Where Is My Place?: Queer and Transgender Students of Color Experiences in Cultural Centers at a Predominantly White University

By

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ABSTRACT

Despite a growing number of student services directed at Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender, and Queer (LGBTQ) students on college and university campuses across the country, few studies address how these students manage on campuses, and even less information is known about Queer and Trans Students of Color (QTSOC). Within the dearth of current LGBTQ literature, the majority of QTSOC literature focuses almost exclusively on gay and bisexual Black cisgender male students. These students often report findings of racism, heterosexism, and isolation. Given this gap in the QTSOC literature, I address this research question: What are queer and transgender students of color experiences with cultural centers at a predominantly white university? This qualitative study was grounded in Queer Critical Theoretical Perspectives (QCP) and its antecedent Critical Race Theory (CRT). I conducted 45 interviews with 15 current queer and transgender students of color from one large predominantly white university. The findings suggest that even though there are spaces marked for specific identities, students who live at the intersections of race, gender, and sexual orientation still have a difficult time finding places on campus where they can be their full selves without oppressive experiences such as racism, heterosexism, transphobia, and gender bias.

Dedication

For my beloved who continued to support me through all the ups

and downs of this program.

For the young people who helped me complete this study.

For the other queer and transgender people of color who continue

to fight the great fight to make sure their

voices and their experiences are heard.

For the young, queer and transgender students of color

who decided to take their lives because they felt as if

they did not have a voice in the queer community.

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CHAPTER 1

Introduction

As college campuses across the country grow and expand, effectively serving all student populations remain a challenge. Multiple minoritized students are often disproportionately negatively affected by unwelcoming campus climates (Bazarsky, Morrow & Javier, 2015). Queer and transgender students of color (QTSOC) have a difficult time finding places where they can be their full selves at predominantly white universities (PWUs) (Strayhorn, 2014). QTSOC often face racism, homophobia, and heterosexism which may be passive, subtle, and overt (Negrete & Purcell, 2011; Poynter & Washington, 2005). Dating back to the 1970's, many campuses have responded to the range of student calls for services by creating cultural centers such as multicultural centers or centers dedicated to LGBTQ students (Ladson-Billings, 2012). Yet, fast forward forty plus years and imagine walking into a cultural center on campus, supposedly dedicated to you, and feeling unwelcome or othered because of your race and sexual identity. Studies focused on the experiences of QTPOC are few, and on QTPOC in student affairs even fewer but, what is available makes clear that racism remains an undercurrent in the White gay community (Poynter & Washington, 2005) and homophobia pervades many communities of color (Kumashiro, 2001). As one Black gay male student explains in a 2005 study, he could not help but notice the undercurrent of racism within the gay community (Poynter & Washington, 2005). In addition to racism, QTSOC report experiences of homophobia in communities of color (Negrete & Purcell, 2011).

Campuses across the country have tried to address issues of racism, homophobia, and exclusion through diverse speakers, sensitivity trainings, and multicultural events (Balsam,

Molina, Beadnell, Simoni, & Walters, 2011; Beemyn, 2002; Negrete & Purcell, 2011). These efforts have been limited in how they address the daily issues of racism (Lozano, 2011) and homophobia that QSTOC are facing (Renn & Ozaki, 2010).

In response to calls from minoritized students for colleges to provide inclusive classes, diverse faculty, and safe spaces, campuses administrations often choose to settle on creating cultural centers. Cultural centers include multicultural (read: multi-ethnic and -racial) and LGBTQ-focused spaces and are some of the only places on campuses built to engage students from the perspective of their racial and sexual identities (Magolda & Baxter-Magolda, 2012; Patton, 2010). Cultural centers often host trainings, develop retreats, and house support groups for students. These centers are also crucial physical and psychological spaces to help students develop identity, build community, gain opportunities, and find support throughout their time on campus, serving as important touchstones for students outside of the classroom (Patton, 2010).

Despite the good intentions behind developing cultural centers to address student demands, they may not necessarily meet the needs for QTSOC. LGBTQ centers often host events such as coming out day or pride week yet are often devoid of the histories and experiences of queer and transgender students of color and their experiences with disclosure (Walmsley, 2015). Similarly, ethnic cultural centers host multicultural events such as Black history month and multicultural greek week, yet these events are not inclusive of sexual orientations or identities other than heterosexual and cisgender identities (Negrete & Purcell, 2011). Thus, QTSOC on campus are not being adequately served (Henry, Richards & Fuerth, 2011). Although the need for diversity and inclusion on college campuses has been studied for at least 40 years, few studies address the issues faced by QTSOC. To address to this gap in the

literature, this study explores QTSOC experiences with cultural centers at a predominantly white university (PWU).

The limited literature available reports a disconnect between the racial and sexual identities of QTSOC on campus as they move between social groups that focus more on race or more on sexual orientation, but not both. For example, a double bind often exists for QTSOC when trying to access cultural centers (Negrete & Prucell, 2011). This double bind is when little attention is paid to people who are minoritized because of their sexual orientation in racially-centered communities, while conversely there is little attention paid to racial issues in mainstream LGBTQ communities (Kumashiro, 2008; McCready & Kumashiro, 2006; Misawa, 2007). This situation forces students to chop up their identities to receive the services they need. For example, students must choose to receive support as a Latino or as a gay man but not as a Latino gay man (Victory, 2015).

Tying together the increase in racial diversity on campus and the needs of diverse populations, Misawa (2007) noted that LGBTQ communities continue to grow in diversity with respect to race. With this increased campus population, QTSOC face unique challenges as they traverse academia at PWUs (Harris, 2003; Mobley, 2000; Poynter & Washington, 2005). These challenges include but are not limited to racism, homophobia, and tokenism (Goode-Cross & Good, 2009; Goode-Cross & Tager, 2011; Poynter & Washington, 2005; Strayhorn & DeVita, 2010). LGBTQ students, faculty, and staff of color are often robbed of equity by neglect and the institutional lack of effort to form LGBTQ organizations, curricula, and services that recognize more than just the White LGBTQ perspective (Barzarsky, et al., 2015; Negrete & Purcell, 2011). This variation of campus experiences QTSOC face should push student affairs professionals to approach serving QTSOC in new and innovative ways.

The field of student affairs cannot develop innovative approaches to meeting the needs of QTSOC if it does not have a clear understanding of the issues at hand. I have focused my research question on students' experiences within cultural centers at a PWU. This narrower focus allowed me to investigate the ways students experience these cultural centers and examine the extent to which they are safe havens for QTSOC (Lozano, 2011; Lui, Cuylet & Lee, 2011; Patton, 2011; Shuford, 2011). As such, this study investigated the research question: What are QTSOC experiences in cultural centers at a predominantly white university (PWU)?

Positionality

From 2012-2017, I worked as the first social justice educator and program planner for the Spectrum and Diversity centers at Midwest University (MU). The primary thrust of my work was to develop, execute, and evaluate programs that meet the needs of the growing QTSOC population on campus. Initiating this cross-functional position is significant because it was the first of its kind at any PWU in the United States. The creation of this role mattered greatly to me because for the three years previous, I was actively involved in the campus QTSOC student organization that predated the creation of this cross-functional professional staff position.

As a queer women of color (QWOC) and a scholar-practitioner, I occupied an outsider-within social location (Hill Collins, 1999). Coined by Patricia Hill Collins (1999), the notion of outsider-within "describes social locations or border spaces occupied by groups of unequal power and individuals who are members of those groups" (p.86). within dominant structures, including education institutions. Hill-Collins described a dimension of outsider-within locations as bringing corrective lenses that have the potential to focus organizational inequities. Another contribution my outsider-within position brought to my study was the ability to magnify the organization's gaps regarding justice and inclusion (Hill-Collins, 1986, 1999). I moved through

campus experiencing the daily slights of macroaggressions and I was often the only Black queer woman in administrative meetings. I knew first-hand how little recourse there was for racist and homophobic actions outside of narrowly defined criminal acts. I could correctly see the holes that my administrative counterparts cannot.

In my past role working as a social justice educator at Midwest University, I created an initiative for QTSOC called Intersections. Intersections continues to function as a campus-based initiative that creates educational and social co-curricular programming for QTSOC on Midwest University's campus (LGBT, n.d.) This initiative is a departure from traditional ways of serving QTSOC because it places QTSOC at the center of the creation of the programs as opposed to on the periphery (Barzarsky et al., 2015). QTSOC identity and issues are the focus of Intersections' hosted speakers, trainings, discussion groups, and workshops. Along with a student intern, I provided opportunities for QTSOC to learn about critical issues and build support networks. Given the context of this unique cross-functional professional staff position and the Intersections Initiative, this campus is a critical location to collect data about student experiences within cultural center experiences.

Operational Definitions

Several terms used in this study help to provide better insight into the topic being examined. Some of these terms may be familiar; however, each term may take on a different meaning for the context of this study. Each word has been defined below to provide a better framework of why certain vernacular terms was used. Language and terminology is often shifting and growing to add to our understanding of the world. I recognize language is context- and time-specific; these operational definitions cannot be universally applied.

Queer and Transgender Students of Color (QTSOC): An umbrella term referring to students of color who identify somewhere along the sexual identity spectrum that is not heterosexual, and/or who identify somewhere along the gender identity spectrum that is not cisgender. It is a term commonly used by students on college campuses throughout the United States, which makes it most useful for my study.

Homonormativity: The culture and practice created by white LGBQ people that marginalizes anyone who deviates from that culture and practice.

Cultural centers: LGBTQ and race/ethnicity specific centers on college campuses.

Literature Review

I reviewed three strands of literature: (a) cultural centers in higher education, (b) students with minoritized identities in higher education, and (c) queer students of color in higher education. To identify studies on the QTSOC university experience, I conducted a literature search using Google Scholar, ERIC, JSTOR, Ebscohost, and ProQuest databases. I used the following key phrases: "African-American LGBT students;" "African-American queer students;" "Queer college student;" "African-American doctoral student experiences;" Latin queer college students;" "Asian queer students;" "Queer students of color students and campus climate;" "LGBT campus climate;" and "QSOC student sense of belonging." After narrowing the search results to empirical studies, I selected studies that examined QTSOC experiences of campus. Although not a large body of literature, what was available gave me a glimpse into the obstacles QTPOC face on campus.

I chose to focus on these three bodies of literature to better understand the history, creation, and structure of cultural centers and the experiences of minoritized and QTSOC students on campus. I started by examining cultural centers' literature to establish a clear

foundation of the purposes and services of these identity-specific spaces on college campuses. Examining this literature enabled me to create a backdrop to compare the participants' experiences versus the intended purposes of these spaces, followed by literature documenting the experiences of minoritized students in colleges and universities. This strand is a combination of literatures about students of color and white LGBTQ students at PWIs. I then drilled down into the limited literature available about QTSOC on college campuses.

Most of the studies reviewed for the minoritized and QTPOC strands were qualitative in nature. These studies often lacked methodologies that were specifically tailored to work within these communities, such as critical frameworks. Using critical frameworks could have produced different data results or even created different questions for inquiry. This is where my study departs from the other studies discussing QTSOC experiences: I built into this study critical frameworks accounting for and centering QTSOC identities. I took this step to expand the knowledge available about QTPOC experiences and to guard against the lack of critical framework in previous research.

Cultural Centers in Higher Education. To better understand the functionality of LGBTQ and multicultural centers, I have combined the literatures on both centers to create a cultural center in higher education strand. Cultural center literature primarily focuses on the centers' need to exist as well as how to use them. With the exception of Negrete's and Purcell's (2011) study, the extant literature about cultural centers does not examine the multiple intersecting identities of the students using cultural centers. Given that cultural centers have been commonplace on campuses since about 1995 (Shuford, 2011), it is especially striking how few studies have examined them. This lack of literature could be due to the unfortunate misconception that cultural centers are separatist spaces and support divisiveness (Ladson-Billings, 2010). Yet, the

extant literature is instrumental to understanding the context and foundations of cultural centers. Unfortunately, even though it mentions the changing political context on campuses and a need to expand whom they serve and how they serve, the literature does not provide any analysis of how these demands have changed centers over time.

Cultural center literature oftentimes focuses on the history or building of cultural centers (Ladson Billings, 2012; Stewart, 2012). A gaping hole in this set of literature is its lack of inclusion of LGBTQ students of color in its estimations of student reliance on centers. In previous studies, leaving out sexual orientation could potentially obfuscate the effects queer students are experiencing in "straight spaces." This set of literature presents strong arguments for the utility of cultural centers as touchstones for marginalized students but in its current state does not accurately reflect the heterosexism or homophobia that might be present in these race/ethnicity-based spaces. Similarly, while LGBTQ cultural centers can serve as safe spaces for some queer students on campus, they can also be a site that perpetuates racism and for LGBTQ students of color. My study seeks to uncover the experiences of QTSOC in both of these spaces at a predominantly white university.

Multicultural student services (MSS), which include cultural centers, have played a significant role in supporting minoritized students and furthering structural change around multicultural issues within PWIs (Shuford, 2011). Although literature is quite sparse about the creation of cultural centers, what I gathered from what is available is that most cultural centers were created to serve minoritized students on PWUs. The catalyst for developing (most? many?) cultural centers were student protests (Shuford, 2011). With political and social unrest combined with student movements like First Nations, civil rights, LGBTQ and La Raza movements, culturally-specific spaces became one of the common demands for newly admitted minoritized

students of PWIs nationwide (Shufford, 2011). The demands for campuses to become more accessible and welcoming for multiply minoritized students were a direct response to the racism and homophobia the students faced upon reception on campuses (Patton, 2011). However, in these histories of cultural centers, voices of QTSOC have not been included, rendering invisible an essential part of the formation story (Negrete & Purcell, 2011).

The first race- and ethnicity-based cultural center established was the Paul Robeson Cultural Center in 1967 at Rutgers University (Shuford, 2011). This development ushered in an era where PWIs established race and identity centers in response to student demands. Not too long afterward, the University of Michigan created the first LGBTQ center in 1972 just about the time when the LGBTQ movement stepped into the spotlight (Bazarsky, Morrow & Javier, 2015, Beemyn, 2002). While a few other LGBTQ centers were created during the 1970's and 1980's, the expansion of LGBTQ centers at PWIs across the country did not materialize in earnest until the 1990s and 2000s (Barzarsky et al., 2015; Beemyn, 2002; Sanlo, 2000). One explanation for this difference in initiating cultural centers for LGBTQ students was student pressure and sociocultural context (Ryan, 2005; Sanlo, 2000). The pressure on campuses to create ethnicity/race-based centers came directly from student movements on campus during the numerous resistance efforts of racially minoritized students' racially-motivated upheaval (Patton, 2006; Shufford, 2011). While campuses created LGBTQ centers for similar purposes as race/ethnicity centers, LGBTQ centers did not proliferate in higher numbers until much later than their counterparts (Sanlo, 2000). These centers were set up to meet the needs of students but concurrently set up a structure that required students to choose between their race/ethnicity and sexual orientation (Poynter & Washington 2005; Strayhorn, 2014).

Mission and Role. The mission and role of cultural centers varies across the country, but they do share some underlying foundations (Shufford, 2011). Cultural centers are often places of comfort and support for minoritized students (Ladson Billings, 2012). Their functions and services include a place to find peers in addition to providing psychological and social support. Well-developed centers can also serve as important educational spaces (Patton, 2011). These centers often support lectures, artistic exhibits, workshops, trainings, and library collections well beyond the typical campus offerings (Barzarsky et al., 2015; Ladson-Billings, 2010).

Counter spaces. While campuses are making strides across the country for minoritized students, these improvements are not enough to combat hostile campus climates. Hostile campus climates create a need for safe spaces or counter spaces to escape the oppression that is often running rampant (Lozano, 2010). Yosso and Lopez's (2010) articulation of counter space is that cultural centers provide a physical, epistemological, social, and academic space that disrupts white privilege and is a site of resistance. Cultural centers are often places where students can escape the heavy burden of outward expressions of oppression (Lozano, 2010). Some students express that cultural centers are the place on campus where they can be their full selves (Lozano, 2010; Lue, Cuyjet, & Lee, 2010; Shotton, Yellowfish, & Cintron, 2010). In addition to offering a supportive space and co-curricular learning opportunities, cultural centers are often places where students can take classes and receive tutoring, counseling, and advising (Lozano, 2010; Lue, Cuyjet, & Lee, 2010; Shotton, Yellowfish, & Cintron, 2010).

The ways in which campuses quantify the support cultural centers provide for students include measuring the number of programs, tutoring sessions, leadership retreats, or occurrences of providing student support who are victims of hate and bias (Barzarsky et al., 2015; Beemyn, Dominique, Pettitt, & Smith, 2005). Many of the contributions to student success are

immeasurable, including one-on-one advising, mental and physical health referrals, and welcoming campus spaces (Cuyjet, & Lee, 2010; Lozano, 2010; Negrete & Purcell, 2011; Shotton, Yellowfish, & Cintron, 2010). In some cases, cultural center professional staff serve on university committees related to students' identities, create new institutional policies, and/or serve as a convening space when a bias incident happens on a campus (Barzarsky et al., 2015; Rankin, Blumenfeld, Weber, & Frazer, 2010). When cultural centers are understaffed and under-resourced, contributions to student success like addressing issues of policy, committee service, and responding to bias incidents can be burdensome to staff (Patton, 2010).

Within the current political context of extreme oversight of higher education and targeting of retirement and tenure (Troop, 2016), political reactionism and retrenchment of state and federal support of initiatives intended to increase the success of minoritized student populations often plague cultural centers in specific ways (Shuford, 2011). Merging of whole offices to reduce financial costs is one prime example (Herzog & Marley, 2015). Often, cultural centers face unique challenges considering the political context that other units operating on campus face less frequently such as attacks on culturally based programs and critiques of exclusionism (Patton, 2010). As public institutions seek to manage budget reductions, cultural centers are often viewed as expendable (Herzog & Marley, 2015). Yet, given the albeit modest body of literature addressing both the tangible and intangible support these spaces offer students, the claims that cultural centers are non-essential services are spurious at best. Both the political atmosphere around race and the precarious position of these centers leaves them operating in the context of politically hostile PWIs and forces them to use considerable resources just to defend their continued existence (Kimbrough & Cooke, 2011).

Merging. University's where LGBTQ centers and multicultural centers converge in their services and histories are numerous. Both LGBTQ and multicultural centers provide sociocultural programming, direct student support, co-curricular programming, and trainings (Barzarsky et al., 2015; Kupo, 2011; Shuford, 2011). Students minoritized based on race or sexual orientation report cultural centers as "safe havens and spaces where they feel they can bring their full self" (Stewart, 2011 p. 24). Given their shared histories and services, these centers' similarities are not surprising. It is important to note these intersections even in the little literature currently available to make way for future cross-center work.

In conjunction with the parallels I just described, LGBTQ and multicultural centers have some convergent services and demands of their spaces (Negrete & Purcell, 2011; Stewart, 2011). Prior literature— including Negrete and Purcell's (2011) study centering on the central question of engaging sexual orientation and gender in multicultural spaces— brings to the forefront gaps in cultural centers' services. What is most disappointing in reviewing this set of literature is the dearth of studies that explores these significant interwoven questions. It would benefit student affairs to have more research that interrogates the practices and culture of cultural centers as a way to begin to move towards improving these spaces. This gap points to how this study will expanded the conversation.

Early on, leaders within cultural centers set the context by stating clearly that students who have minoritized identities of sexuality and race struggle with issues of racism and homophobia on campus and are often seeking a safe haven (Cuyjet, & Lee, 2010; Lozano, 2010; Negrete & Purcell, 2011; Shotton, Yellowfish, & Cintron, 2010). However, these studies do not articulate how students' minoritized intersectional identities contribute to the double bind for QTSOC. Cultural centers, and more specifically multicultural centers, often receive high marks

when addressing race and ethnicity needs (Negrete & Purcell, 2011). Yet, these same centers

simultaneously struggle when students with intersectional identities need spaces to represent

their full selves, both sexuality and gender identity included (Negrete & Purcell, 2011; Rankin,

Blumenfeld, Weber, & Frazer, 2010).

Students with Multiple Minoritized Identities in Higher Education

Over 20 years ago, Tierney (1992) outlined three root problems universities have when

addressing LGBTQ communities on campus: bigotry, ignorance, and silence. Recent research

suggests that all three root problems are still relevant in today's campus climates across the

country (Abes & Kasch, 2007; Dilley, 2010; Goode-Cross, 2009; Goode-Cross & Tager, 2011;

Ellis, 2009; Malaney, Williams, & Geller, 1997; McRee & Cooper, 1998; Rankin, 2005; Rankin,

et al., 2010). Bigotry on college campuses comes in many forms, from outright violence, verbal

attacks, and anti-LGBTQ graffiti (Ellis, 2009; Goode-Cross & Tager, 2011; Malaney, et al, 1997;

McRee & Cooper, 1998; Rankin, 2005;), to uneasiness, biased evaluations, and mistrust

(Balsam, Molina, Beadnell, Simoni, & Walters, 2011; Johnson-Bailey & Lee, 2005; Solorzano,

1998). One of the largest commonalities across the literature about minoritized student

experiences is a lack of an intersectional analysis. Most studies addressing racialized student

experiences lack any discussion of how sexuality can have an effect on student experiences.

Additionally, the reverse is present in literature about LGBTQ-identified students. There is a lack

of intentional discussion of race and sexuality as a combined metric for student experiences of

campus climate. Researchers vary on perspectives and some may argue that intersectionality is

outside the scope of their projects. While that is one way to look at research about multipled

minoritized students, our research community loses a level of complexity when we flatten out

our student experiences into binaries. I attempt to avoid this flattening by not only using

frameworks that attend to these intersectional identities but also using methodologies that allow me to create research *with* my participants as opposed to about them.

   ***Hostility*.** Hostility and exclusion in campus climate environments are two products of bigotry and ignorance that Tierney (1992) found in his research. Subsequent studies (Goode-Cross, 2009; Goode-Cross & Tager, 2011; Nadal, Whitman, Davis, Erazo, & Davidoff, 2016; Rankin, 2005) paint a complex picture for LGBTQ campus community members, one that exposes the ways in which LGBTQ and students of color are finding hostile campus climates. Prior literature suggests systemic issues related and contributed to a hostile campus climate. Numerous studies (Evans & Broido, 2002; Garber, 2002; Malaney, et al, 1997; Rankin, 2005; Rankin, et al., 2010; Robinson-Keilig Clarke, Gortmaker, &, Brown 2004; Tierney, 1992; Waldo, 1998;) document LGBTQ people's negative experiences of campus climate. This outcome is particularly disheartening given the fact that so many campuses have diversity initiatives that are supposedly addressing issues of inequality (Deas, Pisano, Mainous III, Johnson, Singleton, Gordon & Reves, 2012; Clark, 2002).

   On a macro level, these studies confirm that LGBTQ people experience uninviting campus climate environments and are marginalized on campuses through written policies, hate and bias incidents, and exclusion. In a timeframe when some college campuses are making efforts to improve climate (Beemyn, Curtis, Davis, & Tubbs, 2005; Collegeequalityindex.org; Marine, 2011), harassment and violence can seem like a relic of the past. In Rankin's (2005) research, she notes that LGBTQ students are victims of harassment and violence more often than heterosexual students and derogatory comments accounted for 89% of harassment experienced. Additional research has documented the specific experiences of harassment and violence faced by LGBTQ people on campus (D'Augelli, 1992; Ellis, 2009; Herek, 1993; Rankin, 2005;

Tierney 1992; Waldo, Hesson-McInnis, & D'Augelli, 1998). More recent studies (Agnich, Miller, & Stogner, 2015; Rankin, et al., 2010; Robertson, 2013; Woodford, Howell, Silverschanz, & Yu, 2012) report verbal harassment for LGBTQ students. Homophobia and transphobia are still serious issues on campuses across the United States.

Studies have also described how LGBTQ students are overrepresented in statistics for truancy, underachievement, and dropping out of college due to hostile campus climates (Ellis 2009; Rankin, 2005). Researchers' claims that negative health consequences are linked to experiencing negative events are well-documented. For example, a lack of gender-neutral facilities increases the risk of suicide in transgender college students (Seelman, 2016). Seelman's studies (2014; 2016) suggest that campuses have not done enough to curb hostile campus climates for transgender students.

Unfortunately, none of the literature on campus hostility considers race simultaneously with sexual orientation. The combination of hostile campus climates and need for community connections clearly points to a need for campus centers as safe havens. Yet, if those spaces are filled with racism and homophobia, QTSOC are left with even fewer spaces to build community on campus.

In many ways, findings about campus climate for people of color mirror campus climate findings about LGBTQ students. Because all oppression has similar roots, it logically follows that the effects of being in an oppressive environment would be similar. For example, research reveals that campus climate for students and staff of color is also rife with hostility (Balsam et al, 2011; Clark, 2005; Cuyjet, 1997; Goode-Cross & Good, 2009; Goode-Cross & Tager, 2011; Hausmann, Ye, Schofield, & Woods, 2009; Hurtado & Ruiz, 2012, Johnson-Bailey & Lee, 2005; Patitu & Hinton, 2003).

Queer and Transgender Students of Color

QTSOC face a unique set of experiences that are a result of their intersectional identities. In his book, *Troubling Intersections of Race and Sexuality: Queer Students of Color and Anti-Oppressive Education*, Kumashiro (2001) asserted that although many educators have tried to combat racism and homophobia in educational settings, they have not explored the intersections of the two positions. Concomitantly, although studies of the intersections of positional markers like race and gender, race and class, and sexual orientation and gender exist in the field of higher education, research on the intersections of race and sexual orientation is still scarce (Misawa, 2005; Rankin, 2006; Rankin, et al., 2010; Renn, 2010). Rankin (2006) could not make the call for intersectional research clearer, stating that "a final area of needed research is on multiple identities among college students" (p. 115). Although a robust body of work focusing on QTSOC on campus does not exist, the studies that do exist are primarily qualitative and focus on campus climate experiences with racism and disclosure (Harris, 2003; Mobley, 2000; Poynter & Washington, 2005), leadership (Miller & Vaccaro, 2016, Renn & Ozaki, 2010; Vaccaro & Mena, 2011), and strategies of resiliency (Goode Cross & Good, 2009; Kumashiro, 2001; Quaye & Harper 2014; Strayhorn, Blakewood, & DeVita, 2010).

An even smaller body of literature addresses intersectional student experiences within student affairs (Maddox & Potter, 2014; Negrete & Purcell, 2011; Patton & Simmons, 2008). QTSOC spend an enormous amount of time utilizing co-curricular services and programs whether at campus events, living in dorms, or having dinner (Bazarsky, Morrow & Javier, 2015). My research moves the conversation into the realm of student affairs by engaging students about their experiences in cultural centers.

The most prominent subjects of most of the literature are Black gay male students-
addressed as "Black men who have sex with men (MSM)"- or Black gay/bisexual male students
(Brown & Davis, 2000; Goode-Cross & Tager, 2011; Harris, 2003; McCready, 2004; Mobley,
2000; Poynter & Washington, 2005; Strayhorn & Mullins, 2012). The problem with this is it
reduces Black male students just to their sexual acts, pulling them out of their community and
cultural context. In addition, the use of "men who have sex with men" places students in a
medical/clinical designation that medical professionals often only reserve for Black men. It
unnecessarily isolates them from larger societal context and centralizes Black men's sexual
habits as hypersexualized, deviant, and abnormal, leaving an incomplete picture of who these
men really are and how they operate in systems of oppression on campus. This intensive focus
on Black men's sexual behavior versus their identities reflects how oftentimes within research
there is little interest in the identities of Black male students outside of a perceived deviant
paradigm. As such, in this study I will provide many opportunities for QTSOC to discuss in
detail who they are, how they experience campus, and how they maneuver through —or gain
access to— spaces supposedly dedicated to them.

Double Bind. Strayhorn, Blakewood, and DeVita (2008) found that QSOC students in
higher education had challenges with their sense of belonging, disclosure, being true-to-self, and
depression. Goode-Cross & Good (2009) examined how African-American men who have sex
with men (AAMSM) manage their multiple-minority identities, including being both racially and
sexually minoritized at PWIs. Using a phenomenological paradigm, their findings included that
Black men are in a double bind regarding disclosing their sexual orientation, they want to be
open about their sexual orientation so they can gain QTSOC community; yet they are at the
mercy of family (which pays the bills) and heterosexual friends (who might abandon them), and

they fear losing what little community they do have, especially at PWIs. Participants in the Goode-Cross and Good (2009) study reported having much to lose- including community- if they did come out. Students also reported that race was the aspect of their identity that most directly affected their lives daily (Goode Cross & Good, 2009). This is significant because it meant that other people only saw their race, and that myopic lens erased their sexual orientation, once again preventing them from expressing who they are. This experience of erasure is parallel to the struggle gay Korean students expressed in a study on campus experiences conducted by Strayhorn (2014). Gay Latinx male students also reported experiences of erasure and invisibility (Garcia, 2014; Peña-Talamantes, 2013; Victory, 2015). Studies confirm that gay Latinx and Korean male students fear losing community (Garcia, 2014; Peña-Talamantes, 2013; Strayhorn, 2014; Victory, 2015), and students were not fully recognized for who they are (Garcia, 2014; Peña-Talamantes, 2013; Strayhorn, 2014; Victory, 2015).

Additionally, studies examining the experiences of African-American gay men at PWUs shows similar findings of hostility and fear of violence (Harris, 2003; Poynter & Washington, 2005). This hostile environment often instills fear in people of color and sexual minorities on campus. These findings suggest people of color and LGBTQ people struggle to find environments where they can feel respected, included, comfortable and safe.

In addition to the double bind of disclosure and racism, Harris (2003) argued that Black gay male students must become survivors on these hostile campuses if they are to succeed. In conjunction with Harris, other researchers found that QTSOC had to create their own community for themselves (Poynter & Washington, 2005; Peña-Talamantes, 2013; Strayhorn, 2014). Combined, these two findings speak to the additional burdens of moving through campus trauma while being responsible for one's own resiliency.

Race and Racism. Echoing Goode-Cross & Good's (2009) findings, Mobley (2000) previously asserted that Black gay male students possess cultural identities that the predominantly white academy devalues: instead it promotes and reflects a strong, hegemonic, white male, primarily heterosexual orientation. McCready (2004) suggest that Black gay male students' identities are devalued, and little time is invested in supporting them at PWIs. In addition to being sexually minoritized, queer students of color at PWIs also face the additional challenge of racism (Harris, 2003, Strayhorn, 2014, Peña-Talamantes, 2013; Poynter & Washington, 2005). Unlike white non-LGBTQ men, Black gay men and QTSOC in general do not have white privilege to protect them (Harris, 2003). As such, these students may feel a unique sense of "otherness" because of their multiple minoritized identities. According to Harris (2003), if race is a primary social influence of how gay men of color are experienced and experience higher education, the larger QTSOC community experiences the same. The literature highlights the imperative that campuses must begin to develop services that serve students intersectional identities.

Lesbian Students of Color. One of the largest gaps in the literature is the lack of lesbian, bisexual, pansexual, and queer women of color studies. In my search, I found only two examples, and both studies echo those focusing on male QTSOC. In one of the few research studies on lesbians of color, Porter & Maddox (2014) report Black lesbian students face similar challenges, including a struggle to find community, double binds, and isolation. Additionally, the experience of being the "only one" (Patton & Simmons, 2008; Porter & Maddox, 2014) came up frequently in both studies. This gap continues to make evident the need for my study and its expansion of our knowledge of QTSOC experiences.

While these two studies have parallels with the studies that focus on college men, Patton & Simmons' (2008) work is particularly significant because its findings give us a glimpse into the unique experiences of Black lesbian students. I will now go into detail about their findings to highlight their differences in experiences. The findings identified three themes: coming in, triple consciousness, and sister outsider (Patton & Simmons, 2008). "Coming in" (as opposed to "coming out") focuses on how their participants came to terms with their internal sense of self, either in response to or despite how others felt about their lesbian identity. The students understood themselves in response to external others. In other words, external influences mediated their process of coming to terms with their lesbian identity (Patton & Simmons, 2008). "Triple consciousness" suggests that the participants' race, gender, and sexual orientation represent three different sites of oppression that could manifest themselves at any point. Thus, they experienced moments in which they recognized the presence of these three identities, and at least two of the three (if not all three) converged for them in their varied experiences (Patton & Simmons, 2008). Sister outsider describes how being Black was an accepted identity on campus while their lesbian identity was outside or considered the "other" (Patton & Simmons, 2008). This variation in experience certainly speaks to the need to expand research on QTSOC beyond gay and bisexual male students due to the uniqueness of queer women's experiences.

In summary, I reviewed literature strands that discuss cultural centers, sexually and racially minoritized people in higher education, and QTSOC in higher education. These studies together paint a complex picture of the university landscape for QTSOC. The literature suggests that while campuses have made inroads in supporting LGBTQ students with programs and services, campuses encode them racially as white. Campuses do this by both a lack of intentionality and a perpetuation of racism and homophobia. While this literature touches on the

difficulty of being QTSOC on campus in the face of homophobia and racism, it is lacking studies that examine how QTSOC students engage with campus services designated for them. Given this gap, my research question examines the experiences of QTSOC within cultural centers at PWUs.

Theoretical Frameworks

To frame my study, I drew from Queer Critical Perspective (QCP) (Misawa, 2012) and Critical Race Theory (CRT). QCP is a micro-theoretical perspective derived from Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Capper, 2015) that addresses social justice components of race and sexual orientation (Misawa, 2010). Theorists developed QCP from the foundation of CRT to pursue social justice for LGBQ people of color by using the lenses of race/ethnicity and sexual orientation. I chose to use QCP to undergird this study because of its attention to the intersections of race and sexual orientation and therefore its ability to contextualize and accurately interpret the experiences of QTSOC. QCP has six tenets that follow closely the tenets of CRT which include: 1) centrality of the intersection of race and racism with sexual orientation and homophobia 2) challenge to mainstream ideologies 3) confrontation with ahistoricism, 4) centrality of experiential knowledge from narratives 5) multidisciplinary aspects and 6) social justice (Misawa, 2011).

In addition to Queer Critical Perspective, I utilized CRT for my grounding framework. Capper (2015) identified CRT's application to educational leadership toward eliminating racism. Capper's interpretation was significant to my study due to its close examination of key foundational documents and its focus on application. The tenets of CRT include: 1) permanence and pervasiveness of racism 2) whiteness as property 3) counter storytelling and majoritarian narrative 4) interest convergence 5) critique of liberalism 6) intersectionality 7) and social justice (Capper, 2015).

To use both frameworks together, I combined the tenets based on their content and definitions. If a tenet did not have a complimentary tenet it stood alone. QCP's first tenet, the centrality of the intersection of race and racism with sexual orientation and homophobia, which focuses on the controversial sociocultural identities such as race and sexual orientation (Misawa, 2011), stood alone. CRT's whiteness as property and interest convergence also had no parallel. I combined CRT's permanence and pervasiveness of racism and QCP's confrontation with historicism. These tenets are connected through racism's embeddedness in American life and how the dominant positions of "traditional" notions of race and sexual orientation are maintained by the obfuscation of this fact. The centrality of experiential knowledge and counter-storytelling were paired due to their focus on centering minoritized experiences. I paired Queer Crit's challenge to mainstream ideologies tenet and CRT's critique of liberalism due to their connection to widely believed ideologies. Both frameworks are tools to seek social justice through research (Misawa, 2011; Capper, 2015). I relied on all seven combined tenets to guide the data collection and analysis that I detail further in the methods chapter.

Critical Race Theory (Capper 2015)	Queer Critical Perspective (Misawa, 2011)
Permanence and pervasiveness of racism	Confrontation with ahistoricism
Whiteness as property	Centrality of the intersections of race with racism and sexual orientation and homophobia
Counter storytelling and majoritarian narrative	Centrality of experiential knowledge
Interest convergence	

Critique of liberalism	Challenge to mainstream ideologies
Intersectionality	Multidisciplinary aspect
Social justice	Social justice

Table 1.1

These tenets allowed me to make sense of the relationships between my students and the institution. Although all the tenets were used to craft the research instruments, not all were used to explained institutional relationships as I discuss further in my findings.

The theoretical frameworks I use for this study were an amalgamation of CRT and QCP (see chart above). These two theoretical frameworks provide a substantial grounding for the creation of my research questions and the analysis of my data. What makes critical race theory and queer critical perspective appropriate frameworks to utilize in my analysis of the study is they are both frameworks that allow me to discuss the relationship between institution and students through race, sexual orientation, and gender identity and gender expression. CRT and QCP are both frameworks that work best when exploring the relationships between people-particularly minoritized people- and institutions. Within this context of student and university, the cultural centers are agents of the institution and students are the actors. I am articulating this structural connection because it adds to the context upon which the study was completed. I could not do an analysis of what the queer and transgender students of color were experiencing at Midwest University without situating the cultural centers as agents of the institution because it would unfairly place the responsibility of current practices and potentiality of future change on the shoulders of cultural centers who never act in isolation.

As campuses seek to increase the diversity of their student enrollments, they are tasked with creating campuses that are responsive and proactive to student differences. My study

examined the question of what the experiences are of QTSOC within cultural centers at PWUs. I focused on a PWU which provides robust offerings for QTSOC to further inform the field of higher education and student affairs. In this chapter, I reviewed literature that discussed the experiences of minoritized students and QTSOC specifically. Additionally, I examined the cultural center literature to provide a foundation for the institutional agents I studied. I also summarized the conceptual frameworks I relied on for the study. In the next chapter I detail the study methods to address my research questions and ethical considerations.

CHAPTER 2:

METHOD

My study utilized qualitative research methods to elicit the stories of queer and

transgender students of color in higher education. Qualitative methods traditionally focus on rich

descriptions of the experiences and meaning making of the participants (Bogden & Biklen,

2007). Stories were derived from interviews with fifteen queer and transgender students of color,

all of whom attended Midwest University. These interviews were recorded and then later

transcribed and coded for themes relating to participants' cultural center experiences.

Qualitative research methods use interviews, observations, and document research for

exploratory and descriptive studies (Anderson, Herr, & Nihlen, 2007; Marshall & Rossman,

1989). Qualitative studies also "stress the importance of context, setting, and subjects' frame of

reference" (Marshall & Rossman, 1989, p. 46). Qualitative methods are most useful in answering

my research question due to their ability to center voice (Koro-Ljungberg, Mazzei, & Jackson,

2012). Using a methodology that centers the voices and experiences of minoritized communities

is keeping in line with my theoretical frameworks of Critical Race Theory (Capper, 2015;

Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) and Queer Critical Perspective (Misawa, 2011).

Entry. I had a clear understanding that, as a campus administrator while conducting this

study, I had access to participants through initiative-administered listservs and social media. My

service as an administrator at this institution at the time of this study meant that there were power

differentials present between myself and participants. In my capacity as a diversity worker, I

coordinated the LGBTQ student of color initiative at Midwest University, which meant I

sometimes worked with some of the students I interviewed. For example, some of the queer and

transgender students of color interviewed attended programming I planned or engaged in

discussion groups convened through the LGBTQ student of color initiative. This contextual

reality could have created conflict in the students' ability to be honest and authentic in their answers in the interviews

To mitigate some of this potential impact, I discussed with my participants the importance of being as open as they could be without fear of damaging our previous and future working relationship. I reminded them this research is not about ourselves, or our relationships, but about how they utilized the cultural centers on campus. I explained how their honest reflections they shared with me may be able to help other students just like themselves who struggle in similar ways.

My role on campus also meant that I had a great deal of social interaction with some students. To mitigate the negative impact of perceived pressure, I used a combined email and social media outreach strategy to recruit students to participate in the study. This approach allowed student participants to opt into the study without pressure from face-to-face interaction. I made sure I placed my position as initiative coordinator into balance by helping the students understand fully how important their participation was to helping other students and how it could not have any adverse effects on their ability to access services.

Site description. In many ways, Midwest University (MU) is similar to other large research institutions. It is a Research 1 (aau.edu) land grant institution with over 40,000 students enrolled. MU's mission broadly focuses on students becoming global citizens through service to the state, country, and world. Located in a Midwestern city, its enrollment demographics for the 2013-2014 academic year were 75% white students and 25% students of color- and the accounting for students of color included international students. The gender breakdown for MU was 49% male and 51% female, and there is no accounting for gender non-conforming or transgender students at the time this study was conducted. Unfortunately, the campus did not

record sexual orientation either. The cost to attend is just over $25,000.00 per year and 49% of students who attend MU took out loans averaging $25,000.00 per academic year ("Portrait," n.d., para. 1).

Culturally speaking, Midwest University is a typical midwestern university with a majority white student body and staff and cultural practices that appear to be race neutral. I would argue the campus is far from race neutral but exists within whiteness which it projects as the normal way and order of things (Ward, 2008). This white normativity (Ward, 2008) materializes in specific ways: for example, there are regular/normal campus activities, like Student Orientation; and then there are the diversity activities, like Multicultural Student Orientation. These diversity offerings are often optional for students to participate in. This positioning of diversity offerings outside the white normative core of the university is similarly reflected in diversity class requirements being electives and seen as castoffs to real/central education.

Participants. Due to the dearth of QTSOC-specific services and programming at colleges and universities across the country, I limited my study to a single campus. I collected my data through multiple interviews with 15 QTSOC on campus. I selected this university because of the rich programs and services offered to QTSOC through the cultural centers. In addition, this institution is the only known university to have a dedicated administrator who works with and for queer and transgender students of color. Furthermore, it was the only institution in the U.S. with a dedicated initiative to address the needs and concerns of that student population, making it a rich location for research regarding QTSOC and their experiences with cultural centers.

To identify participants, I used social media and direct emails to QTSOC on campus. I was able to identify students through their participation in QTSOC-specific events on campus, targeted email listservs and social media asks (See Appendix D). As mentioned earlier, my position on campus put me in contact with queer and transgender students of color through programming and social media. I contacted students through and social media to ask them to participate in the study. I chose this method of communication, so students would not feel any undue pressure to say yes to me in person. In response to the emails and social media ask I had 21 students respond. Three students who responded were graduate students and therefore did not meet the criteria. Of the other three students who were cut from the student participant pool, two had already graduated and one was a first-year student.

To be a participant in the study, students must have met four criteria:

(1) they must have identified somewhere along the queer spectrum;

(2) they must identify as students of color;

(3) they must have been attending the university between 2012-2017 as a junior or senior;

(4) they must have utilized the Spectrum (SC) and Diversity centers (DC) on campus.

I defined utilization of cultural centers as participating in workshops or trainings, attending events in those centers, or using the centers for homework or other student needs in the past five years. These requirements allowed the student participants to talk across time and experiences on campus.

Data Collection

To address my research question of what the experiences are of QTSOC with cultural centers at a PWU, I collected data through three semi-structured interviews with each participant. Each interview lasted up to 90 minutes, and the longest interview lasted over 120 minutes (See:

Table 2.1). All interviews took place in a conference room on campus. I chose this location because it was a closed room with a window and little foot traffic. This meant that the location had low noise interruption and was good for making clear recordings of the interviews. Each interview was recorded on a password-protected laptop as well as a password-protected cell phone, and afterwards each interview was transcribed. The students did not have the interview questions ahead of time. Each student was interviewed three times during fall semester of October through December 2016. I chose to conduct these three interviews with each student spaced approximately two weeks apart, when their schedule allowed, to ensure I had enough time with each student to build comfort and process interviews. Additionally, the three interviews provided time to focus on specific areas of questioning.

After each interview, I dedicated 2-4 hours to writing field notes in which I reconstructed all of the responses to the interview questions. I noted facial expressions, changes in mood, body language, and when students cried, got pensive, or got excited. I wrote analytical notes which outlined preliminary answers to my research question based on the interview responses. I also wrote theoretical notes in which I reflected on student data and how or if it connected back to the theoretical frameworks.

Interview one focused on introductions and the faces activity, in which I had students draw how they showed up in the Diversity and Spectrum centers. I chose the faces activity as the introduction interview because I wanted the students to ease into questions about campus. Interview two focused on campus climate because of how the literature centers students' negative experiences. I included this interview to get information about campus climate outside of the cultural centers. Lastly, interview three focused on cultural center experiences. All three

interviews taken together helped create a vivid portrait of what queer and transgender students of color were experiencing at Midwest University.

During my initial introduction, I gave a personal introduction, stated the anticipated length of time of the interview, offered water and snacks, and made some initial comments to relax my participants and to assist with the transition from social conversation to research interview. Before each subsequent session, I sent a reminder of what we last talked about in the previous interview and to ask if there was anything else they wanted to add relative to the previous interview. In sum, I conducted 45 interviews for a total of 32:23:27 of interview data collection time.

	Date/Time/Location		
	Interview 1	Interview 2	Interview 3
Carrie	10/14/16/ 01:03:28 Conf.Rm	10/28/16 00:46:58 Conf.Rm.	11/11/16 00:58:54 Conf.Rm
Clarettah	10/17/16 01:26:34 Conf.Rm	10/31/16 00:37:17 Conf.Rm	11/14/16 00:41:32 Conf.Rm
Chris	11/1/16 00:25:45 Conf.Rm	11/22/16 00:12:08 Conf.Rm	11/29/16 00.22.41 Conf.Rm
Cole	10/20/16 00:45:05 Conf.Rm	11/3/16 00:26:52 Conf.Rm	12/1/16 00:35:37 Conf.Rm
Boogz	10/16/16 00:37:34 Conf.Rm	10/30/16 00:31:14 Conf.Rm	11/13/16 00:23:17 Conf.Rm
Marcus	10/23/16 01:17:32 Conf.Rm	11/11/16 01:31:32 Conf.Rm	11/23/16 01:05:37 Conf.Rm
Periwinkle	10/18/16 00:42:16 Conf.Rm	11/1/16 00:26:42 Conf.Rm	11/22/16 00:39:44 Conf.Rm
Sushi	10/16/16 01:20:15 Conf.Rm	10/30/16 01:03:10 Conf.Rm	11/12/16 00:36:47 Conf.Rm
Charles	10/16/16 00:51:43 Conf.Rm	10/30/16 00:35:37 Conf.Rm	11/12/16 00:35:15 Conf.Rm
Kaden	11/2/16 00:30:18 Conf.Rm	11/30/16 00:20:32 Conf.Rm	12/6/16 00:31:51 Conf.Rm
Sam	10/28/16 00:32:16 Conf.Rm	11/11/16 00:32:34 Conf.Rm	11/29/16 00:41:58 Conf.Rm
Elle	10/20/16 00:40:16 Conf.Rm	11/10/16 00:46:46 Conf.Rm	12/1/16 00:40:00 Conf.Rm
Nia	10/17/16 00:45:44 Conf.Rm	11/14/16 00:24:04 Conf.Rm	12/1/16 00:43:42 Conf.Rm

Johnson	11/8/16 00:47:27 Conf.Rm	11/29/16 01:04:11 Conf.Rm	12/6/16 00:34:33 Conf.Rm
Reb	10/24/16 00:41:01 Conf.Rm	11/14/16 00:33:16 Conf.Rm	12/5/16 00:51:11 Conf.Rm
Total 32:23:27			

Table 2.1

Instruments

Three semi-structured protocols (see Appendices B, C, D) served as the guide for the interviews with the students. I created my interview instruments based on my research question, theoretical frameworks, and finding of previous studies about queer and transgender students of color on campus. The structure of the three protocols went from general to more specific.

The purpose of the first interview focused on students expressing how they present themselves in the Spectrum and Diversity centers on campus. The faces activity had four major components (see Appendix B). The first part of the interview was introductory with simple questions about the student and their general impressions of cultural centers. I then asked them to fill in three blank face templates. Each face was related to how they "show up" or what they felt like is most present for them when they are in cultural centers. For the first face, I asked them to draw how they show up in the Spectrum Center. For the second face I asked them to draw how they show up in the Diversity Center. When drawing the third face, I asked them to fill in a blank face that allowed them to express their more authentic self. I created these prompts to help ease students into the interviewing process and gather some of their general impressions. Simultaneously, I wanted them to create an artifact that I then returned to them after completing the dissertation. The returning of the artifact was important to me- as a researcher and sister-outsider, I wanted to demonstrate my gratitude for their participation and remind them I could not do this without them.

In order to speak to queer and transgender students of color experiences with overall campus climate, the second interview focused on aspects of identity, campus engagement, and campus climate. The protocol for the second interview (see Appendix C) included four sections: introduction, engagement, campus climate and context, and closing. I asked questions about motivations for attending Midwest University and to detail what their major department experience was like. I then moved into questions about identity such as race and class to help fill in the contours of each student. The next section of the protocol was engagement. I wanted to know and asked questions about what places students frequented and organizations they were a part of. This line of questioning allowed me to explore what were common activities across student experiences and how they spend their time outside of the classroom.

Interview Three. Protocol 3 (see Appendix D) focused on queer and transgender student of color experiences in the classroom, cultural centers, and overall feedback. Classroom experiences are significant to capture because students' primary college-going activity centers on the classroom and the climate of this atmosphere is crucial to constructing campus experiences. I then moved into direct questions about the Spectrum and Diversity centers. I asked students to describe their atmosphere, staff, and programming. I then asked the student participants to describe a perfect center to speak to direct student needs and to guide practitioners in charge of creating centers. In the closing section of protocol three, I asked for other experiences they wanted to share but had not. I also opened it up for students to ask questions of me about my study in general, analysis, cultural centers, and preliminary findings.

Analysis

After completing the transcripts, I was able to review the data in its completion. For the faces activity of interview one, I looked to identify commonalities across each face. I looked for

characteristics and symbols that meant something for students, such as facial expressions, queer

iconography, or adornment through accessories. I also took note of if a student had drawn

different facial expressions across each face or added additional items outside of the face.

Additionally, I identified commonalities within a collection of faces. The collections were

defined as Diversity Center, Spectrum Center, and authentic faces. I then placed these

commonalities within a chart and noted how often they appeared within the 42 faces. One

participant chose not to draw but used words within his face templates, so for this reason his

faces were not included within this analysis. If a commonality appeared three or more times them

it was raised to the level of a theme.

To review the data from interview two and three I changed my approach slightly. I took

each protocol question and put it as a heading of a chart, I then put the student answers

underneath the question. I also placed student answers under interview sections such as

engagement with the Diversity Center. I looked for what words and sentiments came up often or

were repeated by multiple students. Those commonalties were groups together based on what

meaning they conveyed. For example, when two students used the term white or whiteness to

describe their experience in the Spectrum Center, those responses were placed lumped together

under white culture or racism.

Data and Theoretical Frameworks

To continue to utilize the theoretical frameworks of the study I also reviewed the data

with an eye towards the tenets of Critical Race Theory (Capper, 2015; Ladson Billings and Tate,

1995) and Queer Critical Perspective (Misawa, 2011). Even though these tenets are not themes, I

looked for student answers that confirmed or disconfirmed the theoretical tenets. This review

gave me a way to interrogate how the student experiences related to or could be understood through the prevailing theories of race, sexuality, and gender.

Centrality of the Intersection of Race and Racism with Sexual Orientation and Homophobia

This analytical category called for data that revealed examples of homophobia and racism. Some of the data that went into this category includes: examples of queer and transgender students of color being called on in class to speak for all people of color, invisibility in curriculum, and homophobic attacks such as being called faggot or demeaning graffiti. Student's shared stories of overt homophobia as well as experiences detailing racism and convert homophobia.

Permanence/pervasiveness of racism and confrontation with ahistoricism

This combination of tenets from CRT and QCP was the perfect place to explore data that spoke to conscious and unconscious bias in addition to challenges to grand narratives. Examples include invisibility in identity month events, backhanded compliments, and the flattening of QTSOC in the master narrative of the campus. Students shared the flattening experiences of all being queer but questioning whether white queer students really understood their plight. These experiences challenged the perceived universality of whiteness and the experience of white queer students.

Counter-storytelling versus majoritarian narrative and centrality of experiential knowledge

This category created an opportunity to explore how Midwest University and by extension the Spectrum and Diversity centers peddle in a majoritarian narrative of diversity and progress. Queer and transgender students of color stories can and often do stand in stark contrast

to the messages of progress narratives. Also, student experiences need to be centered as one of the data points to determine if Midwest University and by extension the Diversity and Spectrum centers are doing what is needed to create sustained efforts towards social justice. Participants in this study did share experiences that were counter to the perceived progress of each cultural center.

Interest Convergence

I culled instances of Midwest University creating special programs that appear as progress for queer and transgender students of color but the end goal of their creation and execution is to benefit the institution. This category included diversity groups, committees, diversity plans, centers, and diversity days/or celebrations. These examples can signal change and progress but do little to challenge the structures that created injustice or inequity in the first place. Examples of this would include the student experiences with diversity discussion groups and multicultural speakers and trainers. While it was good to have representational diversity, those things did not change the systemic oppression students continued to face on campus. Conversely, the Diversity and Spectrum centers and by extension the university could highlight these programs as progress.

Whiteness As property

This category is a bit more complex and depended on the absence of things to be explained. For instance, in the Spectrum Center during LGBTQ history week, if the highlighted LGBTQ heroes do not include queer and transgender people of color, this "absence" may only be felt by queer and transgender students of color. Conversely, white LGBTQ students could feel confident that they will be well represented in the university celebration of diversity. Students shared experiences of being invisibilized and subsumed by whiteness.

Within Critical Race Theory (Capper, 2015; Ladson-Billings and Tate, 1995), whiteness is described as a property interest whose value can be calculated in the lack of extra burden, lack of microaggressions, and lack of trauma due to racism compounded by homophobia. I would also like to add that whiteness as property can be understood to confer value or devalue. The value/devalue dichotomy appeared in how the student chose to engage in the Diversity and Spectrum centers after oppressive experiences.

Critique of liberalism and challenge to mainstream ideologies

This category calls for an examination of current machinations of spineless diversity rhetoric. For example, campus dialogues function as "neutral" options to discuss diversity, but often center the feelings, needs, and concerns of white faculty, staff, and students, leaving communities of color on campus with no more answers than before they came to that event. Data in this category would speak to the seemingly innocuous campus practices that have lingering effects on minoritized communities.

Intersectionality and Multidisciplinary Aspects

Data placed under this tenet included examples of how students dealt with interactions on campus from multiple identity positions such as gender, race, and socio-economic class. Although my study is not built to dive deeply into many aspects of identity, it is important to capture these experiences to better contextualize my students' race/ethnicity and sexual orientation. In addition to multiple identity markers, I included experiences where students clearly articulated feeling oppression due to multiple minoritized identities. Students shared experiences of their identities being hyper visible, erased, or ignored based on whether they were in the Diversity or Spectrum Center.

Social Justice

Data addressing queer and transgender student of color needs for more socially just spaces on campus populated this category. Within interview protocol three, I included questions that allowed students to explore what they would want if they controlled the creation of cultural centers. This imaginative question revealed how student affairs and more specifically cultural centers can be more attuned to what queer and transgender students of color need. The visions the students shared can be adopted and adapted to create access and equity in real time and in future planning.

Pilot Studies

Pilot One

On June 6, 2016 I met Francis. In order to find Francis (a pseudonym of his own choice), I asked the queer students of color who worked in the Spectrum Center if they knew any queer students of color who might be interested in piloting a study with me. I had two students reply they knew of someone. I asked them to tell those people to contact me if they were interested. I sent a small synopsis of the study through Facebook Messenger to each student and awaited their reply. It turns out both students were recommending the same student, Francis. He was a Black/African American queer senior at Midwest University. Upon learning of his grade level through his email reply, I asked him if he would be interested in helping me with my study.

He said yes after I explained in that email that I needed to practice using my new interview questions and that these interviews were called pilot interviews. I inquired about his availability and sent him the pilot consent form. He scheduled three interview sessions for the next week. Each session started at 7:00 pm and lasted on average about 50 minutes. I was able to pilot all three protocols with Francis and obtain his feedback on each one. All interview sessions were recorded and transcribed. I reviewed the transcriptions and my notes to determine if any

changes needed to be made. Dr. Capper reviewed the transcripts from this pilot as well and determined no major revisions were needed.

After the initial pilot, Dr. Capper and I reviewed my protocols and determined I needed to examine how my research question and theoretical frameworks could be more closely linked. To do so, I added references in the literature that reflected the connections between my questions and frameworks. Additionally, I added new questions at the end of protocol three that inquired about their impressions of their transcripts if they chose to review them, as well as their thoughts on my preliminary analysis of their previous interviews. Due to these additions I piloted protocols two and three again with a different student.

Pilot Two

As mentioned above, my second pilot study was to test my updates to protocols two and three. I was not able to interview Francis again due to his schedule, but I was able to find a senior who identified as a queer woman of color. Tatiyana was more than happy to help me with this second stage of my protocol creation. All interviews were audio recorded.

Tatiyana answered all of the questions. She often paused to think of answers and offered meaningful additions and clarifications when prompted. She seemed interested in the project as a whole and offered many instances of gratitude during and after the interview. I notice with pilot one and two, the time to complete the interviews fell well below the 90-minute mark. Although I have made an internal note about this, I l kept my scheduled interviews to this same timeframe to allot for longer answers and more time to settle in should the need arise.

Tatiyana had one major suggestion for my protocol: a reminder note to the participants in the beginning of every interview that I moved from more broad questions to more specific questions. She informed me that I did not iterate that enough and so it left her confused about

some of my questions early on. Once I finished my interviews with Tatiyana, I listened to the
audio file and looked for any areas where I needed to change the revised protocols. I did not find
any.

   While completing the interviews for the study, I noticed a few questions seemed
confusing or unnecessary so either removed them or reworked them (see Table 2.2). Changing
these questions did not change the interviews significantly. While conducting interview three, a
student suggested an additional drawing activity like the introduction activity, and I agreed it
might be beneficial. I converted the questions about a perfect cultural center into drawing
prompts. Student could draw and talk me through what a perfect center would look like and
include. The changing of this question gave the students a sense of familiarity and creativity
when designing their buildings.

	Original Questions	Questions Removed	Reason for Removal	Other changes Made
Protocol 2	2.15) What did I miss? Is there any place else where you feel your QSOC identity shows up on campus? 2.16) Are there places where you wish your identity was more visible, but isn't? 2.17) What makes you say that? 2.18) How is it not visible now?	2.15) What did I miss? Is there any place else where you feel your QSOC identity shows up on campus? 2.16) Are there places where you wish your identity was more visible, but isn't? 2.17) What makes you say that? 2.18) How is it not visible now?	2.15 was not clear enough to gather a pointed answer. 2.16 did not seem relevant to the overall aim of the study. 2.17 was not clear. 2.18 was not clear.	Added these questions: What are some unspoken rules of campus you've learned since attending here? How supportive of QSOC individuals do you feel this campus is? What does that support look like?
Protocol 3	3.5) Can you recall a time when a class issue was brought to one of the cultural centers, and how did that inform your	3.5) Can you recall a time when a class issue was brought to one of the cultural centers, and how did that inform your	3.5was not clear or directly related to the research question.	Converted the questions about the perfect cultural centers into drawing prompts.

	response to the challenge?	response to the challenge?		

Table 2.2

Trustworthiness

To ensure the trustworthiness of the study I used three methods to build in rigor: dependability/transparency (Jensen, 2008), member checks (Bryman, 2004), and triangulation. Dependability in a qualitative study recognizes that the research context is constantly evolving and that it cannot be completely understood a priori as a singular moment in time (Jensen, 2008). To ensure dependability and transparency (Givens, 2008), I provided adequate and relevant methodological information to enable future researchers to verify my study procedures.

I offered study participants the opportunity to review the transcripts of their interviews. In the first interview with each student, I informed them that the interviews would be recorded and made available upon request for review. If a student requested their transcript, I would respond within five days with a copy of the interview in their email account. I requested that if they had any changes they wanted to make to the transcripts, that they be emailed within 14 days of my reply email to them. If the changes were not clear, I would follow up with the participants for more clarity. I offered member checks to ensure accuracy of student voice and to provide an opportunity for students to engage with the study outside just interviews. No student requested their transcripts for review. To triangulate, I reviewed the data and compared it to the previous literature. I chose this method to identify how my data either confirmed or diverged from previous studies. Many of the stories the students shared confirmed the campus experiences of other queer and transgender students of color attending predominantly white universities.

The goal of this dissertation study was to expand the understanding of the experiences of queer and transgender students of color within cultural centers. One of its utilities is for student affairs practitioners to recognize the ways in which they can learn and understand the QTSOC

experience and generate transformative practices. The study is context/institution-bound because few campuses offer institutional initiatives for queer and transgender students of color and even fewer campuses have communities of QTSOC activating together for change. That is one unique feature of Midwest University. I see this as a limit and a strength because students and practitioners can reflect on ways to advocate for change on their campuses.

Finally, my bias as a person who inhabits an insider within status could have had undue influence on my study, and I see this as a strength and a weakness. I see my positionality as a limitation because it can make it difficult to make the familiar unfamiliar. Students may be more relaxed with me and give me answers based on presumed previous knowledge of them. Conversely, it is a strength because the empathy needed to conduct such emotional research will already be present and does not perpetuate the problematic dynamic of an outsider coming into community to study the subject and then leaving with no accountability.

Ethical Considerations

I situated the creation and execution of this research study in community, researcher accountability, and social justice. Given that orientation, I followed all guidelines as mandated by the Internal Review Board at Midwest University, made corrective changes as needed based on the suggestions of my participants, and centered social justice as my foundation. To ensure confidentiality for all of my participants, I had them pick pseudonyms and created records of our interviews with no identifiable markers that can reveal their identities. I made sure all students understood the content of the consent form (see Appendix F) by allowing students to ask questions in regard to the study and I addressed all concerns before I interviewed each student.

I mitigated the contextual factor of my role as coordinator of the LGBTQ initiative on campus. I informed my participants about how the entire process would work as well as provided

them with contact information for my committee chair and advisor, Dr. Colleen Capper;

counseling centers; and the Institutional Review Board for problems. For further clarification,

corrections, or to stop participation, I provided them with access to me by email. To help avoid

students feeling as though I am taking their story for my personal gain, I made sure to inform

them that we are co-creating this study and that honest reflections of their experiences and

feedback was less about me finishing my degree and more about the power they held to change

things for other queer and transgender students of color at Midwest University and across the

country. Finally, to help lessen our power differential, I reminded them this is not my study but

our study. All critique was and welcome about my student affairs practices, institutional

practices, cultural centers, and support services.

In summary, I've outlined the design of the study, methodological approach, entry, site

description, participants, procedures, data collection, instrumentation, analysis, trustworthiness,

and ethical considerations. The next chapters in my study focus on findings, discussion,

conclusions, and emergent theories.

CHAPTER 3

Self-Identity and Campus Climate

Because we know so little about queer and transgender students of color, the beginning of this chapter will focus on the student participants in the study. I lead this section of the chapter with a statistical breakdown of the student participants, followed by a participant chart and a brief description of each participant. To answer the central question of this study- what are the experiences of queer and transgender students of color in cultural centers at a predominantly white university- I individually interviewed each student three times in the fall semester of 2016. After the demographic section, I share the findings from the first interview which featured the faces activity that explored how queer and transgender students of color saw themselves and how others see them on campus. To wrap up this chapter I focus on student impressions of campus climate from interview two.

I interviewed 15 students. The racial composition of the group was 53% (8) Black, 27% Asian (4), 13% multiracial (2), and 7% (1) Latinx. Over 66% (10) of them were seniors and 33.3% (5) were juniors. The students came from many different areas of the country including rural, suburban, and urban cities and towns. Because their majors varied, I categorized them by 44.4% (5) STEM, 13.4% (2) Humanities, and 53.3% (8) Social Sciences majors. The students were mainly born in the United States with 73.3% (11) while 26.6% (4) were from other countries. The gender breakdown was 26% (4) transgender/non-binary, 44% (5) female and 40% (6) male, while gender expression was 40% (6) fluid, 13.3% (2) feminine, and 46.6% (7) masculine. The queer and transgender students I interviewed are multifaceted and bring a multitude of lived experiences with them as they matriculate through the PWU. Next, I share

snapshots of my impressions of the students. Please note in each summary that the names used are self-selected pseudonyms.

Boogz is an Afro-Caribbean gay cisgender man from a major Midwest city, whose love for music is only outmatched by his academic prowess. He is the life of the party type who you could always find smiling. He is very observant and only talks when he has something substantial to add. From our time together, Boogz would learn to further reflect on how his upbringing in white suburbia colored his experiences once he arrived at Midwest University.

Carrie's energy was so strong it could transform the feeling of a room. As an African American youth growing up in a major post-industrial large city in the Midwest, he crafted a no-nonsense approach to life. He is a pop cultural connoisseur who prides himself on keeping up with the latest in music and fashion. When I interviewed him, he was working to finish his degree at Midwest University after having to take a break-- he successfully graduated not long after participating in the study.

Charles, an African American cis gay man, was somewhat shy. He would not open up until he got to know you. He was very secure in his Black racial identity which is greatly informed by his east coast metropolitan city of origin and preacher mother. He learned very early on to be self-sufficient and brought that to Midwest University. During our interview time together, Charles made lots of connections between his upbringing, race, and his experiences at Midwest University.

Chris was very direct, concise and only answered questions asked of him. While he was equally at home in both of his majors of sociology and biology, he had no problem seeing and articulating the racism and heterosexism present in both. As an African American cisgender gay male, being from a post-industrial, major, upper Midwest city, he used his straight passing

privilege to push the envelope with his science, technology, engineering, and mathematics classmates to recognize the significance of intersectional identities.

Clarettah, an African American cisgender woman, was loud talking and passionate. She came to Midwest University from the southwest and had a major culture shock at its whiteness. She was one of the newer students to the cultural centers and was learning how its unspoken cultures operated. I did not know Clarettah very well before she agreed to be interviewed and I would come to find out, once she found something to be passionate about she would dive in head first. Her passion fueled her activism and community service projects.

Cole liked to joke around in meetings when he was nervous. He is from Collegetown, USA, the same Midwest town Midwest University is located providing him some familiarity other students did not possess. As a biracial queer student, he had challenging relationships with Blackness and Black spaces so, he helped create a student organization for multi/biracial students at Midwest University. His curiosities about race and self-identification led him to help create a thriving communal space even if at times he still questioned where his own place was.

Elle, a Chinese international student, was a highly active student who was involved in no less than 10 student organizations. As an international student she was often motivated by learning new ways to practice social justice. Elle found community with peers fighting for LGBT rights, gender equality, and against racism. She was very much a third culture kid who saw herself in a rainbow of diversity but could not find herself in designated race intentional spaces.

Johnson, an African American cisgender woman student, used humor to mask emotions. She, like Clarettah, had culture shock when she arrived at Midwest University from the southeast. Her comfortability in her sexuality and masculine gender presentation was rooted in her supportive family and communities back home. This ease allowed for her to be inquisitive

and ask expansive, deep questions about campus climate while participating in this study. It also made her need for the Spectrum and Diversity centers on campus slightly different and more utilitarian than her peers.

Kaden, a Latinx transmasculine student, took his social justice work seriously and as a s visible and out transgender student on campus he was accepted as a bridge builder between communities. He is from the east coast and had a hard time understanding Midwest white and Midwest nice. Guided by practicality and justice, when he saw a hole in programming regarding gender he sought to fill it by volunteering or creating something new. This forwardness made him well recognized as a campus leader but as one of the few out trans men of color he often found himself in a teaching role.

Marcus was social, in greek life, and had many friends. He was active in his major and fraternity. Contemplative journalism was Marcus's specialty. As a cisgender, African American student he also focused on African American cultural production. He planned to continue writing for national publications about Blackness. Midwest University seemed to be a perfect fit for him until he started questioning his attraction and gender. The cultural centers would become havens for his exploration.

Nia, an African American transgender student, had a strong analysis of the inequity they saw on campus and often found themselves frustrated. They found it challenging to build community with other African American students at Midwest University due to transphobia, sexism, and politics of disposability. This lead to them opting to spend more time and energy in white spaces and with white students. They often sought opportunities to integrate justice with acting. As an outspoken student they were a role model for many other queer and transgender students of color, but often felt depleted and overlooked.

Periwinkle found her way to the Spectrum Center through their sociology class. A class assignment gave her the impetus to volunteer there. She came to campus from a suburban multiracial family and found it hard to see herself reflected on campus as a Chinese American. She would eventually come out to her intimate friends and invite them to the Spectrum Center as a way of expanding community.

Reb is biracial and found comfort in the familiarity of whiteness of Spectrum Center. She was very shy and preferred the company of white or other multiracial friends. This shyness and questions of authentic racial identity made it hard to build sustainable community with other students of color who did not identify similarly to her. She found art to be a good outlet and vacillated between high and low engagement of the Spectrum Center.

Sam, a Tibetan gender fluid queer industrial engineering student, was outspoken and sought to solve problems communally. They were masterful at bringing people into the fold. They were a leader in housing and the QTSOC community and often volunteered to help wherever they could. Sam's willingness to unapologetically put themselves out there was a beacon for hope from many QTSOC. Their drive to make things better made them a magnet for other queer and transgender students of color.

Sushi, a Punjabi-Pakistani genderqueer demimale student, was a connector. They made connections between people, large ideas, and spaces. They were one of the few students who utilized both cultural centers and deeply thought about why. After a challenging start to college they refocused and sought to find balance. Sushi looked for opportunities to learn about and with other queer and transgender students of color.

Table 3.1 features each participant and some of their characteristics such as gender identity and major.

Pseudonym	Sexual orientation	Gender identity	Gender expression	Race/ethnicity	Year/Major	Center most utilized
Boogz	gay	male	masculine	Black/Afro Caribbean	Sen-Bio Chem/Spanish	Spectrum Center
Carrie	queer	genderqueer	fluid	Black/Afro American	Sen-Creative Writing	Spectrum Center
Charles	queer	male	masculine	Black/Afro American	Sen-Human Development/ Family Studies	Spectrum Center
Chris	gay	male	masculine	Black/Afro American	Sen-Sociology/Biology	Spectrum Center
Clarettah	queer	female	feminine	Black/Afro American	Jun-Health and Equity	Diversity Center
Cole	gay	male	masculine	Black/White/ Native, /Multiracial	Sen-Computer Sci and Engineering	Diversity & Spectrum Center
Elle	queer	female	fluid	Asian/Chinese	Sen-Econ & Math	Spectrum Center
Johnson	lesbian	female	masculine	Black/Afro American	Jun-Literature	Diversity Center
Kaden	queer	transgender male	masculine	Black/Afro Puerto Rican/Latinx	Sen-Rehab Psych/LGBT Studies	Diversity & Spectrum Center
Marcus	gay	male	fluid	Black/Afro American	Sen-Journalism	Diversity & Spectrum Center
Nia	pansexual	transgender	fluid	Black/Afro American	Sen-Gender and Women's studies	Spectrum Center
Periwinkle	lesbian	female	feminine	Asian/Chinese	Jun-Art/Psychology	Spectrum Center
Reb	lesbian	female	masculine	Black/White/Multiracial	Sen-Anthropology	Spectrum Center
Sam	queer	male	fluid	Asian/Tibetan	Jun-Industrial Engineering	Spectrum Center

Sushi	queer	demimale	fluid	Asian/Punjabi-Pakistani	Sen-Bio/Social Welfare	Diversity & Spectrum Center

Table 3.1

The queer and transgender students of color who participated in this study are as intricate as their multidimensional identities suggest. Whether they hailed from small towns or major cities, were STEM or Humanities majors, or identified as cisgender or transgender, each student's contribution to this study was vital to answering the research question. In the next part of this chapter, I present the findings of the first two interviews.

The Faces Activity

To answer the research question of what the experiences are of queer and transgender students of color with on cultural centers at a predominantly white university, I conducted three interviews with each student in the months of October, November, and December of 2016. The first interview centered around a drawing activity called Faces. I presented three blank head shapes to each student and asked them to fill in two of the blank faces with how they are viewed by others within each cultural center- one for the Diversity Center and a second for the Spectrum Center. The third face was reserved for a drawing of their most authentic/comfortable face. I created this instrument with three aims in mind. The first was to open our interview sessions with an activity that felt less heavy and direct. I wanted to ease the students into the questions about campus climate and cultural center experiences, knowing the experiences would be difficult and challenging to share.

Second, I wanted the students to think about how others saw them and how they presented themselves within each space using something other than words. Fourteen of the fifteen students drew faces. I had one participant only use words within their face outlines.

Each student completed the faces using different techniques and tools. Some students used multiple colors and some just pens, and some decided to fill in their faces with color while others did not. Various colors, symbols, flags, facial features and expressions were present in all the drawings except for the one participant who used words. After each student drew their faces, I asked them to explain the features to me. While each picture was unique, there were some similarities that emerged across the drawings that inform the findings. I classified a feature of the drawing as a trend if it was present in at least 3 or more participant drawings.

I analyzed the faces in two ways: first, I looked across each individual face for trends. Four trends emerged across the forty-two face drawings: (1) racial markers, (2) positive/negative facial expression, (3) queer markers, (4) and gender markers (See Appendix E). I was asked by Dr. Capper to complete a second analysis of the faces by grouping. After I reviewed the faces again by grouping, the findings did not yield any new information about the faces, so I ultimately did not separate them out in a whole new section.

Overall, the majority of students found this part of the interview to be creatively interesting and it made them think about themselves differently. When asked about the faces activity, Nia shared, "It was interesting. It made me think. It really made me think, how am I, how do I think I'm seen in these spaces."

Racial Markers

Race and ethnicity looms large in this study so it comes as no surprise that it came up as a main feature in the face drawings as well. The racial markers trend was present for over 50% of the drawings. This theme includes but was not limited to prominent lips, coloring in of skin tone, hair texture, specific shaped eyes, race/ethnicity-specific clothing or artifacts, and prominently

shaped noses. The students would exaggerate or minimize these features in each drawing depending on what spaces the faces represented.

When students drew their facial presentation for the Spectrum Center, the center catering to LGBTQ students, their drawings featured race and ethnicity-based facial features because students reported these racial features as making them feel different in the white space. Nia was a transgender, African American queer student from a major east coast city. Nia used a dark brown marker to color in all three of their faces. They were very explicit, stating, "I colored in brown to represent my race, my skin tone." Other facial features such as large noses and lips featured in many student drawings. Johnson, a cisgender African American junior from the southeast. who used prominent nose and lips in her drawing, stated, "I feel a lot blacker when I go into these [white] spaces."

Elle, a queer Chinese student from China, highlighted her nose. I asked her about the difference in her nose and she connected this feature to attraction and stated, "My nose is different [in the Spectrum Center] because I feel like people actually look at my nose because when you're a more attractive person, people pay more personal attention to you and what you look like in the queer circle." While it would seem this attraction to a unique feature is good, when I inquired further, Elle made a distinction that in Spectrum Center, a white space, her nose is more noticed and in the Diversity Center, a Black space, this attraction is not there. This suggests that while Elle interprets her nose as a positive thing it is still a racial marker of difference in the Spectrum Center.

Cole, a cisgender queer male student, admitted, "I don't really have to think about how I'm perceived in the [Diversity Center]." When reflecting on being in the Black space of the Diversity Center, racial markers seemed to be less of an issue for Cole.

The use of these features spoke to a recognition of uniqueness across faces and in some cases an aim for accuracy. In addition to demarcating racial difference in the Spectrum Center via facial features, students also colored in their faces with various shades of markers and colored pencils. For example, Carrie, a gender fluid senior from the Midwest, stated it was easy for him to outline his skin "cuz I'm very proud of the fact that I have brown skin." Speaking to accuracy, Nia stated, "I drew in my skin tone and my hair in all three of these just because it's what you see when you see me, you know."

While prominent racial features were a source of pride for some students such as Nia, Johnson, and Carrie, Cole had a different relationship to his racial features since he identifies as biracial. Cole is racially Black and White and spoke about passing. He explained "I feel like I'm passing in so many regards. Except for I feel like curly hair is just, is something that let's me feel like I'm a people of color." I asked him, when he is passing, what is he? He replied, "White passing. My skin is very light." While Cole is not the only biracial student in the study, he is the only one that struggled to draw himself as a person of color.

The students created facial expressions that represented their experiences within the Diversity Center and Spectrum Center. Within each center, the students expressed feeling othered or being made to feel outside of the cultural norm. This sentiment of otherness that was expressed by the queer and transgender students in this study is shared by their peers in other studies. Queer students of color feeling different or othered due to race, particularly within a white context, is mirrored in the within the literature about this student population (Higgins, 2015; McCready, 2004; Strayhorn, 2014).

Meaningful Facial Expression: Diversity Center

Straight lips were used by five students in their drawings representing the Diversity Center. Four students used frowns in their Diversity Center faces. Seven students used straight lips on their diversity faces. A combined eleven of fourteen students used frowns or straight lips on their Diversity Center drawings which translates to 78%.

As one of the students who used straight lips in her Diversity Center face, Clarretah said her straight lips meant that she was "probably in a zone, doing some sort of work." Sam's mouth is also straight lipped, which he attributes to auditory discrimination. When I asked Sam about his closed mouth in the Diversity Center, he said:

> I definitely feel like there's auditory discrimination that definitely does stem from like, sexism. The way that when a woman talks, people automatically don't consider it as important as when a guy talks or as valid. So a man who has a high pitched voice, I feel like there are, there are or have been people who treat me differently because of the way they hear me talk. Which is why I tend to not talk as much in these spaces.

Some students used frowns in their Diversity Center faces. Nia used a frown and spoke about their drawing: "I guess this one for the [Diversity Center], I see it as more of a face of, the face I make when I am depressed." When I asked why, they said they suffer from depression and don't feel welcome in the Diversity Center space. Chris said that he is flat and not being social when he is in the Diversity Center, which is why he used a frown.

Three students used smiles on their Diversity Center faces. When I asked Marcus what his smile meant, he shared that he has a "happy resting face" and even when he doesn't mean to smile he is smiling. Cole and Charles also drew smiles on their Diversity Center faces. Both students shared that they used the smiles as general facial expressions similar to Marcus and did

not indicate that the smile had any significant meaning as related to their Diversity Center experience.

Meaningful Facial Expression: Spectrum Center

Smiles, straight lips and frowns were also used by the students on their Spectrum Center faces. Two students used frowns on their Spectrum Center faces and seven used straight lips. Five students used smiles as their facial expression for their Spectrum Center faces. For his spectrum center face, Carrie used a frown. When asked to describe his face, he stated, "But I have like, frown lines on this photo because I often feel like, I like try to remember that being in a queer space opens me up to the fact that I'll be dealing with people who may not be of color." His use of a frown is connected to dealing with white people. When we discussed this further about the Spectrum Center, he said, "I think the [pause] the one for the Spectrum Center seems the most protected. Or the most defensive." When I asked him how he represented this defensiveness, he stated, "The tightness in my forehead. The attitude of the brows and kind of like the eyes are a bit more pointed. Also, I just feel like, [pause] it's a little standoffish in this picture as opposed to the other two."

Smiles. Sam used a smile on his Spectrum Center face and said, "I feel like I'm a lot more of myself in this space, so you can see me smiling here." When we were discussing Nia's Spectrum Center face, they used a smile, and said, "I drew a smile. Just because also I work there too so I think I do make more of a conscious effort to seem friendly and inviting."

Queerness and Gender Markers

In addition to facial expressions, some participants added additional items to their drawings to connote queerness and gender fluidity. These markers varied across the Spectrum and Diversity center drawings. The symbols present in the students' drawings included explicit

LGBTQ flag colors, iconography, and specifically colored shapes. Similar to queerness markers, explicit gender markers were utilized to connote gender identities as currently lived or hoped for. Markers included makeup, jewelry, hair styles and accessories, facial hair or lack thereof, gender flag colors, and specifically colored shapes.

Queerness and Gender Markers in the Spectrum Center

The use of flag colors signaled recognition of distinctive identities. Nia drew a transgender and LGBTQ flag in their Spectrum Center face. When we discussed the Spectrum Center face, they said , "I put the trans symbol and also the rainbow flag, when I'm there that says my pronouns are they, them. And people usually use my pronouns correctly in that space. So, I do feel validated in my gender in that space. And also queer because I work there [Spectrum Center] so it's assumed I'm queer." Nia identifies as pansexual. Charles drew bisexual colors on his Spectrum Center face. When we discussed his Spectrum Center face he said, "I know that people know that I identify as somewhere in the queer community and that is something that is noticed– that feels accepted in that [Spectrum Center] space."

Queerness and Gender Markers in the Diversity Center

Nia included an LGBTQ flag as well as a woman symbol. When discussing the Diversity Center drawing, they stated, "I just added the symbol, the female symbol. Just because I am perceived as a woman. My gender is not validated in that [Diversity Center] space at all I feel." Kaden did not draw but wrote the word feminine. When discussing the Diversity Center face, he said, "I actually feel like people don't fully see me for who I am in these spaces in terms of they see me as feminine." He went on to say, "The first two (Spectrum Center and Diversity Center) are pretty much the same except the difference is that one of them [Diversity Center] is viewed as feminine and the other one [Spectrum Center] is viewed as neutral. Or masculine of some sort.

And then the last one [authentic face], I think, is like me being super masculine. I guess." As the only openly transgender student of color in the study who was medically transitioning during the time of the interviews, this is a significant distinction for him. I asked him what made it "super masculine", and he shared, "I drew facial hair. Happier in terms of smiling and stuff." Later in this interview when I inquired about what was the most difficult thing to draw, he said:

> Because I had to put my image of myself on paper. Or what I want my image to be. And knowing that the first two are kind of representative of my image not being that, I guess. So I think the last one was hardest to draw. Hardest to draw emotionally but easiest to draw, to get out. Just because I know that's what I want. Want to be seen as.

Wanting to be seen and recognized is reflected in the current literature about queer students of color (Harris, 2003; Higgins, 2015; Means, 2014; Means & Jaeger, 2013; Patton & Simmons, 2008).

Although some queer and transgender students drew gender markers to identify current gender identities, students also drew gender markers on their most authentic faces to signify when they could be their true selves. Carrie, Kaden, and Marcus drew their most authentic face as an aspirational space for more gender fluidity. All three students added makeup, jewelry, and accessories to visually represent a more authentic gender presentation of self. These faces were more demonstrative of a fluid gender presentation than their face in the cultural centers. Carrie is a great example of this: although all of his faces had lipstick on, he reserved his brightest boldest color for his authentic face. When we discussed his use of lipstick, he shared, "Um, it represents freedom. Like I really wish I could walk out on the street with like a lot of cool lip colors that I think look good on me. But then like, you know people stare like, say comments…" Carrie went on to discuss his lip colors as tools. He later shared with me, "…I have an assortment of lip

products in my bag like, that I'm like do I just want to be shiny today? Do I want to add a little

tint to it? It's always something subtle enough for someone to like, pause. And even if they just

continue it kind of helps me avoid the coming out process." I asked for further clarification,

"Helps you avoid the verbal coming out?" and Carrie confirmed with a yes. I asked how he felt

about the faces activities overall. He stated,

> It was fun. I imagine my face in the difference settings. So, I think I have a consistent
>
> face just because my   face doesn't change much. But sometimes I feel like certain things
>
> are more obvious…for the [Diversity Center] one I just feel like any other black guy in
>
> there except like, there is something off that other people can sense something about me.

I asked how he represented that "offness" in the drawings and his reply was "I put a little pink

outline around my head" That pink outline speaks to both a unique gender and queerness marker.

He went on to say, "Yea, they kind of sense it and like sometimes it's something that's like if I

wear like a lip color, even if it's so, someone will notice that it's off they may not pick up that

it's like a color. But like, just that like, something's a little bit too [pause] pretty. And then, the

[Spectrum Center] one, I didn't really change much."

Racial, gender, and queerness markers are all signifiers of difference. The markers speak

to the presence of racism, homophobia, and cisgenderism, and map onto the first tenet of Queer

Critical Perspective (Misawa, 2010). Tenet one of Queer Critical Perspective (Misawa, 2010) is

centrality of the intersection of race and racism with sexual identity and homophobia.

Additionally, the racial marker theme is reflected in the first tenet of Critical Race Theory

(Capper, 2015; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Savas, 2003) which states that racism is

permanent and pervasive in American life. Undergirded by these themes and their connectedness

to CRT and QCP theory, this study speaks to the relatable patterns of queer and transgender students of color experiences.

The authentic faces prompt gave the students latitude to create a vision of themselves few get to see. With their authentic faces students often became the most creative and demonstrative. Across a majority of the authentic face drawings- 9 out of 14- students used a smile to represent themselves. Nia drew a robe and hair bonnet on their authentic face. When explaining this face to me, they said,

> I tried to draw me at home when I'm just chillin'. I drew in my complexion and my hair
> because these are also two of my favorite parts of myself. I love my blackness and I love
> my locks. And also my bonnet. My hair is usually in the bonnet. I put that there for
> comfort too. And then my robe. And then I didn't put any of these identifiers just because
> when I'm home and when I'm chillin' and content in myself, I feel like I'm not wearing
> my identities. It's just all so implicitly me so it's not something that has to be viewed,
> worn, judged by context. I'm just myself. I'm comfy, I'm in my robe.

The authentic faces overall had more adornment, more gender fluidity, and happier expressions than the two other sets of faces. The distinction between the Spectrum & Diversity center faces and the authentic faces highlights queer and transgender students of color current inability to be their full selves in either center.

I created this faces activity and interview protocol to ease students into the interview process. What I would come to learn is the students were more than ready to share their stories, and the faces activity served to deepen and contour the answers to the research question. Whether it was using gender-specific markers or racial markers, the queer and transgender

students of color took this opportunity to ruminate about who they are and who they wanted to be.

Campus Climate

To provide a context to the queer and transgender students of color experience in cultural centers, I relied on the second interview to inquire about department, classroom, and student organization experiences. The literature posits cultural centers as safe spaces (Magolda & Magolda, 2013; Stewart 2011). A natural question from this suggestion is from whom or where are they safe? What is happening outside of the cultural centers that necessitates them being safe places in the first place? The students shared with me several departmental, classroom, and organizational experiences that would suggest a continued need for the safe space of the cultural centers.

Unsupportive Campus Climate

In interview two I asked the participants: How supportive is campus for queer and transgender students of color? Students were clear in their answers and a majority replied not very supportive at all. When I posed the question to Sam, a queer, gender fluid Tibetan student, he said,

> Not very supportive. Just in general, they're not supportive of people of color in general.
> And so once you fall into those many intersections where your identities are targeted
> or not really taken seriously, or your voice isn't heard as loudly as others. I think a big
> thing is the fact that they don't take students of color very seriously on this campus, I
> feel like. A lot of it is just lip service. Especially in the emails that are sent after a hate
> or bias incident does occur. So having to deal with that. And having to deal with the fact
> that your own community here racially is not always here for you. [It] is like tough.

Many of his peers would echo a similar answer. Charles said:

> I personally feel little support. And as a collective, at least in the spaces I've participated
> in, had discussions and dialogue, there isn't very much support for us and we feel that.
> Thank god for the spaces that we do have, the one space that we do have [laughs]. But I
> see a group of us once every two weeks. What? [Laughs] I want to engage more. It'd be
> dope if I went to a class and I could see another one of me there [laughs]. Especially with
> queer identity. It still feels taboo any space that I'm in to talk about queer identity.
> Whether that is just my own internal things that I need to work on. But overall, people
> say they are open but I don't know that.

He goes on to say,

> [Collegetown] likes to pride itself on being a liberal city but it's that fake liberalism. Once
> you challenge them something that clearly this isn't open and respectful of a culture, a lot
> of people are quick to get defensive although [they] pride themselves to be open and
> (affirming) and accepting. So I know that I'm not isolated in feeling like it's hard   for me
> to talk about queer identity in my space and in academic spaces. And the fact that there's
> only one [organization] or discussion group focused on queer people of color that meets
> twice a month kind of speaks to the fact that we need more support.

When I asked Marcus how supported he felt at Midwest University, he replied in concert with

the other students and added a layer of insight and analysis by bringing up heteronomativity.

Heteronormativity is the belief that people fall into distinct and complementary genders (male

and female) with natural roles in life (Rubin, 1984; Warner, 1993). Heteronormativity assumes

that heterosexuality is the only sexual orientation or only norm, and that sexual and marital

relations are most (or only) fitting between people of opposite sexes (Muñoz-Laboy, Garcia,

Wilson, Parker & Severson, 2015; Rubin, 1984; Warner, 1993; Yep, 2002). Marcus replied to my question about campus climate by explaining,

> Yes. But I feel like they could be doing more. Our classes could be less heteronormative. They could.   Everything could be less heteronormative. And could be less white. They don't have to be fearful of hip hop. [Laughs] You know. I feel like white students want to dabble in other cultures but they don't want it to be a part of mainstream culture. They just want to jump into it and then steal it and then commodify it to be white rather than taking it for what it is. And so that's a little bit annoying.

Johnson reverberated the sentiment when she stated, "I think they're supportive of queer people. But I don't think they're supportive of people of color. So in that intersection, they're not." I inquired for her to tell me more. She went on the share,

> I feel like the spaces exist, these things exist. But the school has a very horrible way of broadcasting   these things. They have them but you have to dig through files to find them. To find like events going on. It's not the university that's hyping them. You gotta know a friend who knows a friend and you gotta accidentally come across this shit. So I feel like that's with all their events. So it's really hard to like, find, in general find stuff. And then you add in the minority status. Even though [Collegetown] loves gay people. They're big on being LGBT friendly. But you know, even then, I think it supports only one type of shorty. You know. And even regards to the fact that you have pride parades and stuff like that, it doesn't mean that, you know. The white gay people I know here are great, they're fine, they're chillin'. They're really chillin'. It's the black people who—I feel like being black and gay, being black and queer, that's a completely different ballgame.

Cole reflected on campus climate and made a distinction between the Diversity and Spectrum

centers and the rest of campus. On the question on campus support, he shared,

> Not very. I would say if you're not working in this building, what have you done for me?
>
> I haven't seen you say anything, I haven't seen you be explicit about anything or take a
>
> hard stance ever. Never put yourself in a position where you can make your-. I've never
>
> seen the upper administration do something that would make them unpopular with
>
> their bosses, which makes me lose a lot of respect for them.

Clarettah focused on services provided but drew a distinction between campus-wide and more

localized initiatives. She said,

> I mean, I know there are a lot of services out there that support queer students of color
>
> but as a campus, I don't feel like that's a campus initiative. I feel like that's more of okay,
>
> we have these organizations and certain programs set in place to target these populations.
>
> And that's kind of how that is more how that is navigated more so than saying. That's
>
> kind of the same when we're talking about our blackness and campus saying okay,
>
> we want there to be safe spaces. But if you're not doing anything about stuff that   puts
>
> black students in uncomfortable positions or threatens their blackness, if that's not
>
> even being done on a campus wide level, if we're talking about black queerness, that's
>
> really really not going to be talked about on a campus level. Which is sad. And I have
>
> thought about ways that campus, the campus could take initiatives on bringing
>
> awareness to same gender loving communities and stuff like that.

Carrie echoed the anger that Cole felt and replied to the question of support by stating "Not very

[supported] at all. No. I just feel like we're forgotten about a lot and when they need a

demographic, then they come to us." When I inquired further and asked how that feels, he replied,

> It makes me angry. I hate it. I'm almost like, I'd rather they? just leave me alone than pretend to be interested in me so I can do something for you. And here it's been how many years that I've been asking for you to do this for me? If I'm paying to be here, I should be able to feel comfortable here. But that's not a priority for you. But it's somehow a priority for me to help you out so people have the impression that you're doing the actual work. When in all actuality, you're not. And the work that is happening is not by your doing. So it's almost like you want to take credit for things you have no idea about. It makes me angry, it's hurtful. But it's also just fuel because I feel like it's made me a lot more creative. Because I'm like, cool, if you want me to do this, I want this in return. And if that can't happen, then I'm not helping you.

In this sense, Cole felt used by the university and administration.

The students' reflections on campus support is not surprising given the recent national campus climate conversation. Hate and bias incidents across the country have sparked a powder keg of student activism and engagement (Zhong, 2016) that hit home with Midwest University students staging protests and making demands of the university's administration. What is telling and frankly disturbing is how little to none of the on-campus activism centered queer and transgender students of color. Thus, while Midwest University answered some of the demands of the students of color on campus (Wang, 2017) the university fell woefully short for queer and transgender students of color. Student reports about hostile and unsupportive campus climates are present in the literature (Evans & Herriott, 2004; Rankin, 2005; Sanlo, Rankin, Schoenberg,

2002). The tactics taken by campus administrations does not seem to be enough to provide the support the students in my study need.

Site of Contestation: Academic Departments

In concert with overall negative campus climate impressions, students reported having a difficult time within their academic departments. The majority of students in the study shared challenging experiences in classes and with departmental professors and administration. I asked Sam if he had ever had a difficult time in his major due to his sexual identity and race. His response, and our ensuing conversation, was illustrative of the experiences of many of the other students interviewed.

Sam shared,

I am an industrial engineering major and all engineering majors need to take a class-. Well, they changed the requirements now but last year and the years prior, you had to take a class called Intro to Engineering Design. And that's where you get put in a class with a bunch of other engineering majors, doesn't really matter which one you're trying to pursue, and you get put into a team. And of course, the engineering department itself is just very white and male dominated. I looked at the statistics recently and I'm pretty sure it's eighty percent male and maybe even more. And ninety something percent white. It's just much more white male dominated than any other field. Because it's hard for people of color and women to feel welcome in STEM when the environment, you're already set up not to do well in that environment. And so I was already, I already felt out of place in that class because I was like one of three people of color and in my group, I was the only person of color. Because once you're in the class, you're split up into

groups. And there were two other women in my group and the rest, the eight other people, were white men.

He then continues,

And when I tell you that I experienced so many microaggressions in that class, I feel like when I think about the [Midwest University] experience, I immediately think of negative things just because I'm a pessimistic person in general, and immediately all those memories from that class come up. Because it's horrible what I had to go through in that class.

Sam connects his experience to the oppression he experiences around his gender expression and queerness in continuing,

In my fall semester here, I was still not very fluid with my gender expression because I was coming to a new place and I wanted to fit in. But by the spring semester, I was very openly gender fluid and people could tell I was queer. And I also don't, I'm not white. I immediately felt ostracized whenever I had ideas. It was always downplayed or not considered legitimate, I guess. Because we never ever did what I thought we should do and my input was never really taken seriously. And it was kind of horrible because everyone would delegate tasks to each other except me. I was the only one who was never given something to do. I was just sitting there. And I was like hey, how can I help? And either they'd ignore me or say I don't know, maybe ask, and they'd refer me to somebody else. So that's like, I was always doing my own thing, I never felt like I was part of the team or group, which was really discouraging.

Sam asked me if he could show me an example of what he is explaining to me, I responded, yes, show me, and he shared the microaggression he experienced in class:

> So it looked something like this, trapezoidal shaped. And he put it on his head like this.
> He literally looked at me, went like this, and did that to me. He put his hands together. In
> a kind of Asian respectful sort of Asian way. With the woodwork that he made that day
> on his head to make it look like a straw hat like a rice farmer. And I was so upset. I told
> him that he shouldn't be doing that and he told me that I should learn how to take jokes.

To get this issue addressed Sam went to his Section Assistant for the class. Sam shared:

> So I brought it up to call in an SA. And then he was like okay, I'll talk to him about it. So
> he talked to him about it. And instead of telling him that's not okay, he ends his
> conversation with him because they had a private conversation. Then he comes to me
> and he tells me he thinks I've been inciting bad teamwork or I'm not being a team player.
> So I don't know what that white kid told him but he must've told him I was the one who
> was ruining the team dynamic and I was the one who was just being angry and making an
> uncomfortable environment or what the fuck words that white people use.

After being reprimanded by the SA Sam went to the instructor of the class. He continues:

> And so he told me that I was being like the troublemaker even though I was the one who
> had just experienced that racist encounter. And I went to my instructor for that class.
> Because I was like, who else do I go to when the SA isn't even on my side. And the
> instructor, who was an Indian woman, obviously understood the situation a lot better.
> And was like, I'm so sorry, I've experienced horrible shit during my time in STEM
> as well. Because she was a mechanical engineer.

Sam was able to find some solace in his professor understanding and validating his lived

experience. Later he shared that this was the first engineering class he took here.

Sam was not alone in sharing experiences of microaggressions in the classroom, Marcus,

Kaden, Johnson, Chris, and Carrie all shared experiences of when classmates, teaching

assistants, and even professors were racist, homoantagonistic, or trans-antagonistic to them.

I asked Johnson if she had ever had challenges in class with regards to her racial and sexual

identities. She shared,

> I feel like when dealing with white supremacy and homophobia in any space, it's hard.
>
> And when dealing with white minorities who feel they understand things, but not to the
>
> degree that you might, is also difficult because there's still privilege in that. For instance,
>
> trying to touch my hair without asking.

A combination of racism, homoantagonistic, or trans-antagonistic microaggressions

punctuated the queer and transgender students' experiences at Midwest University. Whether they

were in class or on campus writ large, overall, they shared primarily negative campus climate

experiences. There can be little doubt these negative experiences impacted how they saw

themselves on campus and why these students would seek solace in the Diversity and Spectrum

centers.

The students' experiences of being othered mirrored other studies of LGBTQ students of

color (Harris, 2003; Higgins, 2015; Patton & Simmons, 2008). Additionally, the findings from

this study reinforce tenets of both Critical Race Theory (Capper, 2015; Ladson-Billings & Tate,

1995) and Queer Critical Perspective (Misawa, 2010). Specifically, a combination of the

permanence and pervasiveness of racism and intersectionality tenets from CRT (Capper, 2015;

Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) and the centrality of the intersection of race and racism with

sexual orientation and homophobia tenet from QCP (Misawa, 2010) reflect the multiple marginalization's the student participants experienced.

Introducing the students to our interview sessions with the faces activity allowed them to express the multiple aspects of their identities as well as reflect on how other perceived them. The students' analysis and clarity with which they rearticulated their experiences showed a deep and wide understanding of the complexities of queer or transgender students of color and their intersectional identities. These campus experiences provide the context for the queer or transgender students of color experiences in the campus cultural centers that I take up in the next chapter. . After highlighting the findings, I will discuss parallels within the literature and connections to both theoretical frameworks.

CHAPTER 4

Experiences with Cultural Centers

In this chapter, I discuss the findings to the research question that asked about participants' experiences with cultural centers at a PWI. The findings revealed three themes about their experiences with each of the two cultural centers. Within the Spectrum Center. the first theme, "White Space/White Culture," features a discussion of each participants' understanding of and identification with the Spectrum Center as a culturally and functionally white space. Second, "Racism," explains how participants experienced racism within the Spectrum Center. Third, "Racialized Behavior Modification," reveals participants responded to the White Space/White Culture and racism hen navigating the intersections of their identity within the Spectrum Center.

Within the Diversity Center, the first theme, "Black Space," highlights each participant's understanding of how Blackness is coded into the Diversity Center and sets a baseline for how they engage that space. Theme two, "Cisgenderism, Heterosexism, and Homoantagonism," explores how these oppressive agents are experienced in the Diversity Center. Last, theme three, "Specter of Violence," will show how students express trepidation about the potential for violence within Diversity Center. In interview three, I focused the questions on what was happening inside of the Spectrum and Diversity centers. The findings are bifurcated by cultural center and represent a pattern of engagement.

Spectrum Center

White Space/White Culture

I asked each student about their overall impressions of the Spectrum and Diversity centers. The Spectrum Center is a white space defined by white culture. Carrie said,

It's really white. But I generally have really good experiences. I think it's just like, if I'm in the center casually and a lot of white people frequent the center, it just gets uncomfortable. I don't know if I can really concentrate on what I'm doing and not feel awkward at the fact that there are just groups of white people around me that don't really see me. Or I don't know if it's actively making the decision not to acknowledge me. I'm very aware that there's a difference between me and the other people.

When asked about the Spectrum Center, Johnson said,

I had never really came here because I always thought it was a super white space…When I think LGBT, I think white people. When I think queer, I think black people. And so. Isn't that weird, right? When I think lesbian, I don't like being called a lesbian, weirdly. It's a white word. When I think lesbian, I don't think me…So when I come here [Spectrum Center], it's kind of like the alternative white woman with the I'm With Her Hillary buttons, the shaved off side hairstyle. That's just not my crowd. Not my scene…Or I could be considered butch. I guess that would be the word that they use.

In Johnson's estimation, one articulation of white space is language. Even the commonly used acronym LGBT is thought of as white. Her peers would agree: Carrie shared later in his third interview, "when [I] first got here I think I went to the [Spectrum] center once and decided it was too white of a space for me and so I stopped going." This isolation leads to missed opportunities. Charles explained,

Especially since coming out the [Spectrum Center] um, most of the people that I saw there – there weren't as many people of color that I would have liked. But that definitely would have helped in a lot of ways… I just wanted to share my experience with a person of color lens. I just didn't think - that - whether I'd be received and or whether we could

actually explore those identities. I just didn't think that would be a conducive space for

that exploration.

Sam agreed with the other participants on the whiteness of the Spectrum Center: "My main

qualm with the LGBT community is that especially with gays, it's very Eurocentric. And it's not

like an active exclusion, it's more passive." Passive exclusion serves as a cornerstone of covert

racism and does not require a direct rejection or action. Passive exclusion racism becomes hard

to redress because white supremacy demands evidence that is tangible to white people. Kaden

also experienced passive exclusion similar to Sam and Johnson. He shared,

I think that until recently, I've always considered it a very white space, which kind of

deterred me from coming. Just because every single time I would come in here, minus

you [the interviewer] and maybe a few people here and there, everybody was white and

just talking about things that I felt like I couldn't relate so it almost felt more isolating for

me to come into this space…it was very white space. So I avoided it. Just tired of being

around white people all the time. And then I had to be around queer white people that

thought their struggle was terrible. So that was like, eh.

Boogz, a Black cisgender gay student, recalls, "I remember when I first came in [the Spectrum

Center] there were certain people that, or [like] a lot of instances at this university in general. I'd

walk in and be the only Black person in that space. I was kind of used to that from being the only

Black person in suburbia." The literature on queer students of color identifies isolation as a

common experience (Means & Jaeger, 2013; Simmons & Patton, 2008; Strayhorn, 2014).

Johnson, who agreed with Boogz, also states, "I felt it was a very white cultured space." Johnson

shared further about her experience with the white space of the Spectrum Center:

> There's a white queer, a very white queerness. And there's a people of color queerness…And I have a very long history with black gay people. And that's a very specific space. And it's a space that is a completely different, completely different in culture than white queer spaces and how people interact and how perceived, how we're perceived…I felt it [Spectrum Center] was a very white cultured space.

Queer and transgender students of color not only recognized the whiteness of the Spectrum Center, they also expressed how this monoculture affected them, causing discomfort, isolation, and invisibility.

The literature confirms queer students of color feeling isolated and invisible at predominantly white universities (Porter & Maddox, 2014; Strayhorn, 2014). The experiences across participants were consistent and spoke to a universal recognition of whiteness. All 15 students mentioned the whiteness of the Spectrum Center at some point over their three interviews. While the literature mentions the whiteness of LGBT student groups (Poynter & Washington, 2005), it does not offer student experiences or opinions of LGBT centers.

The whiteness of the Spectrum Center is a manifestation of racism on campus. The dominance of white cultural norms and language cannot be overstated or ignored. The White Space/White Culture findings reflects the Critical Race Theory tenet (Capper, 2015) that racism is permanent and pervasive. The presence of white cultural dominance within the Spectrum Center serves as a barrier for queer and transgender students of color to bring their full selves into the space. This finding of White space/White culture within the Spectrum Center is integral to the next two themes, racism and racialized behavior modification, which discusses in more detail students' experiences and how they dealt with the Spectrum Center's whiteness.

Racism

Within the Spectrum Center, racism functioned as an understanding of whiteness as default and over-representation of white people as normal. The students shared regular occurrences of microaggressions or racial slights within the Spectrum Center that were barriers to full engagement. In an effort to explain the racism laden in the Spectrum Center, and more specifically the normalcy of whiteness, Carrie brings in the concept of white comfort. He explained:

> Honestly, I wish there was a way I could change the way white students felt so comfortable in the space. And I don't know how to do that in a concrete way. But sometimes I'm like, this is a space for queer people of all backgrounds. So to come in and have that comfort that maybe like, QTPOC aren't afforded is something that people should be made aware of.

Carrie continued:

> Sometimes I feel like it's the whole oppression Olympics things. Where it's like, I'm queer so I'm oppressed too. That's fair but you also have to be in community. You're oppressing me. In this space, we have to address it safe space. And I'm like, yeah, it's a safe space for queer people but we're still gonna learn here and still gonna operate on that function of there are layers to this. So. I think that comes from these people feeling too comfortable.

Johnson further explained how the white space of the Spectrum Center perpetuates racism:

> But there, I'm always like, you know. You always, I always, speak in the I tense, but when I'm in white spaces, especially interacting with white people who fit into minority groups, I'm always like yo, they might have this in common with me but they could still

be racist. That's always in my mind. You could be down with this cause but you ain't

really down for me?

The racism experienced in the Spectrum Center was covert and atmospheric. The racism

theme is linked to the first theme of White space/White culture and the third theme of racialized

behavior modification. The assumption and normalcy of whiteness as default represents racism

in action, as does the need to change one's behavior to fit in with the expectation of white

culture, which I discuss next.

Racialized Behavior Modification

Given the white space of the Spectrum Center which cultivates white racism, the queer

and transgender students of color described their survival behaviors within the Center, including

racialized behavior modification. Carrie explained how he initially chose to disengage from the

Spectrum Center but he eventually started utilizing the space more and ultimately became a

student intern there. He shared,

I like try to remember that being in a queer space opens me up to the fact that I'll be

dealing with people who may not be of color. And so sometimes like, in wanting to make

that connection will suppress things. I notice that I'll feel like, "I'm really not enjoying

this interaction right now but like I'm trying to hold it together." So. In an effort to be in

this queer space I don't want to fight in the space I feel safe for the first time. So I kind of

keep things like, fine. I'll brush that one off. We're not going to get into the little things. I

think I suppress those. Microaggressions and stuff. So like if someone [non-Black

person], does a mannerism that's stereotypically black, like [snaps fingers] "Oh, honey

yes," I'm like, "okay." Yes. It's those things that I'm like, because I just need space for

right now I'm not willing to fight about it.

Carrie's experience required him to do an extraordinary amount of analysis and work to make connections in the Spectrum Center. He shared in this passage how he suppresses feelings through holding it together while he experiences a series of microaggressions. He bears this racial violence all in an effort to keep community in the white space.

Nia also discussed how they made concessions in the Spectrum Center to keep community in and access to white space. They explained: "And just noticing how I'm treated, how I'm looked at. I feel like at the [Spectrum Center], I'm met with smiles, and hello. Or even if not, indifference, which I'm also fine with. As opposed to when I go to the [Diversity Center]. I just feel this tension sometimes." Nia was willing to accept indifference in the spectrum center which is a concession to be in that space. Other students also spoke of changing behaviors when in the Spectrum Center. Sam shared:

> This space is very white. As great as it is, it's white. And so I feel the need to kind of code switch when I come down here and use more like white sort of mannerisms and language down here. Not because I feel like I'm targeted if I'm not using those kinds of language but just because I want to fit in more.

The process of marginalizing and betraying the self to keep community in white space for queer and transgender students of color requires an enormous amount of psychological, spiritual, mental, and physical work. Racialized behavior modification required suppressing conflicts in thoughts or a willingness to accept indifference in the Spectrum Center, and thus, queer and transgender students of color are being made to do unequal labor just to be a part of community—to pay a queer and race tax.

While the literature explicitly names isolation and racism for queers of color on college campuses (Higgins, 2015; Poynter & Washington, 2005; Strayhorn, 2014), it does not enumerate

racialized behavior modification within the queer and transgender students of color experience. The illumination of this finding contributes to the queer and transgender students of color literature and our understanding of challenges faced on campus.

Diversity Center

Compared to the Spectrum Center, the experiences of queer and transgender students of color within the Diversity Center take on a different tenor and tone. The Diversity Center is seen as Black space or a place imbued with Black culture by the students in this study. Also, within the Diversity Center, cisgenderism and heterosexism operate in tandem, forcing students to be hyper-vigilant about their own gender, gender presentation, and sexuality. One of the most damning findings in this section? is the specter of violence in how students shared experiences of fear, bullying, and disposability.

Black Space

The students identify and understand the Diversity Center as Black space—which in their view marginalized other races and silenced all aspects of queerness. This identification influenced how the students engaged with the Diversity Center. The students shared how Blackness oozed throughout the Diversity Center in a myriad of unspoken ways, including in language, bodies, and potential harm. In this section I share how some of the students understood the Blackness of the Diversity Center and how they engaged with or disengaged from it.

When discussing the Diversity Center, Nia said, "Just feeling like wow, I'm not wanted here. This is not, even though this is the [Diversity] Center, this isn't a place for me." Reb agreed by stating,

I'm kind of nervous to go to the [Diversity Center] because I'm going to see them all and they all hang out but they don't hang out with me. I don't know. I think it was a lot in my

head but I think that's also because growing up, I've always felt like, as a mixed girl, I'm

not really Black.

I further inquired about what Reb meant when she said, "not really Black." She went on to share,

"So yeah. I've always had this feeling of I'm not a hundred percent accepted and there's not much

I can do about that. And I think I'm changing more now. But I've struggled with that, feeling like

I'm not really Black because I'm not, my parents aren't both Black."

While Reb and Nia discussed not being welcomed or accepted, Charles connects his lack

of engagement with the Diversity Center with dominance of Black Greek Letter Organizations:

I have maybe a personal sort of qualm with Greek life, particularly black Greeks. But

they sort of dominate [the Diversity Center] sometimes or [its] space. And it feels like if

you're not a Greek, you're not real. Particularly in your blackness. If you're not a Greek,

you're not real. So that's what sometimes I feel uncomfortable in that way. In coming into

this space.

Blackness and Black Greek life emerged up as a marker of Blackness and a deterrent from

engaging in the Diversity Center. With regards to Black Greeks, Nia shared:

There's a lot of Greek people that frequent [the Diversity Center] a lot. Which also makes

me anxious. I have a lot of anxiety around the popularity and emphasis of Greek culture

in the [people of color] community here on campus. It makes me feel like oh, I'm not

Greek so I don't belong here. Or you know, I'm not a part of their cliques. So I don't

belong.

Carrie agreed, "So sometimes it's just weird to kind of be in a space where [Black] Greek culture

is so visible. Not that it shouldn't be but like, just I'm very aware that I'm around a lot of Greeks

and Greeks are everywhere."

Within the Diversity Center, some students also experienced a sense of disposability—that is, that disposability is perpetuated in Black space. While sharing about Black queerness and why they do not utilize the Diversity Center, Nia stated:

> I guess more specifically the Black queer community. The black community in general but also the black queer community…we [the Black community] also have a tendency to dispose of each other a lot…Like if someone displays mental health issues that are characteristic of say, abuse, like say if someone has anger issues or say if somebody's response to trauma and anger is to be violent or things of that nature, we dispose of each other. I think especially with call out culture, being such a big thing in our culture, and throwing shade and all of that, that it's just become unfortunately easy for us to just cut each other off. And dispose of each other in that way.

Charles added:

> And so it's been this weird purgatory of like feeling, completely comfortable in myself with white people and completely uncomfortable in myself specifically with black people. Because I have the trauma, for lack of better term, of feeling the pain when I was younger and associating that with a specific color.

Queer and transgender students of color in the study viewed the Diversity Center as Black space and connected it to disposability and cliquishness. These experiences created a negative association with the Diversity Center. In contrast, though students shared negative experiences within the Spectrum Center, they did not use its connection to whiteness to disengage. No literature currently exists where queer and transgender students of color articulate negative racial association with cultural center spaces.

Cisgenderism and Heterosexism

In addition to negative racial association, students experienced heterosexism and cisgenderism in the Diversity Center. For the purposes of this study, I define cisgenderism as denying, ignoring, denigrating, or stigmatizing any non-cisgender forms of expression, sexual activity, behavior, relationship, or community. I define heterosexism as assumption of heterosexual normality, both serve to invisibilize queer and transgender students of color in non-queer spaces. While discussing the Diversity Center, Johnson shared, "they still have this heterosexual normatives in gay relationships. I've got to be like the man, you're the man in the relationship." Nia shared the simultaneity of being invisibilized and hypervisiblity:

> Since I'm seen as a woman, there's also all those associations and connotations with that. So I could be seen as sexualized, I could be seen as I don't know, maybe just hypersexualized, especially being seen as a black woman in that space. And also be seen as queer too. That tends to bring on opinions or people thinking I'm like hypersexual and things like that.

Charles described being invisibly queer in the Diversity Center: "And I think that this, is just uh, when people see me, I am a Black man in this space. And I'm just one of the boys in this space. That's what I kinda feel." Kaden echoed the invisibility of gender in the Diversity Center:

> As a person of color I'm accepted. But then as a trans student, a little more difficult. People aren't used to seeing trans students or interacting with trans students, whether they know it or not. So like, misgendering happens and programming that's more so only related to a piece of your identity as opposed to your whole identity. So it's not necessarily a completely harmful space but it's not a completely helpful and inclusive space either.

Elle also shared her experience of gender invisibility at the Diversity Center:

But when I'm in the [Diversity Center], they're like oh, that's just like a girl, like a chick, walking around with construction boots. They probably won't think twice about what I'm wearing. So there is like, they would automatically categorize me into the feminine category. And with myself, I just fluctuate a lot based on what I feel like every day.

These students' experiences at the Diversity Center illustrate how their identities are either being erased or invisibilized due to cisgenderism and heterosexism. Carrie brings in another layer of analysis when he shared the distinction between tolerance and openness at the Diversity Center: "But sometimes just trying to hang out up there is weird. Doesn't really feel- It feels tolerant of queerness, it doesn't feel open to queerness." He also went on to share:

I don't often see like, [pause] I guess an obvious embrace of queer students. I see like, kind of like "you're welcome here" um, but being in those spaces, you notice when, um, I think men specifically don't feel comfortable with you around. Whether it's like they are not speaking to you or programming like, I guess like, you feel hyper visible in those spaces.

He continued:

So like, you notice when someone's really thrown off when we have to talk about pronouns. Or you notice when, um, if we are being paired off and we are not allowed to choose pairings how that uncomfortable vibe of like, oh like, okay, I'm paired with you, kind of almost like this passive aggressive niceness. It's like I'm being tolerated more so than welcomed into this [Diversity Center] space. the verbiage in the flyer says that it's open to all like, there's definitely been the embrace of like, 'let's talk about pronouns' and this idea of safe space but I don't know if it's so much the staffing of the [Diversity

Center] as it is the student body, that those behaviors don't always seem to be present in all of our interactions.

Even with this gender and sexual identity-based erasure, students chose to engage with the Diversity Center, yet engaged in a myriad of tactics to do so. For example, to engage with in the Diversity Center, Charles changed his mannerisms:

Um, but I notice myself sometimes being in black spaces, particularly dominated by men. Um, I speak a little deeper, less twang in my voice. Whatever you call that. But I know what it is if I heard it. Less, "Yaasses" or you know, some of those things that may be associated with femininity I tend to – hide – sort of code switch in that way.

Sam engaged in similar behavior modification. He shared:

Yeah. I definitely feel like there's auditory discrimination that definitely does stem from like, sexism. The way that when a woman talks, people automatically don't consider it as important as when a guy talks or as valid. So a man who has a high pitched voice, I feel like there are, there are or have been people who treat me differently because of the way they hear me talk. Which is why I tend to not talk as much in these spaces.

The students shared experiences of code switching, behavior changes, and mannerism vigilance while in the Diversity Center. These behaviors speak to queer and transgender students' inability to be themselves in a race- and ethnicity-based space. Hiding and code switching is similarly reflected in queer student of color literature. In his dissertation, Higgins (2015) found queer men of color often code switched when around white peers. Similarly, Strayhorn (2014) found a pattern of hiding or behavior changes within his study about gay Korean students.

Specter of Violence

The experiences the students shared about the Diversity Center take a decidedly negative tone. Queer and transgender students of color experienced hypervisibility, erasure, anxiety, and intolerance in the Diversity Center, making it a hostile place, and that hostility led to fear. Sam stated:

And so yeah. Another thing is that I don't feel welcome in the [Diversity Center] because POC communities, especially with men, tend to be a lot more hypermasculine than with non-POC…And that makes me really uncomfortable and it makes spaces really unsafe for me as someone who presents either in the middle or femininely. And so I automatically feel very out of place in those spaces. Especially because like we talked about earlier, as a male, as a man, you have to be more masculine, especially in POC communities. And especially since I'm an Asian who is already emasculated in most cases, I feel like the need to make up for that by being even more, trying to be even more masculine.

Nia similarly shared: "I don't feel safe in that my pronouns would be respected or that I don't know, I don't really feel safe in my queerness there either." Sam also shared:

The whiteness of the Spectrum Center, which is still bad but it doesn't make me feel as unsafe as in a space where I could be like targeted and attacked by someone who feels that I don't belong there, especially if it's a way for them to prove their masculinity or something like that. So yeah. I feel like me being more feminine and my sexuality being different has been more of a source of violence in my life than my skin color, which is why I also feel like the [Spectrum Center] space is a lot more safe for me.

Charles was able to make a connection that was powerful, he shared,

And so, growing up with that – when I came here I definitely noticed myself, aside from the required going to the [Diversity Center] I sort of distanced myself from like, people of color spaces. And it wasn't until this past year or so where I was able to connect that to that bullying experience. The people that were bullying looked like me. And so, why would I want to integrate myself into a space where they look like the people who hurt me? Right? So that as something that I am now challenging.

Violence, or the specter of it, looms large for these students at the Diversity Center. A majority of the students interviewed come from communities of color where violence has been visited upon them in some form or fashion because of their sexual orientation and or gender presentation. So in some ways the fear of violence can be understood. The themes of Black space, cisgenderism & heterosexism, and the specter of violence come together to paint a hostile picture of the Diversity Center. The literature does not mention cisgenderism or fear of violence about queer and transgender students of color on campus or cultural center spaces. Even though these findings could not be found in the literature, they do confirm the Queer Critical Perspective (Misawa 2013) tenet of centrality of race and racism with sexual orientation and homophobia.

Despite having difficult experiences in both the Spectrum Center and the Diversity Center, how the students discussed their experiences was markedly different. The Diversity Center was spoken about in more negative terms and even marked as an unwelcoming space. The Spectrum Center was spoken of as a space necessary for building community despite racism. The racial difference between white and Black space served as a reminder that race-neutral spaces on campus do not exist. The students' experiences with microaggressions and erasure in both the Spectrum and Diversity centers serve as a primary impetus to making change in these

specific spaces. In the next chapter I discuss the study overall and explore implications for future policy, practice, and practitioner work.

CHAPTER 5

Implications and Conclusion

The purpose of this study was to explore what the experiences are of queer and transgender students of color in cultural centers at a predominantly white university. Additionally, this study sought to amplify the voices of queer and transgender students of color who are often silenced within a four-year predominantly white institution due to microaggressions and marginalization related to their racial and sexual identities (Higgins, 2015). In this chapter I summarize and discuss the findings from this study. Additionally, I discuss implications for future practitioners and cultural center structure and for future research. Furthermore, the findings inform a new approach to cultural center work that is more inclusive of the needs of queer and transgender students of color.

The findings of this study indicate that queer and transgender students of color view the Diversity and Spectrum centers as places to escape from campus but found challenges within these spaces. According to the participants involved in this study, it was difficult seeking inclusive community within each cultural center.

Narratives, testimonies, and storytelling from a minoritized perspective provide "educators with a set of tools to challenge the policies and practices that privilege the experiences and the tacit truths of the dominant group" (Zamudio, Russell, Rios & Bridgemen, 2011, p. 5). The stories shared in this study should not only be seen as truth, but should be examined as stories that help us see the everyday battles queer and transgender students of color deal with when seeking higher education. I present these recommendations regarding the needs of QTSOC utilizing cultural center spaces based on the stories provided by each participant and taking into consideration each participant's voice.

Below is a summary of the findings of this study in relation to the research question presented. The narrative arc of this project told the story of queer and transgender students of color navigating the Spectrum and Diversity centers while experiencing oppression and fear. For many of the students who participated in this study, there were no spaces on campus where they could be their full selves. Given that cultural centers were created in part to be spaces where queer and transgender students are supposed to be safe and feel included (Shuford, 2011), these findings present a counter-narrative.

Combined Framework Tenets and Related Major Themes

Framework Tenets	Major Themes from Data
Centrality of the intersections of race and racism with sex and sexuality	Cisgenderism and heterosexism
Permanence/pervasiveness of racism + Confrontation with ahistoricism	Racism, Specter of violence, Racialized behavior modification
Whiteness as property	White space/culture, Black space

Table 5.1

Each student in this study expressed they sought out the Spectrum Center and Diversity Center as spaces to be in community. What they found in each space was complicated by race, gender, and sexual identity. The Spectrum Center was experienced as a culturally white space imbued with white culture and this dictated how students approached the space and how they chose to engage in the space. Students' experiences in the Spectrum Center were filled with racism and microaggressions and required racialized behavior modifications. Students shared experiences of cultural appropriation, indifference, and erasure.

According to the students in this study, the Diversity Center was the Black space. This designation meant it was not seen as a welcoming space. The students reported negative experiences with regards to their sexuality, gender, and gender presentation. Other experiences within this space included fear of potential violence and fear of being ignored.

Notwithstanding having negative experiences in each cultural center, the students' overall impressions of each space differed by racial association. The Spectrum Center, which was also the white space, was seen as a welcoming space where, despite racism and erasure, queer and transgender students gave the Center second and third chances. The Diversity Center was the Black space and seen as a place to avoid or keep all uses utilitarian. Few students discussed building community in the Diversity Center and they used language such as unwelcoming and not friendly to describe the atmosphere.

One way to understand this distinction in how each space was received by the participants in the study is to look to Critical Race Theory (CRT) (Capper, 2015, Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). One of the tenets of CRT is whiteness as property. This tenet enumerates that, because of the history of race and racism in the United States and the role U.S. jurisprudence has played in reifying conceptions of race, the notion of whiteness can be considered a property interest. I would like to extend this definition to include that whiteness can be seen as having value, especially above and over Blackness, and in turn, over Black space. Thus, the participants viewed the Spectrum Center as a value laden space where students, particularly students of color, need to keep trying to fit in despite is overwhelming and permanent racism.

Conversely the Diversity Center is the Black space and is itself seen as hostile and reminds students that they are disposable. As mentioned earlier, students experienced the Diversity Center as an unwelcoming space and one where, when given the opportunity, they

decided to disengage. The overall patterns of engagement in the Spectrum Center went up the more time students spent on campus and went down in the Diversity Center as time went on.

Key findings within this study of racism, white space/culture, Black space, and racialized behavior modification confirm the CRT (Capper, 2015, Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) tenet that racism is permanent and pervasive. Additionally, the findings of specter of violence, cisgenderism, heterosexism, and homophobia confirm the Queer Critical Perspective (QCP) (Misawa, 2011) tenet of centrality of the intersection of race and racism with sexual orientation and homophobia.

Queer and transgender students of color are often some of the most vulnerable students on any college campus. The needs of these student communities are often obscured or subsumed into singular identity spaces such as multicultural and LGBTQ centers. As mentioned earlier in this study, cultural centers are critical locations for minoritized students maneuvering through predominantly white universities, but what happens when the cultural centers are also sites of oppression? This inquiry signaled for me the oppressive experiences the students shared were rooted in theoretical and structural issues. If we take steps to recognize and fix the way we approach working with QTSOC as well as the structure of these spaces, which are embedded in the whiteness of the university, we could create opportunities for different outcomes for multiply minoritized students.

Negrete & Purcell's (2011) study of engaging sexual orientation and gender in multicultural spaces offer some similarities and differences when compared to this current study. The similarities include LGBT spaces being predominantly White with limited knowledge of cultural factors that might be affecting LGBT students of color. In their study students needed to straddle identities or leave parts of themselves behind when seeking community, this is seen in

this current study throughout the face activity. Lastly, racism in the larger white LGBT community, homophobia within communities of color, and heterosexism & discrimination in the larger dominant heterosexual culture, and religious conservatism in Black Church making Black spaces less inclusive are all present in both studies. The key differences in the Negrete & Purcell (2008) study include and competition for limited resources between race/ethnicity and LGBT centers.

As revealed through this study, it was not enough for queer and transgender students of color that the cultural centers engage in LGBTQ or race and ethnicity work, but rather they needed places and practitioners that would attend to the combined multiplicity of their identities while challenging existing power structures and assumptions. The cultural centers do not exist in a vacuum and are agents of the institution, Midwest University. In their current configuration, it is difficult to operate any other way because the university itself focuses on compartmentalized identities via the Spectrum Center, the Diversity Center, and on this campus, an associated disability center, international student services, and veteran's services.

Towards A Praxis of Social Justice Literacy Theory

As currently constructed, a majority of cultural centers predominantly on white campuses focus on singular identities (Stewart, 2011) and this configuration will always leave someone out. This study highlights how queer and transgender students of color could not get their needs for non-oppressive community met in either center. Students' reported having difficulties because neither center effectively created inclusive, affirming spaces. Students stories revealed the Diversity Center was a place where cisgenderism and homophobia ran rampant. Gender identity and presentation were not respected in the Diversity Center. While gender identities were respected within the Spectrum Center, students shared experiences of racism in both

centers. One way to address these issues is to change the structure of the centers and the approach to minoritized student services.

Social Justice Centers

Cultural centers should be converted to social justice centers. Social justice centers would serve as locations on campus where students could learn how to strategically solve problems on campus, build inclusive communities, and learn and practice restorative justice. In a social justice center, students could learn how to be more inclusive in their words and deeds. Trainings and programs would be vetted to make sure they are inclusive of multiple identities and were planned with queer and transgender students of color in mind. When students and staff at these social justice centers prepare for annual programs, speakers, and trainers, they should ask themselves critical questions, including: whose voice is missing on the planning committee? How can this program be expanded to include queer and transgender student needs? Are we working from assumptions of heterosexuality and cisgender identity? Are the students who are working in the center practicing inclusivity and making sure minoritized students are welcome and attended to?

Even with the best intentions, social justice centers will still be places where oppressive incidents will happen. A way to make sure SJ centers are true to the cause of justice is creating processes for restorative justice. When a racist or transphobic incident happens, it needs to be addressed in a transparent way that makes sure those affected are redressed. Restorative justice principles (Karp, 2015; Karp & Frank, 2016) offer social justice centers the tools to practice differently by focusing on reconciliation within community (Clark, 2014; Karp, 2015). The professional and student staff should be trained in restorative justice practices on an ongoing basis to ensure knowledge of the practice is embedded into the institutional culture. Having a

process to address conflict internally provides a way for those aggrieved to receive redress and offenders to provide restitution without feeling disposable.

Social justice centers are the spaces needed to facilitate change and their professional staff need to create the atmosphere of that space through how they approach the work of serving minoritized students. To this end, I propose a Praxis of s Social Justice Literacy Theory for Queer and Transgender Students of Color, which has three components:

1. Decipher and understand the root causes of oppression

2. "Read" code and decode from more than one identity vantage point

3. Understand points of convergence and divergence of various issues that most affect queer and transgender students of color.

This approach allows for student affairs practitioners to expand how they serve all students by getting better at serving some of the most vulnerable- including queer and transgender students of color. The praxis of social justice literacy for QTSOC provides practitioners a set of skills that will help ask crucial questions and demand action. Using the three tenets will allow for a deep examination of programming, hiring, and mission**.**

Decipher and Understand the Root Causes of Oppression. The skill of deciphering and understanding the root causes of oppression will allow for practitioners to connect the work of their center to larger movements and develop programming that address the issues QTSOC face on campus.

Read Code and Decode from More Than One Identity Vantage Point. In addition to creating deeper and wider programming, the praxis also helps to develop the skill to "read" code and decode from more than one identity vantage point. For example, it might be fun for white students to have a date auction, but what messages are you sending to minoritized students who

have a familial history of slavery? In that same vein, a drag show may be popular for majority

students, but how would it affect your transgender students of color? Decoding from multiple

vantage points requires practitioners to consider intent and impact on multiple student

communities.

       Understanding Points of Convergence and Divergence. The most difficult tenet of the

praxis, if you do not have previous experience doing so, is developing an understanding of the

points of convergence and divergence of various issues that most affect queer and transgender

students of color. An example of how to execute this is through the #metoo movement. Centers

can create programming about #metoo that address gender-based violence, and its points of

convergence might include sexist language, sexual assault policy, and greek letter organization

culture. Points of divergence might include the disproportionate occurrence of sexual violence

towards transgender and gender non-conforming students of color, lack of culturally intelligent

support systems written into Title IX policy to redress these incidences, and how race affects

reporting of sexual violence on a predominantly white campus. Programming and internal policy

created from being able execute this praxis in concert with a social justice structure can help lead

cultural centers to become more meaningful partners in creating inclusive campuses. A

representation of the shift from current practices to future practices are in the figure below.
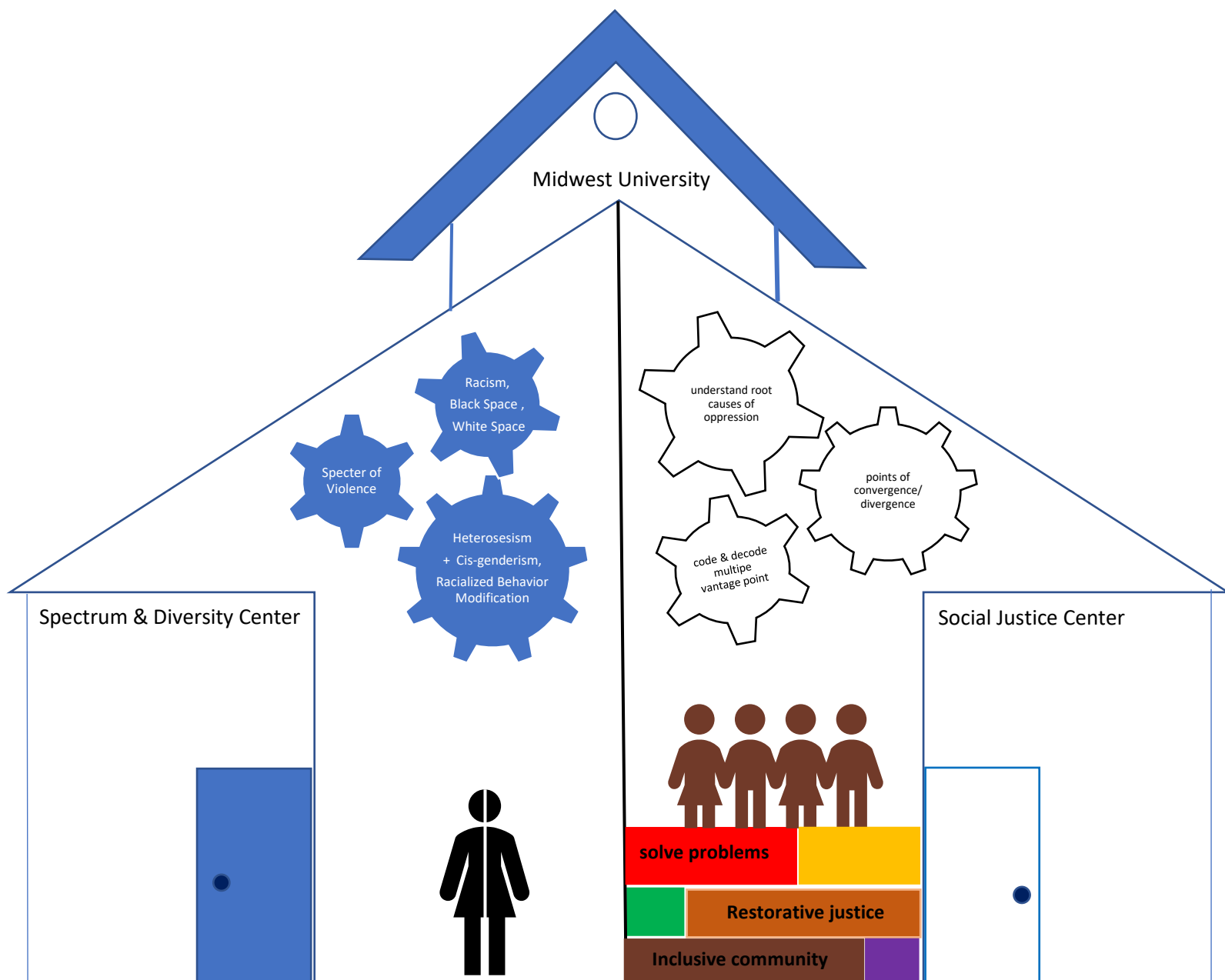
Figure 5.1: Social Justice Center

Though the experiences of the participants differed throughout the study, many of the

participants shared the same need for services and support. To better serve queer and transgender

students of color, the findings suggest the following recommendations for higher education

administrators and student affairs practitioners to lead toward a more inclusive and capacity-

building ideology for queer and transgender students of color (Wall & Washington, 1991).

The needs of QTSOC cannot be met by changing a few programs, implementing new programs, or hiring more staff of color. While hiring more staff of color is needed, the representational diversity that hiring people of color brings is not enough to effect systems change (Ward, 2008). In research about the white normativity of LGBT organizations, Ward reminds us that an increase in diverse people does not lead to cultural shifts. Ward states,

> Analyses of normativity—defined as conventional forms of association, belonging, and identification demonstrate that inclusion is not always, or necessarily, accompanied by cultural change. For instance, examinations of heteronormativity demonstrate that lesbians and gay men have gained access to increased institutional power (e.g., socioeconomic mobility, domestic partnership benefits, workplace rights), yet the extension of these rights has arguably done little to challenge the heterosexual norms that undergird dominant institutions (p.563).

The same can be said for offices that are looking to diversify racially (Ward, 2008). This study's findings reveal the limitations of identity-based cultural centers. With a majority of cultural centers being organized around race/ethnicity, gender, and/or sexuality (Patton, 2010; Stewart, 2011), these spaces currently demand a fracturing of oneself at best, and students can experience oppression and violence in these spaces, especially those who have intersectional lives. As identities for students are being expressed more fluidly, single-identity spaces lack the flexibility to develop alongside queer and transgender students of color.

Cultural center practitioners need to adopt a deep and wide approach to the work of serving QTSOC. A way forward is reconfiguring cultural center praxis by adopting the praxis of social justice literacy for queer and transgender students of color. The praxis will provide a way to rethink the services provided and survey the landscape of programming offered to students.

Further, converting identity-based centers to social justice centers will ensure they are spaces flexible and expansive enough to serve queer and transgender students of color.

Implications for Preparation Programs

One way to build for systemic change in future cultural centers is focusing on how we prepare future practitioners. The first step is to educate student affairs professionals about cultural centers and minoritized student services. Every preparation program should include a course about cultural centers, their history, and contemporary operations. Student Affairs programs need to integrate the experiences of queer and transgender students of color and best practices in serving them across courses as it currently stands, learning about cultural centers and minoritized student services writ large is an individual endeavor most practitioners do not take up until they have been hired in positions serving these student populations. The problem with this on-the-job training is it forces new and under-experienced practitioners to learn at the expense of QTSOC, who are either put in the educator role or must wait for comprehensive services until the professional has done their own education. The queer and transgender students of color future practitioners will be working with will need someone attentive to their needs who will work hard to create inclusive communities- and will not micro aggress them in their search for services.

An added incentive to building cultural center work into the core of student affairs curricula is to help created better-informed practitioners, especially white future practitioners. Reconfiguring core courses to include queer and transgender students of color at the core will help break down the pervasiveness and centrality of whiteness, cisness, and straightness that plagues our current practice. Student affairs programs are where the interrogation of white and straight normalcy can begin, and competency built from there.

Implications for Future Research

This study contributes to the student affairs and minoritized student research landscape by seeking the perspectives of often-overlooked student populations. And yet this study represents only a drop in the bucket when we consider how much more research is needed to understand the wide breadth of experiences of queer and transgender students of color on campuses across the United States.

Future research should include examining communities within communities such as: How do non-Black queer students of color experience multicultural centers? It is imperative to understand how POC across race experience race-based spaces on college campuses. To answer this question, the researcher could use a mixed methods approach, surveying students who utilize the multicultural center and then select participants to interview from those surveyed. Queer Critical Perspective (Misawa, 2011) would be useful as a guiding framework to conduct this study. A research focus on non-Black queer students of color could provide an opportunity to explore how multiculturalism is operationalized for these students outside of the Black/white binary.

Relatedly, little is known about transgender and gender nonconforming students of color, and although gender loomed large in this study, a closer examination of how gender identity and presentation inform student affairs experiences of QTSOC at PWUs would be immensely valuable. Research examining how gender identity and gender expression affect student affairs experiences could be addressed through a qualitative study utilizing Anzaldua's borderland/napantlism theory (1987).

Additionally, a future study detailing how racial coding of student affairs offices and services inform and affect usage would allow us to explore more deeply the interiority of campus

life. Lastly, although not a focus of this study, examining the experiences of queer and transgender practitioners of color who work with and for QTSOC would also further illuminate campus climate experiences. A study interrogating the experience of QTPOC practitioners who serve QTSOC would allow for exploration into how oppressive systems & behaviors operationalize themselves on students as well as staff, what supports QTPOC staff utilize, and how institutions respond to calls for redress.

Limitations

Every effort was taken in this study to include accurate accounts of the participants' experiences. Because all data was self-reported and based on the lived experiences of the participants, some of the limitations were based on these lived experiences being from a majority of Black/African American students. Eight of the fifteen participants in this study identified as Black/African American and two were multiracial. Both multiracial participants identified as Black and white. Though I believe that all of the experiences shared were true and that the participants answered honestly, many of these responses may not resonate with students of other racial and ethnic identities, such as First Nations/Indigenous students. Because lived experiences tend to be different between races, it made it difficult for me to be able to identify issues for queer and transgender students color who openly identify as queer, transgender, and Indigenous without the participation.

Only having fifteen participants in my study may have been limiting because it does not represent all of the experiences that queer and transgender students of color go through regarding the Spectrum and Diversity centers. Other limitations include the location of the participants and the institutional type: all of the participants involved in this study attended a singular public institution in a midwestern state. Various participants expressed that this study

would have been more inclusive if done in a manner that allowed for the experiences of queer

and transgender students of color who attended other universities to be included, but because of

the location and disabilities of the researcher, it made it difficult to include participants who were

not local to the researcher for in person interviews. While it adds important richness about

Midwest University and its particular context and climate, doing a study at a singular institution

contours the responses to that specific campus context and does not allow for diversity across

sites.

Additionally, as I am of color and from the queer community, this study had to be

navigated while limiting bias in relation to participants' experience. During this study, I would

often have to make sure that all data was recorded verbatim to ensure that no unintentional bias

occurred in the process of this study. Another tool used during interviewing was asking for

clarification and definition of experiences that students presumed the researcher would

understand. Even if I could decipher a meaning, asking for clarification meant I was not giving

my interpretation of things but allowing the students to speak for themselves in their own words.

Significance

As it stands, no studies explore the experiences of queer and transgender students of color

within cultural centers. This study is one of the few studies known to date that explores queer

and transgender student of color experiences at predominantly white universities. This study

adds to the literature regarding intersectionality and overall campus experiences for QTSOC by

focusing on their experiences in cultural centers. Previous research highlights the challenges

queer students of color go through and the fears they have related to going into a campus

environment, such as fear of violence, isolation, and discrimination (Diaz & Kosciw, 2009;

Higgins, 2015; Simmons & Patton, 2008). Further, many queer students of color often feel as if

their voices are overshadowed by their white peers while not being provided access to the much-needed resources that would help make their college experience better (Woodson, 2013). Many queer students of color also choose to not discuss their intersecting identities due to the fears of being further marginalized or victimized (Kumashiro, 2001). Consistent with the literature, the experiences of the students in this study confirm how many QTSOC search for belongingness within their campus communities (Higgins, 2015; Patton & Simmons, 2008; Poynter & Washington, 2005).

This study is significant in five distinctive ways. I relied on Queer Critical Perspective (Misawa, 2011) and Critical Race Theory (Capper, 2015, Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995) in tandem. Both theoretical perspectives allowed for the creation of interview protocols concerned with both the QTSOC identity and how these students experience cultural centers at a predominantly white university. The stories were so rich that examining them provided a window into patterns of experiences that confirmed several theoretical framework tenets and suggested how to fix the system to serve the most vulnerable students.

This study adds to transgender, lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer student literature, as well as student of color, student affairs, and cultural center literatures. It helps to inform cultural center best practices through the illumination of QTSOC experiences in cultural centers. Last, this study utilized student experiences to propose systemic instead of incremental change to student affairs programs and cultural center direction and operations.

Conclusion – No Place to Hide or Grow

The stories of Carrie, Clarretah, Boogz, Chris, Reb, Cole, Periwinkle, Sushi, Charles, Kaden, Elle, Sam, Johnson, Marcus, and Nia allowed us to see the need for better ways to create and operate cultural centers in the 21st Century. Though there were multiple experiences that each

of these participants brought to this study, navigating their cultural center experiences were difficult for majority of these participants because they were not provided avenues to get all of their needs met and identities affirmed. In spaces created and purported to be safe, inclusive and affirming, they experienced racism sexism, homophobia, heterosexism, and violence to their identity and being. These centers and the students' oppressive experiences within them added to the students struggles on a campus enshrouded in white supremacy, heterosexism, and transphobia These students struggled with coming to terms with how to maneuver through matriculation and whom they could go to for support.

On a personal accord, this study allowed for me to not only make sense of my own experience within my matriculation through higher education, but allowed for me to learn more about how transformational this study is and could be for queer and transgender students of color. After all interviews were completed, I received an email from a participant sharing the importance of his participating in this study and how grateful he was to be a part of the study. Charles wrote,

> I wanted to thank you again, even if they were just a few sessions, this research had helped me in so many ways. I feel like a big weight has been lifted off my shoulders, like my story was told for once. I know I have a long process ahead with being fully comfortable with who I am but I am progressing! I feel like I grew and learned a lot about myself. So thank you for letting me help you.

I was moved to know that something I worked so hard to bring to life helped a student find value. I was worried at the end of this study about what would happen to the participants in this study, but I was happy to learn that many of the participants have continued to strive to make other spaces on campus inclusive.

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Appendix A

Email and Social Media Solicitation

Participate in Sheltreese's PhD research

You are invited to participate in a research study about the experiences of LGBQ students of color and their usage of campus cultural centers. The purpose of my study is to examine the racialized and non-heterosexual experiences of students. Namely, how their multiple minoritized identities influence cultural center engagement. Students who agree to participate in this study will be interviewed 3 times over the course of the 2016-2017 academic year. Each interview will last no more than 90 minutes each and participation is unpaid and voluntary.

If you are interested and willing to participate, please contact me directly using the email information below.

Sincerely,

Sheltreese D. McCoy
PhD Candidate, University of Wisconsin- Madison
School of Education - ELPA
Sheltreese.mccoy@wisc.edu

Appendix B

Interview Protocol 1

Introduce study: Hello and thank you for agreeing to participate in my study. I am working to learn more about QSOC and their experience on campus in general and experiences with cultural centers more specifically. We will have 3 interview sessions together. Our first session will be us getting familiar with each other. I have some basic demographic information questions and an activity for you to complete. The second interview focuses on your campus experiences, how you identify, and institutional contexts. And the third session will explore how you, as a QSOC person, utilize campus centers. I am interested in these topic because QSOC voices are often hidden within higher education and society more broadly. I hope that through my study, we can create a way for QSOC voices to be heard. Can I answer any questions about that?

Currently, I coordinate programming for QSOC at the university. It is of the utmost importance to me that you are being as open as you can be without fear of damaging our previous and future working relationship. This research is not about us, or our relationship, but about your experiences and how you utilize the cultural centers on campus. Your honest reflections you share with me may be able to help other students just like you who struggle in similar ways.

Have you had a chance to review the consent form? Do you have any questions about it? Do you fully understand it? Great, I have a copy here for you to sign and a copy you can take with you for your record and future reference.

To ensure your confidentiality please pick a pseudonym and my records will not have any identifiable markers that can reveal your identity. Additionally, I will send you a copy of your transcripts for your review. If you have any additions, clarifications or changes please submit them to me in writing within 14 days of the initial email.

Would you like some snacks or water before we start?

Name   Time
Date

Pronouns   Year   Major/School

Faces Activity:

As we maneuver through the world and on campus we often put on different faces for different situations. You may act or be different in class than when you are with your friends or family. I have 3 blank faces for you to draw on.

One face one: Draw the identities that you feel like get seen the most when you are in the Multicultural Center (MC)

On face two Draw the identities that you feel like get seen the most when you are in the Rainbow Center (RC)

On face three: Draw the identities that you carry with you or engage with when you feel your most whole of complete. Or put another way when you feel most comfortable, what do you not show in public? But before we move into the activity, I have a couple of Questions.
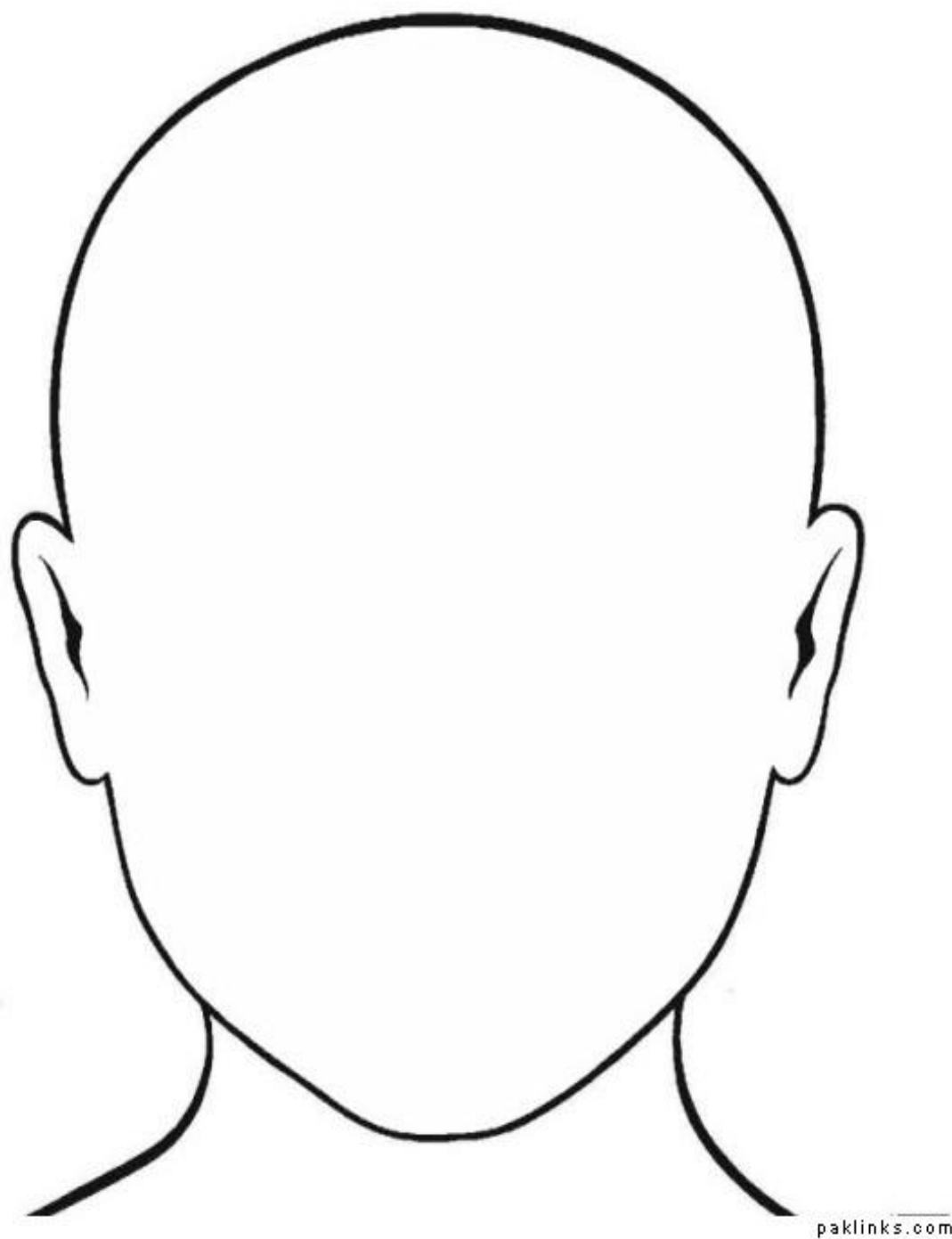
paklinks.com

RQ: What are Queer Students of Color (QSOC) experiences with cultural centers at a predominantly white university (PWU)?

Pre Face Activity Questions

1. What are your experiences at the cultural centers? [M1]
2. How do the experiences you just shared show up in other spaces on campus?

Post Face Activity Questions

Individual Drawings

3. Can you explain what this experience of drawing was like for you? [M4, C3]
4. Can you share the details you put in the picture?

1.Face 1
2. Face 2
3. Face

5. What identities were most easy for you to identify?
6. What made it easy?
7. Which ones were more difficult?
8. What made it difficult?
9. Why did you use the colors you did?
10. What do those colors mean?
11. If we were reconstructing this activity what would you change, add or subtract?

Collective Drawing

12. How are the faces related to each other? [C6,M5]
13. How would you characterize some of their key differences from each other?

Closing

14. What other information would you like to share about your faces? [M4, C3]
15. What questions or comments do you have regarding your faces or this interview in general?

Appendix C

Interview Protocol 2

Thank you for meeting with me again. In our last session we worked on the faces activity. What was that experience like for you? What are things you wanted to change about your faces or thought more deeply about once you completed your face?

In this session we are going to focus on what your life is like on campus and what you do inside and outside classes.

Would you like something to drink or a snack?

Introduction

1. Tell me a bit about yourself? [C3,M4]
2. How would you describe the atmosphere for Queer folks of color back at home?[C1,M3]
3. What was your motivations to attend MU?
4. Can you describe what is it like to be QSOC person at MU in general? [C1,M3]
5. Describe what is it like to be QSOC in your Major/Department/ [C1,M3]

RQ: What are Queer Students of Color (QSOC) experiences with cultural centers at a predominantly white university (PWU)?

How do you identify? [C6,M5]

6. Race/ethnicity	Sexual orientation	Gender identity & Expression
7. Ability	Religion	Class

Engagement

8. What Places on campus you frequent?
9. What offices or departments do you hang around the most? Why those places?
10. What events do you like to attend on campus?
11. If you could describe them, what were those events like
12. What, if any, organizations are you a part of or have been a part of, what role did you play, can you tell me about what were those experiences like as a QSOC?
13. What other co-curricular programs have you been a part of? (sort of anything outside of classroom academics) Study abroad, theater, volunteer? How has your QPOC identity

Campus Climate & Context

14. If you had to describe the campus climate for a new QSOC coming to campus, what words would you use to do that? [C4]
15. If you were welcoming a new QOC student, what would you tell them about how to be successful on campus? [C4]
16. What are some unspoken rules of campus you've learned since attending here? [C5,M2]
17. How supportive of QSOC individuals do you feel this campus is?
18. What does that support look like?
19. Can you tell me about a time that you felt especially supported?
20. How do prevailing views about sexual orientation and race influence your experiences? [C5,M2]
21. How has the campus climate changed for you over your time here, in what ways? Can you recall a specific time when you thought the campus climate has changed? (favorite time and memory)[C5,M2]

Closing

22.   Do you have any anything else you want to add to any of these sections (identity, engagement, classroom, living).?

23.   Do you have any questions for me about any parts of the past interview or the current one?

Appendix D

Interview Protocol 3

In our last two sessions we talked about what campus life is like for you and how you identify. Where there any additions you'd like to add to any parts or clarify?

In session two we discussed campus life, we will continue talking about this but we will drill down a bit to further discuss how you experience specifically your classes and cultural center spaces.

Do you have any questions before we proceed?

Would you like something to drink or a snack?

What are Queer Students of Color (QSOC) experiences with cultural centers at a predominantly white university (PWU)?

Classroom

1. What is classroom climate as a QSOC like for you? [C3,M4]
2. Tell me about a time when a class session was difficult as a QPOC? What was that like? What made it challenging? Who participated in making it that way for you? What if anything did you do to address the challenge? How did you feel after the event?
3. Tell me about a time when you enjoyed a class session as a QPOC? What was that like? What made it enjoyable? Who participated in making it that way for you?
4. Can you tell me about your favorite class overall thus far? What was there to make it so enjoyable? Who was the professor, classmates, structure? Content? What were some lessons you took away from this class?
5. Can you recall a time when a class issue was brought to one of the cultural centers and how did that inform your response to the challenge?

Cultural Centers RC

6. What is your experience like at the Rainbow Center(RC)?
7. Please describe the atmosphere, staff, activities, events?
8. What programs resonate the most for you as a QPOC in the RC? [C6,M5]
9. Please describe what you do when you go to the RC?
10. How do you interact with the staff at the RC? How would you characterize that experience as a QPOC?
11. If you could change things about the RC, what would they be? Why? [C7,M6]
12. What would a perfect RC include?

Cultural Centers MC

13. What is your experience like at the Multicultural Center(MC)
14. Please describe the atmosphere, staff, activities, events?
15. What programs resonate the most for you as a QPOC in the MC? [C6,M5]
16. Can you describe what you do when you go to the MC?
17. How do you interact with the staff at the MC? How would you characterize that experience as a QPOC?
18. If you could change things about the MC, what would they be? Why? [C7,M6]
19. What would a perfect MC include?
20. Do your experiences in the cultural centers translate to other venues like in your classrooms or in student organizations?
21. Can you tell me about a time that you felt especially supported in either cultural center?

22.   Where are the places where you wish your identity was more visible, but isn't? How is it not visible now?

Closing & Feedback

23.   What experiences or stories do you want to share regarding your cultural center experiences that you haven't earlier?
24.   After reviewing your transcripts and our time together these preliminary findings are coming from your other interviews (see findings doc.) How do they resonate with you?
25.   How do they reflect what you have shared with me?
26.   Are there things that are missing or any holes in what you have shared with me? If so what?
27.   What changes would you make to the preliminary findings?
28.   What questions do you have for me about cultural centers?
29.   What questions do you have for me about my prelim analysis?

Appendix E

Faces Activity Trends Chart

	Diversity Face	Spectrum Face	Authentic face
Nia	Face Colored in Locs 1 Frown Woman symbol Lgbt flag	Face colored in Locs Trans/Bi Flag LGBT Flag Smile	Face colored in Bonnet Robe Locs Smile
Kaden	Word: feminine Short hair cut 1 Straight lips Large brown eyebrows	Large brown eyebrows No hair Smile Pink lips	Large brown eyebrows Short hair cut Large eyes Big Smile with teeth Pink lips Beard Pink stud earrings
Chris	2 frown Short haircut Glasses Nose ring Beard	Short haircut Glasses Large open mouth smile Nose ring Beard	Short haircut Glasses People around Words: social people, friends with arrows Large open mouth smile
Johnson	Large Nose Large Lips 2 Straight mouth Large afro	Large Nose Large Lips Colored in face Straight mouth Large afro	Large Nose Large Lips Large open mouth smile Short afro
sam	Short hair 3 Straight mouth Shirt	Shirt Medium hair Bigger eyes Eyebrows Forehead creases Poc/acne marks Red lips/ open mouth Straight mouth	Shirt Poc/acne marks Red lips/ open mouth Eyebrows Headphones Smile
Cole	1 Small smile Brown curly hair Colored in skin	Brown curly hair Studs Colored in skin Purple shirt frown	Longer Brown curly hair Hoop earrings Large smile
Elle	Long hair Hoop earrings Other piercings Large nose Straight eyebrows Nose ring 4 Straight lips	Short hair cut Hoop earrings Other piercings Squared face Nose ring Arched eyebrows Straight lips	Short hair cut Red lips Hoop earrings Other piercings Squared face Nose ring Arched eyebrows Straight lips
Reb	Locs 5 Straight lips Earring Large lips	Locs Straight lips/frown Earring Large lips	Large lips Smile Earring Locs Large eyes
Carrie	Red lips Low hair cut Pink dots/aura Mustache/beard Nose ring Gold stud Brown skin outline 3 frown	Sun Black clouds Forehead creases Red/pink lip Low hair cut Nose ring Gold stud Brown skin outline	Nose ring Gold stud Brown skin outline Du rag Large eyes Large Purple lips Smile Crown

		Straight lips/frown	Earbuds eyelashes
Boogz	Short hair cut Glasses 4 frown	Red hat Colored in skin Straight lips Earring	Mouth open/singing Music notes Person singing Writing No hair
Peri	Bisexual flag on face Bob hair cut Almond shaped eyes open 5 Straight lips	Bisexual flag on face Bob hair cut Almond shaped eyes open Frown	Bisexual flag on face Bob hair cut Eyes closed Other colors(other layers of identity) Straight lips
Marcus	2 Large smile Skin colored in (dark brown) Big eyes Stub earrings Short haircut Mustache/beard	Large red lips Red cheeks No hair Skin colored in (dark brown) Smile	Large smile Long hair Head band Skin colored in (light brown) Big eyes Stub earrings Beard choker
Clarettah	Piercings Headband bun freckles 6 straight lips	Words: broad shoulders/big/her piercings/Black! hair? Face colored in brown Tee shirt straight lips	Mouth open/smoke coming out Hair wild Naked peircings
Charles	Short haircut Skin colored in 3 Large smile Large nose	Short haircut Skin colored in Large smile Large nose Bisexual colors in face	longer haircut Skin colored in Large smile Large nose Bisexual colors in face Heart on cheek

Diversity face
4 frowns
3 smiles
7 straight lips
Spectrum faces
2 frowns
5 smiles
7 straight lips

Other Trends

Diversity	spectrum	Authentic
Straight/frown Skin colored in Short hair	Straight/frown Skin colored in Colored lips	Smiles Skin colored in Jewelry

Appendix F

Consent Form

UNIVERSITY OF WISCOSNIN-MADISON
Research Participant Information and Consent Form

Title of the Study: Make the road by walking: An exploratory study of Queer Students of Color (QSOC) at a Predominantly White Institution (PWI)

Principal Investigator: Colleen Capper (608- 263-9994) (email: capper@education.wisc.edu)

Student Researcher: Sheltreese McCoy (email: sheltreese.mccoy@wisc.edu)

DESCRIPTION OF THE RESEARCH
You are invited to participate in a research study about the multiple minoritized experiences of LGBTQ students of color (QSOC) engaged in graduate or undergraduate study at predominantly white institutions.

You have been asked to participate because you have been identified as a QSOC that is currently enrolled at a predominantly white institution. You have been involved with the Intersections Initiate and cultural centers of campus.

The purpose of this study is to learn about how QSOC are experiencing race and sexuality at predominantly white institutions so that so that administrators can create policies, procedures, and practices that will aid in their success as scholars.

This study will only include currently enrolled Queer Students of Color.

This research interviews will be conducted at a location that is convenient for you.

Audio recordings and interview transcripts will be made of your participations.

WHAT WILL MY PARTICIPATION INVOLVE?

If you decide to participation in this research you will be asked to participate in a two-part interview process.

You may elect not to answer any question that is asked during any of the interview.

Your participation will last approximately 90 minutes per session and will require 2 sessions, which will require 3 hours all together.

ARE THIERE ANY RISK TO ME?

There are known risks to participating in this study. There is the potential for a confidentiality breach of personal and identification information. Due to the open ended nature of the interview questions there is potential for the participant to share sensitive and personal information. If the interviews are conducted in your home, due to mandatory reporting laws, researchers may be required to break confidentiality if abuse or neglect is suspected or witnessed while in your home.

WHAT ARE THE BENEFITS TO ME?
There are no direct benefits to participants. Your participation in this study will help educational organizations and their leadership understand how current QSOC are experiencing race and sexuality at a PWI in an effort to increase inclusion, persistence, and success. The results of this study will be shared with participants.

HOW WILL MY CONFIDENTIALITY BE PROTECTED?

To avoid a breach of confidentiality, the researcher will use pseudonyms for all research study participants and will not include identifiable information in the research findings. If information is provided by participants during the research study that is unrelated to the research questions that information will not be included in the research findings. The participants may choose not to answer any question asked during the interviews.

Audio recordings will be password protected and stored in a secure file. Transcripts will be scrubbed of all personal and identifiable information. Data collected through this research will be kept in a secured file cabinet for at least seven years and then all data will be destroyed. The researcher will work with PI and IRB in the event of an unanticipated problem.

If you participate in this study, we would like to be able to quote you directly without using your name. If you agree to allow us to quote you in publications, please initial the statement at the bottom of this form.

WHOM SHOULD I CONTACT IF I HAVE QUESTION?

You may ask questions about the research at any time. If you have questions about the research after you leave today, you should contact the student researcher Sheltreese McCoy at Sheltreese.mccoy@wisc.edu. You may also call Colleen Capper at 608- 263-9994.

Your participation is completely voluntary. If you decide not to participate or to withdraw from this study you may do so without penalty.

Your signature indicates that you have read this consent form, had an opportunity to ask any questions about your participation in this research and voluntarily consent to participate. You will receive a copy of this form for your records.

Name of Participant (please print):

Signature _____ Date _____

_____ I give my permission to be quoted directly in publications without using my name.