to be like it is in the movies, where she would have a rich cultural experience in an environment that was a microcosm of the world: she also expected to “find” herself. She came to Iowa State because of the heavy recruiting that Iowa State did to get her here and because she thought she would have lots of help.

Fia has been an acquaintance since our freshman year and a close friend for about four. Fia is very proud of being a Midwestern girl, but the depth of anger expressed in her interview was surprising to me. She is normally a very talkative individual and that did not stop in the course of her interview.

My tenth interviewee was Rico. He is originally from Brooklyn in New York City, where he went to a specialized high school. Before he came to Iowa State in 1993, he thought that he would be in a highly challenging scholastic environment where he would have lots of fun and have a good sports team to root for. I’ve known Rico since high school. He and I were the only ones to come to Iowa State from our alma mater. The surprise was that Rico and I have had very different experiences since we came to Iowa State even though we were from the same environment. He was happy about his stay at Iowa State with a few minor complaints about weather and entertainment.
My eleventh and final interviewee was Mark. He is originally from Chicago, Illinois, but half way through high school he moved to Minneapolis, Minnesota, where he finished high school. Before he came to Iowa State in 1991, he expected Iowa State to have a calm, professional, comfortable environment. He came to Iowa State on a last minute whim: it was a school that was close but not too far from Minneapolis, and it was a big name school.

I have known Mark as an acquaintance for about four years, but as a friend since he became a father two years ago. My personal image of Mark was as a slacker who did not complete his tenure at Iowa State because it interfered with his social life, but I found out in his interview that he hasn’t graduated because he no longer wanted to be an Iowa State student once he arrived on campus.

Now that you’ve met my interviewees, let’s see what they have to say.

**Representation**

Throughout this thesis, representation has been defined in many different ways: as a means to represent the world through language, as an essential part of the process by which meaning is exchanged, as the notion of something that is already there, and as the way meaning is given to things depicted. It is easy to see that representation means different things to different people.

In another section of his book on representation, Stuart Hall defines it as “a complex business and, especially when dealing with ‘difference,’ it engages feelings, attitudes, and emotions and it mobilizes fears and anxieties in the viewers, at deeper levels than we can explain in a simple common sense way” (226). Difference and emotion are crucial to my thesis, especially because my interviewees were affected emotionally by the visual...
Table 1: Ethnic distribution of the interviewees

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Interviewees</th>
<th>Non-Matriculating</th>
<th>Current</th>
<th>Graduate</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Latin American</td>
<td>African American</td>
<td>Caribbean American</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renae</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Carl</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Maria</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Georgia</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tonya</td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jerome</td>
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<td>X</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Charlene</td>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Sandra</td>
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<tr>
<td>Fia</td>
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<td>Rico</td>
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<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mark</td>
<td>X</td>
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</tbody>
</table>

representations in the promotional/ recruitment materials they received. Difference means a few things to me: difference in interpretations of the atmosphere at Iowa State, difference in the perception of what representation means, and the difference in the way cultures are portrayed in Iowa State promotional materials. When all of these differences conflict and coincide with each other, there will inevitably be powerful feelings, sometimes negative as is the case with most of my interviewees, evoked. I use this quote mostly because of the direction that my discussion of interviews will take. A lot of emotions come out in these interviews.

What does representation mean in all of these promotional materials? Why do people expect different things? What does all of this ultimately mean? The last question will be
answered in chapter 5, the implications chapter. The other two questions are answered by the quote at the beginning of this section. A representation does not mean the same thing to all people, and beneficial or harmful representation sometimes depends on the level of emotion evoked by the image.

To some of my interviewees, representations in the materials were taken at face value, and others expected the brochures to be a completely false view of the university because they realized that they were recruitment/promotional documents. Those interpretations came out in their different assumptions and experiences. For instance, Renae was expecting to be alone. She was not expecting an environment where she could get along with her white professors and interact with them the same way that she did with her black professors. The recruitment/promotional materials that she received didn’t show a lot of contact between people who looked like her, minority students, and administrators. So when she got to Iowa State and realized that black faculty and staff were not in abundance, she began to worry about who she would talk to about any problems that came up in her life relating to school and otherwise.

I think and I don’t know if this has a whole lot to do with being African American, but when I got here I kind of...on a negative turn I kind of felt that it was gonna be kinda awkward being here. Because with not a lot of with not a lot of black professors, I wouldn’t have anybody to talk to you know if I did have a problem or whatever. As far as like if I had a problem with a grade or if I was having problems with a class or whatever.... You know if I had gone to one of my professors and talked to them about a situation I would be having or I would be missing class.

Her experience was very different from that; she found that she was not alone. She had some very good experiences with her white professors that were not expected.
...they've [her white professors] been really good about you know being helpful and doing whatever they can to help me out. And I didn't expect that. I really didn't. I expected just the opposite.... I've never had a problem like that with a professor. I've never had a problem where I got the distinct impression that the professor didn't want to help me because I was a black student or whatever.

Where would this expectation come from? It's easy. In the recruitment/promotional materials that Renae received, she was constantly bombarded with images of a black community that would take care of her every need but without any connection to the white community that inevitably dominates a small town in Iowa like Ames. Without actual experience, she couldn't know that her professors would be willing to help her regardless of whether she were black or white. Iowa State's promotional materials missed the opportunity to show their students of color that there is academic interaction between minority and majority groups.

Georgia had a very different experience. How was Iowa State represented to her? "All of the material that they sent me had lots of black people in it and I was thinking 'Oh wow I can see a lot of black people there.' Then, you know, I can meet a lot of people and have good times even though it's a predominantly white school." Georgia's reasons for being excited about this possible atmosphere were simple. She had never been away from home for an extended period of time. She needed to know that she could be away from home and find herself in an environment conducive to learning and comfort and finding herself. But she says that what she found was different.

I called and I asked admissions to send me a catalog. I looked up what the ratios were and I calculated and I'm like hold up this is only three hundred and something. And I'm like this doesn't look like what they sent me and then not too long after that I get this [Viewbook] and I'm like... All these
black people... I'm mean that's not representative of real life with the
calculations I made.

Not only did she find out that there were fewer black people than she thought, but her
experiences left a lot to be desired, as I will discuss later in this chapter.

To Fia, Iowa State was represented as a culturally diverse environment. She says,

[I got the impression that] this is a rich cultural environment. That culturally I was going to come in contact with a lot of people that were going to enlighten me on a lot of different things about the world that I would never know unless I had traveled. When I got here it was like, I don't know.... Iowa State to me just presented itself like a total contradiction. This big ass university, but there was gonna be a support system. I was not only gonna be supported and nurtured in my learning process, but I was gonna learn about people and the world and stuff like that. I was not supported nor nurtured through my learning process, nor did I learn sh*t about anybody outside of these little f*cking farmers from Iowa. That's awful to say I'm sorry.

Fia was understandably upset by the idea that Iowa State misrepresented itself. Fia
comes from an environment where she was always challenged and unhappy about her
parentage. She was called a half-breed by her African American counterparts and impure by
her Puerto-Rican counterparts. It was especially important for her to be in an environment
where she wouldn't be an anomaly. She no longer wanted to be different and be the only
person of color. She wanted to meet other people like herself—not necessarily people in the
same situation—which is what she found at Iowa State. Once again she was the only
minority in the group and she felt betrayed because she didn’t get what she was expecting.

Another factor of the representational tactics employed in the
recruitment/promotional materials that Iowa State sent to minority students was what the
actual campus climate would be when they arrived here. The large number of minority
students depicted in the recruitment/promotional materials when Renae and Mark arrived at
Iowa State wasn’t very far from being accurate. Renae said that from looking at the brochure,

...it shows all these black people and everybody is smiling and everybody seems to be getting along, and unfortunately as the years have gone by, and I’ve been here for seven years so I’ve seen a lot of changes... it’s just like the black community has gone from supportive to almost... I don’t know how to even say it... things have changed so much. I mean we don’t get along.... And when you look at these brochures it makes it seem like, oh the black people up there are so nice, and they seem like they get along really well and we don’t. We don’t.

Renae was admitted to attend Iowa State in the fall of 1992. When she got here, there were lots of minority students and they did get along as well as the brochures depicted. It wasn’t an unusual thing to see lots of black, Asian, white, and Latino students hanging around together and playing games out in the Towers Residence Halls where she lived, but these same brochures were still being used later when the population’s numbers had shifted and/or decreased. Mark’s experience was much the same. He remembers a very supportive minority student population and a very supportive experience because the minority population was much larger and the racial/living conditions were harder to deal with when he arrived in 1991 than they are now with causing bonding among the black community.

Georgia and Jerome, coming into Iowa State three to four years after Renae and Mark, received the same materials that Renae and Mark received, but their experiences were entirely different because of the population changes.

By the time Jerome and Georgia were recruited to Iowa State, recruiting patterns had changed. Minority students were not recruited from all over the United States. The suburbs were seen as a safer place to recruit minority students from. The survival, bonding mentality that existed as late as 1993 changed because the people coming in were not desperate for
education. For the most part, they were from affluent, well-balanced households and they had choices about their education. This changed the way minority students on campus interacted with each other. In the past, everyone learned to speak to any minority they saw in class because it was such a rare occurrence and sometimes that hello could get a person through the day. People no longer said hi as they passed between classes. Most of the old traditions that folks used to maintain the community fell by the wayside as people moved off campus and minority students moved to other sections of the campus such as the Union Drive or Richardson Court Association.

Jerome was expecting Iowa State’s minority population to be very supportive and close knit based on what he saw in the promotional materials that he received. The pictures were no longer the reality and he expresses distress about the lack of support that he received from minority students on campus.

...you kind of think that when you get here, because there aren’t a lot of black people and knowing that a lot of them at this school are from you know other areas...that people might be a little closer than they actually are...just like the whole thing, like you know, speaking when you’re on campus, things like that, and maybe that’s something that you might think just from, you know, some of the brochures, I mean, that might be something which you might expect.... just from interactions with people on campus, I mean, it’s not really, I don’t think, a very, you know, warm caring environment. Especially among minority students on campus.

Who has the power to control the way visual image depictions of minority students are established? Iowa State had the power to design these manuals, but no one could foresee how the visuals would be interpreted. If you remember from chapter 3, we talked about meaning and representation. According to the concept of representation, meaning is not
inherent; it is constructed. As we can see, many meanings were assigned to the representations presented in the recruitment/promotional materials.

My interviewees had a wide variety of experiences based on how Iowa State was represented to them. Hall uses movies as a means to explain how these different situations occur and why they are problematic. In his article “New Ethnicities,” he talks about the extreme diversity of people in the same culture.

What is at issue here is the recognition of the extraordinary diversity of subjective positions, social experiences and cultural identities which compose the category ‘black’...which cannot be grounded in a set of fixed trans-cultural or transcendental racial categories and which therefore has no guarantees in nature....We should put this as plainly as possible. Films are not necessarily good because black people make them. They are not necessarily ‘right-on’ by virtue of the fact that they deal with the black experience. (443)

Black or minority is not an all-encompassing term. It should not describe all of the thoughts, feelings, likes or dislikes of any race of people any more than the term color should be used to fully describe orange, purple, blue, green, or gold. Hall is basically saying that including happy black people in pictures does not ensure that all blacks put in the same situation will be happy. Hope does not make reality. According to Dr. George Jackson, many of these recruitment/promotional materials were designed with the hope that Iowa State would become diverse if many pictures of minority students were included in the materials. The process worked in a problem/solution format: problem—lack of minority representation on campus, Iowa State unable to meet the Board of Regents 8.5% minority mandate; solution—include more minorities in recruitment/promotional materials in staged and actual photographs, more minorities will come to Iowa State, the pictures will become a reality.

Sadly that is not the case and it moves us into a detailed discussion about how Iowa State
attempted to remedy its diversity problems by including minorities and how that played out with minority students. In chapter three, we discussed absence and representation. The theory, according to Hall, is that people will define an image by what is not there. What was absent from the visual depictions of Iowa State’s campus were unstaged, everyday representations of the environment minority students would be in.

**Absence and representation**

Another Hall quote is a perfect opener for this section. “Racism, of course, operates by constructing impassable symbolic boundaries between racially constituted categories, and its typically binary system of representation constantly marks and attempts to fix and naturalize the difference between belongingness and otherness” ("New Ethnicities" 445). I do not believe that Iowa State was trying to create a boundary between its minority and majority population. On the contrary, as we found out in the last section, they were trying to decrease the lack of diversity through their recruitment/promotional materials. They downplayed the fact that most of their white students cannot and do not know how to relate to minorities of any kind. I know from experience how amazing and sometimes disheartening that is.

As an English major, I found that more than 75% of the classes in my major contained no minority students whatsoever. I always felt alone in my opinions and in the class as a whole. Not to say that all minorities would share my opinion, but at least I would feel that someone would have shared some of the life experiences that I had. I used to be so hurt sitting in classes and never having anyone to relate to or work with. You see, until I became thoroughly acquainted with people in my major, I was usually the only or last person
who didn’t have a partner. That could have been for many reasons, but I never saw any of my white counterparts experiencing the same thing. This feeling doesn’t stop either. In the beginning of this semester, I enrolled for a weight lifting class. The first day of class the TA asked everyone to separate into pairs. The pairs formed rather quickly, and no one picked me or looked in my direction. Even the people who were standing next to me went to the other side of the room. It is easy to assume that everyone knew each other, but I would find that hard to believe when many were asking the names of their partners. Needless to say, I dropped the class. The question I ask is, did Iowa State succeed at decreasing its lack of diversity with its recruitment/promotional materials, and if so, at what cost?

Iowa State represented itself as a very diverse environment where minority students would feel comfortable because they would not be alone. This strategy is in contrast to what most people know about Iowa. It is not a very populated state with regard to minorities, or as a matter of fact white people. That is evidenced by the fact that many presidential candidates only bother to come to Iowa because the first caucuses are held here. Otherwise, there aren’t many votes to campaign for here. Iowa is also isolated and landlocked, so many have an idea of Iowa as wild wilderness. In the recruitment/promotional materials, Iowa State capitalizes on its large population of students to take many of its pictures that show variety, a population that is in stark contrast to the populations of a great majority of the towns that make up the state. Receiving the recruitment/promotional materials, people, specifically minority students, who have no idea about Iowa make up their own ideas based in part on what they do not see: the size of classes, the atmosphere of campus, the make-up of the student body, and the lack of access to the comforts of home.
When you think of Iowa you think of barren place with corn fields and stuff like that. And those promotional materials made it seem like there was black folks.....They need to show...send that cause that’s truly how it is. And you can really judge. Am I going to feel comfortable in this environment? Am I going to feel like I am successful in this environment? Am I going to feel that I can do something in this environment because I see other people who look just like me doing it, being successful, going some place. strong emphasis [F*ck no!! You get that when you get here? No you do not. No you do not.] You don't see nobody that looks like you doing nothing.

The previous quote from Fia describes how she felt upon coming to Iowa State and realizing that there were many things not addressed in the recruitment/promotional materials that would become a part of her experience. There was a marked lack of information about many of the things that plague minority students when they come here. For instance, she mentions the lack of seeing people like yourself being successful. In the brochures, we see minority students doing things that aren’t necessarily related to academics. However, are incoming freshman able to judge the difference between someone reading a bus schedule like we see in the Viewbook and someone reading a newspaper or term paper? My answer is no. In fact, I didn’t realize that she was reading a bus schedule for Cy Ride until I began to really get into writing my thesis. The brochures don’t show minorities studying or attending classes, but to the incoming freshman it seems like minority students are actively involved in studying and receiving the academic benefits of Iowa State. When they get to Iowa State, it becomes scary to see that there aren’t many minority students doing academic things because there aren’t many minority students. As minorities, we are not prepared to be in classes where we are the only brown, or black, or red face in the crowd.

These kinds of experiences are not present in the recruitment/promotional materials presented to Iowa State’s minority students. Sandra says, “And a lot of people weren’t ready
for that. They go in their class and they sittin’ there you know put they book bag in the seat, ‘I’m gonna save this for some black people. I know this row...yeah we gonna be tight.’ Ain’t nobody ever come in their classroom. You just be lookin’ at the door.” Tonya was from Iowa and she still wasn’t prepared for the atmosphere when she arrived at Iowa State. In her interview, she says that had she known the atmosphere was so harsh, she wouldn’t have ever come here. Although Tonya has been in the type of environment all her life where she was the only minority, Ames, Iowa, a short thirty miles from her home, was too much for her to handle. That situation may not seem like much until you consider that people who have never been in a situation where they are the lone minority come to Iowa State and have to deal with it from day one with no preparation. It’s like being thrown into a pool and being told to swim when you go for your first lesson.

Georgia wasn’t prepared for being the only minority on her floor when she arrived at Iowa State, and neither was I. She assumed as most people do that she would immediately be able to foster relationships with people who looked like her— which didn’t happen. Charlene does not feel that the other minority students in her incoming class were prepared to be less than 10% of the population especially when they were coming from cities where they were the majority. Many of her classmates dropped out, and she feels it’s because they were so unprepared for the experience when they arrived at Iowa State.

I think that they need to somehow find a way to emphasize the people than you know putting all these people...you know this may be what MSA is about but somewhere in here can you say that you know we’re less than 10% of the population here. You know that...I think that was a big problem for a lot of people my first year.... Coming here and being that much in the minority. And that you may very well be on this campus and go to two or three classes and see an average of ten African American
people.... it’s never really portrayed to you...unless you’re actually looking for it, how small the minority population is here.

She also says that many minority students aren’t prepared for things like not being able to purchase hair products, get their hair done, or purchase make-up or other hygiene related supplies in their skin tones. Since the minority population in Ames is so small, stores tend not to carry perms for people with curly hair, or panty hose and make-up that flatters people with darker complexions, or clothing that fits women with wider hips and larger bustlines. Men have problems finding things like hair products or even some place to get their hair cut because most shops in Ames are not familiar with coarser textured hair. The absence of this kind of information is devastating to the minority students who arrive in Ames, Iowa, expecting, from the recruitment/promotional materials of Iowa State University, to be reasonably as comfortable as they were at home.

Iowa State has a long and productive history of outreach and recruitment of minority students. In the late 1960s and early 1970s, Iowa State developed an extensive recruitment and promotional program complete with many well-placed pictures of African American students. Unfortunately, this well-developed initiative, while listing African American students in publications and brochures, did not include the hopes and desires of African American students in decision making before the arrival of such students.

The campus remained the same, the instruction remained the same, the products and materials and all of the food choices in the stores and restaurants remained the same. In short, all of the things that made up the culture, which excluded minorities, remained the same throughout the ISU/Ames community. While the promotional materials were first-class, they were quite misleading because they erroneously showed a campus and community
that included minority students when, in reality, minority students were excluded. It was a case of saying to African American students, “This is our culture. If you would like to be a part of it, you change your culture to coincide with our culture,” rather than saying, “We hear you, we see you, and would like for you to combine with our culture,” making a richer culture for all of us.

What about the possibility of being hated because of your skin color? This possible scenario never entered Georgia’s mind because everyone was pictured as getting along so well that she thought she had a never-ending possibility of places to go for support.

I remember before I got the catalog I got a lot of information in the mail and it had a lot of black faces on it and I’m like... or even just minorities in general you know and I was just like oh wow this is pretty good you know... I got all of these little brochures and stuff and I was just getting all excited...Cause I wanted to be around people that looked like me. I didn’t want to be so totally dominated.

When Georgia got to Iowa State, her experience was not the picture-perfect mosaic shown in the brochures. She describes her first experience with her roommate as being the complete opposite of what she saw in the brochures.

... when I first walked up and I was trying to find my room I kind of waited outside of the room...okay mom here we go this is my college life now and I opened the door a little bit before I go in I hear a few voices in the background going , “Yeah I can’t wait to see my roommate. Like if she’s black, I’m going to give her hell. But if she’s white I guess we’ll get along just fine.” And I was like...WHAT!! And I looked at my mom and I’m like, “Oh my gosh...” I just wanted to cry. And I looked at her. She knew that I was just really wanting to go back home right then, but the fighter in me was not going to let her beat me, so I just walked in the door and was like Hi...I’m Georgia.

It might not have been a completely horrible experience, but Georgia had nowhere to turn after this incident. Her mother was only in Ames for a few days and the support network of minority students that Georgia was expecting did not exist because as we discussed earlier
the large numbers of minority students that the materials that she received pictured had not existed for about three years.

Mark says the same kind of thing happened when he attended Iowa State, but the difference was that the population of minority students on Iowa State's campus was so much larger that he had somewhere to turn.

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Like, it was a, everybody against white people thing, from my perspective. That's what it looked like, you know. I mean, and it just, I guess, that was the, just the things at the time because the whole Rodney, Rodney King thing just looked just horrible, you know, and that was like an effect that everybody that I hung around, it took a nasty effect on everybody. A violent effect, I would say.... I never did expect, like, it to be so, a, so harsh, you know, I mean, it was like, just real harsh as far as talking to others. It was real cool to be around, to come here and finally realize that there was a lot more black people up here than I thought there would be and then to go from that to, like, you know, being in the dorms, and knowing that, you know, the guy across the hall is like, you know, he's like screaming I hate niggers, you know, out of his window, you know and throwing water balloons down at people and stuff like that, you know, it's like that, you go, you have those two things to deal with and it's like, no, I never would have expected that, you know, just looking at the campus and looking at the It Works pictures, you know, I would have still been looking at the butterfly-cute little calm pictures of, you know, Beardshear and Alumni Hall.

Sandra had another kind of experience with the university and it involved the absence of any other organization besides MSA providing her with assistance. All of the promotional materials she had pictured MSA as the savior of minority students. She got brochures with all of the pictures of minority students going to MSA and looking happy about their experience. What was missing in the pictures were minority students receiving help from other entities.

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I really expected a lot more, like when they say Minority Student Affairs, I thought that would be my office and they didn't help me, they didn't help me much at all.... I went in there times and they was like I don't know
what you talking about. How can you not know what I’m talking about? You supposed to help me find out, call somebody something. Help me! Don’t send me out knowing less than what [when] I came in.

When she needed help and the only place she knew was available to her couldn’t help, she was extremely distraught and didn’t know where to turn. These experiences were traumatic for her. During the course of the interview, when she was describing the problems she had obtaining assistance, she burst into tears.

I can understand that in recruitment/promotional documents the amount of possibly negative information should be kept to a minimum if not omitted; however, I see recruitent/promotional materials as a similar genre to instructional documents and manuals. They are a user guide for people before they attempt to use the product, Iowa State. That product should contain warning labels if the user guide intends to be useful and accurate. For example, there should be a box outlined in red in every recruitment/promotional document near any picture that contains a large gathering of minority students that says, “Caution: you may not have a class or meeting that look like this ever in your tenure at Iowa State.” A less drastic and more realistic measure might be to have some pictures remain the same and balance them with more accurate visuals.

The next section will discuss power and representation in the promotional materials.

Power and representation

In the previous two sections, we discussed representation, representation and absence as they relate to the recruitment/promotional materials. In this section, we will focus on power and the redefinition of Iowa State’s minority population through the eyes of the dominant culture. Iowa State’s minority students do not have the power to represent
themselves in the recruitment/promotional materials sent out to prospective minority students because they lack the money, numbers, and representation in student, faculty, or alumni roles to attain significant power; therefore, the majority decides which aspects of the university should be emphasized even when they don’t really know anything about how those aspects affect minority students. In this particular situation, minority students are represented in recruitment/promotional materials in ways that depict either how the majority would like to think or would like the minority student experience to be in order to achieve a happy, multicultural experience for all. To compensate for the lack of available opportunities for minority students both socially and academically, Iowa State represented other things, such as the Black Cultural Center (BCC) and George Washington, as a bigger deal than they really were to the university.

I remember them talking about the BCC like it was this huge bi-cultural center. And you get there and there’s this little ass f*cking house on Welch…. I feel for our pictures for our perspectives and that bullsh*t about the BCC they need to re-word that sh*t on the real…. Nothing!! Nothing!! There’s no funding. There’s no nothing there. What the…what is it’s purpose? That could be like the Mecca for black students on this campus if they would pay it some attention, give it some funding you know what I’m saying? Give it a program director. Give a f*ck about it. If Iowa State gave a sh*t about this place it could be something. It could be something. Cause when people get here…when the little black kids get there that’s one of the first things you hear. There’s a place. Don’t nobody hang out there and do you know why? Cause it ain’t about sh*t. It could be about so much more than it is. For it to be the Black Cultural Center it needs to be treated like it’s important. I don’t think the university gives a sh*t about it. I don’t think.

Fia describes how Iowa State represents itself in promotional materials as a place where minority students are happy, provided for and well adjusted, but that is not the reality for many minority students.
These books look to me...the way I really expected college to look. And then I got to Iowa State and I was just like ugggh. It wasn’t the way I thought it was going to be. You see an awful lot of black people here [in the promotional materials]. There’s a lot more than they tell you. And just looking at it bothers me, it makes way more of a difference that you can ever know. Do you understand what I’m saying? The fact that there are not black people here. When they tell you that in high school, you don’t think about what that means until you are actually here at college. They did not stress the importance of how f*cking you know desolate this b*tch is. No one told me that I wasn’t going to be able to find products for my hair and stuff like that. Nobody told me any of that stuff. That I wasn’t going to be able to go to the local bar and listen to any type of music while I’m trying to kick it. You know what I thought about Iowa State before I got here? That this was a kick it school. That there was all kinds of stuff to do here and I realize there is and you know like if you’re white it’s way cool to go to school here.

I’ve presented some of the concerns of minority students earlier not being able to find personal hygiene products that would make them feel comfortable, but let’s take Fia’s discussion into a more global perspective. The school and community as a whole seems to be a really great experience if you are a white person. Why? Because Iowa is a populated by white people. Not to generalize, but there are at least forty barber and beauty shops in Ames that cater to white people. The bars, shopping malls, and classes all contain people who look like you if you are white. Even though you are not like everyone else, for the most part you can still find comfort in your atmosphere and that makes it hard to see why everyone would not have attained the same degree of comfort as you have. I believe this is what happened with Iowa State’s recruitment/promotional materials. The things that are good for the majority don’t necessarily address minority concerns or desires.

It makes it sound like all the organizations and stuff is one big happy fun time, but it doesn’t quite tell you that it is in the middle of nothing. There is nothing to do here, especially if you are black. It caters to I guess with lack of other minorities it caters to all the Caucasiens over here. Unless you like frequenting bars, you will be hard pressed to find anything to do.
The previous quote from Rico describes a similar reaction to the representation that Fia describes. Rico looked at all of the brochures and pamphlets and expected that Iowa State had large organizations that he could join like fraternities or places to go and have fun. The fraternities were described as having hundreds of members and the social atmosphere was portrayed as being rich. However, when he got here, he found that there were hundreds of members of the white fraternities, but the historically black and Latino fraternities had only three or four members. The social atmosphere is rich if you like frequenting bars, which Ames has in abundance. What about movies and other forms of entertainment? Charlene says, “There’s nothing to do. As far as like the movies. There’s usually three or four if that many and if they got one that’s...well if there’s one that’s particularly interesting to African Americans it only stays for like three days. So you need to go see it before it leaves.” There have even been previous instances where protests had to be staged for African American movies to come to Ames.

The explorations in this chapter, as I said earlier, are only scratching the surface of some of the ways that the representational strategies Iowa State used for its recruitment/promotional materials were damaging not only to the students, but to Iowa State. So what can be done, you may ask. That question will be answered in depth in the next chapter, where we will discuss the implications of this study for Iowa State and the field of technical communication.
CHAPTER 5. IMPLICATIONS

Throughout the course of my thesis I have asked many questions and provided a discussion designed to answer the questions I present. The main question I asked initially was whether or not the promotional/ recruitment materials provided to Iowa State’s minority students affected their perceptions and subsequent experiences. As we saw in chapter four for my eleven interviewees, the answer is a resounding yes! Another important point to point out is that even students who are successful and graduate are affected by the good and bad experiences they have had at Iowa State, but the bad one outweigh the good. What is impeding the connection with Iowa State? What does all of this mean, where do we go from here, and what can be done in the future? This chapter will discuss the implications that my thesis has for Iowa State University’s recruitment/promotional material and the implications for technical communicators.

Before I go into the actual implications, I would like to share the mindset of my interviewees at the conclusion of their interviews. They wanted to hear what I had found in my research. They were happy to be a part of my study and they felt it was important, but they also assumed that any conclusions I came to would be dismissed much like other students’ concerns over the years. Students realize that their tenure at Iowa State University is short and they realize that administration has figured this out as well. My interviewees feel that the university waits them out so it does not have to implement changes. I hope sincerely that this will not be the case with the recommendations I make in my thesis.
Implications for Iowa State University's Recruitment

The implications for Iowa State will cover departments and procedures that are currently in place. I think, as a result of my interviews and research, broad, sweeping changes should be initiated with regards to the recruitment of minority students. The first change will have to begin with the procedures for recruiting minority students.

Though Iowa State’s intentions are perfectly honorable, some of the interviewees seem to wonder whether there were intentional misrepresentation. George Yoos says that pictures can be used to deceive whether it is on purpose or unintentionally.

We can thus mislead and lie in the use of pictures, graphics and other visual schemata in two ways. The first way consists of all the common dirty tricks used to slant by misrepresentation, distortion, and omission. The second is the more subtle way. We can mislead or deceive by falsely manifesting our intent to communicate in a certain way, that is, we can falsely mislead about someone about our pragmatic intentions. (115)

Right now minority students receive materials that are geared towards them and that have been designed to address their needs and concerns. I agree with this procedure, and it’s not all that different from what other schools are doing. What I disagree with is how the materials are designed. We saw in some of the interviews that many other students disagreed with the design of the recruitment/promotional materials.

Iowa State has already made an attempt to remedy past design flaws with the creation of a new recruiting brochure that doesn’t have as many pictures and that, because of the way people are drawn, makes it a difficult feat to determine the race of the depicted individuals. That is a step in the right direction. More steps like that need to be taken. Iowa State cannot continue to present an atmosphere that is not there.
What Iowa State minority students want is to be able to contest the images that are present in the recruitment/promotional materials. In order for them to do that they need to have access to the process for putting together the recruitment/promotional materials. So, the next logical step that needs to be taken is a meeting between the Office of Admissions and the leaders of the Asian Pacific American Awareness Coalition (APAAC), BSA, the Latino Council, the American Indian Rights Org, and the three MSG’s so that students will have an opportunity to give feedback about how they would like to be represented and what a more effective means of representation might be. The purpose of these meetings would be to ensure that there is a broad spectrum of knowledge about the experiences of American-ethnic minority students on this campus before recruitment/promotional materials are designed and sent out. Current students could see the efforts of administration to remedy the discomfort they experienced, and incoming students might not have the same levels of disillusionment and unhappiness that their predecessors had.

I’m not saying that a separate minority world should be created, because many of my interviewees were against a false representation or a representation where they would not know what to expect once they arrived at Iowa State. They felt instead that an accurate image would have helped ease their transition into college because they would have known what to expect and would have been prepared for it. Charlene says,“Maybe tell people who they have. But then there really isn’t a tactful way to do it because they’re promotional materials. It might not be a tactful way to tell someone well if you come here there’s no where to get your hair done. Or, if you come here you can’t find pantyhose. Or if you come here you might not be able to find the type of clothes that you like to wear. So if they could some how develop a way to get that across to people in a tactful way.”
If that means lower numbers of minority students for a while, then Iowa State will eventually recoup those students with some of the other methods used to recruit minority students such as scholarship offers. More than half of my interviewees said that a lot fewer students would leave after the first year if they knew what they were getting into before they arrived on campus; that way, they would be prepared and been able to make an educated decision about whether or not to come. And the same way we’re told what to pack to live in the dorms, there should be a checklist for minority students to follow before they come to Iowa State. Rico also says that Iowa State might lose some of the students from the suburbs who have many choices about where they want to go, but inner city kids would probably come in droves because they wouldn’t have as many choices.

Two of my interviewees have ideas for how the representation could be improved. Fia recommends that Iowa State fly a plane over campus in between passing periods so that minority students could see how drastically small their numbers are. Sandra recommends going to a class where there are two hundred or more students and there is only one minority student and asking how he or she feels and putting that in a brochure. I don’t agree with either of these tactics, but I do feel that more accurate pictures could be taken. It wouldn’t be horrible to show pictures where there was only one minority student in a sea of white students, because that’s what minority students will have to deal with from the time they come to Iowa State. It’s accurate and fair to the students who are arriving. The process of accurate representation would negate the “fetishization of commodities” Barton and Barton discuss in their article “Ideology and the Map.” To describe the process of fetishization, the Barton’s use the example of the London Underground Diagram (LUD). It is actually a mess
and unclear for people to understand, but a map was created that made it easier for people to see the structure of the railroad. The hypothesis is that the map of the LUD encouraged people to take journeys that wouldn’t have been taken otherwise because “the viewer of the LUD is confronted with an “object of desire,” not an “object of use” (68). Iowa State put themselves in the same situation. They used pictures that were an object of desire for both minority students and Iowa State. It was an object of desire for Iowa State because they really want Iowa State to become a diverse campus. And it was an object of desire for minority students because they would like to be on a campus where other minority students exist and prosper. Therefore, minority students matriculated to Iowa State based on some of the expectations they developed from the recruitment/promotional materials. The negative side of this issue is that they might have chosen to go to another university that met their needs better had they been given a more accurate representation of Iowa State’s campus.

MSA, the Office of Admissions, the advisors for each of the MSG’s and the Minority Liaisons in each of the colleges need to meet as well. As the first contact for most incoming minority students, these three groups need to co-ordinate special programs to acclimate minority students to Iowa State’s campus as well as make themselves and their programs known to incoming students. “To, in that, to give them more information about the minority programs, minority organizations, without just listing them, is not gonna help, just saying well, okay, we do have this and that, but, to like, list them, give contact numbers, which I know they do for some of them but to also give some kind of background, um, is another thing.” In the previous quote Mark is telling Iowa State’s minority representatives that they could do a much better job of keeping minority students abreast of what is going on as soon
as they arrive at Iowa State. Special programs such as an orientation just for minority students would be very beneficial. Dr. Jackson conducted orientation programs like these when he was the head of MSA in the early nineties and people recruited under him graduated and love Dr. Jackson, affectionately called Dr. J., to this day. Even through the hardships that they experienced, the fact that he personally presented himself to many of the students made him a father figure and safe place to go to. Minority students need to know where they can go for help, and they also need to know that those places really can help them. A joint effort among those different administrative bodies will enable brochures to make it clear where to go for help in different situations. Fia wants the university to live up to its potential, “...I do feel like this university has a lot to offer a person. But at the same time they need to stress less of diversity and diversity related issues in their brochures and stress more of what they are good at: the services that they provide.”

Iowa State also needs to help further the research the Young Women’s Christian Association (YWCA) began in 1995 to gauge the climate of Ames and the work of some of the businesses in Ames concerning the products that minorities need in order to be comfortable once they arrive in Ames.

For a recruitment/promotional program to work, the philosophy cannot be “we do not do this for other students....” Specific efforts must be undertaken to build elements into the ISU/Ames community that will assist minority students in developing feelings of security, respect, acceptance, and equality. The creation of a positive campus environment will require the cooperation of all components of campus life: administration, faculty, students government, fraternities and sororities, athletic teams, campus media, and alumni. All of
these groups must be brought into dialogue, and a consensus must be reached on the goals and objectives of the promotional plan to increase minority enrollment, retention, and graduation; anything else is misleading and unethical.

**Implications for the discipline**

The implications for technical communication are much simpler and require a lot less help from outside sources. Anne Herrington said that basically because readers are not as sophisticated when they look at pictures as they are when they read, technical communicators need to be very careful about being ethical when they are designing and inserting visuals in documents. Brasseur and Thompson caution against becoming so comfortable when we are designing visuals that we forget that they must be both effective and ethical. Further, George Yoos says, "What is important in assessing lies and deception in communication is not so much the truth or falsity of the message encoded in the language used to communicate a lie....It is the ill will in the hypocrisy of masking with pious intent a real intent to have someone infer from what is said something misleading or false." (117) Yoos is saying that a knowingly inaccurate visual is the most harmful when it's done supposedly for good. We have to make sure that every design project that incorporates visuals is seen as an ethical project, and we shouldn't take for granted that it's just an everyday job. It is crucial for us to remember this if we plan to design effective and ethical visuals.

I will attempt to construct some guidelines based on my study and some research that will hopefully help technical communicators be effective and ethical in the future. The first objective would be for technical communicators to consider the issues Hall presents
concerning representation, absence and representation, and power and representation in visuals. In order to represent any group and/or situation accurately, technical communicators need to know as much as possible about the groups they are representing and the purpose of the document being created. If a document will inaccurately represent any group, then it will be necessary to make the hard decision of telling the sponsoring organization that the visual could potentially harm and should not be included. The same advice applies if a visual hides a situation intentionally or unintentionally.

Another thing for technical communicators to consider is the power relationship between the person requesting the representation and the thing or person being represented. If the imbalance of power is too great, then great care should be given to any incorporation of visuals. A possible method for balancing out the power scale would be to allow the people being represented to have a say in the design or visual incorporation process or to allow the affected minorities to be a part of the testing process that should follow the design of any product. That would satisfy Hall’s requirement for access to representation. The decisions will be hard and it will require some assertiveness on the part of the technical communicator to advise the sponsoring organization of the risks. An alternate possibility would be to eliminate the visual altogether, or to take the initiative and present another visual that will still satisfy the requirements and be ethically sound at the same time.

My suggestions require that technical communicators assume a tremendous amount of responsibility when using or incorporating visuals, but we do owe that to our audiences, profession, and personal integrity.
APPENDIX A: GRADUATE STUDIES BROCHURE

Discover Your Future

Elaine Figueroa

By earning a Master's or PhD in the humanities or sciences, you can enjoy the opportunity to pursue your interests and engage in meaningful research. Our graduate programs span across all disciplines, providing you with the freedom to explore your passions and develop your expertise.

"Why earn a Master's or PhD?"

In any field of study, a Master's or PhD degree can provide significant advantages. A Master's degree can help you advance in your current career or open up new opportunities, while a PhD degree can lead to a research-intensive career in academia, industry, or government.

"Why earn a Master's or PhD?"

The Black College-Omaha Program (BCOP) is an initiative that aims to provide educational opportunities to African American students in the Omaha metropolitan area. BCOP is a joint effort between the University of Nebraska Omaha and Norfolk State University, designed to increase access to higher education and promote academic success among African American students.

"Black College-Omaha Program (BCOP)"

The Hispanic American Graduate Council (HAGC) is dedicated to supporting Hispanic students in their pursuit of higher education. The HAGC offers a range of resources and support to help Hispanic students succeed in their academic and professional goals, including scholarships, mentorship, and networking opportunities.

"Hispanic American Graduate Council (HAGC)"

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"Native American Graduate Council (NAGC)"

National Society of Black Engineers (NSBE)

Society for Hispanic Professional Engineers (SHIP)

United Nigerian National Students Association (UNNSA)

"Diverse and inclusive community for minority students?"

The office of minority students at NEU is dedicated to promoting diversity and inclusivity on campus. We host a variety of events and activities to celebrate cultural heritage, foster community building, and provide support to minority students.

"Events and activities for minority students?"

Iowa State University

Graduate Study...

It works for your future

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Helping You Feel At Home

We're Here To Help

MSA Program Assistants

Minority Liaison Officers

Our Services Support Your Goals

Educational Programs

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY
Minority Student Affairs

The mission of the MSA is to provide an environment that is conducive to academic success, personal development, and professional growth for all minority students. The MSA offers programs and services that support the needs of minority students, including academic support, cultural programming, and additional resources.

MSA Program Assistants

The MSA program assistants are available to provide support and resources to minority students. They can assist with academic advising, career development, and other needs.

Minority Liaison Officers

The MSA has minority liaison officers who are responsible for providing support and resources to minority students. They can assist with academic advising, career development, and other needs.

Our Services Support Your Goals

The MSA offers a variety of services to support the needs of minority students. These services include academic support, cultural programming, and additional resources.

Educational Programs

The MSA offers educational programs to support the needs of minority students. These programs include academic support, cultural programming, and additional resources.

[Images of students and faculty members]
Outreach

Our Back-to-School Reception — a chance meeting between students and new students who can be part of the minority student affairs office.

For more information, please write or call:

Minority Student Affairs
322 Student Union
Iowa State University
Ames, IA 50011
(515) 294-6358
or Toll Free: 1-800-362-3920 (extension 0330)
FAX: 515-294-0597

The office of Minority Student Affairs, located in Room 301 of Brouse House Hall, is open Monday through Friday, 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m. If you have a question or a problem, please call or stop by. We look forward to talking with you soon.
APPENDIX C: MINORITY STUDENT AFFAIRS: WHERE EVERYONE CAN BECOME THEIR BEST
APPENDIX C: MINORITY STUDENT AFFAIRS: WHERE EVERYONE CAN BECOME THEIR BEST

Iowa State has what You Need.

Early Business Program (EOP)
The Early Business Program (EOP) is designed to help minority students acquire the skills and knowledge necessary for successful business careers. It provides an intellectually and academically challenging environment that prepares students for leadership positions in business.

Scholarship/Financial Aid
The University of Iowa offers a wide range of financial aid opportunities for minority students. These include scholarships, grants, and loans, as well as work-study programs.

Recreation Program
The University of Iowa offers a variety of recreational activities for minority students. These include sports, fitness classes, and social events.

The Jerome A. W. Foundation
The Jerome A. W. Foundation is a private, non-profit organization that provides scholarships and other forms of financial support to minority students.

The Minority Student Affairs Program
The Minority Student Affairs Program is designed to help minority students succeed in college by providing academic, social, and emotional support. It includes tutoring, counseling, and mentorship programs.

...and what You Want.
APPENDIX D: IT WORKS BOOKLET

IOWA STATE UNIVERSITY

it works.
The Multicultural Support Group (MSG) will help you succeed by linking you to these programs:

**Emerging Leaders/Leadership Academy** — These MSG-sponsored seminars teach and polish leadership skills.

**College Night** — We'll show you the University's full array of social and service organizations at this event.

**Fall and Spring Retreats** — Here you'll help plan the MSG's activities.

**Social Activities** — Join your MSG friends to attend pizza parties, the Homecoming Dance, rollerskating parties and the group's fundraisers.

**Student Support Services** — We can help you find academic advising, tutoring, financial counseling and special services for students with disabilities.

**Fitness Centers** — You can work out in the residence hall fitness centers.

For more information about joining a Multicultural Support Group, talk with your residence hall director or call the Coordinator of Residential Minority Programs, (515) 294-0543.

**Iowa State University**

OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

Department of Residence
APPENDIX F: QUESTIONNAIRE

Demographics

Age
18-20
21-24
25-30

Gender
M
F

Hometown

High School Background (city, state; quality of education; etc.)

Promotional Materials Questions

1. What year were you admitted to Iowa State University?

2. Did you receive promotional materials prior to your admission?

3. Tell me about your recollection of the materials especially the promotional materials.

4. **Invite them to look at the materials.** Do you remember receiving any of these materials? What impressions were created if any? **Seek specific input about the materials. If there are no specific expectations, ask why?** Have them look at the images with you and discuss their feelings. **b) If there is still no response ask them,** what were their expectations about the human campus climate based on those campus materials?

5. What were you expecting about Iowa State based on those materials?
6. Did your experience after you arrived at Iowa State meet those expectations you developed from the promotional materials? *Ask for some examples.*

7. Did the images of the campus in the promotional materials affect your decision to attend ISU?

8. Were there other influences that affected your decision to attend Iowa State? For example, high school influences, family experiences, personal experiences. If so, what were they?

9. Do you feel that the images of campus in Iowa State's promotional materials ought to be changed? If so, why and in what way?
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VITA

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Dean’s List, Spring and Fall 1996
Minority Student Affairs Academic Achievement Award, 1997
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