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Campus Climate Perceptions of Queer College Students of Color: Disidentifying the Rainbow

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**CAMPUS CLIMATE PERCEPTIONS OF QUEER COLLEGE STUDENTS OF
COLOR: DISIDENTIFYING THE RAINBOW**

A Dissertation Presented

by

Khristian Kemp-DeLisser

to

The Faculty of the Graduate College

of

The University of Vermont

In Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements

for the Degree of Doctor of Education

Specializing in Educational Leadership & Policy Studies

May 2013

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "K Kemp-DeLisser". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style with a large initial "K" and a long, sweeping tail.

Accepted by the Faculty of the Graduate College, the University of Vermont, in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Education, specializing in Educational Leadership & Policy Studies

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March 25, 2013

ABSTRACT

This dissertation explored the experience lesbian, gay, bisexual and queer students of color. Influenced by the Queer of Color theoretical framework, this dissertation employed multiple methodological traditions (namely qualitative and Scholarly Personal Narrative), to deepen the exploration and unlock multiple dimensions of experience of queer college students of color.

Analysis of the student interviews produced 29 themes. The results are, framed by four categories of campus climate (behavioral, socio-historical, psychological, and structural or compositional (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998).), and offer a glimpse into the interlocking dynamics of racism and homophobia that the queer students of color navigate in their efforts to make meaning of their identities as queer people of color.

Reviewing the results of this study college faculty, staff, and administrators can begin to understand the unique experiences of queer college students of color. This dissertation also may contribute to theory and practice around appropriate and accurate ways to deal with complexity when measuring the campus climate for diversity.

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I want to first acknowledge my students; all of them from University of Vermont to the ones I worked with at the University of Illinois, where I first began my doctoral journey. To the ones who graciously gave the time to participate in my study, I am sorry that you can not all receive doctorates with me. To all of the students I have worked with in my career, I am ashamed that my words are inadequate to capture how much you educate and impress and inspire me. You literally expand my own ability to comprehend the world. I am a better man because of the students have served.

My dissertation committee is amazing. I loved Dr. Jill Tarule before I even met her when she first planted the idea in my mind that there can actually be multiple ways of knowing the world. They are no less valid even if the apparent rest of the world misunderstands or underestimates them. She will always be the intellectual and academic guide I follow as a sailor lost at sea relies on the north star to help him find his way.

Dr. Wanda Heading-Grant is the very model of the professional I want to be. She is a beacon of our campus community and the off-campus community as well. And to her family, I am sure she is so much, so much more. Would that one day I am able to balance all that I love and believe in as adeptly as she. She reminded me in words and by her example to find the path I want to follow and stick with it, no matter how powerful the temptation to veer.

Long ago, Dr. Sherwood Smith pulled me aside and offered gentle encouragement and it was literally years before I fully comprehended the wisdom of his words. I am sure years from now my mental capacities will catch up with his brilliance. I will forever be grateful for his kind patience and mentorship.

Dr. Robert Nash is a gentle fire master. I have seen many individuals that hold marginalized identities, dim and nearly extinguished by uncaring and vicious oppression. I have seen him gather up their tender branches and patiently blow air onto dying embers to reignite the flames. Those flames burn on without him but I can not begin to imagine how much light and warmth is in the world due in part to his careful tutelage.

I want to thank my supervisor who allowed me to complete this degree while holding a full time job. To my supervisor and friend, Bev Colston: A great writer once said: “kill your darlings.” In the context of writing, I interpret the advice to mean an author can’t be so in love with just one part of their writing. If there’s just one powerful turn of phrase or sentence on which the entire text hangs, then it’s a sign your writing is not as strong as it could be overall. So either delete that darling sentence in which you have invested all your affection or work to tighten up the language around it until every word measures up. Bev, you are that glorious sentence that shows by example what every other sentence around her can be. If the great writer in the sky hasn’t erased you yet, there’s still hope for us all.

I believe one can be judged by the company he keeps. I deliberately keep people in my life who feed my spirit. I want to acknowledge and name some of those queer people of color who at various times have allowed me to be myself and find the kind of acceptance I wish every person finds if just temporarily. The space I have here is limited but know that even if only your name is here it is because you made all other words on these pages possible. Thank you Shanda Lazare, John Mejia, Breonna Young, Danielle Aguilar, Salomón Rodezno, Domonic Rollins, and TJ Jourian for offering invaluable support and advisement during my research.

Finally, I am grateful for the doctoral cohort of 2009. I owe a particularly great deal to Jeff Bukowski, Adrienne Capone, Talia Glesner, Colby Kervick and Kimberlee Monteaux.

DEDICATION

I am because we are; my accomplishments are the product of a collective effort. I do not know how long it will take me to feel as though I have earned the honorific “Doctor” but I suspect it will not be soon. At what point does a man become a doctor? It doesn’t just happen overnight, but can one locate that first moment when his fate is locked into place? Did it begin the moment a chubby Boy Scout sat down in the middle woods and opened a book when he was supposed to be collecting firewood? Did it begin when a single Black mother from an inner city housing project called Charter Oak handed over the first and last month payment on a two-bedroom apartment in the suburbs? When a worker from a bottling factory in Hartford, Connecticut named Esther held hands with a fetching soldier named Charlie, could they see the trajectory of their family’s lives that would lead to this esteemed place?

I am not the doctor; I am the ultimate fruition of generations of endurance, resilience and hard work. I am the culmination of an evolution of family, acceptance, pride and love that cascades down through my lineage and permeates any community I enter. If there is any new respect or esteem, any credibility or honor that accompanies this degree, let it go to Carol and Esther and Charlie and the Harrisons and the Kemps and countless of others whose names and histories have gone unspoken and acknowledged in this journey that has brought me here.

Today we are all doctors.

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SPN: Chalk Centers, Shadowy Margins

Six of us started out together at the Pride House that Thursday night. It was dusk when I first arrived and the sky was a shadowy blue hue. I stood outside the old house, which was tucked away on the margin of campus. This was where our student organization's offices were located; literally the middle house on the street that marked the furthest perimeter of campus.

The Pride House itself was a university-owned building two and a half blocks from the center of campus. We weren't sure but from the old newspapers and photos we found in the house, we guessed it had once served as a women's collective in the 70s. It had been abandoned and somehow Pride Union, the campus group for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender undergrads, inherited it as our meeting space. But we only had access to the porch and two rooms on the first floor; the other rooms were used for storage. The house was perpetually dusty, half of the fixtures were broken and it was in desperate need of a paint job.

The night grew darker quickly and I stood just outside the door, watching for more people. There was only a small university sign with the street address on the front of the house but the long bare branches of the trees cast long shadows. The air was crisp and cool. My wool jacket would have been too warm for this time of day but we had a long night ahead of us. This time we planned on staying out for a while. My companions began emerging from the house. Tiff, a fair-skinned woman with spiky pink hair and a Boston accent came out first. She gave me a wink and held up her arms to show the buckets full of fat sticks of multi-colored chalk in each of her hands. She was followed by her on-again, off-again girlfriend

DeeDee. DeeDee was carrying a small pouch of flashlights. She turned one on, held its beam to her face, and playfully stuck her tongue out, showing off the jewelry on her pierced tongue. As I watched her descending the front porch I felt a firm pat on my back. I knew it was James. He was the president of the student government, his support and presence was strategically crucial. He was also there because he'd been a member of Pride Union. And he was my best friend. We had known each other since high school and became roommates our sophomore year. But now in our junior year we had to work hard to spend time with one another. Not only had he recently been elected but I was a Resident Advisor and president of Pride Union.

As James walked by, I took my place beside him. We were the only two Black people in Pride Union – sometimes it felt like the only two on campus – and we were generally inseparable when we were together. We didn't mind the rumors that we were a couple, though we had never even contemplated anything besides our fierce friendship. Physically we were very different; at 5 foot eleven inches, I stood a full foot and a half taller than him and I must've been two and a half times his weight. But we were kindred spirits. We were both overachievers who guarded our vulnerabilities with drama and musical theater. We each were the only person in the world to whom we had divulged the dreadful aching loneliness we associated with being a queer person of color. With him I felt I could accomplish twice I could alone. That was important that night of all nights.

Tiff, DeeDee, James and I paused at the bottom of the stairs to the porch only long enough to be joined by the final two students coming out of the house: Tara, a tall woman who always seemed to be on the phone with her twin sister on the West Coast; and Alan, a computer geek who was quite smart but painfully socially awkward at times. With the excep-

tion of James, we all held leadership positions in Pride Union. We six queers walked down the steps and behind the house, headed for the shortcut to campus. It meant passing through a break in the chain link fence and crossing through our back neighbor's yard, which wasn't always the most welcoming space. But that night we were emboldened. We were laying claim to any space we could get away with.

Our neighbors on the other side of the fence were several fraternity houses. They were privately owned, paid for by the dues of their members. Three stories high with grand columns, they faced inward, toward campus, and seemed to gleam even in the soft early evening light. People often remarked that the gays were literally stuck in the shadow of Fraternity Row. Whenever I heard that, I would just shrug and say "the Greeks aren't the only ones with a house." Such as it was, our house was home and every Wednesday at 8 pm, we draped our rainbow flag over the porch railing, turned all the lights on, and tried to make as much noise as we could. That's what this Thursday night's gathering was about; making our presence known. That small house would not contain our pride. Especially not after what had happened Wednesday night.

James, Tiff, Deedee, Alan, Tara and I crept out of the darkness from behind the fraternity house and spotted a group of other Pride Union members waiting to cross the street. Alan called to get their attention and we all held up our buckets of chalk and other supplies. We ran across the street to join them and as our group made our way through the brick buildings, more people joined us until there were nearly twenty students. By the time our rag-tag bunch of graduate and undergraduate college students reached the center of campus, some of the students were chanting a slogan originally popularized by a national activist group called Queer Nation: "We're here, we're queer, get used to it."ⁱ We stopped at the cen-

ter of campus, the area affectionately called the quad because of the quadrangle that was created by the sidewalks and grassy areas. The club leaders started handing out our supplies: chalk, flashlights, and sheets of paper with pithy quotes and slogans. Tonight's goal was to cover the quad in chalk messages of inclusion and hope for LGBT people. As we passed the materials out through the crowd the chanting turned to chatter about what witty or fun sayings people would write on the concrete sidewalks that crisscrossed the quad. People began to spread out to different corners and crouch down to begin their work. James and I weren't there to chalk that night, we held our flashlights tight, standing guard and waiting for any passerby who may have had a question about what we were doing.

We were fully prepared to answer questions and even show the permits the university had provided us to cover the grounds in our slogans and messages. Student organizations chalked the quad frequently so it wasn't that unusual, although this particular activity was an annual event for Pride Union's Coming Out Week festivities. Any other year I would have been kneeling down, holding a flashlight in one hand, writing out a message with the other, chalk dust settling on my face and clothes. It was fun to compete with my friends to leave the most poignant, outrageous or provocative message on the walkway. We imagined the pauses and traffic jams our chalk statements would create as our classmates stopped dead in their tracks to read something we left. But that night was different because it was the second night in a row we were chalking the quad.

It had started out as the same ritual we performed every year. We had all been here Wednesday, writing many of the same things in the same rainbow colors of chalk. We had "queered the quad" with our bold visual display of openly proclaiming or affirming our identities. Some of the words we used were in response to things we had heard from our en-

emies or our friends. Some of the words embraced our right to live and love and some of them supported our right to fight back against those who wished us harm. Here's a sampling of some of the statements one could have found Thursday morning: "One of your teammates is a queer," "God made me this way" "Fags are us" "I'm not gay but my girlfriend is," "Fuck gender boxes!" "Hide your children – I'm Bi!"

But in fact, only a few early birds had seen those words. When we woke up the and hurried to the quad to see the impact of our messages, they were gone. At some point early in the morning, someone in the campus grounds crew had turned the garden hoses on our chalk messages and washed them away. Word spread quickly about our chalk literally disappearing overnight and at 9 a.m. I received a phone call from Rosemary Dawkins, the administrator for student clubs. The groundskeepers had found some of the chalk drawings "disturbing" she had said. There had been complaints that some of the slogans were threatening, she'd explained

Standing in the dark, I watched the members of my club at work and felt a little like a shepherd watching over a flock. I kept scanning the dark shadows but there was no one there. And though several people I didn't recognize passed by, they didn't linger or ask questions. And none of them were carrying any chalk of their own.

Rosemary had warned us to be on the lookout for people who may want to leave messages of their own in response to us. Apparently the night before there had actually been a group who came to the quad after us and scrawled their own homophobic messages beside our hopeful ones. Rosemary told me the grounds workers were unable to sort out who wrote what; some of our original messages had used admittedly provocative language.

I didn't blame the students who used loaded words. I allowed myself to imagine what my chalk voice would sound like. I liked the idea of pointing out places where finding a queer person may be novel or unexpected, like in your church pew, or on your baseball team. What parts of my identity would I want to accentuate? How would I wish to represent myself? James and I were fond of a man named Marlon Riggs, a gay Black man who had once said "Black men loving Black men is the revolutionary act of our time"ⁱⁱⁱ because it challenged the idea that White heterosexuals were the epitome of normal or acceptable desirability and that they were the only ones worthy of love. Maybe I would write that on the sidewalk. The thought made me smile, bringing a little warmth to my cheeks, which was welcome; the night was growing cold.

I knew some people certainly would find it unexpected to see that there were brown gay people out there. Too frequently coming out of the closet meant jeopardizing or even forfeiting one's acceptance in their racial community. I knew that reality too well. Those kinds of identity politics were responsible both for my trajectory to president of the undergraduate LGBTQ student organization and for my dissatisfaction with my status in the student group. It served as a survival strategy and a prison. (And I was sure that was true for James as student government president.) A survival strategy because the position settled any questions about my legitimacy or belonging in the organization or the larger campus queer community. A prison because despite how visible I was and how many spaces I carried my high status and acceptance, I wasn't able to attract other queer students of color or embolden them to come out. I still found myself in a similar situation as I did that night in the quad; a black sheep shepherding a white flock.

I knew there were other black sheep like me out there. But they couldn't take the risk of losing what support they received from their communities by coming out. Or much more. One Asian woman told me that people in her country were killed for being gay. She couldn't come out for fear that no one would ever hear it over the nails being hammered into her coffin. What could I write that would let them know that there's life after coming out? It was a heavy, lonely burden to carry. So many times I wanted Pride Union to bring up issues of race and ethnicity but Tara, Alan, DeeDee or Tiff would say it was too divisive. I guessed being White meant one could be gay without compromise or betrayal.

The struggles of queer people of color never got enough attention. But the disappearing chalk ended up in the campus newspaper. The storyline that received the most attention was the fact that there were elements in our campus community that either waited for Pride Union members to leave the quad and then moved in to write their own obscene messages or that came upon the LGBT-affirmative messages and quickly mobilized a response team to put enough counter graffiti on the sidewalk to prompt the groundskeepers to clean first, ask questions later.

Throughout the day I heard from other staff members and many students who talked about their outrage. Venom was flying around for those queer students who had written provocative messages; for those seemingly random people who swept in after us and wrote overt messages of hate; for the groundskeepers from washing it all away rather than letting it stand as a testament of freedom of speech.

The argument I sympathized most with was that we had been silenced by the renegade chalkers. I rounded up Alan, Tara, Tiff and DeeDee and we agreed to organize tonight's second attempt. It wasn't difficult to get the proper paperwork; in fact Rosemary had offered it

over the phone that morning. But, she warned, campus safety would be patrolling the area more vigilantly to make sure everyone who was chalking actually had permission.

This is campus climate. Outdated houses on the margin of campus in the shadow of the fraternities. Chalk messages written under the cover of night. Permits and surveillance to discourage brazen individuals from writing hurtful counter messages. University employees who call student leaders in the morning to act as spin doctors for other university employees who would rather wash away conflict than let it stand as an open forum. And in this milieu, two Black gay student leaders who must navigate all of these physical and virtual spaces, choosing carefully our words and levels of involvement.



CHAPTER I: Introduction

This project began as an effort to do something I felt was lacking in many of the seminars that constituted my graduate education: work on issues that were directly tied to the daily survival of individuals and their communities. Such a goal meant that I needed to pursue questions I perceived as directly linked to the experiences and life quality of marginal individuals and groups in this society. (Cohen, 1999 p. ix)

The passage above, originally written in *The boundaries of Blackness*, a book that charted the response of African American political, religious and social institutions to the rise of AIDS, encapsulates this dissertation's origins. Cohen's words speak to everyone who ever felt short-shrifted or forgotten by education, particularly higher education. Those students who have been left out of the classroom because their identities are too deviant, uncomfortable, or complex to confront. As a gay Black educator, interested in race and sexuality in poli-

cy and higher education, I join Cohen's call for voices and experiences like mine in the classroom. Perhaps the voice of the queer of color (Ferguson, 2004) can offer a new practice; a way of transforming educational environments, pedagogy, and practices from oppressive state apparatuses into ones of liberation and empowerment for society's most vulnerable citizens.

Research Statement

This dissertation explored the stories of the college experience of queer students of color in order to describe their campus climate perceptions. The perspective of queer-identified college students of color can deepen educators' understanding of the sources and impact of campus climate in their efforts to evaluate and assess outcomes ranging from student academic performance, physical safety, levels of diversity and inclusion, and emotional and mental health.

The guiding research questions for this project are:

- What are queer students of color perceptions of campus climate?
- How do queer college students of color perceive their identities and the support on campus for those identities?
- How do queer students of color describe the contribution of race and sexual orientation to the way they make sense of their identity?
- How do queer students of color describe the impact of the college environment on their identity development?

This study aimed to describe common sources, themes and patterns among queer stu-

dents of color's perceptions of campus climate in order to add to the knowledge around creating inclusive educational settings and creating effective interventions to serve marginalized populations.

Kind of study

This study employed multiple methodologies and methods in order to collect and analyze its data. A phenomenological methodology was used to elicit and analyze the stories of queer student of color's perceptions of campus climate. I applied Scholarly Personal Narrative (SPN) methods to clarify and present my own college experience and perceptions as a queer college student of color. This dissertation presents the implications and findings of both methodologies.

Existing theory and research

This study not only adds to the knowledge around student perceptions of campus climates and the lives of queer students of color but also to the mixed-method approach of SPN and phenomenology. Furthermore, this study's aesthetic and structural construction, weaving stories and methods, is an effort to produce a document that demonstrates and informs a unique queer person of color theoretical positionality.

Personal experience and knowledge

My subjectivity as a queer researcher of color and the identity development I experienced in college influence form my interest and expertise in the topic. However I also wish to bring attention to stories besides mine. I feel I need to use methods that will illuminate the

two experiences. My response therefore is to choose two approaches which are distinct and yet related in their philosophy and data collection methods.

Definition of Key Terms

Before continuing, it is necessary to establish a common language for some terms I will be using throughout the dissertation. This project is interdisciplinary, drawing from theories that are rooted in sociology, education, ethnic studies, and organizational theory. The interdisciplinary nature of this project requires a shared understanding of basic concepts. This section seeks only to provide a brief introduction; each of the concepts will be thoroughly discussed in its relevant section.

Climate

Climate refers to the overall disposition or dominant attitudes governing a particular space. It differs from, but is related to culture (Hart & Fellabaum, 2008). This dissertation will examine campus climate along four dimensions: sociohistorical, structural or compositional, psychological and behavioral (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998).

Queer

Queer is used variously as a label of sexual identity and a theoretical space (Mayo, 2007; Plummer, 2005; Renn, 2010). Whenever it is used, it is an effort to blur and reconcile fixed positions along the spectrum of sexual orientations and gender expressions. This dissertation will refer to study participants as queer, employing it as an aspirational label or identity, acknowledging possible tensions (Latina Feminist Group, 2001). For example a student's description of their sexuality and attraction may fit the definition of queer yet they prefer to identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, or transgender or they may use the terms interchangeably.

Queer of Color

I use “people of color” as an umbrella term deliberately to refer to non-White or non-European. Add the concept of “queer,” which rejects essentializing (Mayo, 2007), and I am left with queer of color (“person” is implied), a concept that imagines a shared standpoint that avoids privileging one particular racial category and reproducing power hierarchies (Cohen, 1997). It is a pragmatic lens that relies on destabilizing conventions (Ferguson, 2004). The theoretical framework in Chapter 4 contains further discussion of queer as a critical theory and standpoint.

Homophobia

Homophobia is used multiple times throughout the dissertation. All of the uses are slightly different but generally refer to overt acts (including creation and enforcement of policies) that are based on an irrational or extreme sense that anything not heterosexual is threatening or abhorrent.

Heterosexism

Heterosexism is also used variously (although less than the word homophobia). I use heterosexism to refer to a subtle, generalized assumption that non-heterosexual identities and practices are normal and proper by default. Heterosexism is less an overt action and more the presence of bias.

Study Limitations

Sample

Despite the political considerations, great care must be taken not to overextend the findings of this dissertation study. The experiences of college students, although ripe with

insights, represent a specific subset of queer people of color. The Queer of Color Critique is an emerging theory; as it builds acceptance in more fields and contexts, to evolve, it will need to contend with both the experience of queer people who did not attend college and those who did not.

Table 4 in the appendix includes a list of the participants' pseudonyms and demographic information. Despite best efforts to generate a representative study, this study did not include any transgender-identified individuals. Transgender is a queer identity that is commonly included in the LGBTQ acronym. However in the discussion of this study's results, the term queer is used to describe the students. The study participants did vary along a spectrum of gender identity expressions, although none identified as transgender.

Researcher identity

This study and its methods involved several negotiations of power relationships (Theoharis, 2007). I am employed by, and therefore an agent of the very institution being discussed. Both the student participants and I are, to varying extents, invested in the creation and perpetuation of the campus climate being investigated. That relationship, as well as the assumed shared queer and racial identities between the researcher and the subjects, may blur traditional notions of subject/researcher. Rather than limitations, Queer Theory accepts these relationships and frames them as entanglements that strengthen the authority of the claims and the voices of the queer college students of color. (Mayo, 2007) One way queer researchers transform liability to strength is by bringing the "coming out" tradition to their practice. They acknowledge that all research processes are in fact guided by deliberate structural decisions that actually shape and guide the very research itself (Shollock, 2007; Theoharis, 2007).

Structure of the dissertation

What follows is a description of the structure of this dissertation. Although parts of this dissertation will follow a traditional chapter formula common among dissertations, the blending of multiple methods and theoretical influences prompted certain departures. The most significant of those departures will be the use of inter-texts, a device introduced by Lather and Smithies (1997) for their book, *Troubling the Angels*. In the inter-texts, they juxtaposed and layered their own anecdotes along with interview transcription and analysis from their feminist research study. They wrote that “the book addresses the *beyond of what we think we believe* [italics added] through the multiplication of layers of meaning that trouble what we come to such a book to understand and what it means to know more than we are able to know and to write and read toward what we don’t understand” (p. xvii).

Inspired by Lather and Smithies, Prue (2004) produced a dissertation in which she folded SPN “inter-chapters” into a qualitative study she conducted. Being able to offer her experiences, observations, and opinions related to the topics being explored in the research, offered a “focused, intimate portrait of student and researcher experience” (p. 15). She added that it allowed her to tell a sometimes contradictory but still rich and complexly layered story of the experience of the students in her study. I will employ SPN inter-texts to similar ends, woven throughout Chapter 2. (Each inter-text passage is in italics and features the graphic of a Moebeus strip. The Moebeus strip is a visual and conceptual device I use to frame the themes in the findings section, Chapter 6). The passages collectively present stories of my process of identity formation and campus negotiation, with emphasis on the ways that my perceptions of the climate on campus influenced my development as a Black gay man.

Chapter 2, the Literature Review, provides a review of foundational and relevant research that prompts this study's questions and important concepts it contends with. The literature review attempts to provide a backdrop of the existing research on campus climate as it related to queer students, students of color, and queer students of color from high school through college. Additionally, identity development theories are reviewed in order to introduce the ways that queer college students of color problematize conventional norms and lenses through which a GLBT identity is conceived by higher education researchers and practitioners. Finally, it closes with a brief discussion of what makes qualitative research most fitting for studies of queer students of color.

In Chapter 3, I will provide an in-depth discussion and justification for the mixed-method approach as well as a rationale for each methodological traditions employed in this study. It provides an introduction to qualitative research and discusses the relationship between SPN and qualitative research traditions. It will then provide a philosophical link between Phenomenology and SPN and discuss what each method stands to offer this study.

The dominant theories guiding this dissertation will be discussed in Chapter 4. The study's epistemological viewpoint is explained, drawing from critical theories of education, including Critical Race Theory and Queer Theory. After a discussion of the contribution of each theory to this study, the chapter culminates by providing the broad contours of the queer of color standpoint or critique. It will close with a consideration of the limitations of the study.

Chapter 5, the methods section, identifies the specific methods followed in order to construct a SPN to capture the researcher's identity. Additionally, this chapter provides an

explanation of the phenomenological study, from study setting and context to sampling and data coding plan.

The discussion of the major findings will be in Chapter 6. This chapter presents the qualitative data, framed as themes that emerged from the data collection and coding process. It closes with a discussion of the Mobius strip model of framing the issues faced by queer students of color.

The Chapter 7 will feature a discussion of the phenomenological study's themes in light of past research, drawing from the literature review and introducing other research that may have emerged in the midst of the study. It also features future areas of research that are opened up by this study.

Finally, Chapter 8 includes recommendations for student affairs practice and higher education policy; and a discussion of the unique features of this study that limit its generalizability, such as sampling and methodological aspects.

CHAPTER II: Literature Review

Introduction

This literature review demonstrates the need for further study of the perceived campus climate for lesbian, gay, bisexual, and queer (LGBQ) college students of color. The goal is to demonstrate the need for accounts that help understand the college experience of this student population by discussing the ways the experience of queer students of color raise questions and interrupt or complicate issues raised in the literature around campus climate, race and sexual orientation. This review will be comprehensive without being exhaustive; additional literature will be introduced in the themes and findings sections as it relates. After all, Boote and Biele (2005) remind us “a thorough, sophisticated review ought to be influential and evident in the entire dissertation” (p. 10).

A variety of research studies and sources will be discussed in the following review. Unless otherwise noted, they refer to common understandings of the terms gay, lesbian, bisexual, transgender and queer. In an effort to accurately reflect the language and the subjects under study, I will use the acronym used by the study. Shifts in the order of the letters (i.e. GLBT vs LGBT) reflect the evolution of the social and cultural understandings of the LGBT community. Furthermore, some studies may simply be looking at LGB issues in their sample. This dissertation, adopts the term “queer” in order both to consolidate language and terms and also to foster a sense of solidarity among a diverse group. (Rhoads, 1994, p. 4).

Following a brief introduction to the history and evolution of educational research on queer students in high school, I review five distinct strands of literature from the field of education that demonstrate how queer students are represented – or not represented – within the

research on educational environments. The four strands prompt this study's four main research questions:

- What are queer students of color perceptions of campus climate?
- How do queer college students of color perceive their identities and the support on campus for those identities?
- How do queer students of color describe the contribution of race and sexual orientation to the way they make sense of their identity?
- How do queer students of color describe the impact of the college environment on their identity development?

The descriptive and exploratory nature of these questions can best be addressed by research methods following a qualitative tradition. Therefore, this literature review also includes a brief introduction to relevant research in qualitative and mixed method studies.

LGBTQ students in high school

A report released by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) in 1989 turned the nation's attention for the first time to the disturbing reality that 30 percent of youth suicides are committed by LGBTQ youth (Perrotti and Westheimer, 2001). Coalitions of human service agencies, gay activists and politicians, gay and straight alike, were motivated to confront youth's emotional/psychological struggles and the sexual desires/behaviors. In the realm of education, the Massachusetts Governor's Commission and Safe Schools Program of 1993 pioneered a "safe schools" initiative, focusing on developing sensitivity training for teachers and some parents, in order to cultivate "empathy and compassion" (Perrotti and Westheimer, 2001). However the safe schools initiative and the interest it engendered was

focused on K-12 -- mostly high school-aged -- students. Today, public health issues continue to use the need to create LGBTQ-safe educational settings in K-12 education as a public health issue in order to address a host of problems linked to LGBTQ youth, including harassment (Human Rights Watch, 2001), suicide (U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, 1989), HIV (Ryan, 2002), substance abuse (van Wormer & McKinney, 2003), and discipline (Himmelstein & Bruckner, 2010). Lasser and Tharinger (2003), conducted a study of gay, lesbian and bisexual (GLB) youth, and hypothesized the educational experiences of GLB youth may be affected by a number of other factors, including the attitudes of teachers; the degree to which homosexuality is incorporated in (or ignored by) the curriculum; opportunities for GLB students to meet and share their experiences; and the level of support for sexual minority students as expressed by heterosexual students (p. 234).

Although the research into the LGBTQ high school students can provide a valuable snapshot of the lives of those students before they enter the college environment, research focusing on the perceptions of the educational climate for LGBTQ college students remains limited. Furthermore the existing literature demonstrates the absence of stories specific to the experience of LGBTQ people of color in college. What follows is an analysis of the research organized into four areas: LGBTQ students in higher education, LGBTQ students of color, LGBTQ students of color and campus climate, and LGBTQ students of color and identity development.



ESPN: Don't Tell

Dear Mom,

I want you to know that I went to college wanting to come out of the closet. I chose a college environment that would allow me space to come out and to “live out.”ⁱⁱⁱ I had been identifying as bisexual since I fell in love with a male friend of mine when I was sixteen.

I’ll never forget the day I was sitting in the car and you asked me, “So you think you’re bisexual?”

I asked how you knew and you simply answered, “A mother knows.” But I knew that wasn’t the full story. I knew you’d found the love poems stuffed into one of my dresser drawers. Just the week before I had noticed they were out of place. In one of them I had stated plainly, “I think I’m bisexual.”

And then you said: “Don’t tell your grandmother. Don’t tell your father. Don’t tell anyone.” Do you remember saying that? I can’t forget it. I certainly wasn’t surprised; ours was not a family that spoke of our problems; it’s no wonder I turned out to be a writer. Still, the echo of those words “Don’t tell anyone,” stirred an avalanche of shame in me that day that quickly slid down the slopes of my mind.

And it would build momentum as the days passed. I stared out the window of the same bedroom I had always slept in, in the same house, in the same small town I had always lived in. It would pick up other resentments like debris as I imagined starting over somewhere else. Over the next two years, I became miserable, increasingly anxious. I felt like a fraud and I blamed you. I blamed the neighbors and their little White picket fences. I felt as though even the trees that lined our yard were oppressing me.

I only knew one other gay Black male other than myself. Did you remember James, Mom? We attended the same Arts Academy High School. He was a short thin boy with a powerfully loud voice and a wild imagination. He was as subtle as a five-foot, two-inch tor-

nado. In my experience, people either loved James or hated him. James did not allow for anything in between. So when he came bounding after me in the hall at the Academy one day, demanding that I write a musical stage play based on his life, I wasn't really surprised.

"It will be the new Evita!" he exclaimed. He hugged me and patted his hand on my chest. "I'll be the star and you'll write it! I heard you're the best writer in town!"

James attended the Academy for theater and he was a consummate actor. If you wanted him to be an antagonistic, ego-maniac, he was all too happy to be. For me, James became a fiercely loyal friend and confidant. I savored those brief glimpses of sensitivity and vulnerability that peeked out from beneath his histrionics. It helped to be a poet when dealing with James because you knew how to read between the lines and seek his motive. We were instant friends; he played whatever role you would have him play; and no one knew about roles better than me. James was one of the few people who I spoke to on the phone during high school. He was also the only guy I had talked to about being gay.

James had a sweet charm about him that made me feel privileged to be the focus of so much of his attention. His excitement was infectious; and so was his biting honesty. I felt I could be authentic with him. At one point he said we were like brothers and it left me speechless. I remember it like it was yesterday.

"There are not many people I can trust like you," James confessed. "Not too many Black gay guys like you and me, right?"

"Well," I said. "I don't know." I was honored but at the same time I could not fully meet his level of vulnerability. I felt I was like James in so many ways but not like that. Psychologically I couldn't be. My world wasn't ready for that, I thought. "I'm not gay," I whispered. "I'm bisexual." What did I know of sexual orientation identity development models or

that I would be progressing through one?^{iv} All I knew what that you had said not to tell anyone and I wasn't going to, not only knew even myself!

Somehow, James seemed to understand. "That's OK," he said cynically. "You'll be gay by the time we graduate." But I never did in high school. I waited. I knew I would have to go far away to be myself.

That hot sunny day when we first arrived in your little blue Mustang could not have come any sooner! We were only one of several thousands of families moving into the residence hall that August morning. I had not been prepared to step out of the small cramped Mustang into an onslaught of moving bodies, giant carts with squeaking wheels, and cardboard boxes. Cars were lined up on the curb being unpacked and moved. Older students who had volunteered to help were herding people in and out of doors. Members of the residence hall staff were lined up along the street directing traffic. Car doors and trunks were slamming. A young woman, approached our car wheeling a large gray plastic bin, introduced herself as Kelly, and instructed us to begin unloading. I appreciated that you didn't make a fuss; you dutifully began unloading my suitcases and boxes.

We unloaded the car and Kelly showed me to my room, all the way up on the top floor of the eleven-story residence hall. It was a three-person suite, made up of a long narrow study room with a couch and desks, a bathroom, and another long bedroom with three beds. It was situated on a corner of the building, with windows along one side. I was overwhelmed by the size of the room, and the view from the windows was breathtaking. One side of the building offered a view of the university and around the corner, a fantastic view of the city of Syracuse.

Here was a new window from which to observe a whole new world. But this time all around me I saw shining opportunity laid out before me like a gift. I allowed my mind to imagine the new me. The fake Khristian who felt constrained and boxed by nearly everything in his life would soon be gone. I was a powerful new man, ready and willing to do things I had never done. First on my agenda was to join the gay student group. I felt I had to stay true to myself and my desires. "I feel reborn already," I whispered.

That's when I felt your hand on my shoulder and your voice in my ear. But I couldn't hear it. I was looking at the reflection of us standing there in the window, thinking about all the time I felt like I had been living a lie; about my fear and resentment. I pressed my finger to the glass and traced the outline of our faces on the window. I wanted to tell you what I was thinking. I tried to formulate the words to say but instead of words flowing from my lips, I could feel tears forming in the corners of my eyes. I couldn't hear my own thoughts above the echo of your words: "Don't tell anyone." I knew if I was ever to hear my own voice, I needed to quiet yours.

What I didn't know was that I was a part of a growing number of LGBT students who arrive on campus every year.^v Whether we are fully out of the closet or not, college involves new developmental processes and transitions^{vi} such as separation from our parents and home environments; making meaning of our personal sense of themselves^{vii}; and becoming the authors of our own lives.^{viii} These developmental processes occur both in public and in isolation, deeply impacting our identity formation in a myriad of meaningful ways.^{ix}

Instead, all I managed to say was, "I can unpack later. Do you want to see the rest of campus?"

You turned and stepped away. “You seen one, you seen them all, right?” you said, already sounding distant. Perhaps you too felt the power of that moment. you sighed and we hugged. Soon after, you left.

I leaned my forehead against the cold glass and watched until I saw you get in your small blue Mustang and drive away. I’d never felt so alone.



LGBTQ students in higher education

The literature investigating the experience of LGBTQ students in higher education is still growing, reflecting the dominant society’s evolving understanding of homophobia and sexual minorities (Renn, 2010). An example of the way homophobia still influences the literature on higher education is the fact that gay researchers and professors have feared coming out of the closet and the culture of academia has produced environments in which producing LGBT-related scholarship is fraught with danger of being perceived as LGBT, a possible career-ending accusation (Garvey, DeCosta & Rankin, 2013; Yoshino, 2006). Universities themselves have proved to be slow to change. Renn came close to suggesting the college system itself is incompatible with LGBTQ or queer identities: “Higher education is a strongly modernist system of organizations that contain LGBT/queer people but that have not been transformed by the postmodern project” (p. 132).

Ready or not, the institutions will need to change. Recent studies indicating youth’s increasingly complicated attitudes about the fluidity of sexuality (Rosario, Schrimshaw & Hunter, 2008) and growing numbers of college students who self-report being LGBTQ by the time they arrive on college campuses, reveal a need to understand the impact of campus cli-

mate on the intellectual and social development of LGBTQ students (Rankin, 2003). Whether they are “out of the closet” or not when they arrive on campus, college is often the setting in which students disclose their sexuality (Evans & D’Augelli, 1996). Hostile college environments decrease the likelihood of successful persistence for LGBTQ students (Sanlo, 1998). Research on LGBTQ college students reveals they typically experience discrimination, feelings of fear (Evans & D’Augelli, 1996; Rhoads, 1994), high rates of harassment, verbal and physical assault, and intimidation (Bieschke, Eberz, & Wilson, 2000; Brown, Clark, Gortmaker, & Robinson-Keilig, 2004) and the need to hide their identity from other students and staff (Rankin, 2003). A national campus climate assessment conducted in 2010, concluded “practically all research studies examining the perceptions and experiences of LGBT campus community members underscore negative experiences from subtle to extreme forms of discrimination” (Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, & Frazer, 2010, p. 8).

The overwhelming majority of the literature does not explicitly discuss the unique challenges of LGBTQ students of color as a subset of the LGBTQ population (Greene, 1994). Stevens (2004) acknowledged as much in his comprehensive summary of the literature around gay college student identity development: “current sexual orientation models do not readily address religious, cultural, ethnic or racial dimensions as they relate to the development of a gay identity” (p. 186).

Cultural dimension

More information is needed to identify the needs of students who engage in same-sex behavior but deliberately subvert or reject labels associated with White LGBTQ identities (Alimahomed, 2010; Battle, Cohen, Warren, Ferguson, & Audam, 2002; Cohen, 1997; DeBlaere, Brewster, Sarkees & Moradi, 2010; Green, 1998; Poynter & Washington, 2005).

Still more individuals may be missing from the knowledgebase because there literally are no cultural space or words to describe their identities. Yang (2008) made this point in her phenomenological study of gay and lesbian Hmong (an Asian ethnic group): “Currently, there is no direct translation for the words “gay” or “lesbian” in the Hmong language. This paucity of language means people will have to derive new words and meanings when talking about lesbian and gay Hmong” (p. 3).

Gay Filipino American men in a study conducted by Manalansan (2003) also expressed difficulty reconciling Western gay concepts with their culture’s “bakala.” The concept of bakala encompasses a cultural space that includes homosexuality, transgender, and effeminacy and cross-dressing. The Native American term “two-spirit,” is similarly expansive (Walters, Evans-Campbell, Simoni, Ronquillo, & Bhuyan, 2006).

Finally, Herek & Gonzalez-Rivera’s (2006) study of the attitudes of Mexican-Americans toward homosexuality. They found that respondents who had a closer allegiance to their Mexican cultural roots were more likely to have homophobic beliefs. However certain English words that were meant to indicate positive traits toward homosexuals had negative connotations in Spanish. Rather than indicating higher rates of homophobia, it may in fact, have indicated the limitations of quantitative research to capture the fundamentally different ways language constrained the way the researchers and the respondents thought about sexuality.

All of the previous examples demonstrate that there are in fact a variety of behaviors and identities observed among people of color that might simply be lost in translation because of cultural factors. Ryan (2002) wrote:

A variety of identities have been constructed to provide social roles and a cultural framework for [same-sex] desires and behaviors, and an understanding of these meanings is essential ... Sexuality is often left out of the study of culture, but to a large degree, culture has been left out of the study of sexual orientation, particularly in understanding the connection between culture, gender and same-sex desire (p. 16).

This study seeks to address that gap. The first research question: *How do LGBTQ college students of color perceive their identities and the support on campus for those identities?* allows space for both U.S.-born self-identified LGBTQ college students of color as well as those whose identities may be influenced by non-U.S. cultural factors.



SPN: Where There's Smoke...

One December evening as I walked down the hall in my residence hall at Syracuse University, I heard the faint sound of a Whitney Houston song. Having been a lifelong fan of the R&B diva, my ears were keenly attuned to recognize her voice even when it was deeply buried beneath background noise. I also did not take long to deduce where the music was coming from: the open door of Carlos' room.

Carlos and I were both first-year students at the time. We were both gay men of color but not even a mutual love of Whitney Houston could bridge our different backgrounds. I was a rather straight-laced former Boy Scout from a predominantly White suburb. Carlos had grown up in-and out- of group homes in New York City. At the time, I was only just learning to accept my Black identity. He was a Latino man who complained about the school's apparent lack of diversity and preferred using "Caucasian" rather than White, so he could de-

liberately say it as if he was clearing his throat. I didn't come out of the closet until I arrived at college. He had been out for years and deliberately sought out another gay student to be his roommate because he didn't want to risk living with a homophobe. When I came out, I drew a pink triangle, a symbol of gay pride,^x on a piece of White paper and taped it to my residence hall door. He had a rainbow LGBT pride flag^{xi} on his wall. He blasted music in his room at nearly all times. He had a drag queen alter ego named "Carlotta" and performed frequently in drag competitions. Carlos embodied the word "fierce." He was the bravest person I had ever met.

I stopped at Carlos' doorway. He had his back turned to me, placing some items into a cardboard box on the floor. When he noticed me, I stepped inside and he turned the music down.

"Hey chica," Carlos said. It's not unusual for gay men to call each other by feminine pronouns, including pejorative words like bitch, a part of gay culture that has been both celebrated as transgressive^{xii} and condemned as counterproductive and offensive^{xiii}. It made me smile to hear him use the term of endearment. Despite the fact that he lived right across the hall from me, I could count on one hand the times we had actually spent time with one another. On those few occasions it was in a group with my friend James. Carlos and James had met during a pre-college orientation for students of color so they were close friends. Still, I wanted my own friendship with Carlos and I had always thought there would be time.

As I looked around the room I noticed there were many cardboard boxes and a couple of suitcases out. A bolt of panic struck me but it only lasted a moment. It was the end of the semester, after all. Maybe he was just packing to go home for the break.

"You leaving me?" I said with a sigh, halfjoking.

“It’s hard out there, Khristian,” Carlos said, opening a drawer in his desk. “I just can’t take this.” He cocked his head toward the window. The night sky was visible through the open curtains but that wasn’t what he was talking about. He looked at my puzzled expression and added, “Besides, I can’t pay anymore.” Carlos had mentioned in the past having some sort of benefactor who helped him pay the tuition bills. I didn’t press the point. The truth is, he’d never really been happy at the university; too White, too cold, too boring, too “fill in the blank.”

What hurt the most was that I was generally happy to be at Syracuse. I was learning an enormous amount and I felt a freedom to imagine being a different person than I had always been. And knowing there was another gay person on my residence hall floor had always made me feel safer. Carlos’ roommate, Kenneth, was gay but he was never around so I didn’t feel his presence the way I felt Carlos’. Standing there, contemplating my friend’s departure, I felt as though I had failed him; the whole school had failed him. I felt like crying but I didn’t want to appear vulnerable so I tried to keep the familiar heaviness behind my eyes at bay.

“This isn’t fair,” I said. My voice was shaky, which surprised me. Carlos seemed surprised as well. He stopped what he was doing and looked me in the eyes as if he was seeing me for the first time. I looked away and grabbed one of the boxes. “I can help you pack,” I offered.

“Sure.” He crossed the room and opened his closet door. “Just dump my clothes into a box. Keep them on the hangers.”

I did what he asked, grateful to help. And grateful to be with him. The two of us spent two whole hours packing boxes and suitcases and singing along to Whitney songs. At one

point, Carlos started to dance around the room, flailing his arms and Vogue-ing the way we'd seen the club kids dance in the movie, *Paris is Burning*.^{xiv} I hooted and clapped to the beat as he performed. A month before, we had watched the documentary about gay New York City Black & Latino street kids who put on elaborate drag balls and competed for prizes and trophies. Carlos had actually competed in some of the balls and knew many of the people in the documentary, including the film's namesake Paris, who had heavily influenced the ball scene.^{xv}

"I wish I had seen you perform. Maybe if you stay we can put on a show," I said as the song faded.

Carlos didn't acknowledge my comment. He dropped onto the bed, which had been stripped of all the sheets. After pausing to catch his breath, he picked up some duct tape and tossed it my way. We continued preparing the boxes for a little while longer before he abruptly stopped, saying he needed to go see someone on the other side of campus. I nodded solemnly, started walking toward the door. He stopped me.

"Bitch, stop being so dramatic," he said and I had to chuckle. He reached into one of his boxes and pulled out the rainbow flag that had been on his wall. "I want you to have this."

I took the flag and gave Carlos a hug, afraid if I spoke, I would wind up crying. That was the last time I saw Carlos. James stayed in touch with him for a little while and would give me updates about how much happier Carlos was.

I didn't have the words for it then but Carlos embodied queerness. The fact that he attended the university but always insisted that he didn't fit in made him queer. The way he played with gender in drag and out of drag, using pronouns that didn't match their perceived

gender, made him queer. Even the way he was unapologetic about being gay and his contempt for Whiteness, which was the race of the majority of students at the institution, made him queer. For me, Carlos represented the possibility to live with contradictions. As the gay poet, Walt Whitman said, to contain multitudes.^{xvi}

I can only recognize in hindsight the embers that lay within myself and the other queer students of color I would meet in college. But Carlos had a flame that just couldn't flourish within the campus climate. Anywhere else, Paris may be burning, but in Syracuse, he'd only smolder.



LGBTQ students of color

Again, research on LGBTQ college students is limited, but if the environment in grades K-12 is any indication, LGBTQ students of color are underserved by LGBT-specific outreach efforts and they feel a general lack of safety in and outside of the classroom due to high rates of physical and verbal harassment stemming from racial prejudice in addition to their sexuality (Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Educators Network, 2009a, 2009b). Additionally, studies have shown that students of color and LGBTQ students are regularly disciplined and/or treated punitively by school administrators at higher rates than their White or heterosexual peers, respectively (see Himmelstein & Bruckner, 2010, for LGBT youth; see Johnson, Boyden, & Pizz, 2006, for youth of color). Thus, at any given moment, a queer student of color may have multiple reasons to fear harsh repercussions just being themselves.

One standard method to address the needs of LGBTQ students in high school is the creation of Gay-Straight Alliances (GSA) (Perrotti & Wesheimer, 2001). Sadowski, Chow, and Scanlon (2009), used case studies foregrounding the voices of LGBTQ high school youth

to promote the development of GSAs as effective ways to leverage “relational assets,” or relationships that promote meaningful connections between LGBTQ students to combat the isolation they experience. In the end, however, Sadowski et al. acknowledged the need for further research into the specific impact on students of color, citing the “difficulty many LGBTQ youth group coordinators have in making their organizations seem welcoming to LGBTQ youth of color” (p. 194).

Other researchers have observed the same difficulty in studies of gender (McCready, 2004a, 2004b) and race (Perrotti and Westheimer, 2001). Specifically, their findings were that high school GSAs and their advisors frequently normalize Whiteness and promote a narrow expression of gender in order to be perceived as acceptable and comfortable both by the students and outside constituents. McCready looked at an urban high school that was predominantly populated by people of color, but had recently been integrated. Most of the after-school activities were dominated by students of color, with the conspicuous exception of the GSA. His study found that gay and gender-nonconforming male students in particular, were less likely to attend and were marginalized within the group. The organization’s advisor actively avoided the issues around integration that had presented at the school and was reluctant to ask students to discuss their race and cultural identities because of the “complexity” those identities brought.

Quinn (2007) added complexity and triangulation to McCready’s (2004a, 2004b) findings by presenting findings of a study of queer or gender-non conforming females of color. She focused on a small group of queer women involved in a GSA in an urban school for girls. The GSA became a lightning rod at the school, drawing opposition from teachers, parents and other students. The administration responded reflexively by using subtle policy to

restrict and regulate the GSA. The board of directors effectively revoked the GSA's advisor so they could no longer meet. Quinn agreed to revive the group after a vocal group of queer African-American girls created a "crisis" with their gender mixing clothing and visible displays of same-sex affection. Another condition that made the GSA unattractive to White students was the fact that the school leaders prohibited the GSA from hanging their literature and posters up in public spaces, driving their recruitment and outreach underground. At the end of the year, Quinn advocated for the GSA's student leaders to be recognized at an award ceremony. The staff initially didn't recognize the GSA students' leadership because their awards reflected "a White liberal feminist ideology about female success and women's education" (p. 40). Quinn's study highlighted how queer student of color leadership, style, and ways of being are capable of flourishing in the face of marginalization. The GSA hadn't been marginalized because of the high involvement of these queer girls of color but the student of color's allegiance and leadership within the GSA increased as the group's marginalization increased. Notably, this study helps to understand the high rates of punitive actions taken against LGBT youth (Himmelstein & Bruckner, 2010) and youth of color (Johnson, Boyden, & Pitzz, 2006). At any rate, both Quinn (2007) McCready (2004a, 2004b) advocated for organizing GSAs with explicit attention to intersectionality - a multidimensional framework that allows us to understand the subject as the product of multiple competing - sometimes complimenting - oppressions (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007). An intersectional approach would allow us to recognize the students' access to alternative standpoints as a positive adaptation rather than a reason to disenfranchise or punish them.

The hostile and culturally-insensitive high school environments described above underscore the crucial role higher education can play for college-bound LGBTQ students of

color. College may represent the first opportunity where all their identities can be embraced. That sentiment was reflected in the study of college choice of gay Black men conducted by Strayhorn, Blakewood and DeVita (2008). Their students “overwhelmingly noted that they came to college to ‘come out,’ and therefore chose a college environment that would allow them space to ‘come out’ and to ‘live out’” (p. 98).

LGBTQ youth who feel pressure to hide their sexual identities have been linked to high-risk behaviors, including engaging in unprotected sex or drug use (van Wormer & McKinney, 2003). Youth of color between 18-24 are the U.S. group with the highest rates of new HIV cases, with Black men who have sex with men at the lead (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009), even among college students (Taylor & Jones, 2007). Taylor and Jones pointed to a knowledge gap about HIV/AIDS as partial explanation for the higher rates of infection. A barrier to improved education is a lack of outreach specifically addresses not only the stigma around homosexuality among African Americans but also a distrust of the White health industry that feeds “conspiracy” theories. Taylor and Jones suggested colleges are “a natural ally and collaborator in the fight toward curtailing the epidemic.” They added, “other institutions and community sectors are also critical in this fight” (p. 8). Ryan (2002) reached the same conclusion. She studied the research produced from those other “community sectors,” namely psychology, nursing, social work, and counseling. The study was primarily concerned with understanding the HIV risk levels, health outcomes and public health policy as they relate to adolescent LGBTQ populations, not college populations per se. However many of the studies reviewed included college undergraduates and many of Ryan’s conclusions about the professional health fields reflect the findings of this literature review of the field of education. She criticized the overreliance on theories developed from White pop-

ulations, noting “no studies have been published on identity development in LGB people of color, based on their lived experiences” (p. 19).

Ryan’s (2002) findings demonstrate the significance of the research undertaken by this study. The invisibility of LGBTQ youth of color is an issue that requires efforts from a variety of fields to remedy. Inquiries at all levels of education into the unique ways LGBTQ students of color experience educational climates can help educators build inclusive and culturally sensitive support services. By designing a study that allows students to speak from an experience of intersecting identities, this project responds to Tanaka’s (2002) challenge for educational researchers to introduce instruments that, “make multiple, shifting social locations based on gender, race, ethnicity, class, sexual orientation, and other identifiers the *central* focus rather than merely being added on” (p. 267). The question this study will investigate is: How do queer students of color describe the contribution of race and sexual orientation to the way they make sense of their identity?



SPN: Wouldn’t You Like To Know?

I never knew Charlotte “Char” Taylor’s sexual orientation. Char was an African-American Resident Advisor (RA) from Washington D.C. I had noticed early that many of the RAs either shared my identities or were comfortable with different people. When I was outside of my residence hall, I hung out with a queer crowd; when I was in my residence hall, I stayed close to my RA.

I wished Char was my RA but she worked in another building. When we hung out, many of our friends talked openly about our sexual orientation but Char was always careful

not to “come out.” She spoke about ex-boyfriends and ex-girlfriends alike. Whenever I asked her, she would answer with a coy, “Wouldn’t you like to know?” Her comfort with such ambiguity confounded me.

Of course I had once embraced ambiguity before I entered college. I was out to some of my friends as bisexual all through high school. I think I had even convinced myself I was bisexual – especially during that summer before high school when I realized my feelings for Jim Coppel, a boy I had just met, were more than friendly. Bisexuality offered a safe space where I could acknowledge my budding same-sex attractions but still cling to the possibility of finding love with a female. Then I could tell my Boy Scout friends that I liked girls and my school friends I liked guys and both would be true. I had known of other youth with queer identities at my school; I attended a magnet school specializing in the arts.

“Of course he’s talented, he’s an artist,” my aunt had once whispered about a young musician she saw at a school performance. “He’s an artist,” was a familiar refrain. A roll of her eyes and a subtle nod of her head would usually punctuate the word “Artist” and the refrain would follow a range of comments like “He’s such a good dresser,” or “What a creative performance.”¹

My friend James was one of those talented artists. When I told him I was bisexual, however, he had chuckled knowingly and said, “you’ll be gay by the time we graduate.” He only had the timing wrong by about six months. As fate would have it, we ended up attending

¹Little did I know that my aunt’s “Of course he’s talented, he’s an artist,” suggested her (and I suspect people of her generation’s) acceptance of gay people, so long as they could re-articulate and perform the dominant culture’s aesthetic values. The role of artist, in other words, provided a space for gay people to disidentify. I was already unwittingly aware of the survival strategy.

the same college. After the first month, when I was finally able to admit I was in fact gay, he was the first person I told.

In college I met many more people who identified openly and with no fear that they were gay, lesbian or bisexual. Most of them were not misfit artists; they were just average, normal people. My aunt wouldn't be able to dismiss them with a roll of her eyes and whisper under her breath. The members of Pride Union had a variety of backgrounds and interests and they were all well-adjusted, socially adept individuals. College gave me models of gay people as normal manifestations of human diversity, which in turn gave me the confidence to come out to myself and others. The fact that the majority of those models were White was unimportant to me. When I first entered college, race hadn't reached its critical saliency for me yet so I was unbothered.

Still I was beginning to notice. I noticed that despite my temporary flirtation with bisexuality, I still craved simplicity and ease. My world had become compartmentalized into gay and straight; Black and White. Char defied all of that. While most of my friends were White, Char was comfortable among people of many different races and cultures. She rejected labels to describe her affections and sexual orientation while I clung to my gay identity and wrapped myself in the rainbow flag. Rather than using ambiguity to hide, I sensed courage in Char; an openness and self-acceptance that I lacked. I yearned for more people in my life as comfortable in their skin as Char. I didn't know how I would ever synthesize and reconcile the disparate parts of myself. I only hoped I would find it by staying close to her and the other RAs who celebrated my identities and tolerated my questions, even if they left them for me to answer myself.



LGBTQ students of color & campus climate

Campus climate touches on all the other issues discussed in the other sections. Climate refers to the overall disposition or dominant attitudes governing a particular space. Although many higher education researchers deal with the concept of campus climate, researchers such as and Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen (1998) and Hart and Fellabaum (2008) revealed inconsistencies in the way researchers and theorists have defined climate. The literature is still reaching for the perfect model capable of encompassing the dimensions of climate Hurtado, et al identified, including sociohistorical, structural or compositional, psychological and behavioral.

Hurtado and her colleagues described the structural or compositional component of campus climate as the actual numbers and representation of people from diverse backgrounds. Behavioral is the number and the quality of both formal and informal interactions or contact experiences between and among different groups. The next dimension, psychological, is the extent to which people feel support/commitment related to their identities specifically or diversity broadly. The final dimension of climate is the sociohistorical, which includes not only the institution's legacy of inclusion but also includes aspects of the climate influenced by off-campus events or characteristics (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998).

In addition to analyzing multiple dimensions, developing surveying or analyses methods from multiple populations or subsets of the population has proven valuable for campus climate researchers (Brown, Clarke, Gortmaker & Robinson-Keilig, 2004). Specific subsets that have been studied have been deaf students (Parasnis, Samar, & Fischer, 2005), education majors (Henry, Fowler and West, 2011), Latino students (Hurtado & Carter, 1997),

African American students (Rodgers & Summers, 2008), and LGBT students (Rankin, 2005). Researchers have asked these students to report their perceptions of climate of the racial and academic climate (Reid & Radhakrishnan, 2003), climate for diversity, the climate for women, and LGBT students (Rankin, 2005). Similarly, focusing on the multiple dimensions of campus climate also furthers educators' understandings of the dynamic ways the campus community creates climate along different dimensions (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pederson & Allen, 1998). This study hopes to add to the multiple perspectives through which to view campus climate.

The preponderance of data on campus climate is concerned with the racial climate. Nevertheless, the literature provides a foundation on which research on other marginalized populations is built. Understanding the impact of campus climate on various populations of college students has potential to help craft public health interventions and campaigns. Research has found factors of negative racial climate such as microaggressions and discrimination (Pieterse, Carter, Evans and Walter, 2010) can lead to psychological trauma and anxiety (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000) among students of color, increasing their likelihood to have low self-esteem (Pieterse, et al.) and engage in high-risk activities (Taylor & Jones, 2007).

Harper and Hurtado (2007) conducted a qualitative multi-college study in which they provided a comprehensive review of literature on racial climate. Although their synthesis explicitly excluded studies of climate for LGBTQ students, it found that racial climate has a heavy influence on college student development and that the marginality felt by students of color persists. They wrote, "despite fifteen years of racial climate research on multiple campuses, the themes of exclusion, institutional rhetoric rather than action, and marginality continue to emerge from student voices" (p. 21). African-American students at Predominantly

White Institutions (PWI), for example, have been found to experience heightened levels of distress, and anxiety when incidents of racism or microaggressions related to race create a hostile climate. Microaggression refers to the routine experience of being reminded of one's oppressed status (Solorzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000).

A notable exception is Cabrera, Nora, Terrenzini, Pascarella & Hagedorn's (1999) quantitative study that found no statistical significant difference in the impact of discrimination and intolerance on African-Americans and White students. They recommended institutional policies and practices that "address the students' *needs* rather than his or her *ethnicity*" (p. 155). Still, their findings are dubious, since 59% of the African American students in their sample attended an HBCU (p. 153). The HBCU students would have been less likely to report incidents of discrimination or microaggressions at their institution (Rodgers & Summers, 2008).

Microaggressions can come from anywhere and impact identities other than racial ones. Sue (2010) pointed out that they are "constant and continuing experience of marginalized people in our society" (p. 6). He provided a taxonomy of microaggressions, including microassaults, microinsults and microinvalidations and how they differently manifest in the experience of people of color, women, and LGBT people. LGBTQ students of color not only contend with racist microaggressions in the LGBT community but homophobic microaggressions within communities of color. The following passage from Porter's (1979) study of dating experiences of Black youth, although more than 30 years old, unfortunately still rings true. Whenever "young Black homosexuals popped up, [other] Blacks assumed he learned to be a sissy hanging around White guys" (p. 26). The sentiment expressed in this quote illustrates two points. First, it suggests the conflation of homosexuality to Whiteness is perpetuat-

ed by popular culture and empirical research alike. (See Patton (2012) for a recent discussion that confronts racial assumptions in queer identities). Second, Porter is committing a homophobic microaggression that reveals the lack of space within the construction of Blackness to be homosexual. The presence of homophobic comments like these can lead to the conclusion that Blacks are more homophobic than White people. Rather than attempting to measure whether one racial community is more homophobic, it may be useful to explore what is different about the ways homophobia manifests. For example, Lightsey (2009) advanced the concept of “bhomophobia,” an authentically Black iteration of homophobia that thrives in cultural spaces such as the Black church, and is characterized by the “irrational fevered sense that gay African Americans are race traitors” (p. 5) and thus jeopardize the entire race by fraternizing with White trash, who occupy the dregs of society. Homophobia is abhorrent in any manifestation, however bhomophobia challenges the White supremacist myth that communities of color are more homophobic (rather than differently homophobic). In order to help understand these issues, focused research is needed on how the salient identities of race and sexual orientation are intertwined and related to microaggressions or common beliefs in the environment.

This study is not interested in measuring campus climate per se, rather it seeks to describe how queer students of color make sense of campus climate. The results may point to more responsible and accurate ways to assess campus climate, design surveys, and analyze the results and analyze survey data. Queer students of color are only one example of a student population that can help reveal trends or patterns about how different populations perceive campus climate. Researchers have found it useful to examine campus culture through the lenses of various campus constituents. A survey of deaf students found significant differ-

ences in the ways deaf students of color perceived their campus climate in comparison to their deaf White peers. (Parasnis, Samar & Fischer, 2005).

Climate surveys that focus on race with no attention to sexual orientation are insufficient to understanding the impact of climate for intersecting identities. Currently, climate studies consistently focus either on race or sexual orientation, even when they control the data for other identities. Nonetheless, such studies offer insight into students' experience. For example, Brown, Clarke, Gortmaker and Robinson-Keiling (2004) attempted to ascertain whether sufficient differences existed across and within campus groups (i.e. faculty, staff, students) to warrant using a multiple perspectives approach when assessing the campus climate for LGBT students. They found significant differences along lines of gender, class (first-year, sophomore, etc.), and academic discipline, however the researchers did not include any demographic information about their sample vis-à-vis race at all. More recently, Dugan and Yurman (2011) conducted a study into inter-group differences among LGBT populations' perceptions of campus climate in order to explore the accuracy of information that can be obtained using quantitative measures. Although the researchers noted differences in climate perceptions that could be attributed to gender, they remained silent about any difference along racial lines. Again, the study did not even report the races of the students included in their sample. It seems as studies of campus climate build upon one another, valuable opportunities to understand the challenges of LGBTQ students of color are missed.

The United States Student Association Foundation's (USSAF, 2008) list of the most pressing challenges for LGBTQ college students of color may offer insight into campus climate. The USSAF's list included: tokenization or assumption of the role of spokesperson for their issues; lack of recruitment and retention programs and funds targeting LGBTQ people

of color; inadequate resources for students of color in LGBTQ Resource Centers; inability to guarantee safety and confidentiality for members of LGBTQ people of color student groups; and finally, that LGBTQ students of color are commonly forced to compromise by choosing one identity over another to navigate homophobia or racism.

The USSAF's findings are unsettling because they are not new. Wall and Washington (1991), for example, observed LGBTQ students of color being forced to prioritize one identity over another ten years ago. Educational researchers have more recently called for revisions and further research in light of new social theory that addresses the racial, ethnic and cultural bias in educational literature (Tanaka, 2002). This study responds to that call for further research by asking: What are LGBTQ students of color perceptions of campus climate?



SPN: Different Dimensions

One of Hurtado et al.'s components or dimensions of campus climate is the behavioral dimension, referring to the formal and informal opportunities students have to engage in meaningful intergroup or intragroup exchange or contact.^{xvii} The formal opportunities range from extracurricular institution-sponsored initiatives such as cultural festivals or intergroup dialogues to curricular offerings and majors such as women and gender studies or ethnic studies courses. During my undergraduate years, I have little memory of any institution-sponsored inter-or intra-group exchange.

Student leaders all over campus had to create those opportunities for themselves and others. Char Taylor and I loved to attend those campus workshops and programs together. I typically had an agenda; I was representing Pride Union or Three-Sixty Magazine, two stu-

dent organizations I was a part of. But Char frequently reminded me that I could learn personally rather than just for my professional roles.

So I found myself with Char in an open forum sponsored by La LUCHA, the student Latino organization, about race and racism in Hispanic culture. The program took place on a Sunday evening in a small classroom with no windows. When we arrived I was shocked by how many people had already packed into the room. Char and I found seats together toward the back of the room. We sat down next to Talia, a plump woman with big earrings who I actually recognized from a Pride Union meeting once. She was one of a small handful of brown faces I would see at Pride Union meetings. They would attract my eye, shining like bright shooting stars in the sky for the whole evening. But like shooting stars, they would disappear as quickly as they appeared.

“Hey, I know you,” I said, extending my hand to Talia. “Pride? I’m the president.”

Talia took my hand and gave it a gentle squeeze. I hardly felt it though, because Char, sitting on my opposite side, nudged my side with her elbow. I knew what she was doing. Or rather she knew what I was doing. I hadn’t even said my name and already I was launching into my title! I don’t know if it was my social anxiety that led me to need a formal role or responsibility or if it was the fact that I was majoring in journalism in college, but I had real difficulty just being a regular attendee for an event.

Talia didn’t seem to notice. “Yes, right. I’m Talia,” she said.

“This is Khristian,” Char said for me. “And I’m Char.” Char was a tall dark-skinned woman with long hair that she died chestnut brown. As she reached over to offer Talia her hand as well, she leaned so close I could see her Black roots growing in. I made a mental note to tease her about it later to get even with her for making me feel awkward.

The majority of the program consisted of a lecture delivered by a faculty member LaLUCHA had asked to be an invited speaker. I remember she started out sitting but kept getting up to write on the Blackboard and then sitting down again. The post-lecture discussion was moderated by a LUCHA officer. Somehow the conversation turned to specific examples of racism at Syracuse University. My ears perked up and my jaw dropped as people went around the room and described examples of what they felt were racist policies or incidents that had not been handled properly or at all by the university. Although my memory of the specific examples is fuzzy, what has always stuck with me from that night was the feeling that my world was expanding rapidly. I was typically very good at dissecting situations and coming up with “perfectly logical explanations” that avoided racist implications. However there were so many that I quickly became overwhelmed. There were just too many testimonies to be denied. I don’t think I was alone and the professor must have sensed that as well. She suggested we break up into small groups and process our reaction to the stories and anecdotes students were sharing. Char, Talia and I arranged our chairs into a triad.

“I feel as though I’ve been walking around like a horse with blinders on,” I said.

Talia smiled and it seemed to me she was stifling a giggle.

“What?” I said, more defensively than I intended.

“I bet homophobia keeps you pretty busy,” she said.

Char giggled as well and moved quickly to sharing her reflections on the discussion.

And yet that comment lingered. There was more than humor in her words; I felt a subtle critique of what was took a priori in my life. I felt as though I had spent so much time preoccupied by the oppression of the LGBT community that I had forgotten about racial oppression. In fact, I had thought the communities of color were in need of education about

LGBT oppression. They were the ones with the problems to solve. It never occurred to me that they could have just easily have seen the LGBT community as the ones who refused to confront racial issues. Seeing Talia at a LUCHA event and hearing her comment that night forced me to confront the fact that maybe the “shooting stars” I would see didn’t have to be shooting stars. Maybe it was the LGBT community’s ambivalence to racism that left no room for them to stay in our night sky.

I realize now that in that moment as I sat with all those racist incidents and Talia’s comment in my head, I felt like a traitor. But rather than be ashamed of myself for my apparent naivety, I was filled with outrage at Talia. Today I know that the outrage should have been directed at the university. Where were the forums sponsored by Student Affairs Offices or intergroup dialogue courses?

There wasn’t an LGBT Resources Center but I knew there was an Office of Multicultural Affairs (OMA); I had met once with their director, Irma. She saddened me when she admitted that she felt OMA’s charge was too expansive and that LGBT issues were given too little resources. Syracuse has an Intergroup Dialogue program today but that didn’t exist when I was a student. Char, Talia and I – even the leaders of La LUCHA, were all earnest students left watching the heavens for glimmers of light and rather than wishing on falling stars, hoping we could keep them in place.

Queer students of color are hard pressed to describe a campus climate for queer people of color when the spaces to build community, educate or learn about those identities remain separate and distinct. University administrative offices that aren’t fully committed or funded to creating holistic encounter groups or opportunities results in students saddled with the responsibility to create fragmented events and workshops in isolation that are insufficient

to fully capture all of their intersecting identities. In turn, their ability to accurately assess the climate without having access to the behavioral dimension of campus climate is limited.

More formally structured or intentional opportunities would have helped me and other students like me integrate my two dominant identities into a holistic self-awareness.

Throughout my undergraduate years I made significant progress moving through a racial awareness and acceptance of my gay identity but in my mind they seemed to coexist alongside one another at the same time but never in the same spaces. It's true I yearned to find more people who shared the two identities and sought out role models, however the idea of "queer of color" as an integrated identity in and of itself remained foreign to me.

The previous story exemplifies how the failure to create spaces for intersecting identities such as race and sexual orientation is detrimental to queer students of color. Allow me to share another example of how institutional cross-cultural exchange has the opportunity to expand awareness and create links among communities. This is an example of a formal institution-sponsored intervention to foster intergroup exposure through curriculum.^{xviii}

I was a senior when I enrolled in an English course that covered U.S. LGBT history and literature. The instructor was a White professor in his mid-fifties with White hair and pale pink-ish skin. He was a rather effeminate man who had been embroiled briefly in a controversy on campus when a comic in the student newspaper featured a character who bore great resemblance to him. The serial, which ran over several weeks, had implied he'd been seducing undergraduate men. The paper decided to run several editorials written by the professor and the student comic, exploring the nuances of free speech, satire, and slander. My impression after observing the exchange was that the professor was a strong-willed, widely read man with enormous integrity. I was intimidated by him but intrigued by the course sub-

ject. Beyond the Afro-American Studies courses I had taken, I hadn't ever found an actual course that related so directly to my personal identity.

It was a small seminar course and I was the only person of color. Every week we learned about White authors and read articles filled with references to White people. It didn't surprise me; it was what I had come to expect. But one week a reading was assigned that discussed the Stonewall Inn protests.

The Stonewall Inn Bar was a New York City establishment that was known for serving people who were transgender or in same sex couples in the 1960s. In June of 1969, the vice squad of the New York raided the bar. They conducted these raids on a regular basis; they forced patrons to show their IDs and produce at least three pieces of clothing that were consistent with the gender on their IDs. If transgender and transvestite clients could not produce the three items of clothing they were hauled off to jail for indecency. Same-sex couples would have to disavow their partner or also be hauled off as an avowed homosexual, which was considered a fineable offense at the time. For a bar to serve homosexuals was also an offense.

That night in June, as some of the patrons were being brought out to the police cars, people from the bar and some people in the street began to fight the police. The fight soon became a full riotous protest that lasted for nearly a week.

The article we read for class retold that classic story of Stonewall. The protest represented the first time that trans people and gay people came together to fight against police brutality. Thus, the LGBT community was born. What is often left out of the story, the article said, was that many of the Stonewall Inn clientele that fateful night had been people of color and the protesters who gathered that night in solidarity were poor Black and Latino people.

Reading those lines filled me with pride and excitement. Finally a testimony that the history of LGBT people is not completely White! Imagine the empowering effect it could have on me to be able to finally have a way to present to my LGBT student organization and friends specific and meaningful way to discuss racism and race dynamics in a queer context. Here was evidence that brown-skinned people had been an integral part of the LGBT community from the onset. I was eager for the instructor to talk about this in class the next day. But when that particular reading came up, he brushed past it without much attention to what I had considered a profound epiphany.

Sitting in the room, my head surged with memories of my high school years when I sat in the back of classrooms. Back then I would pour my most intimate thoughts and emotions into poetry, clutching my pencil so tight it eventually created a callous that still marks my finger to this day. Then I would promptly rip the paper into small thin strips and slip them into my mouth, preferring to literally eat my words rather than speak them. I came out many times on those pieces of paper. But those declarations of my identity never got any further than the distance from my desk to my mouth, to my belly. The people around me certainly never heard me. They were most likely what Ettinger called “People Lacking an Agenda,” or PLAs. PLAs are people who are not interested in “the need to survive in an alien culture and/or to assess in good faith their own positions in the multiple systems of subordination that constitute the culture.”^{xix}

What had begun as an affirming experience wound up making me feel dismissed and demoralized so that day in college, just as in high school, I was in survival mode. I wish that I had said something. Had I a piece of paper I may have written down the lesson I had taken away from the reading as well as the lesson that not talking about it perpetuated the margin-

ality and invisibility of people of color in the LGBT community. But sitting in that class surrounded by what I perceived to be PLAs, I read the climate and decided to stay quiet. In fact, I hardly contributed to the class discussions for the rest of the semester. Climate is created as much by the silence created when educators do not address intersections as it is when people who embody that intersection are silent.

Today, as a practitioner and researcher in higher education, I know I will encounter that familiar sound of paper tearing. Perhaps my ears have even become conditioned enough to pick up on the barely audible crumpling as paper touches some young person's tongue, dissolving the words scrawled in lead or ink. I do not want to perpetuate spaces loud with teaching yet silent when it comes to learning from students' lives. I am a person with an agenda and it is to say to that student: "I promise to always seek campus climates in which you can be heard."



LGBTQ students of color & identity development

The unique campus climate issues LGBTQ students of color experience may impact their development of healthy identities. "The individual's identity is constituted by processes originating within the cultural environment and its institutions, in this case, the school" (McKenna, 2004, p. 12). It is not uncommon in student affairs and social psychology fields to create developmental models that describe common path individuals travel during their identity formation (Torres, Jones & Renn, 2009). Efforts have been made to develop comprehensive LGB identity development stage theories and models (Cass, 1979, 1984) and LGBTQ student leadership models (Renn & Bilodeau, 2005) that codify the students' experi-

ences into discrete developmental stages or phases. Educators craft their programs, activities and services to reach students at particular stages. Presumably, students may be more susceptible to different aspects of the campus climate or culture, depending on the stage they are in. Student affairs profession has developed a particular appreciation for these identity development models because of the emphasis on the influence of the campus social context (Torres, Jones & Renn, 2009; Moran, 2009), however faculty have been encouraged to also incorporate identity development into their practice (Gay, 1985; Tatum, 1992).

Cass's (1979) model of homosexual identity was one of the earliest stage models of lesbian and gay identity. The Cass model has six stages:

- Awareness, where the person is aware of being different;
- Comparison, where the person believes they might be gay, but tries to hide it;
- Tolerance, where the person realizes they are gay;
- Acceptance, where the person begins exploration into the gay community;
- Pride, where the person becomes an active participant of the gay community;
- Synthesis, where the person fully accepts who they and others are.

Notably, Cass (1979)'s model implies a public identity must be achieved in order to reach full development, but he did not specifically designate one of his stages the "coming out" stage. Others who were influenced by Cass, have; Coleman's (1982) five stages are:

- Pre-coming out stage, the person feels different but may not be conscious of having an attraction to others of the same sex;
- Coming out: the person has admitted to him or herself that they have these feelings.

Exploration: involves experimentation with one's sexual identity, including developing interpersonal skills to meet others who share their sexual orientation;

- First relationships: the person enters a relationship with someone of the same sex;
- Identity integration, the person brings together their public and private selves in order to integrate their new identity as a gay person;

D'Augelli (1994) proposed a model of five processes, rather than stages:

- Exiting heterosexual identity is the recognition that an individual is not heterosexual and includes coming out to others;
- Developing a personal lesbian/gay/bisexual identity status involves a personal sense of what it means to be a lesbian, gay, or bisexual person, as well as challenging one's own internalized homophobia;
- Developing a social lesbian/gay/bisexual identity status in which the person creates a support network of people who know about their sexual orientation and support and accept them;
- Becoming a lesbian/gay/bisexual offspring, involves coming out to parents, and redefining the impact of this on their relationship with their parents;
- Developing a lesbian/gay/bisexual intimacy status, the person learns how to be in a romantic relationship with a person of the same sex;
- Entering a lesbian/gay/bisexual community, the person makes the decision to what degree they commit to social and political action. Some persons never experience this process for a variety of reasons, including lack of interest or safety, while others risk everything;

D'Augelli's (1994) model improved on Cass's (1979) original theory because it presented a less linear expression of LGB identity development (Yang, 2008), however it didn't complicate the "coming out" narrative. Some have attempted to revise LGB identity models, to accommodate the multiple dimensions of lesbian identities (Abes & Jones, 2004; McCarn & Fassinger, 1996), for example. However, these changes have also not problematized the "coming out" experience. experience of "coming out," continues to be among the primary reasons researchers have concluded that the dominant LGB identity models are inappropriate for capturing the experience of people of color (Renn, 2007; Talburt, 2004).

LGBTQA identity models and racial/ethnic identity models have both been critiqued (see Fassinger, 1991; Poynter & Washington, 2005; Torres, Jones & Renn, 2009). In reference to ethnic identity models, Waller and McAllen-Walker (2001) wrote, "stage theories have no place in the Navajo understanding of the world" (p. 96). They argued that the application of the stage development models is counterproductive, even damaging for people of color. Walters, Evans-Campbell, Simoni, Ronquillo, & Bhuyan (2006) argued that Native American identities develop in dynamic, fluid ways that defy discrete stages. Drawing on research from Black youth, Duncan (2005) theorized that the flaw of most of these models is that they are proscriptive; they inevitably feature one stage in which an individual holds an over-commitment to their identity. This stage is frequently accompanied by an immersion and hostility to the dominant society and the status quo, which the student perceives as oppressive. The final stage in the model is one in which the identity achieves synthesis, or assimilation into the dominant society. Duncan pointed out that the result of this stage model is that the identity pride and allegiance that was nurtured in the overcommitted stage must be diluted or ultimately jettisoned in order to move into the assimilation phase. In other words,

progression along the developmental model necessitates rejection of pride in one's identity. For LGBTQ students of color, that means adopting a sort of colorblind LGBTQ identity. Applying pressure for students to move through the model is tantamount to forcing them to cover, a subtle form of oppression exerted by individuals and societies by framing a minority groups' behavior, politics and associations as deviant (Yoshino, 2006, p. 79).

Talbert (2004) took issue with the stage of the LGBTQ identity model in which the individual "comes out," or informs the greater community of their LGBTQ identity. "Coming out denotes the achievement of a 'higher' level of development" (Yang, 2008, p. 14). It is often associated with the integration of one's sexual identity and the connection of one's private and public lives. Talbert countered the idea of this stage being necessary by presenting research from a study that included Latino/a youth "who did not wish to endanger family and community relations by being publicly out" (p. 120). She said,

If healthy gayness is defined by a willingness to be out, those who do not come out in particular ways may be construed or construe themselves in negative terms. These norms can pose a problem for youth of color, whose families and communities may attach gayness to Whiteness. (Talbert, 2004, p. 120)

Gortmaker and Brown's (2006) research study demonstrates how students in the Talbert (2004) study would be ill served by normative definitions of outness. Gortmaker and Brown's comparative study of perceptions of campus climate of closeted and out lesbian and gay students classified subjects as "closeted" based on a self-reported 0-8 scale "outness" scale. Students who marked below 5 were classified as "closeted." The quantitative approach did not allow for students to provide information about their reasons for scoring below 5 on the outness scale. Applying such criteria and surveying methods to Talbert's (2004) Latino

students would not have been useful or accurate. Furthermore, Gortmaker and Brown's study provided descriptive statistics of the sample, such as class standing, gender, and age, but was silent about the racial identification of their survey respondents, making any correlation between race, outness, and perceptions of campus climate impossible to determine.

Another problematic aspect of applying stage models is that they treat individuals as having no agency, as if they are helplessly at the will of social cycles and processes. Abes & Kasch (2007) applied a Queer Theory analysis to the results of a study that initially studied the identity stage development of a group of lesbian college students. The revised study revealed certain heterosexist assumptions in the development model. When analyzed through a Queer Theory lens, some (although not all) of the students' identity development and behaviors were interpreted much differently. For example, the initial developmental interpretation cast one lesbian as unable to exit from one of the stages because of her apparent struggle between two competing forces: her evolving lesbian identity and her Christian faith. The queer analysis found evidence that she was actively refusing to submit to the rules of either her sexual orientation or her faith, and thus creating her own sense of identity. The study reframed the issue from one of a student who does not fit the social construction of her identity to one of the construction of identity being insufficient for all of her multiple identities.

Authors such as Abes & Kasch (2007), Jones & McEwen (2000), and Maramba & Museus (2011), have called for studies that describe students' meaning-making along multiple dimensions of identity. Jones & McEwen (2000) did offer a model of multiple identity development that significantly advanced the student affairs field's understanding of identity. The model described the dynamic influence of changing contexts on the relative salience of multiple identity dimensions. In order to achieve their model, the authors needed to adopt a

social constructionist lens to identity, rather than the constructivist approach previous studies had taken (Jones & McEwen). Similarly, this dissertation encourages novel ways to look at the experience of queer students of color.

For example, what if descriptions of how students of color make sense of their LGBTQ identities do not need to involve coming out? Some researchers have hypothesized that the identity development of minority populations like LGBT or people of color may be better captured by descriptive models such as typologies that determine common characteristics (Renn, 2007; Yang, 2008), narrative inquiry (Abes & Jones, 2004), case study (Abes & Kasch, 2007), or autobiographies (Sholock, 2007). Delany (1999) offered thoughts in an autobiographic essay that further illustrate the problems people of color may have with the concept of “coming out.” After sharing two particular poignant coming out stories, he concluded, “I cannot claim that either [story] *identified* or *defined* anything of me but only illuminated parts of my endlessly iterated (thus always changing) situation” (p. 97). This nuanced understanding of identity could illustrate that Delaney, as a person of color, already knows the experience of changing identity. The so-called coming out experience could essentially be meaningless to people of color because of its assumption that one’s experience of life or defining characteristic is changed after revealing their sexual orientation. People of color already carry the experience of being “raced,” and so they may be accustomed to the idea of shifting racial identifiers, depending on political and social whim. Consider, for example, recent shifts in government re-classification of Latino from a racial category to an ethnicity. Thus, coming out for people of color is not the “rite of passage” that Gortmaker and Brown (2006) called it. White people, on the other hand, may be more likely to experi-

ence a loss of political and social status by adopting a gay identity when they come out, so it represents a more significant experience (Parks, Hughes, & Mathews, 2004).

At any rate, those students of color who do come out, do so in unique ways. There's a difference between "selectively out" rather than "closeted." Rosario, Rotheram-Borus and Reid (1996) found that, when compared to their out LGBTQ White peers, out Black youth still report involvement in fewer gay-related social activities and less comfort with others knowing their sexual identity. Also, Black and Latino youth disclosed their identities to fewer people than White youth. In another study, Fischer (2003) made the point that in Western discourse, being in the closet continues to be seen as a representation of LGBT oppression; however, for people who must manage multiple identities that include cultural and sexual orientation, being in and out of the closet becomes part of tactical maneuvering for survival. Similarly, researchers have introduced terms such as "continuum of disclosure" (Wilson & Miller, 2002) and "visibility management" (Lasser & Tharinger, 2003) in order to describe the complex ways people of color publically live their queer identity. In light of this data, it seems counterproductive to persist using existing models that use being "out" as a condition of identity development to understand the experience of LGBTQ students of color.

It can, however, be productive to explore students' experience in an open-ended way that recognizes and accounts for the intersectional nature of their identities, or the ability their identity gives them to simultaneously navigate interlocking systems of oppression. Wilson & Miller (2002) observed gay African American males in their study employing strategies developed in response to racism to guard themselves against heterosexism. Battle and Linville (2006) hypothesized that the ability they observed among LGBTQ high school stu-

dents of color to navigate White-centric educational environments and homophobic communities of color was a kind of cultural capital. About their students, Battle and Linville wrote:

... their consciousness of their intersectionality and the insight that it gives them on the social layers of American society may allow them to take advantage of their ability to use various forms of cultural capital to move between different segments of society and assert their control over their academic futures early in their academic careers (p. 195)

Battle and Linville (2006) reported LGBTQ students of color being more motivated to succeed than heterosexual students of color, which holds implications for how they may perform if they persist to college. Therefore, the more insight we can find into the experience of LGBTQ students of color in college, the more we can cultivate learning environments that are supportive and accepting of their identities and instills pride in them rather than forcing them to have to jettison or reject one over another. The ability to describe and identify how LGBTQ students of colors' identities interact with their campus climate is the project of the study at hand.

This study of the perceptions of campus climate of queer college students of color can offer insight into the ways that students negotiate their racial/ethnic and LGBTQ identities as they navigate campus facilities, for example, athletic spaces and identity-based advocacy/support centers. Gill, Morrow, Collins, Lucey, and Schultz, (2010) found that hostile climates may be a barrier to queer students' physical activity or participation in athletics. Although Gill et al. surveyed college undergraduates about their high school experience, the study's findings hold relevant implications for higher education; it's reasonable to expect the students carried those same perceptions with them to college. The gay male undergraduates

in Rhoads' (1994) ethnographic study certainly did. They identified athletes as one of the most homophobic groups on campus. Consequently they reported avoiding areas of campus where athletes were likely to congregate (p. 282).

Gill et al. (2010) found that students of all races and ethnicities in their sample were equally likely to identify the climate in physical activity settings as hostile to LGBTQ people. However they conceded that a qualitative approach might offer deeper understanding of the specific ways students experienced that hostility:

Quite possibly expectations, stereotypes and the level of harassment differ by varying combinations of sexuality and physicality, as well as across racial/ethnic groups. Researchers and professional programs for physical activity professionals have not addressed physicality as a cultural issue, or explored the intersections. (p. 910).

One contributor to campus climate is campus facilities that exist to support students' developing knowledge of intersecting identities. Campus identity centers that are separate and distinct, specifically serving the needs of LGBTQ students, women, and students of color, with no center that specifically addresses the intersection, creates a systemic inability to provide proper safe space for queer college students of color (Strayhorn, Blakewood & DeVita, 2008). Separate identity centers can lead to "social stratification," which Walls (2008) suggested ought to be included as a measurement of the social attitudes in a given community. On campus, social stratification prohibits students from fully synthesizing or developing their identities, sending the message that they must compartmentalize themselves. This study hopes to shed more light on the impact of social stratification and other aspects of campus climate by posing the question: How do LGBTQ students of color describe the impact of the college environment on their identity development?

Capturing the student of color perspective on the college environment is important because some research has found that racial/ethnic communities actually call into question the relevance of campus climate to persistence and success in higher education. Where race is concerned, many campus studies – particularly quantitative ones – promote “diversity of convenience,” (Yosso, Ceja, Smith, & Solorzano, 2009) or a mutual acculturation model of assessing campus climate. They presume that students’ positive perceptions of campus correlate with contact with students of other races (Simmons, Wittig & Grant, 2010). Surveys are likely to simply ask students to quantify the amount of contacts they have had with other races on a regular basis or within a particular range of time (ie. “the last three months”). The flaw of mutual acculturation models are that they are “colorblind,” meaning they assume White students and students of color benefit equally simply from coming into contact with one another. However, healthy racial identity development for students of color frequently means allowing them “counter space,” or affinity space away from White people (Dempsey & Noblit, 1996; Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Solorzano, D. G., Ceja, M., & Yosso, T. J., 2000). In fact, research has shown that while “in-group” activities with others of the same race had a negative impact on White students’ openness to diversity, it actually had a positive impact on African-Americans’ openness to diversity (Rodgers & Summers, 2008).

A similar finding has been found among Latino students. Simmons, Wittig and Grant (2010) conducted a study exploring the relationship between perceptions of multicultural campus climate and student personal acceptance of diversity. They measured climate by the extent to which students of diverse racial/ethnic and cultural heritage were “acculturated” through daily contact during multicultural programming. Comparing White students and Latino students, they found a net gain of acceptance of diversity among White students but the

Latino students showed no correlation between internal acceptance and increased interracial interactions. Simmons, et al. wrote:

The moderating role of ethnicity suggests that the distinctive cultures and experiences of Whites and Latinos (as well, perhaps, of Asian Americans and African Americans) need to be taken into account when designing multicultural campus programming. (p. 474)

Their research suggests that there is a differential impact not only of campus climate on student perceptions but also on the outcomes researchers and administrators seek to address in order to affect campus climate (Tanaka, 2002). Further, an integration or acculturation model may even privilege White students because White students in their population were less likely to begin college with low interaction with people of different racial/ethnic backgrounds than their own. Their comfort allowed them to benefit the most from efforts to integrate the student body. The Latino students' preference for affinity spaces, on the other hand, would be interpreted as negative.

Hurtado and Carter (1997) had similar findings. Their research suggested integration may not be a reasonable objective because it strips students of their cultural characteristics. Hurtado and Carter argue although climate impacts students' sense of belonging, a hostile climate can be mediated by membership in identity groups that allow students to maintain their racial/ethnic identity. Researchers need "to avoid the assumptions of conformity and assimilation that critics have aptly pointed out are not inclusive of the diverse experiences of historically marginalized groups in higher education" (p. 338). Rather, racial climate ought to be studied in order to identify what attitudes, institutions or social cues students have to contend with in order to develop strategies of resilience without integrating.

Policies or institutions that fail to recognize the unique needs of students of color can contribute to their tokenization. “Under far too many circumstances, students of color on predominantly White campuses are seen as filling a role -- that is, as providing something that the university needs, namely, diversity” (Lewis, Chesler, and Forman, 2000, p. 83). Studies that show students of color are less likely to feel a sense of integration into the campus community suggest institutions need to facilitate “more meaningful” interactions that demonstrated an interdependence of groups (Chavou, 2005). Some of the same limitations that appeared in the previous discussion of racial climate also are also present in studies of climate for LGBT populations. Those limitations include colorblindness and underestimation of the role of race/ethnicity, (Gro, Bimbi, Nanin, & Parsons, 2006) and generalizing based on a predominantly White sample (Mohr & Sedlacek, 2000).



SPN: Words That Hurt

If there were spaces on campus where students could engage in thoughtful discussion of the intersections of race and other identities like sexual orientation, I never knew of them when I was an undergraduate. In such a climate, much of the critical moments in the development of my two dominant identities remained disconnected. When I grew closer to acceptance and comfort with my racial identity, for example, it was usually in spite of my sexual orientation. Although I felt a tug for opportunities to explore both identities at the same time, the idea of synthesis never occurred to me because I never saw any examples in college. I came close at times but most of the time my gay and racial identities developed separate

from one another. The following experience illustrates a missed opportunity to bring a part of my gay identity into the same space as my racial identity.

One day during my junior year, I was standing in the hallway of the student center talking to three other Black men. The tall, muscular man standing in front of me was Derrick, a former student government president who was still well-known on campus and very active in his fraternity. Derrick's best friend and former vice president, Eddie, was on my left. Eddie, who stood as tall as me, wore his long hair braided in tight cornrows. Kwame, the third member of their posse, was one of the editors of the Black Voice, a student newspaper that covered the Black community. He had very dark skin and a bald head. I had heard once that Kwame was related to royalty in Ghana.

The three of us were having an impromptu meeting about Words that Hurt, an event that Pride Union was sponsoring with the Black Student Association. I was proud of the close working relationship I had developed with the three of them. We all had personal baggage to settle in this moment. Derrick was the former student government president because he had lost his reelection campaign to my best friend James, whose campaign I had been a part of. Some people considered Kwame's paper, the Black Voice, a competitor of the student magazine I was editor of, called Three Sixty Degrees. But the three of us focused on the program we were planning. Words That Hurt was an open forum and dialogue about the language of bias, prejudice, and pride. Without formal space to explore intersections of identities, we students had to create them.

I wished that intersectional space existed every week at Pride Union. There were days when I would be sitting in one of our student groups' meetings and look around the room. At any given night, there could be more than twenty students packed into our small meeting

room and it would suddenly occur to me that I was the only Black student there. The walls of the small room would suddenly start to close in on me and I would feel breathless under the oppressive weight of every pair of blue eyes on me.

“I know there are other Black gay students out there,” I would whisper to myself. “I know they have got to be out there!” It hurt me that they didn’t come to meetings.

I certainly never would expect Derrick, Eddie, or Kwame to show up at a Pride Union event. Eddie and Kwame were well-known ladies’ men and I had actually heard Derrick make homophobic statements in the past. Nevertheless, they were three important men in the Black community and certain compromises need to be made for the greater cause. So I strayed away from being too explicitly gay in my behavior or words. Even as I spoke about Words that Hurt, a program I had created, I stressed how the Black community could benefit from the discussion. The Black Greeks had agreed to provide a panel member.

Paradoxically, as an RA I had developed a reputation for coordinating diversity programming and advocating for multicultural issues, but I had managed to do it all with little or no contact with other Black students. I had only recently become aware that although I carried my gay identity proudly, I tended to keep quiet when it came to race. While it was true that my gay White friends tended to eschew race, I was becoming aware of my own complicity. For me, being Black was wrapped up in shame, guilt and inadequacies that I wanted to understand, but my world offered few opportunity.

So I had joined the staff of the student magazine, Three Sixty, which covered the issues of communities of color. Working with student writers and designers for Three Sixty allowed me to explore racial issues in safe, controlled ways. Still, when I saw a group of Black students I didn’t know, I had to make a conscious effort not to bow my head and hurry past. I

would have to swallow down the guilt, shame and insecurities that had been developing just under the surface for a long time.

Other Black students on campus noticed my reluctance. I would see it in their eyes when I formally introduced myself to someone I had seen on campus for more than two years without speaking. The first time I went to a Black Student Union meeting to talk about *Words That Hurt* and announced that I was a junior, I could've sworn I heard someone whisper, "It's about time."

Just as I used my involvement in *Three Sixty* as an entrée into spaces I would have otherwise shunned, I was also using *Pride Union* to gain access to the communities Kwame, Eddie, and Derrick represented. Because they were Black and because of their fiercely visible heterosexuality, I would have hurried by, treating them no differently than any other group of Black students, were it not for the program we were collaborating on.

Whatever had brought me there to that day, I was proud of the progress I had made. Other students were passing all around us. At one point I looked up and saw Thomas, another leader of *Pride Union*. I welcomed the opportunity to bring him into the conversation because I had felt as though the other leaders on the executive board were not as engaged in this project as I was. I watched him as he approached us, waiting to make eye contact, but our eyes never met. I stepped backward and reached out my hand, trying to tap his coat before he got too far. I could see Eddie's mouth moving when he spoke to me but I didn't hear him. Kwame gave me a nudge and I turned back to look at Eddie. Thomas slipped by without ever noticing.

"Can you make it to the meeting on Tuesday?" Eddie asked.

“Yes,” I said absently. I was still thinking about Thomas. Perhaps he had seen me and decided not to say anything because I was already engaged in a conversation. Perhaps he hadn’t realized I was there. I wondered if he had just looked at the three of us and simply assumed he didn’t know me. I couldn’t have been any more different than these three men, I thought, yet to any White man walking by, I’m just another Black man. I felt trivial and invisible.

There were a million excuses for Alan passing by us unacknowledged. But I was left with the stunning realization that I had done the exact same thing. How many people of color had I simply dismissed, assuming they were worlds different from me? In that moment, I resolved that I didn’t want to do that to my own people; I didn’t want to do that to myself.

Looking around at the other three men I felt a bond with Derrick, Kwame and Eddie like I never had before. And the relationship that solidified that day produced a successful program. The Words that Hurt program offered space in which I could grapple with issues and feelings that were common across both of my dominant identities. Both my experience as a person of color and as a queer person held value and actually complimented one another. I told myself programs like Words that Hurt were worth moments like that one in the hallway. I certainly hoped they were.

As a Black man, I was becoming more comfortable and adept at fitting into communities of color while covering my other identity by forgiving a certain amount of intolerance, avoiding talk about gay topics, or by letting people I knew pass by. I knew that made my place in those spaces tenuous and fragile but the feeling of solidarity and shared history was too great to jeopardize. Back then it never occurred to me that there could be a queer of color identity in and of itself; a hybrid of the two identities and yet distinctly its own. It’s reveal-

ing that the school didn't have a "queer people of color" or "QPOC" space. I yearned for the ability to look across the room and lock eyes with someone who felt that double consciousness of belonging and yet not belonging.

The day would come when I would discover a "queer people of color" booth at a Pride parade and all of a sudden feel it click that my two selves didn't have to compete. That somehow being a queer of color did not mean "either"; it could mean "and." I would feel as though all I had learned about my identity until then had been in preparation of this insight; the way training wheels prepare one to ride a bicycle. But that wouldn't come for many years. Until then the few hours I sat in the Words That Hurt program were the closest I'd come to a sense of confidence and wholeness that a space where all of your identities are accepted indivisibly can bring.



Qualitative methods & LGBTQ people of color

A qualitative approach is fitting to this study in particular because of the emphasis on how students translate perceptions of a socially constructed campus climate into personal identity. Miles and Huberman (1994) wrote, "Qualitative data, with their emphasis on people's 'lived experience' are fundamentally well suited for locating the *meanings* people place on the events, processes, and structures of their lives ... and for connecting these meanings to the social world around them" (p. 10).

Researchers have recognized the value of qualitative methods when working with understandings of minority populations such as LGBTQ people and people of color. Discussing the findings of studies exploring the high risk behaviors of LGBTQ youth of color, Ryan

(2002) said, “the only way to understand behaviors that are culturally determined and socially regulated is by in-depth qualitative studies of each ethnic group” (p. 19).

It may come as a surprise, then, how many qualitative studies have failed to address differential LGBTQ experiences of the educational environment stemming from racial/ethnic minority status. For example, Rhoads (1997) conducted an ethnographic study of gay and bisexual male students to understand the impact of increasing gay and bisexual male visibility on campus. He provided description of the men’s student status, year and self-identified status in or out of the closet, however no mention is made of their racial identification. Despite acknowledging a limit of his study was the lack of gay or bisexual women, which he called a “separate student subculture,” of the university (p. 276), he does not discuss gay males of color as a possible subculture. His work is, however, notable for its description of the reciprocal role of visibility. Visible LGBTQ social networks and administrators made students feel safe to come out and become involved. Rhoads concluded that visibility “provides the heterosexual world with a real-life understanding of the lives of sexually diverse peoples and ... this leads to greater tolerance and acceptance” (p. 281). If only he felt similarly about the visibility of LGBTQ people’s racial identities.

Lasser and Tharinger (2003) did identify the race of their studies’ participants. They investigated the “visibility management” strategies LGB youth developed within school. Visibility management – also known as identity management (Yang, 2008) - is the extent to which one makes their sexual orientation known or apparent to the world around them through associations, dress, symbols and other non-verbal cues. One of the findings that emerged from the study was the influence of the world outside of school that still bore upon the students’ experiences. The researchers stressed that one cannot understand the GLB expe-

rience separate from the surrounding culture. They wrote, “the environment and the individual are intimately intertwined. GLB youth are . . . active agents of their environment. One cannot be understood without the other” (p. 241). The researchers discussed the impact of heteronormativity in the greater cultural context, saying “the world around them struggles to make meaning of homosexuality” (p. 241). Still, despite the fact that six of sixteen of their subjects identified as Hispanic, the authors made no explicit reference to the cultural messages that exist around their ethnicity. In other words, how does the world around them struggle with their race and how does that struggle impact their visibility management? The findings of this study can help answer that.

Summary

This review demonstrates the educational research literature’s inability to address the racial and sexual identities of LGBTQ (queer) college students of color. The field’s limited ability to appropriately assess LGBTQ-inclusive educational settings (Rankin, 2003; Renn, 2010), results in educational institutions in which LGBTQ students of color experience high rates of racial and sexual orientation-based harassment and discrimination (Battle & Linville, 2006; McCready, 2004); and educators who attempt to predict their needs using developmental models that inadequately address their cultural/ethnic backgrounds (Duncan, 2005; Talburt, 2004; Yang, 2008). Influencing and understanding the campus climate is a critical component of creating and maintaining campus environments responsive to the needs of culturally diverse students. A positive campus climate can improve student of color’s academic achievement (Reid & Radhakrishnan, 2003); intellectual outcomes such as ability to engage in complex thinking about problems and take in multiple perspectives (Henry, Fowler and

West, 2011); and their mental (Pieterse, Carter, Evans and Walter, 2010) and physical health (Taylor & Jones, 2007). Campus climate studies reveal that LGBT students report high rates of harassment and violence than their peers (Rankin, 2005). The impact of campus climate on sexual and minorities has not been studied as extensively as it has for students of color, however, the growing body of literature does reflect similar experiences of marginalization and discrimination. When queer youth of color have been studied as a population, mixed-method (Griffin & Museus, 2011) and qualitative methods (Alimahomed, 2010; Lasser & Tharinger, 2003; Ryan, 2002, Yang, 2008) have offered the most promising intersectional analysis and insight into their fluctuating identities.

Ultimately, this study's goal of understanding campus climate's contribution to the ways queer college students of color occupy and navigate multiple oppressed identities can make valuable contributions to our knowledge of how college campus' can be supportive to marginalized or at-risk populations.

CHAPTER III: Research Methodology

Multiple method approach

I will use this chapter to present traditions and authors who contextualize and provide justification for the use of the two methodologies of Scholarly Personal Narrative (SPN) and Phenomenology. The methodologies complement one another and allow for complex stories to be showcased. I agree with Barone & Eisner (2012), who wrote: “matters of meaning are shaped – that is, enhanced and constrained – by the tools we use. When those tools limit what is expressible or representational, a certain price is paid for the neglect of what has been omitted” (p. 1).

Mixed method can be a distinct research approach that adds complexity and depth to the findings of a study and produce pragmatic solutions to real-life problems (Harper, 2011; Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). One of my goals with this dissertation was to develop a methodological approach in which the students’ identities and my identity were visible to the reader (Probert, 2006), in hopes that the “multiple, diverse methods may corroborate findings to increase confidence in the inferences drawn from them” (Betzner, 2008, p. 3). This study employed a mixed method technique called triangulation. Triangulation uses different but complementary data collected on the same topic. The two phases of the study are often conducted concurrently, with the findings being integrated at the interpretation stage of the inquiry (Maramba & Museus, 2011).

A mixed-method approach fit my plan to consider the data in light of the Queer of Color Critique, a social critique and theory previously identified by scholars in fields other than education (see Chapter 4 for further discussion of the Queer of Color Critique).

DeBlaere, Brewster, Sarkees & Moradi (2010) encouraged researchers to “integrate divergent lines of scholarship to articulate novel hypotheses about LGB people of color” (p. 338). The Queer of Color Critique may offer a lens through which to view campus climate in order to create climates that are affirming to queer people of color. It must be noted that all literature on mixed-method refers to the combination of qualitative and quantitative research (Griffin & Museus, 2011), however the body of knowledge around mixed method research has been offered, particularly in the field of education, for projects that test or evaluate theory (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). Testing the applicability of the Queer of Color Critique is an aim of this dissertation.

The two methodological philosophies are creative and expansive enough for the two studies to be conducted parallel with one another and then joined in the implications and analysis of the data. Nash and Bradley (2011) wrote that SPN is “as much an art as it is a craft, so the artist needs a great deal of leeway in the act of the creation” (p. 14). It fits my goal of presenting my researcher voice along with the voices of the study participants because it is “a methodology that allows for the ‘subjective I’ of the writer to share the centrality of the research along with the ‘objective they’ of more traditional forms of scholarship” (p. 14). Similarly, phenomenological researchers have been reluctant to “prescribe techniques” for fear of doing the unique phenomena itself an injustice by forcing it to fit a standard formula method (Groenewald, 2004, p. 6). Some researchers have even described phenomenology as a movement with “richness and diversity” (Gearing, 2004, p. 1432), approachable in many ways (Caelli, 2001; Probert, 2006), so long as researchers are mindful of their study’s “broader philosophical assumptions” (Creswell, 2007, p. 62). This chapter discusses the broader qualitative assumptions of my study.

Phenomenology

This study of queer students of color's perceptions of campus climate utilized psychological or transcendental phenomenology. Phenomenology, "the science of phenomena," seeks to apply a scientific method to decipher the essence of a phenomenon embedded in human stories (Sanders, 1982). The method seeks to find "that which shows itself in itself" (Seigfried, 1976, p. 251); as opposed to simply accepting that which shows itself in human consciousness, which would be the definition of subjectivity. The actual phenomenon under study in phenomenology – the thing itself – can range from an event, psychological process, or concept (e.g. birthing, grieving, mentoring). Any project begins with a researcher having an "abiding concern," (Creswell, 2007, p. 59) or strong interest in the human experience of a phenomenon. The researcher's role is to provide description of multiple subjects' lived experiences.

Phenomenology, then, allows me to examine a concept, campus climate, through the lens of a specific human population. I must be particularly vigilant, however, given the identities that I share with my study participants, not to take for granted any knowledge I have. Phenomenology's methods require bracketing the experience of the research participants' from that of my own. Employing proper bracketing allows me to approach the subject "openly, attentively and regularly, to break down the habitual mental patterns that cause us to take our everyday world for granted" (Cameron, 2005, p. 177).

A positivistic reading of phenomenology may lead one to believe the two methods are incompatible. Robert Nash, the leading authority on SPN, juxtaposed SPN's subjective constructionist view against phenomenology's requirement of holding the researcher's subjectivity in abeyance. He called the concept of bracketing "philosophically unintelligible to SPN

writers,” (personal email communication). I am not as convinced the differences are insurmountable because they share two important values. The first philosophical assumption both methodologies share is that human narratives or stories are sacrosanct. Phenomenology, for instance, “glories in the concreteness of person-world relations and accords lived experience, with all its indeterminacy and ambiguity, primacy over the known” (Finlay, 2009, p. 6). Second, they involve deep introspection by all members of the research process, including the researcher. As a result of that self-exploration, a new reality is constructed. Phenomenology is “responsive to both the phenomenon and the subjective interconnection between the researcher and the researched” (Finlay, 2009, p. 7). Similarly, Nash (2004) praised the researcher who acknowledges she is “always as much the subject as the subjects she studies” (p. 49).

Scholarly Personal Narrative

SPN begins with the researcher as its unit of analysis. Many qualitative scholars who attempt an autobiographical or reflexive turn, do so self-consciously (MacBeth, 2001; Shollock, 2007). For example, Rosaldo (1989), an ethnographer, wrote:

Introducing myself into this account requires a certain hesitation . . . If classic ethnography’s vice was the slippage from the ideal of detachment to actual indifference, that of present-day reflexivity is the tendency for the self-absorbed Self to lose sight altogether of the culturally different Other. Despite the risks involved, as the ethnographer I must enter the discussion at this point to elucidate certain issues of method. (p. 7)

Although I have no such hesitation, I thank Rosaldo and other scholars who had the audacity, however defensively, to “enter the discussion.” I enter using “positional reflexivity,” or that which “takes up the analysts’ (uncertain) position and positioning in the world he or she studies and is often expressed with a vigilance for unseen, privileged, or, worse, exploitative relationships between analyst and the world” (MacBeth, 2001, p. 38). I seek to bridge the research methodologies of phenomenology and SPN to present the experience of queer college students of color navigating college campus climate.

SPN, a narrative methodology pioneered by Nash (2004), is presently gaining credibility and popularity within pockets of the social science disciplines. Bradley (2009) wrote, “When asked the question, ‘Exactly what is scholarly personal narrative?’ I often find myself at a loss for words because this developing methodology is not easy to explain.” SPN is advanced, expanded and progressed each time a graduate student or scholar applies it to a given project. I acknowledge the desire to contribute to the evolving realization of SPN’s applicability and versatility. However, all SPNs remain faithful to certain distinguishing principles. Bradley (2009) stressed the concept of universalizable as one of those principles. While qualitative is limited in its scope and seeks to offer insight without being generalizable, and quantitative is concerned with generating data that can be replicated and retested, SPN’s chief aim is to achieve universality via specificity. SPN uses the author’s personal narrative to demonstrate or reflect the human experience (Nash, 2004).

SPN writing has been used by many doctoral students (for example Prue, 2004) and professors (for example, Cohen, 2005) in the social services and helping

professions. It is a tool that bridges rigid and dry professionalism with the vulnerability and empathy of human storytelling. Cohen (2005) wrote, “working on SPN’s, I have witnessed the often small, still voices of personal history and lived experience become powerful affirmations of self, with recognition that self-exploration and conscious awareness of being connected to our own lived experiences can have life lessons for us all” (p. 329)

As the previous quote from Rosaldo (1989) demonstrated, both qualitative and SPN have faced the same criticism of being invalid. Some have questioned whether SPN ought to be considered a valid form of inquiry or just one of many qualitative traditions (Chang, 2008). At the same time, Denzin (2010) believed there is a debate taking place among qualitative researchers over validity itself. Innovative forms of qualitative inquiry that emphasize narrative are criticized by traditionalists as scholarship but not research, a familiar critique of SPN. Denzin wrote: “There are those who would marginalize and politicize the postmodern, poststructural versions of qualitative research, equating it with political correctness, with radical relativism, narratives of the self, and arm-chair commentary” (Denzin, 2010, p. 11).

SPN and Autoethnography

Researchers such as Chang (2008) have asserted that SPN represents one of those postmodern turns in research methodology. At least, SPN can be considered a stream of qualitative inquiry called autoethnography; at most, it is a methodology that has evolved within the creative and innovative space opened up by the debates taking place. Nash (2004) himself insists SPN is wholly its own. Referring to the changes taking place among qualitative methods, he wrote: “These initiatives are a necessary precondition for recognizing the unavoi-

ble role that the ethnographer's *self* plays in interviewing, analyzing and generalizing...

What I am advocating, however, takes qualitative research one major step forward" (p. 18).

Ultimately, where to place SPN among the constellation of research methodologies may be moot. Again, Denzin (2010):

In the social sciences today there is no longer a God's eye view that guarantees absolute methodological certainty. All inquiry reflects the standpoint of the inquirer. All observation is theory-laden. There is no possibility of theory- or value-free knowledge. The days of naive realism and naive positivism are over. The criteria for evaluating research are now relative. (p. 24)

This is not to say that efforts to evaluate research must be rejected out of hand or that one can use methodologies haphazardly. The point is that there must be room for communities of research to develop their own rigorous consistency and systems of logic and then be measured by those systems. SPN has developed its own standards. Nash (2004) wrote:

SPN scholarship is controversial, at least in part, because it dares to redefine the idea of "rigor" to fit its own set of truth criteria. Some examples of these criteria are trustworthiness, honesty, plausibility, situatedness, interpretive self-consciousness, introspectiveness/self-reflection, and universalizability. (p. 5)

Setting aside the debate of whether or not to classify SPN as autoethnography, the two forms of research are perfectly suited for one another. Denzin (2010) and Chang (2008) consider autoethnography a part of an emerging performance-oriented qualitative research. The use of the term "performance" may evoke in some readers an image of rows of seats and a stage, and there are indeed methods of qualitative research that present findings in such a dramatic fashion. However, I interpret it as performance of self. In other words, the way the

researcher positions or represents himself or herself in the writing and presentation of the data is a kind of performance (Butler, 1990; Shollock, 2007). Denzin wrote when he teaches students in his qualitative research seminar, the “focus is on the production of personal performance narratives... grounded in epiphany, or turning point personal experiences” (p. 58). He added that the personal experiences, what he calls the “mystory,” are connected to a moment of heightened consciousness. Nash (2004) wrote about SPN: “Your own life tells a story (or a series of stories) that, when narrated well, can deliver to your readers, those delicious aha! moments of self and social insight” (p. 24). Denzin provided the three “levels of discourse” contained in every mystory. It must contain the “personal (autobiography), popular (community stories, oral history or popular culture), [and] expert (disciplines of knowledge)” (p. 59). Denzin’s “personal” level of discourse can be mapped without difficulty onto Nash’s element of “personal.” Graft “popular” to “narrative”; “expert” to “scholarly,” and the common theoretical underpinnings to bridge the two methodological traditions becomes clear.

SPN as Bracket

For this dissertation, SPN provided a critical vessel to bracket the subject under study from my experiences. My story of being a gay male college student of color is presented to the reader in different sections than the student perceptions, adding both breadth and depth to the study. Bracketing allows the researcher to explicitly state her experience within the study in an effort to prevent it from bleeding over into the study participants’ (Creswell, 2007). It is a fundamental phenomenological practice that reconciles the researcher’s identity with that of the subject. When the researcher’s presuppositions are explicit and clear, the research project can be entered with the researcher’s assumptions held in abeyance (Moustakas, 1994).

In their phenomenological study of the experience of students spiritual struggles, Rockenbach, Walker & Luzader (2012) described struggling and “wrestling with the tension” (p. 56) between bracketing their study from themselves as qualitative researchers. In its purest form, they said, bracketing is not far removed from the positivist notion of an objective reality and disinterested observers. The methodology seems to say on the one hand that human consciousness is the best – perhaps the only way – to understand an event. On the other hand, “to suggest that researchers can and should make meaning of qualitative data while setting aside their own experiences and lenses seems to contradict the notion within phenomenology that subject/object dualities are erroneous” (p. 56). They resolved that bracketing actually requires “heightened consciousness of the potential implications of our identities and experiences for the interpretations we constructed together with our participants” (p. 56). They described each member of the researcher team’s personal connection to the topic at length. Similarly, my SPN indulges my personal investment in the subject.

The varying philosophical influences that have come to bear on phenomenology have in fact resulted in a proliferation of different bracketing techniques and strategies (Gearing, 2004). The variety of bracketing approaches range from treating it as a discrete step in the research process to conceptualizing it as an ongoing process that permeates the research (Finlay, 2009; Gearing, 2004). The following notable examples are of qualitative researchers who, like me, shared many identities with their study participants and sought innovative bracketing methods by borrowing from other qualitative traditions:

- Davis, Dias-Bowie, Greenberg, Klukken, Pollio, Thomas and Thompson (2004) conducted an interview of the primary researcher, and discussed narra-

tive overlaps with the Black undergraduate participants in their phenomenological study.

- McKenna (2004) employed what he called a “multimodal methodology” (p. 17) to study the experiences of Australian gay and lesbian educators. Each chapter of his dissertation was a narrative that he had constructed based upon data gathered through phenomenological interviews. One of the chapters was his own narrative, provided in order to “foreshadow the bias in my theoretical position” (p.12).
- Theoharis (2007) borrowed from auto-ethnographic methods to include his own story among the sample of principals he interviewed and analyzed in a study of social justice practices in education.
- Probert (2006) adopted feminist philosophies that allowed her to center her own experience in her phenomenological study due to the expertise she brought to bear on the study topic of female bodybuilders. (Likewise, Critical Race Theory and Queer Theory influence my decision to share my own story of campus climate.)

Bracketing will help me to elicit and accurately capture the voices of the students I interview. It will further serve the SPN methodology by providing scaffolding for “we-search,” which is a concept in SPN that requires the researcher to lift his or her individual “I” or “me” experience to a larger “we” experience that can be universalized (Nash & Bradley, 2011).

I find this turn from “me” to “we” to be a crucial goal that is also supported by bracketing. “The researcher needs to avoid preoccupation with their own emotions and experience if the research is not to be pulled in unfortunate directions which privilege the researcher

over the participant” (Finlay, p. 13). I believe privilege lives in unspoken, assumed, unearned positions of power. “As an interviewer I must consider how I am differently positioned and privileged in society than some of my co-participants in their interviews” (McKenna, 2004, p. 12). My hope in using SPN is to avoid as much as possible assuming “epistemological authority” (Finlay, p. 15) on the topic by privileging my own preconceptions and expectations.

Phenomenology is not so different than all science; its first goal is to isolate a thing in order to establish a bounded and decipherable definition and set of characteristics for the thing. But if that were the primary goal, there would be no need for a methodology wholly different and separate. If two individuals can have vastly different experiences of a thing, then there must be something else other than the “thing itself in itself” that confounds and eludes objective description. Description of that something else is what makes phenomenology “special and distinctive” (Seigfried, 1976, p. 252). Once she has established the objective existence of a thing, the phenomenologist’s job is to capture the myriad of proximal, hidden meanings of the thing (Seigfried, 1976, p. 252) through description of the collective stories and general experience of others. The acknowledgement that the best way to understand the multiplicity of phenomena is through the human experience is what ultimately makes phenomenology fitting to be used alongside SPN.

Both methods involve deep introspective interrogation by all members of the research process, including the researcher, in order to gather the data. Finlay (2009) discussed what she called “relational phenomenology,” in which “researcher and coresearcher [sic] intermingle,” (p. 13) and “data is seen to emerge out of the researcher-coresearcher [sic] relationship, and is understood to be co-created in the embodied dialogical encounter” (p. 13). This dissertation engages my stories and those of my study’s participants in just that sort of dia-

logue.

Vallack (2010) introduced the category of subtextual phenomenology, derived from the writings of Husserl. Subtextual phenomenology relies on the notion of first-person research. The researcher inquires into his/her own behavior and assumptions, generating deeply subjective data before seeking “transcendental, intersubjective archetypes inherent in that data, which make that research relevant to others, socially and probably also interculturally” (Vallack, 2010, p. 107). Vallack blamed subtextual phenomenology’s low popularity on a fundamentally flawed misrepresentation of Husserl’s original use, which he claimed was a way of gaining a transcendental knowledge of the self, rather than knowledge of others. Misunderstanding Husserl is frequently cited as a reason (Caelli, 2000, Norlyk & Harder, 2010) for the proliferation of phenomenological approaches (Caelli, 2001; Finlay, 2009; Gearing, 2004). Nevertheless, Vallack serves as an example of the limits to which “a new generation of phenomenologists” are taking the methodology (Caelli, 2000).

Conclusion

In an article discussing the virtues of multiple-method research design, Griffin and Museus (2011) wrote that “LGBT racial minority students’ perceptions of the campus climate” (p. 20) was one of several topics best suited for the approach. This dissertation responds directly their recommendation, combining phenomenology and SPN. If the human experience can be imagined as a forest, phenomenology insists that forests cannot be understood without isolating each tree; SPN teaches that one can gain an understanding of the forest by focusing on a single tree. Consequently, each methodology, or research philosophy, has its own methods through which to achieve its goal. When ought one use binoculars and when a magnifying glass, is a question I will explore in the Methods chapter.



SPN: Queer Voices of Color In Literature

I spent the majority of my undergraduate years searching. I wandered, lost in cold darkness, cloaking myself in one identity or another at any given time but neither single identity kept me warm. In those times when I wasn't with Char or James, I had to find other people like me to help me to articulate my realities or better yet, to imagine the possibilities of a different one. Those people came far and few between and that lack of actual queer people of color peers or role models made for a chilly campus climate. The visibility and number of people representing diverse populations, (like people of color broadly or queer people of color specifically) is what Hurtado et al. referred to as the structural dimension of campus climate.^{xx}

I am a writer, so in the absence of a visible structural campus climate, the highest number of queer people of color I found were in the library. I voraciously read the works of poets such as Langston Hughes and Audre Lord; intellectuals such as Cherrie Morega and Gloria Anzaldua; and writer scholars such as E. Lynne Harris and Kenji Yoshino. These queer authors of color brought me great comfort and affirmation.

Moreover, for me, writing my story and writing about others like me is has always felt as serious as life itself and I have found that sentiment echoed by other queer writers of color. Aguilar-San Juan wrote that, for her and many other Asian lesbians, the very existence of Asian lesbian poetry in print was "better proof of our existence than our own flesh and blood could ever be."^{xxi} Brant also articulated the connection when speaking about a Native American lesbian writers like herself, who literally "writes her existence."^{xxii}

In my research on campus climate, I have come across stories of a few queer authors of color that show how their educational experience was influenced by their campus climate

perceptions. These stories and lessons, collectively, represent to me the possibility of a common experience of queer people of color. Whether these queer authors' accounts of their experience in college or other school environments appear in a memoir, research study, or policy manifesto, I find myself returning to these brief passages the same way I did in college.

*A unique perspective and way of knowing is hidden in those short passages. They suggest the existence of a uniquely queer of color educational experience. Just as bell hooks pointed out in her essay, *An aesthetic of Blackness: Strange and oppositional*, art has always served an intrinsically political function.^{xxiii} In the absence of scholarship, the artistic contribution of queer authors of color teaches invaluable lessons about the queer of color experience. Collins wrote: "subordinate groups have long had to use alternative ways to create an independent consciousness and to rearticulate it through specialists validated by the oppressed themselves."^{xxiv}*

*Though the subject matter of their respective books varies widely, I have gleaned certain themes from the work of Kenji Yoshino and E. Lynn Harris. Kenji Yoshino, the gay son of Japanese immigrants, wrote about his college experience for his book, *Covering: The hidden assault on our civil rights*. E. Lynn Harris, who attended college a generation before Yoshino, also provided instructive reflections on his experience coming to terms with his sexual orientation as a Black man during his college years in his memoir, *What becomes of the brokenhearted*. Despite the fact that Harris and Yoshino have different racial backgrounds and attended college years apart, their accounts of how they made meaning from the college environment helped provide a broader context into which my own experience fits. It was very affirming and familiar to see myself reflected in their experiences. And they sustain my belief that somewhere within our subjective experiences lie valuable lessons about the ways queer*

students of color perceive climate.

Many key formative thoughts and attitudes that queer students of color hold about themselves and their place in society develop in formal educational settings. Yoshino, for example, traced his early feelings of alienation and otherness -- both along racial and sexual lines -- to the soccer fields at his boarding school. He discussed how, in an effort to reinvent himself into a person his peers would accept, he excelled academically in school, competing in the debate team, immersing himself in research:

... yet physically I remained a small dark thing altogether. I remember thinking during a soccer practice that I must have had a lot of natural muscle once, to feel so punished as I watched those boys scissor the air with their blond high school legs. Their bodies hummed to a frequency not my own as balls sailed fluently into nets. I sensed these bodies knew other bodies, as I knew calculus or Shakespeare. That knowledge flaunted itself in the lilt of small hairs off their necks.^{xxv}

The sensuality of this passage is undeniable and yet there is more than a sexual fascination in his scrutiny of the boys' legs and blond hairs. There is also a racial fascination, suggested by his description of himself as "dark" and the boys as "blonde." His eroticization of the boys is inextricable from their race. As he watched the other boys' prowess on the soccer field, their talent not only became inscribed with race but so did his sexual attraction. The truth was his academic achievement was only a cover for the feelings of inadequacy he felt from being different than his peers. The unconscious message he carried away from watching those boys was that White and straight was the key to success. He acknowledged as much later: "I would not have been able to say I was gay and these others were straight. I

knew only I was asked not to be myself, and that to fail to meet that demand was to make myself illegible, my future unimaginable. ^{xxxvi}

This example is remarkable because no words needed to be exchanged in order for him to learn the lesson. It underscores the role of the psychological climate and environment. What I see in this passage is not that Yoshino needed to be a better soccer player, but that he needed an outlet to voice his conflicted identity and to counter the unhealthy and damaging truths he was internalizing.

I recognize myself in Yoshino's efforts to have his academic excellence and leadership to provide the social capital his race did not. Like him, I learned quickly that there were spaces I could not gain access to without compromising one identity over the other. For me, I minimized racial discussions among the gay community; and tried not to be flamboyant with people of color.

Yoshino exercised the most identity management in his professional preparation. He chose to pursue a career that would value his racial identity but one in which his homosexuality would need to remain cloaked. The social training he received on how to manage the visibility of his identities was law school. He wrote, "I decided on law school in part because I had accepted my gay identity. A gay poet is vulnerable in profession as well as person. I refused that level of exposure. Law school promised to arm me with a new language, a language I did not expect to be elegant or moving but that I expected to be more potent, more able to protect me." ^{xxxvii} I have personally witnessed this bargain many times since – in myself and others – compensation for standing out along one dimension by assimilating to others.

This bargain is unacceptable. I envision an educational system that offers strategies to expand and showcase the diversity and expression of human life rather than ones to con-

ceal it. One strategy to showcase that diversity is by providing role models. Role models are crucial elements of the environment queer students of color use to base their perceptions of campus of climate. Faculty who choose to include issues of identity and sexualities in their research or course content are rewarded when queer students seek them out. Though Yoshino attended law school in order to learn ways to quiet his gay identity, he encountered a visiting professor at Yale who taught a course with gay content. Yoshino felt compelled not only to meet this man, but to come out to him. He wrote of the transformative experience of telling his professor he was gay: “Nothing has convinced me of the power of words as much as the experience of coming out the first few times - one ends the sentence a different person.”^{xxviii}

In the same way that being a part of an LGBT group in college opened my eyes to the possibilities of being gay and normal and allowed me to finally come out, Yoshino gained confidence and encouragement from a successful gay law professor who taught a course in his law school. Later, Yoshino wrote that the experience of coming out to the professor taught him the liberating power of coming out because “one ends the sentence a different person” than they were when they opened their mouths.^{xxix} Incidentally, from the other perspective, Pollack, an out lesbian college professor, wrote that a student coming out to a professor is “an occasion to celebrate”^{xxx}. She taught an archeology course one year in which most of her students turned out to be gay and lesbian. But, she wrote, “none of them was particularly interested in archeology, by the way. They were just hungry for a role model.”^{xxxi}

One does not need to be a gay student to realize that the very presence of LGBT staff inspires, challenges, and allows us all to be different people. However, despite the liberating potential of their presence, it is no mystery why the majority of LGBT professionals keep low

profiles.^{xxxii} They face pressure from within their own ranks. Again, Yoshino's experience is demonstrative. He reports multiple times he was confronted by fellow faculty who told him that in order to gain tenure, his identity must be separate from his scholarship. They're message: "Be openly gay, if you want. But don't flaunt."^{xxxiii} Staff and faculty of color would tell similar stories of being discouraged from entering the realm of ethnic studies, even when their cultural or ethnic authority may improve their scholarship. These pressures offer a unique double prison for LGBT scholars or professionals of color^{xxxiv}.

Faculty are not the only educational professionals who face this double bind. Researchers such as Croteau and Lark^{xxxv} and Rhoads^{xxxvi} stressed the importance of student affairs departments at colleges to recruit and retain out, visible staff members. Consider the fate of an LGBT person of color who works in the functional area of LGBT Student Affairs. The National Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals have self-studies that indicate the majority of the relative small number of full-time directors of university or college LGBT Resources offices represent a diversity of sexual and gender identities from gay, lesbian, bi and transgender. If they share anything, it is that they are White (82%) and middle aged (average of 38 years old)^{xxxvii}. Conversely, most of the assistant directors are young (average of 27 years old) people of color (50%).^{xxxviii} Consequently, LGBT professionals of color faced what Friskopp and Silverstein called the "lavender ceiling," meaning the inevitable career threshold that LGBT people may reach without having to conceal or tone down their sexual orientation.^{xxxix} For many, their only hope of becoming director is to wait for their supervisor to be promoted (which is unlikely, given the lavender ceiling) or retire. Invisible faculty and tokenized professional staff: that is the picture LGBT college stu-

dents of color see when they look to the ranks of faculty and staff who reflect all of their identities.

That certainly was the picture Yoshino was met with when he first started college at Harvard. He observed that the LGBTQ people and people of color among the faculty were scaling back or downplaying their behaviors or markers that distinguished themselves from their White peers. He would later describe this phenomenon as “covering.” The sad truth is that “covering” is inextricable to many queer students of color’s experience.

Covering is a phenomenon that is sometimes difficult to distinguish from a single person’s individual choices. However, consider Yoshino’s experience, alongside those of Harris and my own, and a picture will emerge of individuals who are locked into a narrow path of options shaped by their educational environment. Our perceptions create our choices we make. Take, for example, E. Lynn Harris, who attended college some twenty years before Yoshino. Harris’ reflections of college provide vivid descriptions of the intersections between race and sexual orientation. While Yoshino focused on the pressures to conform to the straight world and the White world respectively, Harris delved into pressures he felt to conform specifically to the Black straight world. (The different ways the two men negotiated their racial and sexual orientation put them at distinct points along a spectrum of queer college student of color experiences.)

Despite the fact that Harris attended college in the ‘60s, it is striking how many aspects still resonate with Yoshino’s and mine. For example, he described the isolation of being on a predominantly White campus. When he saw another person of color his “heart skipped a beat of joy.”^{xxl} Black students made up 2% of the student body at the University of Arkansas at the time, he said. Fortunately, with such small numbers, there was opportunity to establish

and maintain a strong sense of family. Unfortunately, there were strong consequences for those who strayed too far from the norms. For Harris, all it took was a particular affinity to dancing for rumors to start spreading that he may be a “punk.” At the time not even he was certain about his sexual orientation so he was hurt by the rumors. He kept the rumors at bay by being seen on dates with high-profile women.

I recognize the hyper vigilance that his experience reflects. I too had policed my own actions, depending on the particular group I was talking to or hanging out with. I was afraid of losing the refuge that the community of color offered, particularly after that encounter in the hallway of the student center with Derrick, Kwame and Eddie. At times it felt as though there were a myriad of unspoken rules and codes. As Harris said, “I was learning more than academics at the U of A. I was fine-tuning my skills of becoming a chameleon.”^{xli}

The image of a chameleon seems a fitting metaphor. Not only does the chameleon’s ability to change color invoke the colorful rainbow that the LGBTQ community uses as its symbol but the ability to camouflage oneself is reminiscent of the discussion of the concept of disidentification that began this SPN. Both are extraordinary evolutionary adaptations - except when one is changing so frequently they can no longer recall their own color. I want to celebrate both the fact that we queer people of color are capable of great feats of survival and resiliency but also yearn for a world in which those feats need not be performed.



CHAPTER IV: Theoretical Framework

Introduction

“Without community there is no liberation...” (Lorde, 1981, p. 99)

The quote cited above from queer feminist of color, Audre Lorde, has become a personal slogan of mine. Her words eloquently encapsulate the purposeful act at work within my research, particularly the mixed-method approach that produced two sets of data: the experience of the queer college students of color I interviewed and my personal recollections of making meaning of my identity as an undergraduate. Through the dialogic exchange between the individual and community data sources (Haritaworn, 2008), I believed a liberatory critical consciousness would emerge (Freire, 2007).

I am interested in understanding the systems of knowledge that college students access in order to navigate the campus environment. Perhaps the voices of the students can substantiate a queer of color epistemology, developed out of resistance to oppression, like Black thought (Parker & Stovell, 2004) or Black Women’s standpoint (Collins, 1989). I owe it to the study participants to investigate whether a queer of color standpoint can offer a critical lens through which to view campus climate and educational settings. Dillard (2006) wrote of research as a responsibility. She wrote:

Alternative epistemological truths are *required* if educational researchers and leaders are to be truly responsible, asking for new ways of looking into the reality of others that opens our own lives to view – and that makes us accountable to the people, interests, and needs of whom we study. (Dillard, 2006, p. 2)

The minority status of queer college students of color places them outside of the “normal,” student experience. Consequently, common models or lenses of analyzing educational concepts, such as campus climate, necessarily distort or render their experience invisible. Oppositional or critical stances toward the educational process are the only appropriate method to disrupt the status quo. Rather than casting queer students of color as lost, dismissed, or relegated to the margins by virtue of being at the intersection of two systems of oppression, a queer of color theoretical framework would cast them as resilient agents with multiple intelligences that they employ to reconcile hostility and overcome adversity. Such a shift in language goes beyond a semantic or rhetorical turn of phrase, it is a necessary response to the mundane forces such as heterosexism and racism that are “embedded in the simple psychological decision-making rules that we use to make inferences and draw conclusions about groups” (Parker & Stovell, 2004, p. 173). Keeping a critical theoretical framework in the forefront of my mind will ensure that this study remains self-reflective in my research methods and intersectional in my analysis.

In this chapter I begin with a broad discussion of definitions and controversies that govern critical theory and critical pedagogy in education. I move on to discussions of the contributions of Critical Race Theory, Queer Theory and feminist critiques, to this study. Finally, I culminate in introducing a family of critical theories, including Queer Race Pedagogy and Queer of Color Critique, that engage the dual, intersectional identities (and philosophical standpoints) of sexual orientation and race.

Critical Theories of Education

Critical theories are those that have “a commitment to social transformation with subordinated and marginalised [sic] groups” (McLaren, 2007, p. 162). Butler (2009) credits the German philosopher Immanuel Kant for the origin of the term critique or critical. She presented at least six different ways Kant defined critique, most of them having to do with an interrogation of claims of legitimacy, or “a public means for adjudicating knowledge claims” (p. 777). Butler later offers an additional definition that captures the project in which I am engaged. Critique is “a translation of texts that emerged from a divergent political temporality” (p. 783). Queer college students embody that divergent political temporality and their narratives are the texts I seek to translate.

I believe education can and must be a mutually engaging, transformative experience and critical theories and pedagogy ensure that when knowledge and action meet, we seize the opportunity, no matter our role. In an essay about the function of Critical Race Theory in education, Parker and Stovell (2004) recognized the inevitable convergence of theory with action when he as the professor (practitioners) and his graduate students (researchers) shared so much experience and identity with the subjects they were studying that they felt compelled to act. Parker and Stovell wrote:

As an instructor, a piece of me will argue, ‘students should come to class and be prepared to do the seminar work and assignments.’ But the Decatur incident created an ‘interest convergence’ in the graduate level seminar, as theory was linked to protest by [the graduate seminar’s students] challenging racism in school discipline policy and overall equity for African Americans. (Parker & Stovell, 2004, p. 168)

Parker could not just dryly think and write about critical theory; it could only be understood by engaging in it. Action is what turns critical theory into critical pedagogy.

Critical pedagogy actively employs education to develop a more socially just world (Breunig, 2005; Parker & Stovell, 2004). Whereas pedagogy may be commonly understood to refer specifically to classroom teaching processes and methods, critical pedagogy has been used to recast the entire schooling process in ways that focus teaching on “the development of a moral project for education as social transformation” (p. 109).

Despite Parker’s (Parker & Stovell, 2004) efforts, critical pedagogy still exists largely more as a theory of pedagogy. It informs educators about the principles that should govern their work but says little about how they might be practiced (Breunig, 2005). For example, how does one engage critical pedagogy if there is no act of racism going on down the street to protest or if you do not feel as much vested interest as Parker and his students did? In situations where critical theory compels one to fight but there is nothing to fight over, the professor may manufacture or pick one. Academics such as Jay & Graff (1995) and Eisner (2002) have criticized critical theorists as rebels without a cause; more interested in displaying the shortcomings of schooling than providing models toward which schools or educators should aspire. The theorists end up treating all problems of education with equal weight (Heilman, 2003).

Over two decades ago, Ellsworth (1989) captured the frustration of educators in the title of her provocative essay about the limitations of critical pedagogy: “Why doesn’t this feel Empowering?” She wrote that critical “liberatory” pedagogies (including some of those espoused by Friere) contain “repressive myths that perpetuate relations of domination” (Ellsworth 1989, p. 298). More recently, Bruenig (2005) lamented that critical pedagogy can

still result in a colorblind classroom, leaving instructors wondering how to avoid lending credence to “voices that express racism, sexism, or elitism” (p. 119). As a remedy, theorists have found it useful to modify or develop other critical theoretical frameworks that prioritize one particular oppression over another. In fact, as academics reach for the most pliable and appropriate analyses with which to enact social justice, we are witnessing a proliferation of critical theories (Heilman, 2003). These critiques contribute valuable tools that can be brought to bear in order to ensure research and education is grounded in pragmatic, real-life problems.

Critical Race Theory

Parker & Stovell (2004) offered Critical Race Theory (CRT) to achieve racial justice within a critical theoretical framework. Without the racial focus, they wrote, critical pedagogy can suffer from a “rigid dogmatic binary of positions within itself” (p. 169) that deconstructs hierarchies but ends up adopting a dangerous relativism. First envisioned in the legal field, CRT directs attention to the ways in which structural arrangements inhibit and disadvantage some groups, namely racial minorities, more than others in our society, namely Whites. The subjugation of minorities is so entrenched that concepts such as “normal” or “objective” in practice become cloaks for White supremacy (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Misawa described six principles that form the CRT framework:

- (a) Racism is entrenched and ordinary;
- (b) Material determinism—our system of White over color—serves important material and psychological purposes;
- (c) Race is socially constructed;
- (d) Different minority groups are racialized at different times depending on economic need...
- (e) Individuals do not have unitary iden-

tities (a notion known as intersectionality and anti-essentialism); (f) A unique voice of color that exists because of historical and current oppression can communicate stories to White people who are unlikely to know them. (Misawa, p. 29)

CRT influences this dissertation's choice of focusing on queer students of color as a population worth studying, and the choice of phenomenology and SPN to collect stories. Storytelling and casting counter narratives is a tool of CRT (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995, Parker & Lynn, 2002) since it is a common form of knowledge transmission among people of color (Delgado Bernal & Villalpando, 2002). Parker and Stovell (2004) acknowledged that Critical Race Theory can be faulted for not acknowledging the intersection of sexuality and gender issues with race as well as more global (rather than U.S.-centric) understandings of race and ethnicity. Consequently other researchers are pushing the expansion of CRT. Latino Critical Theory (LatCrit), for example, adds a more global perspective (Parker & Lynn, 2002; Treviño, Harris, & Wallace, 2008). Others turn to Queer Theory.

Queer Theory

The concept of "queer," has an ambiguous, even radical definition. It is used variously as a label of sexual identity and a theoretical space (Mayo, 2007; Plummer, 2005; Renn, 2010). Whenever it is used, however, it refers to an effort to blur and/or reconcile fixed positions along the spectrum of non-heterosexual sexual orientations, attractions, and gender expressions. Queer has also been extended to non-western or non-dominant cultural conceptions of sexuality and gender, such as the Native American two-spirit (Kumashiro, 2002; Walters, Evans-Campbell, Simoni, Ronquillo, & Bhuyan, 2006). In its most radical form, queer is a fluid conception referring to any and all non-conforming or deviant identities,

where deviant is defined as that which is not in power (Cohen, 1997). Queer then, would also refer to all non-state-sanctioned identities and expressions of heteronormativity (sex workers, immigrants, incarcerated individuals, women of color, etc.). The word queer offers not only an opportunity to capture a variety of marginalized identities but also to conceptually complicate the dualistic thinking that perpetuates the marginality of those identities (Plummer, 2005). “Queer embraces the provisional in its refusal to be pinioned by any one single definition” (Vicars, 2006, p. 22).

Queer Theory takes that resistance to definition even further. As a framework or standpoint, it is rooted in the postmodern literary deconstructionist tradition. Deconstructionist critique, often associated with Jacques Derrida, relentlessly collapses conceptual boundaries in order to expose the fact that concepts such as “normal” or “legitimate” are actually socially constructed and not as stable as they appear (Ruitenbergh, 2004). Queer Theory avoids the exclusivity that comes with stability (Mayo, 2007) and even challenges the idea of author/subject or researcher/subject (Adams & Jones, 2011; King, 1999). Dilley (1999) wrote that Queer Theory a) examines the lives and experiences of those considered non-heterosexual; b) juxtaposes those/experiences with lives/experiences considered normal and c) examines how/why those lives are considered outside of the norm. In addition, researchers using Queer Theory frequently employ novel, creative ways of representing the data (Dilley, 1999).

In this dissertation, Queer Theory supports a variety of methodological choices. It influences the treatment of queer students of color stories as data (Plummer, 2005; Sholock, 2007), the creative use of SPN and phenomenological data in one document, and the data analysis through the lens of the Queer of Color Critique.

Queer of Color

Queer Theory is in stark contrast with CRT because while Queer Theory seeks to abstract definitions, blur boundaries, and make categories fluid, CRT in fact insists on grounding issues in material, historical lived realities of racial minorities. Treviño, Harris, and Wallace (2008) go so far as to say CRT is less a theory as it is a movement, further underscoring CRT's hesitance to become too abstracted. Since issues of sexuality and race are "embedded in the ordinary texture of life yet tied to larger social imaginaries, institutions, and ideologies" (p. 92), a single approach is needed that engages the politics of both race and sexuality.

The Queer of Color Critique offers a creative space for the existence of multiple realities and interpretations because it retains "the openness that accompanies the utopian impulses of queer possibilities" (Davis, McGlotten, & Agard-Jones, 2009, p. 90). The critique has definite components that give it shape such as disidentification, oppositional consciousness and intersectionality. Still, it remains by nature "an emergent and ongoing project, one that continues to proliferate even as it resists neat categorization or institutionalization" (p. 90). The idea of destabilization and perpetual action or movement is central to the Queer of Color Critique. Roderick Ferguson (2004), named his book, *Aberrations in Black: Toward a Queer of Color Critique*. The word "toward" in the title deliberately invokes the tension of reaching to capture something that doesn't desire to be caught, defined, essentialized. The critique is pragmatic; only realized in the application.

Disidentification

Queer of Color critical theory introduces disidentification, a key concept that allows that "in flux" tension to exist and function as an integral part of an epistemological standpoint. Disidentification imbues actions with multiple subversive meanings (Ferguson, 2004).

Munoz (1995) described it as a form of mimicry of colonial power that simultaneously demonstrates a mastery of symbols from the colonizer's language and culture while also putting those symbols to use for purposes they were never intended. It has also been associated with Foucauldian and feminist philosophies about individual acts of resistance to power structures (Sawicki, 1991).

The act of disidentification changes the meaning. To disidentify is "to constantly find oneself thriving on sites where meaning does not properly 'line up'" (Munoz, 1995, p. 84). It brings "both similarities and differences simultaneously to bear on one's identity" (Medina, 2002, p. 664). The concept of disidentification is related to "signifying," a concept known to African American intellectuals. Gates (1983) said signifying was common in African American vernacular, literature, and artistic expression, such as jazz. He defined it as transforming the meaning of traditional concepts by "repeating a form and then inverting it through a process of variation," (p. 694). The concepts being transformed are frequently but not always oppressive and signifying is as much about play as it is subversion. Disidentification is also about aesthetic play. It influences the choice to employ the literary qualities of SPN in this dissertation. I am inspired by other queer researchers like Sanders III (1999), who adapted his doctoral dissertation into a stage play rather than follow a formula that was "dressed up in traditional chapter and section" (p. 542).

The idea of performance is central to disidentification. First articulated by the dower of Queer Theory, Judith Butler (1990), performativity was originally conceived to describe how individuals create genders and sexual identities through everyday behaviors. These actions, collectively, constitute identity. As such, an individual becomes – or more to the point, they represent – the identity that they perform. Performativity reveals that there is

nothing inherent about identity and individuals can step out of or transform identity by performing it differently than the dominant construction. Identity is always changing because every time an individual repeats an action, it is impossible to repeat it exactly the same. Each small iteration reflects the fluidity of the identity (Abes & Kasch, 2007).

The idea of dressing up and performance are in fact common ways one can observe queer people of color practicing disidentification (Ferguson, 2004). It's what allows drag queens, who glamorize and celebrate a highly and usually impossibly feminized construction of womanhood, to be a celebrated component of LGBT culture. Disidentification also allows many gay Black men to seek soloist or choral director positions in the chorus of Pentecostal churches. Despite the danger of perpetuating long-standing stereotypes, both performers create for themselves empowering and high-status spaces within constructs as deeply heterosexist as gender roles, or institutions as homophobic as the Black church.

Ettinger (1994) wrote, "the dominant discourse has never been home to people of color, queers, or those who combine racial and sexual otherness" (p. 53). The discourses, or the stories told about communities of color and the stories told about the LGBT community, are equally likely to not include space for queer people of color. Disidentification is how queer people of color and other minorities have been able to "claim an identity free of self-loathing [through] discursive strategies that reject and transform the categories produced by a hostile and hegemonic heterosexual discourse" (p. 53).

Returning to the example of the drag queen, the dominant culture commonly calls performers satirical or campy. However, where the dominant culture sees satire, some queer people of color call a survival strategy; one that has been around for years. Witness the strong ball scene and culture common in urban centers, dominated by poor gay and

transgender youth of color. Johnson (1998, 2003) called them sacred spaces where marginalized people could reclaim the dignity and high status the dominant culture denies them. Balls are essentially drag competitions in which communities of sexual- and gender-deviants compete for elaborate awards in multiple categories. The balls have been contributing to cultural practices and traditions since the early 1900s. Walker (2001) wrote about a debutante scene that emerged in Black Harlem and became a site where Whites could be found, “testing the new sexual ideologies of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries” (p. 58), suggesting a certain exploitive, cultural tourism for the White population.

But for queer people of color, they offer refuge. Langston Hughes, the African American gay poet, even attended the drag balls as a student in Columbia University. Presumably the campus climate at Columbia was such that Hughes needed to seek refuge in off campus spaces where disidentification flourished. Hughes wrote:

...it was fashionable for the intelligentsia and social leaders of both Harlem and the downtown area to occupy boxes at [the balls] and look down from above at the queerly assorted throng on the dancing floor, males in flowing gowns and feathered head-dresses and females in tuxedos and box-back suits. (Hughes, 1963, p. 273)

Today, the ball scene is a world unto itself, involving “houses” or large extended families of queers who adopt a shared surname and support one another. The houses provide an infrastructure for the performers, of supporters who provide the roles of gown makers, make-up artists and choreographers. The ball scene has seen limited but important popularity through the 1990 documentary, *Paris is Burning* (Livingston, 1990), which focused on male-bodied drag queens, and a 2005 documentary called *The Aggressives* (Peddle, 2005), which featured female-bodied drag competitors. Balls have developed their own language, rituals,

and traditions that reflect the complex lives and thinking of queer people of color. The idea of a “house,” for example, subverts the American dream of achieving full citizenship through the home and nuclear (heterosexual) family (Goldsby, 1993; Johnson, 2003). Additionally, each house has a “mother,” who is typically a male-bodied drag performer or transgendered person. The ball scene disidentifies the concept of house and home (Goldsby, 1993; Johnson, 2003). A wide variety of practices of sexual and gender expressions are embraced in the balls, as well as a wide array of aesthetic and artistic expression. Despite the passage of time, things may not have changed much since the era Walker (2001) wrote about when Whites would be voyeurs who used the balls as testing grounds to push social limits. Pop artist Madonna has been accused by some of poaching the “Vogue,” dance sensation in the 1990s, from a dance style indigenous to the ball scene. Critics have argued that White artists like Madonna and Jennie Livingston, the director of the film, *Paris is Burning*, effectively sanitized or neutered the subversive power of the balls and the queens who compete in them (Goldsby, 1993; Haritaworn, 2008; Harper, 1994). Nonetheless, I argue that the impulse to exploit is testament to the ball’s intrinsic value and the cultural perspective that produced it.

Johnson (2003) wrote at length about *Paris Is Burning*. Notably, he used the film and the ball scene to illustrate the existence of a specifically Black gay male or male-to-female culture, despite the fact that there were Latino houses and performers who played major roles in the cultural and linguistic production. However, I consider *Paris* alongside the documentary, *The Aggressives*, which features a group of Asian, Latino and Black lesbian and bisexual females whose gender presentation can best be described as masculine gender ambiguous (Keeling, 2009). Some of the film’s protagonists are depicted frequenting the ball scene,

therefore I feel comfortable locating the ball scene not the exclusive product of gay males but of queer people of color broadly.

The earlier reference to Johnson's (1998) use of the word "sacred" is deliberate. In another article, he described a subculture of gay Black men for whom the dancefloor at a gay club allows them to achieve the same fervor and transcendence they can't get at church (Johnson, 1998). Queer people of color's sense of spiritual and mysticism allow disidentification to exist as a valid form of negotiating the world. Native American queer identities are similarly infused with spiritualism (Walters, Evans-Campbell, Simoni, Ronquillo & Bhuyan, 2006).

In this dissertation I expect to find students who are experts at reading climate and disidentifying. I embrace the concept of disidentification because it interrupts the metanarrative of queer students of color – and queer people of color, more broadly -- as being too small in numbers or not possessing the economic, political, social capital to matter. Disidentification casts a counter narrative that queer students of color are powerful, creative and inventive agents in their own destiny rather than victims of circumstance.

Oppositional Consciousness

Alimahomed (2010) conducted a similar study to the one being undertaken in this dissertation. She combined her own ethnographic participant observations and interview data from Asian and Latina lesbians to study how queer women of color's experiences and identities are shaped by overlapping oppressions of racism and homophobia and sexism. She too, wanted to contribute to the theoretical base supporting a queer women of color standpoint. Alimahomed's work provides sound footing from which to build my exploration of a queer of color perspective.

Alimahomed (2010) focused on the fact that queer women of color face an invisibility created on the one hand by racism and sexism from forces within the LGBT community that privilege being White and male. And on the other hand by politics within their racial communities that police and regulate sexual conduct in order to preserve respectability and acceptance from the White majority. By their very existence and self-awareness, queer women of color, “disrupt dominant discourses of queerness and representations as authentic racial subjects.” Consequently, they employ a “differential mode of oppositional consciousness” that involves an ability to read cues and symbols and adopt the most effective choice of action for survival. Alimahomed called it “a flexible strategy that allows for the analysis of the particularity of domination in any given situation, thereby opening up the possibility to assume a position in response to that domination” (p. 154)

Walters, Evans-Campbell, Simoni, Ronquillo and Bhuyan (2006) also observed among queer native women the ability to occupy and shift among social positions within the same identity. “Two-Spirited” is the term that has grown out of that ability to shift. Many same-sex attracted Native Americans have found two-spirited to be more acceptable than the Western concept of gay or lesbian. The term is used to “reconnect with tribal traditions related to sexuality and gender identity ... to signal the fluidity and non-linearity of identity processes” (Walters, Evans-Campbell, Simoni, Ronquillo, & Bhuyan 2006, p. 127). The two-spirit identity shapes how the women in their study “position themselves in relation to other Natives as well as to White LGBT groups and individuals” (p. 127). As one of their study participants said, “I’m a multitude of things” (p. 132).

The women interviewed shared one interesting way that their two-spirit identity was created in direct opposition to the dominant culture. They embraced men into their communi-

ty specifically because they observed White lesbian communities rejecting men. Ultimately, however, the Natives in their study embraced the concept of an imagined community that is central to the Queer of Color Critique. “They were comfortable with having [two-spirit] be a placeholder, a momentary construct that is readily contested and negotiated within Native communities and two-spirit spaces” (p. 136).

Haritaworn (2008) advanced the concept of oppositional consciousness by linking the capacity to hold dual frameworks or systems of knowledge to a queer of color theoretical standpoint. He said queer people of color shift positionalities. The concept of positionality “urges us to reflect on where we stand, to define our speaking positions and how they relate to others, especially those whom we claim speak for” (§ 1.5). It is important for individuals (academics, researchers, theorists, community activists, policy makers, etc) to identify and stake out their social identities in order for others to evaluate their claims. To fail to acknowledge one’s position is by default to exercise hegemonic authority and power (Haritaworn, 2008).

Discussing one’s positionality is not always as simple or explicit as listing all of one’s social identities that bear on the discussion at hand. Indeed, clues of one’s positionality can and always have been found in analysis or deconstruction of discourse, language and methodology (Ferguson, 2004). Haritaworn (2008) criticized nationalistic impulses of “single-issue” (§ 2.3) identity-based movements (both conceptual thought movements and activist) to project and normalize a unified front. Even queer theorists like Judith Butler have used their privileged position in the queer movement to judge whether or not others belong under the umbrella. Specifically, Butler, did not discuss what in her White middle class non-transgender position gave her the ability to decree that certain transgender and transsexual

people of color were not queer enough. Her lack of a racial, gender, and class analysis was enough to reveal Queer Theory's hegemonic normalization of a particular White middle class position. Thus, Haritaworn pointed to Butler's failure as evidence of Queer Theory's limited ability to address the material realities of queer people of color, despite its claims as a standpoint to deconstruct such social categories. Notably, Cohen (1997) asserted this same point about the limits of the queer identity more than a decade before the queer of color standpoint emerged.

A queer of color standpoint allows for a situational deployment of different positionalities. It treats "knowledge as negotiated between researchers, subjects and epistemic communities" (Haritaworn, 2008, ¶ 2.4). Key to this ability to consider varying levels of privilege and power relationship is acknowledgement of an "imagined community," rather than an actual one. Haritaworn argued that queer people of color articulate a positionality that uses an organizing principle of coalition, allegiance, or solidarity. In *Queer of Color Critique*, the criteria for inclusion is how much an idea can complicate and further differentiate itself (Davis, McGlotten, & Agard-Jones, 2009).

I theorize that oppositional consciousness is the second basic component of the queer of color experience. It differs from disidentification, which is about mastering and then subverting the meanings of symbols from the inside out, through performance. In different discourses oppositional consciousness is also understood as "code-switching" or "visibility management." Code-switching is the ability to adjust both verbal and nonverbal communication such as language, dress and physical demeanor to accommodate different cultures or power relationships (Molinsky, 2007). When code-switching, "speakers may switch the form of their contributions in order to signal a change in situation, shifting relevance of social

roles, or alternate ways of understanding a conversational contribution” (Nilep, p. 17). Visibility management is a proficiency specifically observed among LGBT individuals of color to judge to what extent they reveal clues of their LGBT identity (Lasser & Tharinger, 2003). Yang (2008) also discussed the same concept, calling it “identity management.” Whatever it is called, oppositional consciousness refers to being multiculturally literate and possessing distinct knowledge systems that inform your identity.

The example of Butler using queer theory to judge the queerness of transfolk of color demonstrates how the queer of color critique may offer a remedy to resolve moments when strictly queer or racial perspectives or knowledge systems fall short. Other notable examples are offered by hegemonic racial constructions that result in a silence or denial of sexuality (Cohen, 1999). In her work establishing a Black feminist standpoint, Collins (1986) wrote in a footnote, “the thesis that those affected by multiple systems of domination will develop a sharper view of the interlocking nature of oppression is illustrated by the prominence of Black lesbian feminists among Black feminist thinkers” (p. S19).

By relegating the lesbian feminist’s “prominence,” to a footnote, Collins (1986) actually both legitimized a unique contribution made to the Black feminist thought by queer women of color and side-stepped directly discussing homophobia as one of those “multiple systems of domination.” Collins was not alone; White (2001) traced significant failures by Black feminists to treat homosexuality as a normal condition of Black people’s humanity. That lack of acknowledgement of the full expression of Blackness marks a clear limitation of the Black feminist standpoint to address the queer of color experience.

Although queer theory provides an alternative standpoint (Plummer, 2005), it may suffer from the same tendency to dismiss or deny the contributions of queer women of color.

Addressing what she saw as a debate among some scholars that set feminism against queer theory, Garber (2001) sought to “restore to their central place in the story the works of working-class/lesbians of color whose marginalization is foundational” (p.1) to both the construction of feminism and Queer Theory. Queer feminists of color such as Gloria Anzaldúa have influenced both Queer theory and ethnic/racial theories (see Anzaldúa, 1987; Anzaldúa & Morega, 1981).

Considering the presence of queer women of color in racial and Queer Theory, and the apparent distancing that has occurred in each tradition, I need not focus on identifying areas in which both people of color and queer sentiment overlap in order to demonstrate the Queer of Color Critique. Both are in fact infused with queer of color perspectives. For any given individual queer person of color, choosing one perspective to occupy over the other may simply be a matter of comfort or survival. The willful ability to contextually apply perspectives or ideologies is the essence of Oppositional Consciousness and a distinguishing factor of the queer of color standpoint.

Intersectionality

Queer of Color Critique as a standpoint is influenced by the knowledge systems represented by CRT and Queer Theory but it ultimately possesses different qualities and methods. In order to be applicable at all, the Queer of Color Critique must demonstrate intersectionality. That is not to say that the influencing theories are not intersectional, only that social science scholars have realized more and more that intersectionality is an imperative in order to be relevant (Torres, Jones & Renn, 2009).

Intersectionality is a principle popularized by the feminist movement, that emphasizes three important premises: a) there is no hierarchy or oppressions b) categories of difference

inherently involve both a process of normalization and exclusion c) categories of difference are contextual and complimentary (Hancock, 2007).

A paradigm that employs intersectionality treats no single form of oppression as a priori. For example, Collins (1989) wrote that Black women's lives are as much constrained by racial oppression as gender oppression. Therefore, any efforts to address the conditions caused by one form of oppression and not the other is in fact, oppressive. Is it racism or sexism that traps so many Black women in seemingly endless cycles of state welfare? Intersectionality dictates that as long as the possibility exists for either or both (or neither) to be the source of Black women's subjugation, any act of welfare reform must address both.

Needless to say, intersectionality reflects the natural tension caused by human tendencies and impulses to organize and shape the world. It is not easy to craft intersectional policy and practice (McCall, 2005; Torres, Jones & Renn, 2009). McCall introduced the idea of complexity as a condition that intersectionality addresses. Complexity not only refers to the difficulty to apply an intersectional approach but the fact that intersectionality is itself an attempt to retain the complexity of a subject and thus necessitates a complex response. She identified three distinct strategies intersectional theorists have developed that all attempt to "satisfy the demand for complexity and, as a result, face the need to manage complexity, if for no other reason than to attain intelligibility" (p. 1773).

The three approaches, anticategorical, intercategorical, and intracategorical, are distinguished by their treatment of categories as an effective way to capture the spectrum of human life. Anticategorical, often employed by Queer Theory, destabilizes and abandons categories. Social life is considered too irreducibly complex, making order a fiction and identities "impossible" (Rahman, 2010). Intercategorical, or categorical, involves the provisional

adoption of categories and employs them to highlight inequities between and among categories. Critical Race Theory, which has a vested interest in the category of race, employs inter-categorical intersectionality. It uses settled categorical definitions rather than questioning the settled categories. Finally, intracategorical problematizes categories (but doesn't actually challenge them per se) by focusing on the complexity within the categories (Hancock, 2007). McCall (2005) said it seeks to describe variance rather than compare.

Intracategorical best fits the intersectional aims of the Queer of Color Critique. Rather than deny the importance of categories, it focuses on “process by which they are produced, experienced, reproduced, and resisted in everyday life” (McCall, 2005, p. 1783). Because of the interest in “everyday life,” both intersectionality and Queer of Color Critique are theoretical approaches that are realized in practice. Hancock (2007) said, “Intersectionality, as a body of research, is concerned even in its theoretical voice about the practical implications of its arguments” (p. 71). The Queer of Color Critique is intersectional because it acknowledges the tenuous nature of identities by acknowledging its status as a temporary, conditional place marker while still affirming its existence every time a person of color disidentifies or shifts positions.

Ultimately the success or failure of any given intersectional endeavor relies on its subjects. Scholars such as Jordan-Zachery (2007) and Collins (1989) have suggested the use of dialogue with subjects of the study (or the target of the policy or program) to measure it. They endorse narrative and interview-based assessments that emphasize how it penetrates and applies to the subjects' lived experience. The Queer of Color Critique is rooted in that value because of its emphasis on reflecting the voice of queer people of color. It makes no

truth claims except those that can be legitimized by the standpoints that inform the Queer of Color Critique.

The Queer of Color Critique influences this project in many meaningful ways. Most significantly, this project attempts to achieve an intersectional representation and analysis of the experience of queer students of color. The issues raised in the literature review in Chapter 2, particularly around the identity development stages, are in many ways a demonstration of applying lenses and research methods that do not allow for intersectionality. This project and its research questions treat queer students of color as more than the sum of their parts. As Bowleg (2008) wrote, “Black and lesbian confers a unique experience, above and beyond being Black or lesbian” (p. 319).

Conclusion

This dissertation study responds to McCready (2010), who wrote, “educators must treat the lives and experiences of queer youth of color as ‘pedagogical’ in the sense that they have the potential to educate teachers, researchers, and policymakers ...” (p. 52). The Queer of Color Critique is a recent iteration of a tradition of critical theories, which interrogate whose lives and knowledge are considered legitimate by society. These theories problematize the educational process and guide pedagogical decisions to move away from didactic knowledge transmission toward knowledge creation and creative problem solving. Critical Race Theory and Queer Theory are rooted in a deep responsibility to transform social process to address issues encountered by marginalized or oppressed people. The Queer of Color continues that evolution by applying intersectional methods such as oppositional consciousness and disidentification. This dissertation attempts to apply principles from these theories into a

research study.

CHAPTER V: Research Methods

Phenomenology

Study Setting

This study was conducted at a small public research institution in the Northeast. The institution was chosen both for its unique racial characteristics as a predominantly White institution (PWI) and the high visibility of the LGBT community. The university is located in a city of approximately 40,000 people. White people comprise 93% of the city's population; 96% of the state population identifies as White (United States Census Bureau, 2010). The university has scored five out of five stars as LGBT-friendly on the Campus Pride college index (campuspride.org). These conditions impact the salience of the students' two group membership and create a laboratory environment in which to reflect on the meaning that salience has on their day-to-day life. Lasser and Tharinger (2003) wrote, "GLB youth cannot be understood outside of their surroundings, and their surroundings cannot be completely understood in isolation from them" (p. 241). Therefore I expected the study participants to be profoundly affected by the low visibility of people of color and high visibility of LGBTQA people and issues.

Participants

A total of fourteen interviews were conducted. I entered this study as a "full participant," allowing me status to act simultaneously as a functioning member of the community and investigator (Glesne, 2006). The study participants were undergraduate students who self-identified both as people of color and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and/or queer. Participants were solicited by email invitations sent through public university email distribution lists. I

took full advantage of as many campus listservs as possible, including lists for multicultural students, women, Greek Life members, graduate students, LGBTQA students, and on-campus residents.

Six students responded to the initial email appeal. After interviews had begun a few students expressed a desire to share their experience with other queer students of color who they knew. Consequently, snowball sampling methods yielded an additional four participants. The remaining four student interviews included in this study were originally conducted as a part of a preliminary pilot study. Some students provided their own preferred pseudonym; some students asked me to assign one to them.

Interviews

I gave students the opportunity to identify a location on or off campus in which they felt comfortable to hold the interviews. Six were conducted at the campus racial identity center. Three were held at the campus student union. One was held in the researcher's home. The length of the interviews ranged from 45-90 minutes.

The four interviews conducted in the pilot study (Sinath, Reggie, Linde, and Nadine) followed a standard question protocol. The remaining ten interviews were conducted with no standard protocol. The only questions I asked every study participant were demographic questions (i.e. age, gender, and major in college). Additionally, I prompted students to respond to broad questions such as "Please describe your racial identity," "Please describe your sexual orientation," and "Tell me a story about your experience as a queer student of color at this university." The most frequent question that was asked when conversations wandered or slowed was "What does that have to do with the campus climate for queer students of color at the university?"

The interviewees shared very diverse stories, focusing on one aspect of their experience or another. I used attentive listening practices and asked for clarification or probed for more detail until I was satisfied that I understood the students' points. At no point were the participants persuaded to follow a particular direction but rather gently encouraged to elaborate on themes that naturally emerged from the conversation.

Coding

I recorded all the interviews and typed verbatim transcripts for the data analysis. The analysis process consisted of the following steps:

1) I printed out and conducted a close reading of each transcript, keeping track of a variety of things that stood out. I underlined quotes and wrote observations down in the margins of the paper. The observations I tracked were:

- Content that directly addressed or responded to the study's research questions;
- familiar themes from the literature review conducted at a previous stage of the research study;
- familiar themes or points that resonated with researcher memos and notes I had been accumulating throughout the interview process;
- novel or unexpected ideas;
- general overall impressions or underlying subtexts that emerged from the study participants' story.

2) After conducting a close reading of each transcript, I re-read the transcripts, focusing on the handwritten notes and underlined passages. This time I focused on finding

any patterns or summarizing points that recurred in the notes. I typed these patterns that emerged and used them as the base for 32 preliminary data codes.

3) I created a table with the data codes and re-read the transcripts a third time, this time specifically underlining sentences or paragraphs that fit the data codes. Whenever I could not find a concise sentence to quote, I paraphrased or summarized the student's story.

4) I shared the preliminary data codes and an anonymized transcript with study participants for member checks and the study's advisors in order to conduct tests for inter-rater reliability. I gave the advisors three weeks to review the data and return their coded transcript to me. The study participants were only asked to review the codes and provide feedback on the extent to which they felt they accurately described or captured the breath of the students' experiences.

5) While the transcript and codes were with the advisors and study participants, I played with various ways of representing the codes and data, including:

- I created a table with 32 boxes representing each code and the 14 interviews and I shaded a box to represent each time the code appeared in a single interview (Appendix D)
- I used the paraphrased statements and direct quotes to create a rough outline of each transcript that functioned as an abstracted, coded version of the interview
- I used the website <https://bubbl.us/> to create a concept map of the codes
- I cut-and-pasted the words of the student participants from all of the transcripts and then entered them into wordle.net to produce an image

in which the most frequently used words appeared the largest in the visualization.

6) Looking at the displays and displaying the data in different ways helped me to refine the 32 codes, tweaking descriptions and cutting some entirely until I was satisfied all significant findings were encapsulated by the codes. I spent considerable time contemplating each code, allowing it to formulate and settle into my unconscious mind. As Meek (2003) wrote, ultimately the decision to end coding must be made “in one of those intuitive leaps best grounded by processing in the less conscious parts of the mind” (¶ 49).

7) I returned to the original transcripts and re-read them, this time looking specifically for direct quotes that could be used as evidence of the final codes. This was an effort to return to quotes that revealed the essence of the experience being described, those crystalizing passages that showed the thing “itself in itself” (Seigfried, 1976, p. 251), as phenomenology dictates. I continued to refine the codes when I was not satisfied that there was sufficient evidence in the transcripts. When I found illuminating quotes, I isolated them by adding grammar and punctuation such as ellipsis to indicate that the quote was part of a longer passage and I adjusted grammar whenever it did not detract from the meaning. For example, “not like I wanted to” would have been changed to “it’s not like I wanted to” in order to more precisely indicate where the thought unit began.

8) As I received the coded transcripts back from the advisors and the feedback from the study participants, I compared them to my codes and quotes. Whenever a conflict or disagreement occurred, I considered the advisor/participants’ feedback and made adjustments to my findings if I judged it necessary.

9) A qualitative research computer software, HyperResearch, was used at this point simply to organize and manage the transcripts and group quotes for the findings section. I found the sheer volume of data and pages cumbersome to organize without the software.

10) I then reviewed the research dimensions of campus climate and categorized the codes, quotes and paraphrased summaries by campus climate dimension to guide the presentation of the findings section. At this point, the original roughly sketched out codes were flushed out further and converted to 29 final “themes.”

Scholarly Personal Narrative

Although all SPNs share philosophical underpinnings and guiding principles and their data contain the same basic elements (e.g. narrative themes, personal appeal or disclosure, and universalizable implications), however the process each SPN writer follows to produce his/her data differs widely. Each researcher must develop his/her own method. SPN “requires intensive self-probing and the responsibility, at times, of having to make up the writing rules, and inventing your own writing tools as you go along” (Nash & Bradley, 2011, p. 37).

In order to describe my methods to construct a SPN that is as well-crafted and trustworthy as the results of the phenomenological study that accompanies it, I developed and followed a method based on the four components of the SPN-writing process: pre-search, me-search, re-search, and we-search (Nash & Bradley, 2011). These stages are not fixed in terms of order; one may return to them at any time or jump forward. One flows through the stages according to what Nash and Bradley refer to as the “Unavoidable Five T’s”; one’s taste, temperament, timing, training and talent” (p. 143).

Pre-search

Pre-search refers to the period during which the writer is clarifying her goals and topics. My SPN Pre-search process was heavily influenced by the pilot study conducted in the spring of 2010, when I conducted a qualitative exploration of the identity development and college experience of LGBT graduate and undergraduate students of color. I realized quickly that my own experience set up certain assumptions and expectations that were far-reaching and which would need to be negotiated. I chose to adopt a SPN methodology because it offered a creative vessel to capture and encapsulate my experience

Me-Search

Me-search is the period of time during which the bulk of the personal writing occurs. The SPN writer begins writing life stories and memories that address the questions he identified in the Pre-Search stage. The Me-search stage is most of all about producing words on the paper. This is most frequently where the writer's narrative voice emerges. My me-search stage occurred within the context of a writing-intensive course during the fall semester of 2011. This course focuses on the mechanics and process of SPN, taught by the two principle experts on the form of writing: Robert J. Nash, Ed.D. and Demethra LaSha Bradley, Ed.D. I relied on the course to provide the opportunity to learn the most current SPN trends and influences. The SPN wasn't completely written during the course; the writing continued during the course of conducting the interviews for the phenomenological study. In that way, the two methods fed into one another.

Re-search

SPN requires linking the author's narrative voice and life story to greater themes and truths that exist in the greater community or world. My SPN was influenced and guided by

the queer writers of color who inspired and guided me for many years. I used my SPN to place the queer authors of color alongside one another in order to compliment my own story and also serve as building blocks for theory of a college experience unique to queer students of color.

We-Search

Blending personal story with existing literature is only one step the SPN writer makes toward revealing his lessons or takeaways for his audience. He must explicitly discuss the implications for his various audiences. The “universe” in universalizable does not mean everyone everywhere. The SPN writer is only responsible to the audience that he clearly identifies, for whom his SPN would be most relevant and instructive. The we-search in my SPN passages appeared in the closing of each autobiographical vignettes or story. Also, I used the lay out and order of the SPN sections around the introduction of the dissertation, the literature review, and theoretical framework, in order to frame and engage the personal snippets in dialogue with the study’s research.

Issues of Validity

Research advisors and member checking were two strategies I used to address the validity of the study results.

Advisors. The study benefited greatly by peer-debriefing by colleagues and advisors whose scholarship and/or lived experience gave them expertise on the issues of queer people of color (Creswell, 2007; Marshall & Rossman, 2011). I chose four individuals who hold Masters degrees and research experience and one person currently completing a Masters degree from my personal network to be readers. I provided them with a copy of the study’s

themes and an anonymized transcript of one of the interviews I had conducted. They commented on the codes and coded the transcript. Their coded transcripts and thoughts and questions about the codes provided an inter-rater reliability test that helped me to clarify points and provide additional description to elucidate the students' experiences.

Member checks. Glesne (2006) defines member checking as sharing interview transcripts, analytical thoughts, and/or drafts of the final report with research participants to make sure you are representing them and their ideas accurately. Member checks were chosen as a strategy of mitigating the researcher's bias and close relationship to the subject, in an effort to ensure the trustworthiness of the results. Furthermore, member checks preserve the participants' investment and active participation and they bolster the integrity of the interviews as a reliable source of data.

The member check process for this study consisted of sharing the preliminary emergent codes from the interview transcripts. I invited the students to read and share their feedback about my preliminary codes. All the respondents were asked to review the initial findings and description of themes to determine whether they felt it captured their experiences or if they could offer any additional insight. Only two of the fourteen study participants provided responses. Their positive feedback confirmed that the codes were congruent and accurate portrayal of their perceptions of campus climate. There were several times when the students coded a passage or sentence differently than my original coding. As discussed in Chapter 3, proper bracketing requires approaching the subject "openly, attentively" in order to "break down the habitual mental patterns that cause us to take our everyday world for granted" (Cameron, 2005, p. 177). The new information from the students interrupted my mental patterns and forced me to reconsider my findings in an effort to reconcile the students' percep-

tions. My reconsideration consisted of returning to the source material, the original transcripts, in order to see if further analysis was needed in order to strengthen the coding. All instances underscored the overlap of themes but did not require re-coding.

Field notes/bracketing. I engaged in thoughtful journaling, beginning in the initial literature review phase and continuing through the interviews and during the findings/analysis stages of this project. Particularly resonant or dominant themes were captured in the narratives shared in the SPN portion of this study. Bracketing was an ongoing, active process of parsing out my impression and assumptions from the student participants.

Beyond exploring the experience of queer college students of color this dissertation is an experiment in combining two methodological frameworks. Phenomenology is a widely accepted conventional form of qualitative research. Despite its longevity, it has not strictly adhered to standard methods. Instead, phenomenologists adhere to certain principles such as preserving the subjectivity of the researcher and the study participant and creating a system in which both are preserved and protected. SPN encourages innovation and creativity to transform navel-gazing to moments that teach and instruct. This chapter detailed the process I followed to elicit valid data through the careful and responsible adherence to method that remained faithful to the philosophical underpinnings of each research framework.

CHAPTER VI: Results

This chapter presents the thematic analysis of the data collected from the interviews conducted with fourteen undergraduate LGBTQ-identified students for this study of perceptions of campus climate of queer students of color (Table 4 in the appendix includes a list of the participants' pseudonyms and demographic information). Most of the themes were shared by the majority of the group, with easy patterns emerging from the interviews. There is a great deal of interconnectedness between the themes, each intimately entwined with the other; however, at some point an arbitrary distinction was made for analytical reasons. The visual displays of the preliminary codes are included in the appendix to demonstrate the strength of the codes and the amount of saturation achieved throughout the participants' stories. The 29 remaining themes withstood inter-rater tests and feedback from the study participants and other researchers familiar with the population or with qualitative research. Despite these attempts to ensure credible findings, and truthfully reflect the experience of the queer students of color's stories, the themes and meanings ultimately do reflect the researcher's interpretation of the data.

This study's sample consisted of more women than men (9:5). Therefore, observations of gender differences are included in the discussion of the theme. Occasionally a topic appeared in more of the interviews with one gender than it did in interviews with another gender. Subsequently, the theme may appear stronger among men, for example, but it is still possible to have a divergence or variety of opinions on the subject so it is not necessarily indicative of a gendered difference. The few significant deviations from or exceptions to a theme are noted in the description of that theme. Percentages and likelihoods are discussed

whenever appropriate in an effort to further clarify the difference gender may have contributed to the theme.

Notably, the early analysis conducted on the preliminary codes (see Appendix D) revealed no codes that achieved 100% saturation across interviews, meaning no single code was discussed by all participants. Notably, however, when analyzed by gender, 2 codes reach 100% saturation of the women and 3 codes reach 100% saturation of men. Those codes wound up feeding the themes of No Binary and Family for women; for men, the 100% saturation codes contributed to the themes of Narrow Race, Bubble, and LGBT as White.

The following section contains the findings of this study of campus climate perceptions of queer students of color. The findings are organized by code and appear under the dimension of campus climate with which they most relate. I begin with a generalized description of the theme and then bring in specific examples from the individual participants' stories. Finally, a selection of direct quotes is shared that provide evidence of the theme.

Including multiple voices and perspectives of queer people of color is an aim of this project. Direct quotes are included in an effort to allow the students to speak for themselves. I am wary of treating the students as the "other," as hooks (1990), wrote:

Often this speech about the "Other" annihilates, erases: "No need to hear your voice when I can talk about you better than you can speak about yourself. No need to hear your voice. Only tell me about your pain. I want to know your story. And then I will tell it back to you in a new way. Tell it back to you in such a way that it has become mine, my own. Re-writing you, I write myself anew. I am still author, authority. I am still the colonizer, the speaking subject, and you are now at the center of my talk. (p. 208).

I have listed a sampling of student quotes in effort to interrupt my own summary and analysis and allow the actual students to speak rather than being spoken about. (In a similar fashion, the intertextual vignettes from my own personal experience have interrupted the research at other points throughout this thesis.) Despite its intentions, this attempt to respond to hooks' critique is admittedly problematic, since I chose the quotes and edited for grammar, but traditional dissertation format is difficult to transgress without compromise. This way, at least, the queer students of color have the last word on each theme.

Behavioral Dimension

The Behavioral dimension of climate consists of interactions or contact experiences between and among different groups, participation (or lack thereof) in campus programs, traditions, and services, and full engagement in the various systems of the institution (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998). Examples include students' experience with mainstream campus systems; experiences in diverse campus experiences; and interactions with different groups. In this study the themes I called of Bubble, Civility, Coming Out, Diversity Appreciation, Educators, Friend Networks, LGBT as White, Narrow Race and No intersectional Spaces, all occur within the behavioral dimension of campus climate.

Bubble. College is a world unto itself where students expect to both be socially and academically challenged and supported in order to persist to graduation. People consider college as a time to take risks and see it as a time to be adventurous and experiment. Students also expect their peers to be tolerant and open minded. At the same time, discrimination/bias are interpreted as mistakes of civility that must be endured; the cost for privilege of earning a degree. I believe this theme best fit the behavioral dimension of campus climate because it

pertains to the consequences and issues involved in living in a diverse environment with people from a variety of backgrounds.

This pattern was observed in all of the interviews with men in this study and 90% of women, making men minimally more likely to reflect on the feeling that campus was a bubble. An early analysis of preliminary codes revealed this pattern and it remained strong enough to note here.

Having grown up in an economically depressed, rural community, Roger perceived a high amount of class privilege and cultural capital on campus. Roger was a student who learned a new language for his social identities and those of others when he came to college. Although he found it helpful to increase his social mobility, he felt the knowledge and concepts created a greater barrier to his family understanding him because they did not share the same language. He wondered about the how useful it was outside of the bubble of academia.

Roger was a senior in college and thought a lot about his life post-graduation. The “real world” off campus – even as close as the downtown area of town -- was a place where he expected people to be less likely to appreciate racial or sexual orientation diversity. Therefore, as a graduating senior, he was preparing to distinguish himself by excelling in academics and developing his ability to fit into as many different social spaces as possible. He believed that kind of political savvy would be a more lucrative than confining his involvement or associations to people who shared his racial identity or sexual orientation.

Other aspects that were unique to the campus also made it feel like a bubble for students. Alex, Audre, Sinath, and Adrian had all heard about the university and its LGBT-friendly policies before they enrolled. This LGBT-friendly reputation, most commonly heard

from high school guidance counselors, upperclass students or internet websites, made the school seem like a unique and atypical place.

Consider the following quotes from the students that illustrate the sense of the campus as a bubble:

I mean I feel like surprisingly there is a good level of acceptance here. ... I thought it was like too good to be true. But I come here and you know, people are very accepting and they don't care where you're from. They just... they're cool with everybody. (Adrian)

I think that when I'm in an all-White place back home it's just not... it's not the same. It's a different kind of White people out here. (Linde)

Yea, and there's also, I've been talking to my friends about the [off campus] community is kind of a bubble in itself. Which also makes me kind of nervous to travel elsewhere is that there are all these things I've been involved in here but I don't know if people are having the same kind of discussions or awareness of LGBT issues somewhere else. (Patti)

I'm leaving the this university bubble of inclusivity and I'm going into a world that is not as aware and educated as even half of the people here when it comes to proper language and how to view certain situations and so that makes me nervous. (Roger)

Civility. Students hold themselves back and tolerate bias or microaggressions in the interest of keeping the peace or preserving relationships. Students avoid conflict and tension, thus "civility" becomes in fact an act of survival. They subdue their sexual orientation in order to either not alienate people or not expose themselves to being perceived as a stereotype. I believe this theme best fit the behavioral dimension of campus climate because it pertains to the consequences and issues involved in living in a diverse environment with people from a variety of backgrounds.

Students exhibited an ability to read and adapt to situations in the campus environment in order to navigate the social and cultural campus landscape. However, they frequently had a sense of justice and a low tolerance for inequity. For example, Alex was familiar with

research on identity development models and challenged the idea of identity synthesis. She felt “synthesis” implied that a person necessarily loses their anger and indignation. She saw the identity development model as evidence of bias in the culture and vowed to not lose her anger.

Perhaps ironically, she did mention needing to limit her emotional or angry responses in classroom environments. She feared her peers and the professor would dismiss her as playing into a stereotype. The very idea of “civility” takes on a biased connotation when framed as when and where it is appropriate to channel one’s racial passion.

Consider also Roger’s experience. He could recall incidences when he heard homophobic language from one of his fraternity brothers but he framed them as issues of poor language choice and civility rather than bias or discrimination. The lack of a cultural or institutional homophobia analysis allows Roger to conduct himself as an individual and treat systemic oppression as an individual failing.

The quotes below feature student’s thoughts on avoiding conflict:

But, like, oh no, I just have a bad way of dealing with [microaggressions] cuz all I want to do is curse ’em out but I can’t do that. I gotta be nice and educated cuz I’m in class. (Alex)

Actually, no, it’s more like I’m out [at home]. But I’m more conservative about it. Because since I’m up here. I had to really get more mature. Because, like being in the city, there’s a lot of gay people back there. And they are really out ... and their outness has a lot of negativity around it. ... You know, you can’t be too much, you can’t be really out there. Like causing too much attention. (Blanche)

I wish, I mean, it’s like you want to talk about it but you don’t know how other people, how comfortable other people feel about it so you don’t really, I feel like it’s something you don’t really bring up. And I think that’s another reason I can’t really talk to people about it because, it’s like, are people comfortable talking about this subject? So you have to put all those factors into play. (Bob)

I'm walking around campus and all I can think about is that I'm Asian and are people who are walking behind me... you know, it's just like ... who are laughing at things... It's just a sort of "Did I do something wrong?" or am I going to say or do something that will make people, you know, that people will take and apply a stereotype?
(Linde)

Coming Out. I use coming out here to connote students' views on what it is to be out. How and when they manage their visibility varied. Often students discussed private/public components of coming out. They disclosed or revealed their identities carefully. People generally come out consciously in their demeanor, words or actions. Coming out is often framed strategically as a way to build community and bond with people. In other words, one doesn't feel any particular need to "come out" unless it means you want to make friends with a person or gain access to a particular group but otherwise, one could live their lives being queer but never being "out" about it. The idea of "outness" then takes on a sort of commodity or cultural capital that is valued differently in different contexts and brings different benefits. Being "out" in a racial community or in one's family isn't particularly valuable. I believe this theme best fit the behavioral dimension of campus climate because it refers to the limits or challenges of interactions or contact experiences among different groups.

Students were not cavalier or nonchalant about the language they used to describe their identities. Bob struggled with the idea of what "out" meant because there were people in his life he deliberately hid his sexual orientation from. In fact, several students, including Audre, Victor, Patti, and Nadine, Roger, hid their sexual orientation from family members at one point in their lives. Roger, for example, said he was not closeted for very long, but he did not consider himself out until he told his family. Blanche and China also referred to friends and acquaintances who were not publically out. Linde struggled with the idea of out because she was in what appeared from the outside as a heterosexual relationship. Still, she insisted

that her current relationship status had no bearing on her sexual orientation. Alex expressed the same idea. This is a significant and important finding, particularly in light of the observation that her and other students' racial identity was integrally connected to family. The idea of a public out identity begins to blur when one considers the different ways that the queer students of color in this study perceive their own identities and those of their friends. "Out" appears to be a very pliant concept that doesn't necessarily match how one identifies their queer identity.

These quotes capture the various ways students viewed coming out:

Yeah, I'm like what is that. That doesn't make any sense. And they're just like, "Oh, they're just under cover," and I'm like, why? I feel like, I was told it was a majority of people that are like that. And I'm like, they should feel comfortable coming out and it would probably change everything. You know, if there's all these resources out there why would you stay and keep it in and not show who you are as a person? (Adrian)

I don't really know what, like "out" is. Like I'm out to my friends but like I don't... like, to other family members, like, the only people who really know are my mom, my brother and my grandparents. ... So I guess I'm kinda out. In a way ... I guess that's another reason why I don't really tell a lot of people. It was kinda like, uh, for me to guard myself. (Bob)

I wanted to tell everyone but obviously there was some sort of strategy. Like I have like my really two like two closest friends who are also in my sorority all identify as queer and have been out for a little bit longer so I talked to them first so I would have support within the group. They were really supportive so then I felt comfortable telling other people or like expressing myself to other sisters so like close friends and sisters and family came later. (Patti)

Like, it's, being gay and open is sometimes seen as a White thing. (Reggie)

Diversity Appreciation. Students report their marginalized identities (whether person of color or sexual orientation) provide them with empathy and insight into the experience of other marginalized communities. The queer community doesn't always live up to their expectation to be tolerant and inclusive of difference. I believe this theme best fit the behavioral

dimension of campus climate because it pertains to the students' ability to find community that is inclusive and diverse.

The queer students of color in this study were all living out gay lives. They were not closeted or on the down low, which is a term commonly used to refer to African-American men but often extended to urban men of color in general, who live apparently heterosexual lives, sometimes with girlfriends or wives, but have sex with other men in secret (King, 2004). They varied in their self-definitions of being out and they all employed different strategies of managing the visibility of their queer identity (see the Coming Out theme). Some students talked about having the ability to passively pass as straight because they did not fit a "typical" or stereotypical gay look or demeanor. Bob, for example said he was "not really putting it in people's face." Roger and Patti were keenly aware of the company they kept but their intent was never to hide or deceive people, only to control how and where they came out. However, the underlying principle that emerged from their stories is that the queer community is one that is in fact diverse and dynamic.

Nadine said holding a queer identity opened her mind and made her more inclusive. That also included being able to acknowledge guilt that she struggled with from internalized heterosexist or homophobic thoughts. She also talked about not blocking people or ideas out just because she doesn't understand them.

Like Nadine, students repeatedly said being queer meant, in theory, inclusiveness and celebration of diversity. Many students expected the queer community to reflect those values (although that expectation was not always met). (Even Reggie, who rejected the term queer because of its offensive origins, acknowledged that to many it meant an embrace of many identities). Thus when the students shared their identity with others or confirmed it verbally,

they did so in settings or environments that reflected the safety they expected. Frequently that safety also involved a perceived acceptance of their racial identity.

These students' words suggest they look to the gay community to be inclusive and pluralistic:

If this person wants to be in our space, like who are, why would we, like, if someone wants to be with us, why would we reject them? Like, that's, especially, like in a group of queer people who have been the people who have been rejected, like, I feel like we should not be rejecting anyone and telling anyone how they should identify because there's so many people telling us, like, "no you should be heterosexual."
(Alex)

So I feel like identifying as pansexual definitely has made me more, like open to hearing different ideas and not just shutting people down or out because what they believe in or what they think is right is different than my sense of belief. (Nadine)

I feel like [my queer identity] made me more aware of diversity. Um, it's like not, well, seen as the norm all over so it's just one of those things which allowed me to see how people who are in, I guess, like, minority groups, how they're treated differently from people who have... I guess, like, in the hierarchy from people who are seen as better so it's allowed me, actually opened my eyes to, like, pretty much seeing people, like, in a different light. Just positively, rather than separating and further in the subordination. (Sinath)

Yeah, that's what I was saying. I was like, "You know we work so hard to get this acceptance from people and be able to integrate ourselves within larger communities and just by doing something like that you're isolating yourself. So it's like, you're going against what you believe in. And it kinda frustrates me when I hear people saying I just want gay people to live here. But you have straight people who actually care and actually want to be a part of your life. You know, and want to be a part of your community and you're not letting them. So you're isolating yourself. (Adrian)

Educators. Students educate peers and friends, sometimes professors about their identities and community. They are both willing participants deliberately educating people in order to create a safe space for themselves and forced by peer pressure or authority who ask them to speak for their identities. They are also likely to play an informal role of helping other closeted students who seek them out. I believe this theme best fit the behavioral dimension

of campus climate because it refers to having to represent their community or communities to other campus groups or individuals from other groups.

In and out of the classroom students are educators. Some rely on their behavior and example to teach people like Roger, Reggie and Patti. Others are more overt educators by inviting their friends along to build community by exposing their friends to new experiences such as Audre and Alex. Some used their leadership positions such as Victor and Blanche. Victor, for example, became known for making presentations to his student organization that focused on the intersection of sexual orientation and race. Blanche spoke about being inspired by him to do the same with her student organization.

Roger's educator role was most pronounced in his work within the Fraternity & Sorority system. Within his own fraternity, he spoke about teaching his brothers about the LGBT community both by explicitly answering fraternity brothers' questions and also by being a day-to-day example of normality and acceptability.

Roger said he accepted his role of being the one who educates his brothers about LGBT people. He did not feel that it isolated him or tokenized him because he knew that there were other gay individuals in the Fraternity & Sorority system who were also working within their spheres of influence to change the culture from within. Paradoxically, Roger was one of the students who did not wish to be associated with a formal group organized around an LGBT identity because he found it to be limiting. The practical implication is that no matter how many other LGBT students he knew within the Fraternity & Sorority system, those individuals would be working in isolation without some sort of way to come together or check-in with one another or show a united front as gay people rather than gay individuals.

Tokenization seemed to be the inevitable result of his and other students' efforts to "normalize" the LGBT experience within the Fraternity & Sorority system.

Read on for students descriptions of the educator role in their own words:

It wasn't an easy thing [to speak up in class]. It wasn't at all. I caught myself like, you know, when you speak in front of a crowd, your voice like trembles a little bit. At least you feel your voice is trembling. I was totally like that and, um, I had like this whole speech planned out in my head but it didn't actually come out like that. I had just said the things that I felt really important. So it wasn't actually an easy, it wasn't easy. It's never easy to speak up. (Audre)

Yeah. They assume it. Like I told one person in the people of color community. She was like "What? I just think people are gay and straight." They don't think about the other categories! Just gay, straight. I'm like, no, there are other categories too! ... so you can't just sum it up to gay or straight. That's just how ignorant they are. (Blanche)

And I feel like another reason I like doing queer research is so that when they read it, they can actually learn something and not do too harsh of the grading. And whenever I do, they're really interested in it so maybe that will shed some light on certain things. I guess. I enjoy doing that. (China)

Yes. We have discussions based on my, like, you know, [fraternity brothers] are very honest with me and say Roger, I have this question about what it means to be a homosexual, like, can you tell me more about that? Or what does this actually mean for you? And I'll be like, well, sir, this is what this means. And this is how it's done. Any more questions? I can pull up a visual on Wikipedia or something. That kind of thing. I feel like it's a mutual... like, through our discussions they are in fact learning. (Roger)

Friend Networks. Students created close friendship circles that served as sounding boards and sources of information about the community and their identities. Students who didn't seek assistance from identity centers or class were likely to talk to friends and find out about what their community/identity is like through their friends, who they are loyal to and trust. These networks included gay people, straight people, people who were closeted and White people as well as people of color. I believe this theme best fit the behavioral dimen-

sion of campus climate because it described students' ability to create relationships across difference and individuals from communities that differed from their own.

Some students such as Bob and Adrian relied on their friends to expose them to campus resources and events. Both Adrian and Bob had attended student group meetings and explored on- or off- campus volunteer opportunities at LGBT organizations with the encouragement and advisement of a friend who had already checked out the scene prior. Both had in fact been referred to participate in the study by friends who encouraged them to take part. Patti also talked about the value of having people in her life who were already out and could serve as examples of healthy queer people. The friendships these students formed had both positive impacts of helping the students feel comfortable and empowered however they can also feed the feeling that people must be guarded and protect their personal reputation in the small community where, as Blanche said, "Everyone's in your tea." Roger's friend network was made up of Fraternity & Sorority members. These spaces allowed him to create his own identity on his own terms, even if it meant creating that space in a heteronormative environment or one in which he wasn't seen as a person of color.

These experiences demonstrate the important role of the students' friendships and carefully cultivated peer relationships:

It's, it's... sometimes there's like, I've had friends in groups of queer friends -- cuz those are the best kinds of friends... We're very, like we don't try to push them to like come out or say this, like this... Um, yeah, so I feel like I have friends. Like if I didn't have queer people of color in my group of friends then I feel like I would make more of an effort to go to the queer people of color meetings. (Alex)

So, um, the gay people or the queer people that's here. It's real small, with the students. But I think it's a community, though. I mean not like the greater people of color community, but it's a community, though. Amongst friends. (Blanche)

So I think having people that have had positive experiences and who didn't describe it as "don't come out because it's going to be really tough." I think because I didn't receive that message I thought it would be easy and that I would be comfortable doing it. (Patti)

I would never out my [fraternity] brother. I would never, you know, I would recognize the level of security that they're at within our community and, you know, think about the level that they are out in the greater community. (Roger)

LGBT as White. Students and their family and friends associate words or actions or demeanors with forms of presentation that White people do; "being out" is commonly seen as a White and thus associated with gaining privilege or a cultural capital (see the Coming Out theme). Students seldom interacted with the university LGBT identity center. Students frequently felt as though being queer for a person of color and being queer for White people were two different phenomena. I believe this theme best fit the behavioral dimension of campus climate because it refers to the limits or challenges of interactions or contact experiences among different groups.

This pattern was observed in all of the interviews with men in this study and only 66% of women, making men more likely to contribute to this theme. This is the largest percentage discrepancy based on gender. The construction of the LGBT or queer identity as a White identity seems to prompt more discussion from men than women. An early analysis of preliminary codes revealed this pattern and it remained strong enough to note here.

Alex felt as though queer people of color and queer White people see the world in fundamentally different ways. She said queer people of color have more rules of behavior or demeanor to live by. A variety of arbitrary behaviors or acts stand to forfeit one's membership within a group. She and her friends create spaces of resistance by talking openly about and questioning these rules. Here are some of those questions, which she shared in her inter-

view: Do I have to just date women in order to be a lesbian? Do I have to date at all to be a lesbian? How Black do I have to look to be considered Black? If my gender identity is masculine, does that mean I have to be transgender? Can male-to-female transgender people be lesbian? Would you be friends with them?

Blanche and China also mentioned being policed by other people of color who try to tell them the proper ways a queer woman expresses her gender or sexuality. They are policed in the community through gossip and rumors. Bob also discussed the gossip, rumors and assumptions that police the boundaries of acceptable behaviors from mannerisms to language. None of the students were involved with the undergraduate LGBT student group, which had a predominantly White membership. Some had tried but felt uncomfortable. Victor reported the students in the group behaved in a manner that was “stigmatized” and Roger said their meetings were not “relevant.”

The myth that LGBT is an identity best suited for White people persists through statements like these:

I mean, in some circles, being a “Gaysian” -- that’s what you call it -- is fine. Like, no big deal. But then in older communities and among immigrant communities, it’s just sort of like, “No way. You’re Asian; that’s a White thing.” I think that being queer is often seen as a White thing. (Linde)

But I still think there’s a tangible difference between having to tell your Caucasian family versus having to tell your family who is not. (Patti)

On a general scope there’s a relationship between someone being a gay male and being a person of color. Because it’s not easily accepted. And, um, it’s not easily accepted, it’s not as easily out. It’s not as open out there as White homosexuality. So, like, homosexuality, in essence, sort of falls separately between Caucasians and people of color, I guess. Just like, sometimes a whole different beast. (Reggie)

No. Prior to joining the awards committee I didn’t really feel active in the LGBT community because, um... like, my first year I lived in the residential learning community for LGBT issues and that opens an entirely different worldview of myself and

being a person of color in that environment. ... I went to a [LGBT student organization meeting] and that was really uncomfortable for me. That was, for me, a lot of the culture that is stigmatized that I don't like presenting. (Victor)

Narrow Race. Students are challenged by race because they feel a need to create and be a part of multi-racial communities of color because of the small numbers in general. They may have difficulty relating to White people. The result is that racial differences, including intersectional identities such as sexual orientation, are consolidated, ignored or sacrificed in the name of racial solidarity. Most commonly seen in student organizations, this theme best fit the behavioral dimension of campus climate because it refers to the challenges of interactions or contact experiences of communities of color.

Race was narrowly constructed at the university into White and "non-White." The POC community is multicultural; racial differences are glossed over in order to keep together a coalition of student groups and individuals. Even as nearly all the students in the study said being a queer person of color was different than being a queer White person, they were generalizing about White and person of color experience in ways that made both sides of the dichotomy deceptively monolithic.

This pattern was observed in all of the interviews with men in this study and 90% of women, making men minimally more likely to share thoughts to share about the constraints on the social construction of race. An early analysis of preliminary codes revealed this pattern and it remained strong enough to note here.

The narrow construction of race on campus inhibited students full integration and expression of themselves. China talked about other people not accepting her as Latino because she didn't speak Spanish. Bob and Blanche lamented the general silence around intersecting identities in the racial identity student groups. Nadine said people in the student organizations

spend so much time defining and limiting their races into boxes that they lose sight of the whole person. Roger and Patti expressed concern that they were being defined by a single racial characteristic. Sellie spoke about compromising the parts of her identity she felt needed to be left outside the room when she entered a people of color space. The common thread is that students felt the racial climate on campus produced a narrow definition or normalized a limited experience of race that felt uncomfortable for students attempting to integrate multiple identities simultaneously.

The conditions on campus that produce a narrow construction of race can be gleaned from the following statements:

Because all the drama, it's not between somebody Black and White.... It's always somebody Black with somebody else Black. Or somebody Black with somebody Hispanic. It's always within us. It's never nobody else. And all the shade comes from them. Who knows why? We're in this small-ass campus. And you're throwing shade at me? Come on, we're supposed to be together! Like, there shouldn't be no beef. But all the shade comes from them. (Blanche)

Like I never had a bad experience with somebody of color about my sexual identity. I guess that has to do with, because, we're trying to be close as a community as a whole. ... Like, I feel like when we come here, there's not a lot so we want everybody to stick together, regardless of anything. Like, even if you're gay we're still one, I guess. (China)

Well I think for me personally because it's not, because of the fact that I identify as multiracial my racial identity is something I'm not consciously aware of. It was never expressed in my family. I think because of that my racial identity hasn't been as salient and I haven't needed to find support for it. I guess I just didn't see that as something I've always been aware of as being multiracial or biracial. (Patti)

My queer identity doesn't really come up as often in [people of color] spaces. Which, I kinda see as a problem since I do see it as part of my identity. (Sellie)

No intersectional spaces. Students observed there were not enough spaces or chances to discuss intersectional identities. Students sometimes said the study was the first time they thought of the possibility of a QPOC identity. I believe this theme best fit the behavioral di-

mension of climate because it has to do with the amount of or extent to which students had formal experiences communicating with others about their multiple intersecting identities.

Alex was surprised when she went to college by the level of institutional support she found for the identity centers. For example, she appreciated that the centers were organizationally structured within the same department, which facilitated collaboration and shared resources. She and other students, such as Blanche, had come to expect communities of color to not be welcoming or inclusive of LGBT people. Blanche and Alex both discussed appreciating the amount of interaction and programs that were co-sponsored by the two offices, however they felt there needed to be more. Additionally, they and other students were dissatisfied by the work of student organizations. Alex expressed dissatisfaction that the student LGBT organization did not engage in multi-issue conversation or collaborative projects across multiple identities. The sentiment was echoed by Roger and Victor as well. However, Blanche believed that the racial identity student organizations were too busy dealing with interpersonal conflicts and tensions to work across communities or give air time during their meetings to discussions of the intersection of identities. This overall lack of spaces in which programming or discussions that bring attention to multiple identities and issues results in a silence around queer of color identities. Outside of conversations with their friends, students rarely engaged in thoughtful reflection on the challenges or the climate for queer people of color.

Roger would benefit from more opportunities or spaces in which to discuss the intersection of his social identities. He felt uncomfortable going to meetings of the campus LGBT student organization because it advanced a narrow way of being queer. He also didn't feel Asian enough to feel comfortable with other Asians. In fact at one point he mentioned he

didn't know any more about Asia than anyone who knew how to conduct a Google search. However he enjoyed going to religious gatherings of faiths that he did not share. He was also a part of a panel of LGBT student leaders convened by the campus LGBT identity center to talk about leadership. He said he valued each of those experiences because they allowed him to hear about and celebrate a spectrum of cultures and experiences and helped him place his own experience among that spectrum.

Students shared the frequency and nature of the opportunities they had to reflect on the relationship – if any – between their race and sexual orientation.

I just feel like we don't really talk about [homosexuality]. So you don't really notice it. So it's like, if I'm in a group of students of color, I don't feel like that's the first thing we talk about. That's like the last thing we're gonna talk about. (Bob)

The sex and gender classes that I've taken we didn't really touch on queer people of color too much. And I guess it's because, you know, this lack of research and stuff like that but you could find ... I don't know how a professor would go about teaching it. (China)

Hmm. I feel like there is definitely a strong connection between [race and sexual orientation] because I'm the other in both senses. So, it's definitely like, I just go with the flow with most people. Like, just chooseI just let people decide what my race or ethnicity or whatever is because I feel like we spend so much time trying to box people into these groups that we forget who we're talking about. (Nadine)

I don't know. Maybe there's like um, a homosexual man who identifies also as a man of color who's at this university who's never been a member of a club or an organization that focuses on leadership roles and hasn't had the same kind of, hasn't been told like these are issues that we have to face every day and reflect on these things. What does this tell you about yourself and what does this tell you about the environment that you're playing a part in. ... People who have fallen through the cracks. We can't get everybody. (Roger)

Summary

The university environment can offer a buffer between students and the “real world” (Bubble) Within that protective bubble, interpersonal behavior and conduct is regulated by

formal and informal rules that individuals conform to with varying levels of difficulty and comfort (Civility). The amount and types of those interpersonal interactions and cross-cultural exchanges make up the behavioral dimension of campus climate (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998). The findings of this study show that the students generally felt formal, institution-sponsored opportunities for cross-cultural exchange and intergroup contact was insufficient. Lectures, dialogue circles, class group projects or collaborative research are all examples of opportunities that individuals or groups could use to explore the intersection of social identities and groups (No intersectionality). Under such conditions, some communities often unwittingly coalesce around narrow definitions or conceptions of belonging, (LGBT as White), while others intentionally consolidate differences in the name of solidarity (Narrow race). Queer students of color navigate this minefield of mixed messages, developing strategies including seizing upon educational moments (Educators), managing the visibility or salience of their identities (Coming out), and judging when to be vulnerable and reach out across difference (Diversity appreciation) and building networks of allies who offer acceptance and safety (Friend networks).

Psychological Dimension

The extent to which individuals perceive conflict and discrimination on campus constitutes the psychological dimension of the campus climate. This dimension measures the ways students feel somehow singled out because of their background or perceive institutional support/commitment related to diversity (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998). Some examples are perceptions of belonging; perceptions of alienation; and perceptions of conflict. In this study the psychological dimension of campus climate can be observed in the themes I call Development, Human, Involvement as safety, Microaggressions, No binary, Not enough, QPOC dream, and Self-Advocacy.

Development. College offers the opportunity for students to learn about their identities, including identity development models, nomenclature, and sociological/theoretical perspectives. Whether they came to college knowing they were gay or not, they appreciate the way that they could figure themselves out and explore their identities. Further, students are less likely to notice development along sexual orientation when their race is prioritized or more salient. I believe this theme best fit the psychological dimension of campus climate because it describes the extent to which students feel their identities can be understood in this environment.

Development in college requires a combination of challenge and support. Students frequently talked about their racial identity as one that they did not think about before they came to college. With the exception of two students, that lack of pre-college racial salience stemmed from living in an environment in which their race was actually not the minority, suggesting a low amount of challenge in that dimension of identity. Most of the students knew they were queer before they came to college, and many were actively seeking new ex-

periences in which they would find both challenge and support for their sexual orientation. Those experiences included dating for the first time, living or spending time in spaces catered to the LGBT community, or simply meeting other openly gay people.

Students expressed the opposite when it came to their racial identity. Several of them shared stories that still haunted them of their parents – usually their mother – being outright scared for them because of the predominantly White environment. Students were not expecting their racial identity to be positively impacted. Because attending college placed them firmly in the numerical racial minority, and an apparently more visible (or accessible) gay community, the college environment inherently produced a complex set of psychological, social and emotional dissonance. Thus, as the students cognitively and socially resolved these incongruities they exhibited growth or movement in their identity development.

In the area of sexual orientation the development resulted in the ability to accommodate and incorporate an ever-increasing amount of change and difference. In other words, the students said learning about the spectrum of queer identities, including their own, made them feel more confident in their own identities and more able to appreciate difference in general.

Unfortunately, occupying a minority space can in some cases make one or a group more efficient at sorting, isolating and separating difference. When an identity is occupying the most mental space because it is besieged or vulnerable, it has the potential to become even more narrowly defined. Those students for whom race was more salient than sexual orientation did not observe any development or appreciation of difference. In fact they were more likely to express frustration that the campus community of color was too narrowly defined and preoccupied with race and was an obstacle for the development of their sexual orientation because they could express their queer identity within people of color spaces.

Here are the students' comments as they reflect on their own emotional, psychological and social development:

Now that I've come to college I've matured. I've learned to let little ignorant things slide by, you know? I'll just brush it off and keep going with my life. (Adrian)

I'm never gonna stop being angry. I was reading a personality development chart -- no, identity development. And I read one for like your person of color identity and one for your queer identity and it said in the queer identity, like the last stage was "synthesis" or something and fully synthesize into, it literally said, the person is now fully synthesized into dominant culture. What? And anger mellows. What? Like my anger is never gonna mellow. ... So no, I'm not gonna synthesize into dominant culture. I'm always gonna rebel against it and, because it's wrong! Like, oh my goodness, I can't. (Alex)

I do feel comfortable [speaking up in class]. It's a fairly new level of comfort. I did not feel comfortable at all like a year ago but I'm trying to acknowledge the importance that that carries in making sure that all of my salient identities are being addressed -- as long as it's appropriate -- in a given situation. But I don't think it's the responsibility of any one person or group to make that happen. (Sellie)

I'm just happy I came to my school because through reaching out and joining different programs that helped me become more comfortable with my sexuality and when I came, I wasn't too sure. I guess maybe, like, confused about whether I really wanted to make that step as, like, fully identifying as lesbian because they're so much negative stigma attached. (Sinath)

Human. Students articulate a desire to be treated as "human" or as an integrated person for whom sexual orientation or race are simply characteristics or roles like sister or student. They see themselves as "normative" people not characterized particularly by any one attribute. I believe this theme best fit the psychological dimension of campus climate because it describes the extent to which students feel their identities can be understood in this environment.

Only one of the students in this study, Sinath, consistently described her sexual orientation and race to be intertwined and inseparable. The rest of the students considered their queer identity and race identity as separate and distinct parts of their identity no more linked

together than they were linked to their other identities like gender, socio-economic status or religion. Students such as Reggie, Roger and Patti preferred to not be defined by any particular group membership but rather as individuals with multiple facets to their identity. Notably, they were also the three students who were active members of a traditionally White fraternity or sorority. (Linde was a member of a multicultural sorority). Alex also expressed a desire to just be treated as “just a person.” Nadine had a desire for her race to not make a difference but found that impossible at the university. Audre wished her identities were accepted as just parts of her the way a tree is brown and green.

Observe what the queer students of color had to say about feeling as though social identities are overrated:

There’s time when I’m more aware of my identities. Sometimes I get to just forget about them and just be a person. And not be a woman. And not be a woman of color. And not be a queer woman of color. (Alex)

I just wish that everyone knew. Not that I have to sit down and tell you “I’m gay.” Like I don’t have to tell you that. Like you just know and you be fine about it. Like we know a tree is green and we’re fine with it. (Audre)

I think that being with other people who identify as queer is one identity, but there are so many more parts to that person. We’re all queer. But then like...everyone who’s Jewish, or from the south, or people of color. The being queer is a base layer so that other different identities can come forward. (Patti)

Um, it’s just a part of my identity, I would say. It’s not the distinguishing fact. It is a part of who I am as an individual but not the start all, end, all of who I am. I would like to think that all my identities create who I am. (Roger)

[My identities] are just, like, a part of me. It’s, like, ingrained. It’s like being a sister and a daughter. Like, they’re just there. (Sinath)

Involvement as safety. Students choose campus involvements that turn their minority identities into assets and offer access to status that helps them make a difference in the climate they perceive. Their involvements bring them attention from staff/faculty and peers that

affirm their identities and insulate them. Involvement allows them to create their own niches or spaces of resistance. I place this theme within the psychological dimension of campus climate because involvement offers both a literal and metaphoric “counter space” (Dempsey & Noblit, 1996); a vehicle to achieve a psychological state of safety and agency.

Roger’s most significant involvement was within the Fraternity & Sorority system. This involvement created safety for Roger because it allowed him to minimize both his LGBT identity and his racial identity. In the predominantly White environment, he was never asked to bring attention to or highlight his Asian heritage. He was also an LGBT person who wasn’t associated with a larger LGBT community, which allowed his fraternity brothers to treat him as an individual who only happens to be LGBT when he is educating them or talking about his personal romantic relationship.

Students were likely to describe their involvements or their sub-communities as safer than the larger campus community, which supports a theory that campus is not only made up of multiple dimensions but also holds the potential to be made up of a set of complex microclimates (Vacarro, 2012). The results or reports of campus climates are as useful as their aims or reach of the questions. Perhaps we ought to encourage silos and craft climate studies that seek to survey or explore understandings of these microclimates. Can campus climate be bigger than the sum of its parts? Or vice versa?

Observe how students discuss the many ways they are involved in the life of campus:

They wanted me. Like the whole e-board wanted me. ... But in my mind, I turned it down. I was like, “I don’t wanna do that.” Then my mother said a good point. She said, “You’re always calling me, complaining about these issues. You need to fix it.” And so that’s what I intend to do. I intend to explore other issues other than race ... We need to talk about other issues. (Blanche, on joining the leadership of a racial student group)

And they're like, "What?" I'm like, "Yes, can you watch your language?" And they're like "Who are you?" "I'm one of the Resident Advisors. Do you need me to write you up?" I mean, I wouldn't but, you know... (Reggie)

I guess, until, like, I joined more programs like QPOC and getting to know more people and meeting allies through, like, you know, our friends that we may have in common or just meeting through other people. I guess my level of feeling safe kinda increased. (Sinath)

There's not enough people being out there, around the table, in conversation with a lot of the other leaders, like White leaders on campus. So it's easier for me to go back to my Asian American identity. I started looking at Asian student group and asking what can I do for Asian student group to bring out that leadership within that specific population? (Victor)

Microaggressions. Microaggressions are a range of brief, visible or audible cues that are considered daily or commonplace, that trigger a feeling of being oppressed, discriminated against or marginalized. Although this theme refers to microaggressions in general, it is worth noting that the students stories contained LGBT-specific microaggressions and race-specific microaggressions. The most frequent type of microaggression discussed by students were racial. However microaggressions of any type can act as a thousand paper cuts that have powerful cumulative impacts on one's self-esteem. I believe, and research on environmental microaggressions suggests (Sue, 2010) microaggressions occur across many dimensions of campus climate including the psychological and behavioral.

Microaggressions were commonplace. Remarkable, however, is that these microaggressions are not limited to overt acts of bias; they range from Adrian's story about a White student who got up and moved when he sat down beside her in a class to Nadine being greeted as a man because her gender expression is not perceived as feminine. They include Linde's stories about professors using only heterosexual couples in class exercises to Victor feeling as though he's expected to know about East Asian religions because he's Vietnamese.

Audre in particular initially said she was comfortable in the classroom environment. However she went on to nonchalantly describe her experience having to correct her peers' insensitive remarks about LGBT terminology. At another time, she discussed her outrage over her professor's failure to address the different impact of the economic recession on people of color and Whites, it became apparent she simply had developed a high tolerance for bias.

The following examples of microaggressions demonstrate the impact of subtle bias:

When I joined the organization I held a leadership position, and I was never consulted on any leadership activities and all my ideas were always turned down. And my committee, at the time, I had an Asian American, a Latino American and that's it. And we were never consulted with about anything. So after one semester our committee broke off because people felt like they hadn't been heard, they hadn't been utilized. (Victor)

It was actually here, in the student center. There was something going on on the first floor and I believe it was some celebration. I heard Native American chants. And I, um, went to the second floor. I was getting food and one of the cashiers said "well shouldn't you be down there chanting?" and I'm like "I'm Puerto Rican." Yeah, I feel like they just judged me off the color of my skin. (Adrian)

I've become, like, a lot more attuned to hearing people and what they're actually saying and what they mean. Because people make little comments that just kind of slide over most people. But I feel like once you're educated about it, you can, like, nit-pick things. So, I mean, a lot of people, like.... They don't address me in the same way that they address, like, someone who is just like any regular girl. (Nadine)

Um, I've heard a few misuses of language like "That's so gay," but then, you know, it's, uh, becomes more of an issue of inclusivity for me than that they actually... You know, when they say gay they mean something different than what they... I don't think they're homophobic, I just think that they're stupid and using the word gay to express what they mean. (Roger)

No Binary. Students live with tension; beliefs that oneself, one's identities and one's life challenges or resists binaries and simple understandings. I believe this theme best fit the

psychological dimension of campus climate because it describes the extent to which students feel their identities can be understood in this environment.

This pattern was observed in all of the interviews with women in this study and 90% of men. The students in this study revealed a diverse and complicated understanding of race. When asked to describe their racial identification or heritage, they frequently replied with stories. These stories often spanned multiple generations and incorporated the opinions of other people to support or refute the students' personal racial identity. Roger for example, struggled to describe his race. He found he didn't know the right words to describe his Filipino heritage. Being biracial, he found labels inherently limiting and inaccurate to describe his race.

More than the specific details of their individual racial stories, the fact that students found it difficult to encapsulate their race within a simple "I'm Latino" or "I'm African-American," demonstrated the social construction of race. The students literally needed to tell a story of their family (grandparents, parents, siblings, etc) to describe the social context in which they came to understand their race. In fact, some students never even uttered the words "I am..." anything. Instead, they said "My parents are..."

The image that emerged about their sexual orientation was similarly complex, only they reflected an emphasis on personal self-determination. Nadine said college allowed her to learn about her sexual orientation. Her sexuality, pansexuality, rejected categories. So too, did her multiracial identity. Queer helped her capture her status as the "other." Carrying the label meant not having to choose a fixed identity and the ability to change: "I'm like Teflon. You just kind of slide," she said.

Alex's feelings about sexual orientation and race also defied binary definitions. As a dark-skinned Latino woman, she was accustomed to being perceived as Black. She was ambivalent about this misperception; whether or not she corrected people depended on her mood and the context (in class, at work, etc). Ultimately she acknowledged that labels and words for identities are limited and sometimes interchangeable. When it comes to a queer identity, she identified as lesbian but she believed in each individual's ability and power to define their own sexuality on their own terms.

Despite the social construction of the two identities, Alex talked at times about her queer and racial identities being inseparable but then at other times about them being separate. Rather than contradict, this ambivalence seems to further illustrate the complexity and tension in which she sees her identities.

The complexity and contradictions with which queer students of color understand their identities is born out in their words:

I've like, struggled between identifying as a lesbian or identifying as queer cuz I feel like queer would just encompass everything, like, it's not, it doesn't like, it doesn't have to be that rigid of a box. But also, like, sometimes, no one's gonna tell me what it is to be a lesbian so sometimes I do identify as a lesbian, sometimes I identify as queer. Um, because I'm the one, it's my identity. I'm choosing what it is. Like, you're not gonna tell me how. Like, by stating I'm a lesbian, this is what it means. That's what it can mean for you, but this is what it means for me. (Alex)

Myself? Like my self-identification? I don't identify as butch. I don't identify as dyke. I don't like those ... like, I don't think there's anything wrong with them. I just don't like those labels on me. Because I feel like I'm just a little bit of both. Like I have masculinity in me as well as I have femininity. (Audre)

OK, if you're queer, it, like, inhabits being bisexual, gay and transgender but if you're gay, then you're just like, I don't know, you're just that one thing. But if you're queer, you can be a whole different kind of things. (Bob)

Because I don't wanna, like, singularly, like, seclude myself to a box. Like, one box... cuz it's always like, "choose one of these blocks." Or "Choose all that pertain" and, like, it just doesn't make sense so I always just choose other. (Nadine)

Not Enough. Defensiveness and self-consciousness about one's racial identity or queer identity because of the local or social construction of the identity. Feelings of not fitting the requirements of any given space. The feeling that they are on campus through affirmative action eats at their sense of worth. I believe this theme best fit the psychological dimension of campus climate because it refers to the extent to which students feel singled out and perceive institutional support/commitment related to diversity.

As a dark-skinned Latino, Alex spoke about feeling like she was not enough to live up to others' perceptions or expectations. She talked about being "raced" by others; in other words, others made assumptions and ascribed races to her. Alex wasn't the only one; many of the students in this study said they had to explain or justify their racial membership to people of color and White people alike.

White students interrogated students, asking what are you? Where are you really from? They misidentified student of colors' racial background. Adrian was mistaken as Native American; Alex as Black. China and Roger expressed other students making them feel as though they were not Latino or Asian enough respectively. Victor, Bob, and Blanche both contended with feelings that they did not do enough in their actions or leadership to represent their race.

Pressure came from people of color from their families as well as on campus. Victor, Patti, Audre and Linde all feared losing connection to their family if they came out, particularly to older generations who the student felt could not culturally understand the gay identity. Nadine said she was considered the White person in her family because she used language

and had interests that seemed foreign to them. She felt like they were disappointed with her being gay. On campus, a subtle normalization process occurred in which the community of color was organized around a “person of color” identity rather than a single-race community such as African-American or Asian. Intra-group diversity was minimized in the interest of solidarity. Queer students of color and bi-racial students, which describes more than one third of the participants of this study, were often “othered” in the climate of the university where the bounds of race were narrowly defined.

Some students such as Linde, Nadine, and Patti said they had to contend with the impression from others that their presence at the university or certain opportunities that were extended to them were not merit-based but due to their race. In other words, the queer students of color were accepted into college because of their race or that they were hired for campus jobs or offered leadership opportunities because of their race. Those are examples of the ways Patti, Nadine and Linde thought being a person of color had a negative impact on their student experience. When asked as follow up whether their race had a positive impact on their life, they talked about gaining material access to resources such as scholarships and leadership positions. That was a part of the bargain for Nadine, who felt cultural capital could insulate her from discrimination or bias.

Roger had a sense of second-guessing and self-doubt about his race and his sexual orientation. His life within the Fraternity & Sorority system created a general silence around of the meaning of difference of sexual orientation and race. His race and sexual orientation simply don't matter any more than his identity as student or a fraternity member. Discussing his race seemed to invoke images of surveys and forms in which he could not find “bubbles” to fill in that accurately described him. He wondered if he was Asian enough, because of the

geographic location of the Philippines vis-a-vis Asia. He also felt he needed to have a wealth of Asian knowledge and connections to an Asian community outside of his family. He also lamented that he didn't know enough about the diverse experience of LGBT individuals. He prefers not to use the word queer to describe himself because it implies a membership within a larger community. It took learning about a spate of deaths of LGBT youth to make him even feel having a visible presence in the organized LGBT community would be valuable.

These quotes reveal how students contend with feelings that they are not enough:
Um, yeah I reflect the Spanish side a lot but it's just that I don't speak Spanish so I don't like to tell people a lot. (China)

Um, I mean, I don't know if I've had more opportunities open to me because I am a person of color but most of the time when I'm going for something, again, the last thing on my mind is race. So I don't want to think that I've been put in a position just because of my race. I would like to think that's based on my qualifications and that's how I do things. I focus on qualifications and why I'd be good for something. (Reggie)

I don't know. Some of them are, some identities are easier to pinpoint than others. Like, sexuality, there's very easy stratifications like LGBTQ. When it comes to, you know, being a man of color, there are, you know, as well as there being like a... I'm Asian, half Asian, I'm half... you know, even that is difficult because some people will say the Philippines doesn't count as Asian. Philippines doesn't count as Pacific Islander. What am I? That kind of thing. (Roger)

But at the same time it's uncomfortable because the courses [the Vietnamese professor] teaches are on Asian religion. And in that environment, people look at me like "Why are you here? You're Asian, don't you know about religion?" I'm afraid to talk about my experiences of these religions because if I practice it, it's different because we're looking at it through an academic lens. So then it's hard. (Victor)

QPOC Dream. Holding an integrated QPOC identity is expressed as an impossibility, a dream or "ideal," or something not achievable at this college, whether because of lack of intersectional spaces or lack of sheer numbers. QPOC spaces are most commonly imagined as POC spaces than LGBT space. I believe this theme best fit the psychological dimension of campus climate because it refers to the extent to which students feel singled out and perceive

institutional support/commitment related to diversity as individuals and the psychological affect it has on them.

Bob did not engage in frequent discussion or conscious thought about his sexuality. He mentioned that the interview for this study was the first time he talked at length about his sexuality. Bob lived in a general silence around the meaning and impact of his multiple identities. He was an active student leader in one of the racial identity student organizations but his knowledge of LGBT issues was limited.

Although Bob was one of the students like China, Audre, and Adrian, who said they did not frequently engage in formal talk about identities, they were likely to talk among their friends about their identities and receive information through myth, rumor and gossip about what it is to be queer. This silence was what constituted the queer person of color dream phenomenon.

These students talked about a desire to hold salient, fully integrated queer person of color identities but did not have many examples of when they felt it. Students such as Victor, Alex, and China did report being sought out by closeted students of color for friendship, support and information. These relationships and private discussions provided brief glimpses of a shared QPOC identity and a fellowship that, until the participant's friend can come out publicly, could only remain temporary and theoretical.

Students from urban communities where there were larger populations of queer people of color, such as Audre, Blanche, China, Sinath and Adrian, were able to share stories about those communities. They used those frames of reference in order to describe environments in which the queer people of color experience was normalized. They pined for spaces like that at their university. Furthermore, acknowledgement by most of the students that be-

ing queer was different for people of color than it was for White people held the promise that a queer of color identity could be achieved.

The study's participant's thoughts on the possibility of a QPOC identity is conveyed in these quotes:

You know, I am Latino and I am a homosexual man. I don't really keep it separate. I mean it's easier going to events for [campus racial identity organizations] and stuff like that because, I don't know, I feel like there's more events for that rather than for being LGBT events. (Adrian)

I think they would be... I think they're separate cuz. I mean, they're like together in a way but I see them as separate, especially in this university because... er like, just in general when people see you, they're not gonna think, like, what's your sexual orientation first. They're like, oh, what his race is, like he's Black. So I'm gonna put him in this box because of his race rather than his sexual orientation. (Bob)

I would say so QPOC is a great idea but it's just getting people to go and be out. Not "out," but out. I don't know where the gay girls are! (China)

I think I would probably say, I have a hard time putting the, I've never looked at my experience being a queer person of color as its own separate thing. There are opportunities to get involved with different students of color. There is that separate thing because it's so small. And then there's the queer thing. (Patti)

Self-Advocacy. By virtue of serving as positive examples of their identities, insisting on honoring their whole selves, and educating others by speaking up to interrupt bias or discrimination, students become their own best advocates. Their personal integrity and courage make them influential change agents. I believe this theme best fit the psychological dimension of campus climate since their perceptions of institutional support or commitment related to diversity dictates the extent to which they must become their own advocate.

Roger advocates for himself within the Fraternity & Sorority community. For Roger, college has meant learning about himself and his identities. His sense of individual power and self-actualization has increased. He thinks knowledge about the history of both his racial

identity and his sexual orientation and the words and concepts used to describe them can help him advocate for change in his environment. He is proud of being a strong model within his fraternity by initiating policy or program changes that draw attention to language and civility.

Many students felt misunderstood because of their sexual orientation and race. They welcomed conversations that allowed them to educate others. In so doing, the students open up a space of safety for themselves and become their own advocates. Being their own advocates is so necessary because students feel that racism and homophobia are run-of-the-mill. Nadine, for example, said she was microaggressed every day. She and Reggie and China all discussed having to tolerate homophobic comments or myths about their sexuality and gender identity from brazen people who make ignorant comments. Sometimes they use the opportunity as a “teachable moment” but they must balance a desire to educate others about their identities with being tired of being the token educator.

These quotes feature the ways students are frequently their own self advocates:

I don't think anything, like, if there is anything that I feel is lacking or if I feel there's a piece of the information that was left out, I will raise my hand and, like, bring it up. (Audre)

Myself and the two other queer identified [sorority] sisters worked to add into our by-laws antidiscrimination policy that included gender identity and sexual identity and that everyone else was on board and supportive of us and happy for us and approved it and on chapter level that's where we were at. Included gender identity and sexual orientation isn't something we would discriminate with and that's me feeling really comfortable with myself. (Patti)

I'm not an issue. But I'm causing them to rethink their own ways. Like they see me as a homosexual male. You know, in the same groups that they are, taking on the same roles that they are, and they see how I am as a homosexual, countering or contradicting or um, going against what they may have preconceived to begin with. I think that's helpful to them. (Roger)

It does kind of feel like a compromise sometimes. Because right now those are both pretty salient identities for me. And they're pretty connected at this point in my life. And I certainly do my best to sort of bring up both of those things. Depending on the situation, I bring up the other identity. (Sellie)

Summary

The various challenge and support in the campus environment and how the institution deals with them influence the psychological dimension of campus climate (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998). Too much challenge without proper support resulted in many students feeling a persistent sense that they carried the burden of diversity alone (Not enough). Some of the queer students of color wanted to fit in and feel like a normal member of the dominant society (Human) but that desire actually undermined their ability to identify and create a community of queer people of color (QPOC Dream). Nevertheless, many of them did express a desire for more opportunities to express themselves and the complex ways they were coming to understand their identities (No Binary). Many of them described a critical awareness of fairness and equity (Development) and growing awareness of their own sphere of influence (Self-Advocacy). In those spheres, their identities turn from vulnerabilities to assets (Involvement as Safety).

Sociohistoric Dimension

Sociohistoric forces include events or issues in the larger society, nearly always originating outside the campus, that influence how people view diversity in society. They are not commonly measured or considered in campus climates, however can have a bearing on the way the campus is perceived (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998). For example, national events such as recession, the G.I. Bill, or shifts in access to higher education broadly or local politics such as the passage of LGBT-friendly laws can stimulate discussion or activities within the campus. In this study, the sociohistoric dimension of campus climate is shaped by issues within the themes I identify as Entrenched, Family, Off Campus, and Wo/man.

Entrenched. Heterosexism and racism are commonplace in the culture and campus environment. Students frequently referred to bias or discrimination being learned or inescapable, not isolated to the university campus. They have a high tolerance for this sort of subtle or overt bias and systemic inequity. There were also frequent instances in which their minority status made them feel helpless or powerless. I believe this theme best fit the sociohistorical dimension of campus climate because it exists within the world outside of the institution and campus but has bearing upon the climate(s) on campus.

The cumulative impact of feeling like a minority took a toll on study participants. Students described the dynamic way their emotional psychological sense of safety could change from moment to moment. Nadine, for example, described living with a general feeling of being the odd one out or the “other.” She said once one is othered, there’s nothing else that one can say that is taken seriously or that matters. Those feelings are echoed in the stories of other students, particularly those in which they suddenly felt isolated in a crowd of

White people in a space. For example Adrian and Blanche experienced it in the classroom, Alex in a night club, Victor in a student group meeting.

Linde would experience the sudden shift so frequently she referred to it as “the game.” She would turn to a friend and say, “let’s play the game,” which meant they would scan the room and track how many people of color they could identify. “The game” became shorthand for the way her mood was affected and her ability to be fully present.

Alternately students described a similar phenomenon of feeling isolated in people of color spaces because of their sexual orientation. Sinath discussed it happening with a group of friends talked about relationships. Victor felt it in student organization meetings. Sellie said she was accustomed to feeling like her identity was compromised or left out in order to be present as a person of color.

These words offer a glimpse into the extent to which students feel homophobia or racism are facts of life:

Geographically there are areas of the country that aren’t as accepting of the identities that I possess. ... No matter where you go, someone’s going to make a comment or say something. (Patti)

I mean of course, I’m walking around and I do hear the regular “Oh my god, that was so gay!” and “Like, stop being such a fag,” or something. And like, you know I pick and choose. You know, if I call it out, I call it out. If I don’t, I don’t. (Reggie)

And it was weird to be the only brown person in class and have the experience of a teacher mentioning something specific to people of color and sort of looking at you and hoping that you’ll clarify something or comment on it. Now it doesn’t affect me as much. I used to get really upset when I felt as though they were expecting me to say something but now I just sort of, I don’t let it bother me as much. (Sellie)

Well, specifically being on a predominantly White campus people kinda think, they have a bunch of stigmas and stereotypes of, you know, African-Americans. So, specifically them. Like some people will make a comment in the classroom and not really realize how ignorant it is or they might just blurt out without actually thinking of the harm that they’re bringing to someone else. (Sinath)

Family. Students talked about the influence and importance of family in their understanding of their identities. Family relationships influenced their two identities differently. For example, their racial identities commonly reflected their parent's lineages and a desire to embrace their parent's backgrounds. Conversely, their sexual orientation was often constrained by conditional acceptance from parents and other family members. Mothers emerge as crucial relationships and religion, typically due to religious reservations. I believe this theme best fits the sociohistorical dimension of campus climate because it exists within the world outside of the institution and campus but has bearing upon an individual's perception of the climate(s) on campus.

This pattern was observed in all of the interviews with women in this study and 90% of men, making women minimally more likely to discuss being close and strongly influenced by their families. An early analysis of preliminary codes revealed this pattern and it remained strong enough to note here. Also notable, for students such as Nadine, Adrian, Alex and Blanche, family pressures that influenced their feelings about their sexual orientation were intertwined with religion. (Alex, Nadine and Adrian all came from Catholic families; Blanche's was Baptist).

Both their sexual orientation and racial identification were rooted in the races of their parents and the responsibility to honor their families. Alex and Audre's family stories each included immigration from the Dominican Republic and for Blanche's African American family, surviving economic poverty and disenfranchisement.

Their families also had deep religious conviction that impacted their identities. Alex associated the pressure she felt from her family to marry a man, have children and live a het-

eronormative life to religious messages. Blanche went so far as to say one could not be Black without being religious. Adrian studied the Bible so he could understand the arguments his family members and community were making to condemn his queer identity. These pressures and religious barriers can be obstacles to the sense of honor and responsibility that people felt (see the Integrity theme) and inhibited the development of their identity, whether race or sexual orientation. In Nadine's family, Catholicism influenced their reservations about her sexual orientation. The family pressures led her to be strategically visible about her coming out; identifying people to come out to but generally not talking to others. It was a choice; a strategy to avoid complications and preserve her relationships. She and Blanche were the only two students who said they believed in God.

Some of the students in this study attended their university in spite of their parents' discomfort with the racial climate and lack of cultural sensitivity. Mothers hold particular power over students' expectations or feelings about the racial climate at college. Alex, Blanche, Adrian, and Victor all shared poignant stories about their mother's negative reaction to the low numbers of people of color at their university.

Parents also influence sexual orientation. Linde was the only student who was not out to her parents. Victor, Nadine, Selle and Audre all maintained a sort of "don't ask, don't tell" stalemate with their parents. Again, mothers emerge as particularly influential. The mothers of China, Patti, and Sinath each exert subtle pressure to subdue their sexual orientation by remarking when the student is being too outwardly visible.

One can see from these quotes that students' identities are inextricably linked to family:

It sucks to not be fully open to my parents. Like, I'm out to my boyfriend's parents. Like they probably know more about me than my parents do. It's just really unfortu-

nate that I can't come out to my parents. (Linde)

Um, I am very, like... I go back and forth all the time. Growing up, my family was, like, "You're like the White person in the family, blah." It's just really annoying because I dress differently to everyone else. I listen to different music. I'm interesting, interested in different music, like, outside of the spectrum of, like, growing up in a Caribbean household, kind of. (Nadine)

Even like, my mother, she's uncomfortable with it. So when I talk to her, she's like, "Oh I wanted you to get married," and it's pretty much like I let her down. (Sinath)

But when I came here my mom told me that she was really scared. Cuz that woman is really strong. She went through war; she survived labor camps; she kept getting imprisoned and things like that during the war as a teenager. And then traveling across the world to a new place... She was more afraid here than I've ever seen her. It was really sad because she was like, "there are no Asian people. There are only White people. You're going to get attacked or something. She was concerned. (Victor)

Off Campus. Some students express that campus can not be understood without consideration of surrounding area. They either are driven off campus to find the sort of support or resources they can't find on campus or they avoid off campus because of perceived educational and socio economic differences. Most frequently they go off campus for LGBT presence. I believe this theme best fit the sociohistorical dimension of campus climate because it exists within the world outside of the institution and campus but has bearing upon the climate(s) on campus.

Alex was one of the students who sought out community off campus, having been dissatisfied with the on campus community. Alex had considered the region around the university before attending the school. The information she gleaned from university Admissions representatives and online websites led her to believe the area around campus had a large population of LGBT people.

Despite the high visibility of the queer community, Alex was disappointed to find herself feeling isolated within the predominantly White off campus LGBT community.

Sellie, Adrian, and Audre all also expressed dissatisfaction with the off campus LGBT community's lack of racial diversity.

Other students such as Linde and Nadine also found that the off campus environment was not the refuge they expected. The both said they encountered mundane acts of bias at work. Nadine said she felt as though she missed out on job opportunities because the business wants to attract a White clientele. One of Linde's supervisors made remarks questioning her English language abilities. Roger also felt the off campus environment was a place more likely to be discriminated against.

These remarks illuminate how students engage and talk about the off campus environment in relation to campus:

But there's no queer, no gay bars. Like there's one queer event that happens, which happened last night ... And being at [that monthly queer event] is like when I am really aware of my racial identity. Because this is basically the queer community [off campus]. (Alex)

Once you step [off campus], the percent of people of color that you see goes down by like double so it's very different. And I've heard a lot of stories. I've never actually experienced one myself, thankfully. But I've heard a lot of stories of people that, because of their color they don't get allowed into bars or some stuff like that. So I've heard a lot of those stories. I've heard of people like saying very disrespectful things to people of color. (Audre)

Even [off campus], like the way we consider things at this university as students, is different than what people would, you know, language might be different downtown. (Roger)

I felt that I still didn't have a sense of queer community. Whether on campus or off so I thought working [at the LGBT identity center] would at least... not necessarily get me involved with the queer community but at least know what was happening. But then I found that queer community off campus through other people. So now it's just sort of a place that I work. It's not really serving a purpose. ... It's not. Because not many people come there much. There aren't that many people of color. And that's what I find I'm missing in my life. (Sellie)

Wo/man. I believe this theme best fit the sociohistorical dimension of campus climate because it exists within the world outside of the institution and campus but has bearing upon an individual's perception of the climate(s) on campus. Many of the women in this study had close friends who were gay men. This finding is a slightly surprising, given a persistent myth in the larger LGBT community that gay men and lesbians can not relate to one another. When addressing their concept of their own gender identity and expression, women were commonly comfortable with parts of their personality or interests that others would interpret as or associate with being masculine.

Furthermore, women exhibited a more nuanced and complex attitude toward their sexuality. Sellie, for example, preferred to label her sexuality queer because although she was in a lesbian relationship, she could imagine being in a relationship with a man. (Although she was careful to say she was emotionally, not sexually, attracted to men.). Audre said she found men attractive too but she was not interested in being a relationship with one. She and China both empathized with the particular social barriers/challenges of being a gay male. They felt a need to acknowledge their feelings toward men by using queer rather than "lesbian."

The exceptions to this theme were Linde & Alex. Linde, simply because she spoke very little about men and that lack of discussion was conspicuous. Alex did mention she had spoken to men who felt women had more difficulty tolerating the racial climate on campus than men. She felt that belief was more evidence that women in general carried a heavier burden than men. Other women in the study actually reached the opposite conclusion; that men were so burdened by masculinity that they were incapable of expressing or being attuned to the ways the climate impacted them. Another notable exception is that Victor was

the only man who remarked on masculinity. He also speculated that men may lack the language or education to talk about their identities.

This particular gendered analysis can be observed through this sampling of quotes:

I am very attracted to women. But I can also say, like, that guy looks really good. I'm never gonna be attracted to him, be sexually attracted to him but I can say, like, you know, I can appreciate that he's a handsome guy. You know? And um, feminine boys are just very, very, like, I don't know, it's just like, it's something I like. Feminine boys. But just to like, look at, not be sexually attracted to. (Audre)

I like the gay men! Cuz the gay women, they're just more interested in being thugs. The gay men, they're into modeling, they're into, like, chill stuff. They're not into doing the negativity stuff. They're into, like, modeling, fashion... And the gay women, they're into, well from what I saw, they're into selling drugs or beating somebody else up just to get their girlfriend or just... they're just so negative, the gay women. That's why I don't really associate with them. To be honest I don't have too many gay girlfriends that's really close to me. (Blanche)

It sucks to be Black and a man. Sorry, but to be Black and gay and a male... sometimes you just got to change. It's hard. It's harder, I guess, not to be accepted, but to just go about your daily life. (China)

I guess it was easier being a female as opposed to being a gay male. And being a lesbian is more acceptable than being a gay male. (Sinath)

Summary

Comments students made about the greater American society or culture suggest they believed heterosexism and racism and other biases are to unavoidable (Entrenched). For several, the choice to attend their university was informed by the knowledge that that region of the country enjoyed a reputation for being tolerant of LGBT identities. The reality, however, was that the racial makeup of campus community was just as likely to lead to feelings of isolation (Off-campus). Such a discovery is not surprising, given that other dimensions of their identity outside of race or sexual orientation influence students. Women, for example, were more likely to empathize and embrace their masculine traits and members of their communi-

ty than men were to even mention the status of women (Wo/Man). Another salient force impacting their identities was the role they played in their families. Whether they were out at home or not, students commonly reported feeling pressure from their family to deny their queer identity (Family). Studies of campus climate rarely if ever account for the non-campus forces such as family pressures, regional or national issues, and other aspects of campus climate's sociohistorical dimension that impact individual's perception of their social identities (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998).

Compositional or Structural Dimension

The absolute numbers of diverse groups that will determine the context for how students experience the campus creates the compositional or structural dimension of campus climate (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998). For example, the number of minorities, women, or LGBT people on campus; the percentage of visible diverse groups or equitable percentage in various disciplinary areas, majors, senior leadership, research, etc. In this study, the themes that emerge from observing the data from a structural dimension are the ones I call Bill of Goods, Campus Resources, Classroom Climate, Context, Faculty/Staff Mentorship, Hypersensitivity, Integrity, and QPOC Loneliness.

Bill of Goods. Students feel as though they were deceived by the university's ability or commitment to support them and affirm their racial identity. Specifically targeted services that are highlighted during admissions process are deceptive. I believe this theme best fit the compositional or structural dimension of campus climate, which extends to the services that exist to serve as a part of the institution's overall commitment to recruit and retain the population.

The reality of attending the university was shocking for most students. Students such as Linde, Sellie, Nadine and Victor said although they were accustomed to attending schools or living in environments that were predominantly White, their university was different. Students who clung to their friends of color and created close networks such as Audre, Adrian and China, felt like they wouldn't need to stay with their friends if the university did a better job at providing support to students of color. Nadine felt the lack of institutional culture that supported diversity fed the sense that students were only there to fulfill Affirmative Action quotas. Students report that during the Admissions recruiting process they were not shown an

accurate representation of the campus because they saw presentations that were specifically highlighting other people of color and the few campus resources that serve students of color. Furthermore, the students were in need of support for more than just their racial identity. For example, many of the students came from low-income urban environments and were not prepared for the different cultural world in the rural setting in which the university was located and the affluence and class privilege that their peers exhibited. This lack of acknowledgment that they would need additional support only fed the students' dissatisfaction with the university and the feeling that the school's promises to students of color were empty.

Presented here are some statements that convey the deception students perceived in the institution's outreach efforts:

I remember coming here during [an Admissions program for students of color]. And the thing with that, I guess because most of the people that would be your hosts are normally people of color. So you're used to them and you're around them the whole time. You don't really see what's actually here. Then you come here and you're like, "Whoa! What happened here?" (Adrian)

When I came up, I came up with [an Admissions program for students of color]. And they bring you up and you have all your friends around you so you don't feel like what it is to just be you. Like, just one Black person in a sea of White people. Just you! (Audre)

Being involved in different leadership stuff on campus I've found that our campus is interested in promoting we are a diverse campus maybe more than we really are. (Patti)

Well, so I think there are benefits [to being a person of color at the university] but at what cost are those benefits? (Linde)

Campus Resources. Students vary in their use of campus offices or services. Some only seek them out for transactional purposes; to conduct businesses or perform a specific service. At the other end of the spectrum are students who see the offices as refuges and spaces that nurture their identities, allowing them spaces in which they feel they matter. I be-

lieve this theme best fit the compositional or structural dimension of campus climate, which extends to the services that exist to serve as a part of the institution's overall commitment to recruit and retain the population.

Students such as Linde, Blanche, Reggie, and China appreciated the staff and community of students who volunteered or worked for the campus identity centers. Linde in particular said the staff treat her like a person and don't reduce her to one identity. Roger's experience contrasts because he felt his experience with the centers was that they did reduce him to one identity. Generally the salience of one identity or another significantly influenced the extent to which students used the campus resources. Perhaps not surprisingly given the role of the primary investigator and their comfort in being interviewed for this study, most -- although not all -- students in this study were more likely to regularly spend time in or seek services at the racial identity center. Notably Audre, Adrian, Roger, Patti were the least likely students to seek help or services at the racial identity center. Also notable, this theme is strongest among women, who are 17% more likely to utilize campus resources than the men in this study.

Generally students in this study of queer students of color did not feel comfortable in LGBT-focused spaces. Few attended meetings of the LGBT student organization and even fewer actually attended the meetings of the small QPOC group for students faculty and staff. The sample represented a spectrum of experiences with the LGBT identity center. At one end was Sellie and China who had each worked in the LGBT identity center for at least one semester and decided not to return. At the other end was Nadine, whose first time entering the LGBT identity center was the day of the interview for this study, and Adrian, who had never entered the LGBT identity center.

Sinath, Reggie, Alex and Linde, frequented both offices. Linde was particularly aware of the fact that having separate and distinct centers for race, sexuality, and gender fed a climate in which identities remained distinct and separate, while Alex just seemed to appreciate all of the centers and made regular visits to each. The queer-affirming campus resources that was most frequently used by the students was housing options. The campus featured at least two residential learning communities that focused on creating inclusive spaces for LGBT students. Victor, Adrian, China, and Audre had all lived in the LGBT theme housing at one point and spoke of it as key to their satisfaction with the university. Audre, in fact, became the Resident Advisor for one of the LGBT-themed residential learning communities.

Here are some students' views on which campus' resources and services they found most helpful:

I know that next year it's gonna be like me and some of my friends. My friend is gonna be the RA. So I'm gonna be living with her in one of those [LGBT theme housing]. I feel like it's gonna be good, you know? People I know and people I feel connected to. (Adrian)

Like I know I go to the [LGBT identity center]. Like, I used to go a lot. I know I talked to the staff a lot. I felt like they were really inviting there so I just talked to them in general and stuff. But I never really had the opportunity to talk about issues like that. Because, like I said, I feel so uneducated about [LGBT] issues so I mean I could definitely, I feel like if I would, like if I sent them an email or wanted to contact them about issues like that I definitely feel like they would want to talk to me about that. (Bob)

I don't know if it's necessarily special. But it definitely is giving the stigma that it's different. It's this, like, "Well if I wanna talk to someone about something, I'll come to the [racial identity center] and I know someone will, someone there will get it." But if I got to a different department, they won't necessarily get it. (Linde)

This year was the only year I got involved with the LGBT identity center. I am involved in a program that brings community leaders together and talk about their identities. So it's more comfortable to talk about my leadership experience and my connection with the community here. So I enjoy it. If it was a student group I would not

go. But because it's well facilitated and it's really structured, um, I prefer that and I really enjoy working with the staff. (Victor)

Classroom Climate. Students commonly describe the classroom as the location where they most frequently encounter bias or discrimination through microaggressions. Majors often make the difference between a classroom experience devoid of discussion of identities or one in which social identities are infused into the curriculum. They also are likely to incorporate their own identities into classroom assignments. They are put in the position of having to educate their professors and peers. I believe this theme best fit the compositional or structural dimension of campus climate, due to the numbers of minorities within a major, in a classroom, or represented within the curriculum.

For many of the students, going to class is an exercise in putting on a public face that feels foreign and uncomfortable. Linde and Adrian both mentioned having to actively concentrate on the course material while monitoring their verbal and/or body language in order to avoid being microaggressed by someone perceiving their response to be stereotypical. Victor discussed being singled out and being expected to know more than others in his Asian studies course because he was Asian. He and others second-guess their responses to situations and themselves.

Students often said that microaggressions would be barriers to their full participation of the class. Victor and Linde both concluded that it's impossible to experience identity and academic development simultaneously at the university. Other students such as Sinath and China decided to bring their identities into the course themselves by adapting class assignments and papers to topics that mattered to their identities. Still others such as Blanche and Patti actively sought out and enrolled in courses that reflected their identities. Nadine also said she

chose classes that allowed her to learn about her identities and to explore them through research or class assignments.

All of these responses reflected the idea that the classroom was not commonly a place in which students see themselves and their experience reflected. It frequently fell on them to speak up in class when a classmate needed to be corrected or their experience was not being acknowledged.

Teachers were not always reliable in correcting people who might say insensitive remarks or microaggressions. It helped if the professor makes their role clear because it is not generally agreed upon or understood why they are being silent. Linde, Audre, and Alex shared stories of classroom incidents in which they had to be the ones who corrected the professor.

Consider these revealing student accounts of the classroom climate:

We live in a society where, OK, the norm is people are White, the norm is people are hetero. It's only further perpetuated in the classroom. So, I'm paying forty grand a year to sit here and not feel safe. Like I'm feeling disrespected. Like, I'm paying forty grand to feel like I don't belong here on multiple levels. ... I mean the classroom is easily the number one place where I feel the most unsafe. (Linde)

I'm lacking that experience in my life. I need more of it. More people of color. I think it's my major. There are too many White people in my major and not enough people of color. So unfortunately I have to find it elsewhere. (Sellie)

Um, in the classroom, I feel like overall, there's a huge lack of identity. I feel like when they talk about LGBT people, they just group everyone together. And I feel like a lot of the research that they have's on White queer people and it's not on, uh, people of color that also identify as queer. (Sinath)

It's like, we're so busy in class and stuff why would we spend time learning about Asian American history or things like [identity development]. (Victor)

Context. One of the most influential factors in identity salience is presence of others who hold that identity. Overall the students perceived the university as a safe place but the

degree of safety depended on the identity. Since race was more frequently salient than sexual orientation for most of the students, they expressed more comfort and confidence describing the places and times with a safe racial climate. Students read the environment and adapted their conduct based on the particular identity that was salient in a given context. High race salience correlated with low numbers of people of color. Conversely, low sexual orientation salience correlated with large numbers of visible queer people. I believe this theme best fit the compositional or structural dimension of campus climate because increasing or decreasing numbers have an impact on the frequency at which they felt they were a minority.

Context is everything. Roger, for example, shared many stories from his upbringing before college. He said he was not frequently singled out for being Asian and thus it was never a salient identity for him. The only time that his Asian heritage manifested in his day-to-day life was after school when he would return home to his Filipino mother who would offer him foods that were a part of Asian cuisine. He speculated that he would feel more Asian if his friends, who were predominantly White, had made more frequent references to his being Asian. When he came to college, he became involved in the Fraternity & Sorority system, which is also predominantly White and seldom asks him to speak from or to an Asian experience.

Here, you can see the spectrum of spaces and situations in which the students are confronted with the need to be flexible and adapt:

No. Like being Black, I think about it up here. Back home, that don't mean nothing. Queer, I think about it at home but I don't really think about it up here. See how that is? Two different cities! (Blanche)

I had to learn certain things from my community about how I act in a queer environment in New York, compared to [this state], I guess. (China)

That was interesting that there are places where you assess it in the moment like on the train or the small things like when we're sitting in the car and I wanted to give her a kiss before we got out but I had to assess if I could; was there someone around or looking. (Patti)

I mean I guess in essence it can make you think a little bit more about your surroundings. Who you're around? What languages you're picking up, what attitudes you're picking up from people... it all really does depend on the certain type of race that you are. (Reggie)

Faculty/Staff Mentorship. Students discuss their relationship to staff/faculty who have their identities. Students are likely to seek out and open up more to faculty/staff who share their racial identity than they are who share their queer identity. I believe this theme best fit the compositional or structural dimension of campus climate, which extends to the services that exist to serve as a part of the institution's overall commitment to recruit and retain the population. Notably, this theme is strongest among women, who are 15% more likely to develop relationships with faculty and staff than the men in this study.

Queer students of color in this study such as Bob or Blanche, Audre and Adrian, rely more on their friends for information than professionals. The role of staff or faculty who they can trust is crucial. Staff and faculty who share the student's identities may be more likely to gain access to the students' networks and make them aware of resources they could benefit from.

Bob did say he felt it was important for students to be able to interact with staff who share their identities. In particular, he appreciated staff of color but he said the more identities staff share with a student, the more likely he thought students would seek out staff as a resource. However not all students felt the same way. China, Patti and Victor, for example said the identities of their student advisors or professors mattered little.

The role of faculty and staff support and relationships in the students' experiences shows from these testimonies:

It's very important to have faculty of color so they can advocate for you and somebody to talk to. I've only had that one Black professor. And he was the coolest. I talked to him my freshman year, Spring semester. He really identified with me a lot. He has family where I'm from. So we connected with that and his lectures were really deep and I really looked up to him as a professor. (Blanche)

It's good to see, I guess, staff of color but it's also better to see like they identify as queer because I feel like they bring something different to the university. I don't know, it's interesting, it's... oh, hell, what's the word. It's um, I feel like it is important because like you have different back stories and I feel like you could talk to those certain people. ... So I guess it's just, like, having the ability to relate to them about different topics. (Bob)

But I'm just saying it's nice to know that somebody else is queer and you can learn from them and they're older, I guess. Like, she was talking about her wife and stuff. And it's refreshing to me to see like when we're at events and they're there with their girlfriends and they can actually have a life. They have a wife and kids and I like that. And not be afraid to come out and to go places and to feel comfortable around other people and don't really have a care. I like that and that really made me feel comfortable I think. And I'm close to the queer people of color staff. (China)

I think it makes a difference in how comfortable I am talking to them. Or confiding in them for guidance in a particular situation. I find that as an older student there is a level of comfort in talking to faculty or staff that are people of color. (Sellie)

Hypersensitivity. Their target identities and the extreme racial disparity (in numbers) created a hyper sensitivity in which one is constantly monitoring one's individual actions. They felt as though they live in a fishbowl and that they could be discriminated against at any moment. A Specifically, a frequent form of discrimination the students discussed was people treating them based on a stereotype. The generalized anxiety or apprehension that minorities can feel when they are behaving in a way consistent with a negative stereotype has been referred to as "stereotype threat" (Aronson & Steele, 1995). I believe the theme of hypersensitivity best fits the compositional or structural dimension of campus climate because increas-

ing or decreasing numbers can have an impact on stereotype threat. The presence of a diverse minority population can prompt more variances from a stereotype.

Linde shared many stories about how she found herself constantly second-guessing herself and wondering if people were treating her in a certain ways because of her race. Many of Adrian and Alex's experiences also reflected this hypersensitivity and awareness of bias in the campus environment.

Linde in particular said she frequently felt as though she was being reduced to her race. It was a common occurrence in the classroom when her peers and professors either overtly ask her to represent people of color in general or other Asians specifically or through their insensitivity prompt her to speak up. Consequently, Linde articulated an experience of feeling policed or under surveillance. Alex was also especially sensitive to injustices or slights stemming from her gender.

Hyperawareness was also exhibited in Roger, Patti and Reggie's preoccupation with the way that they were perceived within and outside of the Fraternity and Sorority system. It can also be seen in Blanche, Bob Nadine, and China's concern about the rumormill and gossip that policed the boundaries of race and how to perform their gender. Students were very careful about their actions and commonly felt the most relaxed in racial affinity spaces.

Presented here are the words of the students as they grappled with hypersensitivity: I feel like as a person of color, like I do need to think about it more. I need to be more aware of how I'm being perceived than they do. Like they, even though I don't care. Like I still go out and be radical and protest all the time but I know that everyone's looking at me differently than they would see, like my, like the White members protesting. Cuz I'm more dangerous, of course. (Alex)

Being a queer person of color is twice as hard, you never know what the reason of being discriminated against is. It just boggles the mind. Because you can either be discriminated against because you're a person of color or because you're queer. You

never know. And for some reason you put that hurt on yourself and you're like, what is it? Which one of the things that I am was it that offended you so bad? (Audre)

Like, it is everything about me. Because it is visible, um, that that makes me wonder... I am always concerned, "are people always looking at this aspect of me?" Or when I'm in [the store] and only buying stuff from, like, the Asian aisle, or, like, Asian produce, you know what I mean. (Linde)

Uh, it just makes me aware of myself and my surroundings. And makes me think about, I guess, my actions. And just how I interact with other people. (Sinath)

Integrity. Students think of both their queer and/or racial identity as a way to live authentically and maintain personal accountability. They like to be in control of the public perception and the ways they are visible as a queer person. Being out and open about their sexuality is a matter of authenticity and self-empowerment. They may also feel responsibility to be a model to others in their racial or queer community. I believe this theme best fit the compositional or structural dimension of campus climate because the test of their responsibility and authenticity is how firmly they maintain their identity in the face of the larger population.

Loyalty and integrity was important for Roger. Underlying his ambivalence about the proper way to identify his race, one can hear a refusal to deny or dismiss both sides of his family. His mother is Filipino and he has extended family in the Philippines. His father is White and U.S.-born. Roger was reticent to call himself any race in particular. Any attempt to pin him down would result in him getting confused about what "box" or "bubble" to place himself in. However he would digress into stories in which he would give equal consideration to his White cousins and aunts and his Filipino family in the Philippines. He felt a responsibility to represent all of his loved ones in all that he did. He was also protective of his fraternity brothers and felt as though he needed to honor them.

For many students, their identity was a matter of personal integrity. They felt a responsibility to honor their family or the legacy of ancestors. Sinath, for example, was proud of the Civil Rights gains and upward mobility of African Americans and felt as though she wanted to contribute to that by pursuing a college degree. Even Roger, Reggie and Patti, for whom race was not a particularly salient identity, wished to be seen as individuals of distinction and respect who transcended social identities.

For Alex, holding a queer identity with integrity was about being tolerant and inclusive and allowing people the same freedom to identify that she wanted for herself. Others such as Bob, Blanche, Selle or China were keenly aware of the social stigma around LGBT identities and the importance of a good reputation. Reggie and Roger also wanted to control and nurture their public identity.

Students feel a sense of responsibility to maintain healthy identities and wear them proudly, as these quotes show:

Yeah, I'm like what is that. That doesn't make any sense. And [my friends] are just like, "Oh, they're just under cover," and I'm like, why? I feel like, I was told it was a majority of people that are like that. And I'm like, they should feel comfortable coming out and it would probably change everything. You know, if there's all these resources out there why would you stay and keep it in and not show who you are as a person? (Adrian, speaking of closeted queer people of color)

Yeah, I'm fine with people thinking that I am gay. I actually wrote this sentence: "You're scared that I'm gay? Let me terrify you, I am." I'm completely fine with people assuming or knowing. I like what I am and if you don't, I'm sorry. We could've been friends. (Audre)

I just think that a lot of the growth and identity development and a lot of the non-academic experiences and learning that I've had here came at a cost. I think I would have done much better at a different institution where I didn't feel this drive to do all the things that I've done and all the things that I still wish that I could do. It's this sort of, I need to make it better for other people. I need to work, I need to change this institution so that when I leave it's that much closer to being a safe environment and more equal. (Linde)

Cuz I feel like, one, I don't, like, identify myself as, like, one thing. You know, I feel like I'm made up of all these different parts and it's really tiring to try to like constrain who you are, in a sense. And I feel like, when I'm here it's a lot easier and I don't have to pretend. (Nadine)

QPOC loneliness. Students tended to think they are the only QPOC student or that they are not typical QPOC students. At the same time, they are accustomed to feeling left out of popular constructions of gayness or the community of color. They were sometimes the only gay friend among their friends or felt isolated because they didn't know of other QPOC people. They associated QPOC identity with dating and the low dating pool. Dating required a level of vulnerability that may be too risky because it exposed them to feelings of stereotype threat. I believe this theme best fit the compositional or structural dimension of campus climate because it mostly stems from the low numbers of visible queer students of color.

This study's queer students of color are isolated from one another. Although their campus has a small organization that describes itself as a "social and support group" for queer staff, faculty and students of color, the students rarely attend its functions. Students such as Reggie, Adrian, China, and Alex, were aware of the group's weekly meetings but said they were too busy to attend. Alex and Audre both said they didn't attend because they already had queer friends of color. Reggie said the QPOC identity simply wasn't salient for him. Linde and Sellie stood out in exceptions within this sample of queer students of color because they did attend the group meetings.

The idea of QPOC loneliness raises interesting questions about the nature of climate and an individual's ability to fully assess it. Consider the fact that these students couldn't assess the climate without knowing others or feeling as though they are a part of a community or group. This observation poses challenges to conventional ways of conducting quantitative

and even qualitative surveying techniques that treat individuals in isolation. Some dimensions of climate may be able to be measured individually but other ones may be difficult to comprehend in isolation. For example Behavioral dimension questions such as “How frequently do you participate in Intergroup Dialogues?” may produce different answers than a Psychological question like “Would you be more likely to attend an Intergroup Dialogue alone or with a friend?”

Imagine the cumulative impact of that emerges from the following accounts of loneliness and isolation:

Um, yeah. There’s, like if it’s a non-queer event then it’s mostly gonna be a group of heterosexuals and I’ll be the queer person but then I’ll also be the queer person of color and they’re all like heterosexual White people so in all of these situations, like, there’s no winning. (Alex)

The community’s so small! The queer community’s small... They ALANA community is small, period. It’s like everybody just pass people around. They pass people around and it’s just like... it’s hard, man, it’s hard. Love-wise, it’s hard. (Blanche)

Because again, these are two identities – racial and sexual – that are surrounded with so many negative stereotypes and so many battles just to come and properly be yourself. And it’s so hard because you always feel as if you might be one in, like, the community or something. (Reggie)

I know I can be in a class and they’ll talk about LGBT people and in my mind, I’m like, “OK where are the people who look like me?” You know, “where is my voice?” ... It’s pretty much like, within American society it’s two negatives put against you. Not only are you a person of color but you’re also a queer person. It’s like two; it’s like a bunch of stigmas put together. It’s like doubling that on people. (Sinath)

Summary

Students were often pleasantly surprised at institution-supported programs that acknowledged the impact of their minority experience, such as Admissions programs for students of color and theme housing for LGBT students. These programs also reinforced the students’ sense of pride and fellowship (Integrity). However these affinity spaces sometimes

created a false sense of how many campus community members would understand or share the students' backgrounds. The discrete number or percentage of the student body who from diverse backgrounds who are visible in the community is a measurement of the compositional or structural dimension of campus climate (Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998). Inevitably, however, students would pick up on inconsistent levels of tolerance of difference as they interfaced with offices and organizations across campus (Context). They were frequently confronted with reminders of their minority status overtly (Microaggressions) or covertly by silence or lack of acknowledgement (QPOC Loneliness). Particularly in the classroom (Classroom climate), where LGBT-identified or people of color faculty or just faculty who interrupted insensitive words or conduct were notable exceptions to the rule (Faculty/Staff Mentorship). They felt pigeon-holed and singled out as the spokespersons for their racial or queer identity. The increased burden of having to represent their identities fed a sense of always needing determine when they were being tokenized (Hypersensitivity). That led many students to express a sense of regret or "buyer's" remorse for having chosen the university (Bill of Goods).

Summary of the climate perceptions of queer students of color

A total of twenty-nine overlapping themes capture the experiences and perceptions of campus climate revealed in interviews conducted with fourteen queer-identified undergraduate students. These themes collectively provide rich description of the dynamic physical, emotional and psychological environment the students inhabit. They are powerful individual agents who hold influence over and loyalty from their family and friends, deliberately crafting spaces of resistance and safety for themselves. They are vulnerable student population

who navigate classrooms and student groups that do not support them and constructions of identity that do not include them and at times stand as stark barriers to community and group identity formation.

In the next chapter, the discussion, I will further consider the results in light of the study's specific research questions. I will also discuss the various dimensions of campus climate and the research conducted on LGBQ students of color in higher education.

CHAPTER VII: Discussion

In this chapter, I provide a discussion of this dissertation's findings in light of the literature around queer college students of color and the research questions this study set out to answer. The following sections parallel the structure of the literature review in Chapter II. After each literature synopsis, I discuss which of this study's themes have the most to contribute to answering the study's research questions.

LGBTQ students in higher education

This project's first question was: How do queer college students of color perceive their identities and the support on campus for those identities? Research indicates youth are increasingly reporting more fluid understandings of sexuality (Rosario, Schrimshaw & Hunter, 2008) and colleges are seeing a higher visibility of the queer student population (Evans & D'Augelli, 1996; Rankin, 2003). Reports that specifically advocate for policies sensitive to the needs of queer students, show they typically experience discrimination and fear (Evans & D'Augelli, 1996; Rhoads, 1994, 1997; Sanlo, 1998), high rates of harassment, verbal and physical assault, and intimidation (Bieschke, Eberz, & Wilson, 2000; Brown, Clark, Gortmaker, & Robinson-Keilig, 2004). The overwhelming majority of the literature does not explicitly discuss the unique challenges of LGBTQ students of color as a subset of the LGBTQ population (Greene, 1994). Students of color are frequently among the populations of students who engage in same-sex behavior but deliberately subvert or reject labels associated with White LGBTQ identities (Alimahomed, 2010; Battle, Cohen, Warren, Fergerson, & Audam, 2002; Cohen, 1997; DeBlaere, Brewster, Sarkees & Moradi, 2010; Green, 1998; Poynter & Washington, 2005). People of color also go unnoticed or unstudied because their

cultures may have no words to describe their identities (Herek & Gonzalez-Rivera, 2006; Manalansan, 2003; Ryan, 2002; Walters, Evans-Campbell, Simoni, Ronquillo, & Bhuyan, 2006; Yang, 2008). This dissertation sought to address that gap in the literature by focusing on eliciting the stories of self-identified queer college students of color.

This study provides thick description to address this research question. First, more educational efforts focusing on or inclusive of marginalized identities and communities will make campus feel safer to the students in this study. Themes such as Campus Resources and Classroom Climate reveal that the queer students of color interviewed for this study appreciated opportunities to learn about their identities in and out of the classroom. Reggie, who prioritized his identity as student above his race and sexual orientation, lamented the apparent bias toward the experience of White LGBT populations or samples in the research presented in his classes. Sinath expressed a similar frustration with the dearth of academic resources that spoke to the experience of queer people of color. Students such as Roger, felt pressure to represent all people who shared their identities; or such as Linde, had to point out insensitive faculty comments. Well-informed and trained faculty and staff can go a long way to improve these students' classroom experience by bringing in under represented groups and voices so the students do not have to carry the burden. Co-curricular programs that provide students with the knowledge to name their experience can also be helpful, as this quote from Nadine demonstrates, "It's nice to know these words and these terms so I can say how I feel and express to other people very important information that I think that everyone should know about."

Students pointed out that the presence of a separate and distinct campus identity center specifically serving the needs of LGBTQA students and the needs of students of color but

no center that specifically addresses the intersection, creates a systemic inability to provide proper safe space for queer students of color. For these students, the environment does not allow them to fully synthesize or develop their identities and that inability created a condition in which their LGBTQ and racial identities were layered, rather than the popular conceptualization of identities as “dual” or “intersectional.” Layered seems a more accurate metaphor to capture the students’ ability to prioritize, de-prioritize and manage the identities without compromising them. Reggie, for example, had this to say about his identities: “I don’t see any relationship... I really don’t. They’re two different identities that are co-existing. Sometimes one is more at the forefront than the other.”

Cultural dimension

All of the students in this study were American citizens and were born in the United States. Many, however, come from immigrant families, meaning their parents emigrated to the U.S. Therefore their ideas and perceptions around race and sexual orientation are heavily informed by the non-U.S. culture. Their stories heavily influenced the No Binary, Family and Context themes.

The result of these various cultural lenses contributed to the No Binary because some students had difficulty negotiating their understanding of their race. For example, Audre, whose family was from the Dominican Republic, for example, talked about the various shades of skin color in her family that did not carry the same importance in terms of social advantages in the Dominican Republic that they did in the U.S.

Patti, whose family was from Trinidad discussed not being able to come out to her Trinidadian family members, thus contributing the Family theme. Specifically, the student’s experience of being able to mute the indicators in her dress, appearance and language that

may “out” her, suggest that her queer identity has defined and specific borders that can be negotiated.

Victor, whose family was from Vietnam shared stories about spaces in his community back home which he perceived as Asian spaces. However not all Asian spaces were spaces he considered safe for his queer identity. His experience strengthens the theme of Context.

LGBTQ students of color

It is difficult to understand how one dimension of queer students of color’s identities contributes to the development of others when both identities make them the target for discrimination or misunderstanding. Studies conducted in high schools reveal high rates of physical and verbal harassment stemming from racial prejudice in addition to sexuality (Gay, Lesbian, and Straight Educators Network, 2009a, 2009b). Both students of color and LGBT students are regularly disciplined and/or treated punitively by school administrators (see Himmelstein & Bruckner, 2010, for LGBT youth; see Johnson, Boyden, & Pizz, 2006, for youth of color). Gay-Straight Alliances (GSA) commonly normalize narrow gender identity (McCready, 2004a, 2004b; Quinn, 2007) and racial spaces (Sadowski, Chow, and Scanlon, 2009) that make students of color uncomfortable (Perrotti & Wesheimer, 2001). For those college-bound students of color, college is often seen as the last hope to come out and live openly (Strayhorn, Blakewood and DeVita, 2008). Queer youth of color (including college students) who feel pressure to hide their sexual identities have been linked to high-risk behaviors, including engaging in unprotected sex or drug use (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, 2009; van Wormer & McKinney, 2003). Consequently, higher education scholars have called for colleges to adapt intersectional research and student services able to respond

to the complexity of race and sexual orientation (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007; Ryan, 2002; Tanaka, 2002; Taylor & Jones, 2007). This dissertation contributes to that discourse by asking: How do queer students of color describe the contribution of race and sexual orientation to the way they make sense of their identity?

Students in this study articulated a need for more opportunities to reflect on or engage in meaningful dialogue on the intersection of their race and sexual orientation. The themes such as LGBT as White and Narrow Race contribute to a sense that students of color are inhibited from developing healthy integrated identities because they must constantly compromise one facet of their identity in order to enter or participate in a space devoted to the other. In that way, the queer students of color are similar to other students who are trying to reconcile multiple identities. For example, Renn's (2003) work on multiracial students suggested predominately White college create a perceived need among the mixed-race students to choose a side and represent a significant barrier to the synthesis of their identity.

Rather than framing the lack of integration as a deficit, some literature such as Wilson & Miller (2002) and Battle and Linville (2006) theorized that having one foot in two communities gave queer students of color cultural capital, making them skilled at simultaneously navigating interlocking systems of oppression. In one sense, the findings of this dissertation contradicted that theory. Students generally felt burdened rather than advantaged by the task of negotiating their identities. One comment Nadine said demonstrated the students' frustrations and their desire to find a more inclusive, integrated way of claiming their space. She said, "I feel like we spend so much time trying to box people into these groups that we forget who we're talking about."

Other findings suggest that the students in this study could employ strategies or values developed in response to racism to guard themselves against heterosexism and vice versa. Clues lie in various themes, beginning with Diversity Appreciation. Many students said their queer identity provided empathy or insight into the experience of other marginalized identities and experiences of oppression. Further, their own sense of their identities, reflected in the No Binary theme, was complex and multi-layered, informed both of their own internal sense of Integrity and influenced by forces encapsulated by the themes Family and Friend Networks.

LGBTQ students of color & campus climate

Campus climate, the overall disposition or dominant attitudes that govern a particular space, offers a promising level of analysis of the student of color experience. It is common for university policies and resources to be guided by campus climate assessments. Researchers have found it useful to measure multiple dimensions of climate (Hart and Fellabaum, 2008; Hurtado, Milem, Clayton-Pedersen, & Allen, 1998) as well as specific subsets of the community such as deaf students (Parasnis, Samar, & Fischer, 2005), education majors (Henry, Fowler & West, 2011), Latino students (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Yosso, Ceja, Smith, & Solorzano, 2009), African American students (Rodgers & Summers, 2008; Solorzano, Ceja & Yosso, 2000), and LGBT students (Rankin, 2005). Researchers have asked these students to report their perceptions of climate of the racial and academic climate (Reid & Radhakrishnan, 2003), climate for diversity, the climate for women, and LGBT students (Rankin, 2005). This study seeks to add to the research on climate by asking: What are LGBTQ students of color perceptions of campus climate?

Queer students of color are impacted by all dimensions of campus climate. As demonstrated by the themes such as Entrenched and Context, opportunities and challenges exist in all dimensions. But notably, most of this study's themes fit the psychological dimension of campus climate. Individual perceptions of the psychological dimension of climate may be the most difficult for an institution to change, however areas of the campus experience such as the classroom experience are clearly critical areas in need of accurate assessment and improvement. Furthermore, the area of campus climate that yielded the least amount of information or response from students was the socio-historical. Nonetheless, institutions of higher education can work in partnership with each other and with government and non-government agents to make cultural and social change that improves climate for democracy and cultural diversity. Opportunities exist for research centers or think-tanks located on college campuses, and Dept. of Education-funded research projects.

Finally, the students in this study also support the call for expanding our ideas around campus climate. The students often spoke of specific niches or spaces in which they felt comfortable. Adrian, Audre, and Victor, who each discussed their perceptions of their residential spaces and the importance of feeling comfortable and safe in their residence hall room. Likewise, Roger and Patti thrived in spaces and roles related to fraternities and sororities. Examples like these suggest that beyond Hurtardo et al's four primary dimensions of climates that I have adopted in this study, one could adopt the theory of microclimates. Vaccaro (2012) wrote, "it is simplistic to view climate only as an organizational-level phenomenon experienced similarly by members of a marginalized group (p. 440). Microclimates, or "localized, physical [socio-spatial environments] where daily interpersonal interactions shaped

people's perceptions and experiences" (p. 440) may be a more useful and productive way of viewing the campus when creating policies or interventions.

This study's findings support the assertion that alternative views of analyzing student identity development may also be effective to describe queer students of color's experience. The students' attitudes toward coming out strategically, and subduing their LGBT identities in order to fit better in spaces of color, challenge the LGBT identity development models (Cass, 1984) that treat coming out as a rite of passage and don't include intersecting identities such as race or gender.

Scholars and researchers familiar with ecological models of identity development have much to contribute to further study of the relationship between identity and campus climate. Renn (2006) observed that "conceptualizing the development of individual students within a complex, dynamic, interactive web of environments, some of which do not even contain them, provides a rich contextual field for the study of cognitive, moral, and identity development" (p. 386). She and other researchers have found the idea of microsystems helpful in framing the experience of students who have multiple identities that follow separate, yet simultaneous processes, influenced by external factors (King, 2011).

LGBTQ students of color & identity development

The final research question this study set out with was: How do LGBTQ students of color describe the impact of the college environment on their identity development. The unique campus climate issues LGBTQ students of color experience may impact their development of healthy identities. "The individual's identity is constituted by processes originating within the cultural environment and its institutions, in this case, the school" (McKenna,

2004, p. 12). If McKenna is to be believed, close attention must be paid to the current study of identity development in school. It is not uncommon in student affairs and social psychology fields to create developmental models that describe common path individuals travel during their identity formation while in college (Torres, Jones & Renn, 2009). LGBTQA identity models and racial/ethnic identity models have both been critiqued (see Fassinger, 1991; Moran, 2009; Poynter & Washington, 2005). They are commonly criticized for simplifying complexity (Waller and McAllen-Walker, 2001; Walters, Evans-Campbell, Simoni, Ronquillo, & Bhuyan, 2006), and normalizing Whiteness by framing behavior or people of color as deviant (Duncan 2005, Yang, 2008; Yoshino, 2006). Scholars have called for more innovative ways of framing identity development such as developing multiple identity development models (Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2004; Jones & McEwen, 2000), employing multi-methodological studies (Maramba & Museus, 2011), using Queer Theory and other post-modern approaches (Abes & Kasch, 2007; Schollock, 2007) or alternating perspectives (Moradi and DeBlaere, 2010).

The identity development of the students in this study demonstrated, as the research showed, a relationship between perceptions of campus climate and the students' identity development. For example, several students reported having a low racial salience prior to attending college, but encountering dissonance between their prior experience of being a person of color and the new environment at school. This dissonance caused a shift in their beliefs, attitudes and expectations around what it means to be a person of color and what they need to feel safe.

All of the students in this study placed a high value on the visibility of others who share their identities in order to measure or gauge the safety of their environment. They con-

stantly seek visible context cues. Linde compared the act of hunting for clues that someone else in any given space shares her identity to a game. When a White friend asked her why she felt uncomfortable, she would reply, “Let’s play the game.” Because they attended a college where they are surrounded by peers who visibly appear to be White, race became the most easily identifiable marker of safety for the students. This resulted in a heightened value on, awareness, and scrutiny of racial differences and markers. It also resulted in a high allegiance to other people of color, no matter their individual race or ethnicity.

The students in this study, by and large, identified race as more salient to them than their sexual orientation. Notably, the sample included three students who work directly for the campus LGBT identity center and only one of them identified his sexual orientation as his most salient identity. Another student in the sample said the first time she had been in the LGBT identity center was to take part in the interview. One common reason given for the low salience was the difficulty in determining if someone was queer. Lack of visibility of a queer community meant the identity held low salience for the students. When asked directly what the climate was for queer students of color, the students gave mixed responses. The low visibility of other queer students of color either made it difficult for students to assess the climate for queer students of color, or made them conclude the climate was hostile. Furthermore, the effort to determine the climate for queer students of color seemed to force students in the study to make clear distinctions between the climate for queer students and the climate for students of color. This ambivalence undermines the need or desire that several students expressed for support and spaces to understand intersecting identities or the relationship between their sexual orientation and their race.

The queer students of color in this study were involved in a variety of roles across campus that impacted their ability to manage their layered identities. Astin's theory of student involvement stipulates that students are more likely to be successful in college when they feel an investment in the campus community (Strange & Banning, 2001, p. 138). Students can become invested in a variety of ways, for example, by participating in a co-curricular club sport, student organization, or finding an academic major that captures their interest and passion. Whatever way they become involved, the student can gain a sense of belonging and safety. The queer students of color in this study had a variety of involvements, ranging from employment at a campus job to leading in an elected position within a student organization. The comments about the visibility that these involvements brought revealed a sense of safety consistent with Astin's theory. Their involvements seemed to allow the students a way to transform the visibility they otherwise received from their race, into influence and protection. For example, the students used their involvements to develop strategies to respond to another common theme in this study, Micro-aggressions.

Finally, themes from this study such as Involvement as Safety, Self-Advocacy and Educator contribute to understanding the ways that queer students of color influence factors in the climate around them. The Mobius strip model of this study responds to Abes and Kasch (2007), who urged researchers to consider critical perspectives that "move outside of linear models to consider the influence that students are having on their environment to reshape their contexts" (p. 633). Furthermore the students showed signs of approaching self-authorship, a point in development in which young adults "choose their values, decide the terms for their relationships, and determine how to judge knowledge claims" (Taylor, 2008, p. 228).

Conclusion

The themes that emerged from this study of queer students of color's perceptions of campus climate have the potential to make valuable contributions to the study of student identity development and campus climate. When considered in light of the study's guiding questions, this dissertation's thick description broadens the data available for the existing research and bodies of literature. In the next section, I review this dissertation's theoretical framework and discuss how consistent the queer student of color experience is with a Queer of Color Critical theoretical perspective.

Chapter VIII: Queer of Color Critique

The theoretical framework provided in Chapter 4 includes a full discussion of the Queer of Color Critical Theory (also known as Queer of Color Critique) and the theories it evolved from, namely Critical Race Theory and Queer Theory. Like any good theory, Queer of Color is constantly in a state of evolution (Love, 2012). Nevertheless, it can be understood as a way of making sense of the world that is articulated by the scholarship or the lived experience of LGBTQ people of color that questions the legitimacy of knowledge or reality by engaging in any of the following ways:

- Uses a semantic and semiotic device called disidentification
- Demonstrates an alternation of perspective switching called oppositional consciousness
- Maintains an intersectional understanding of phenomenon through multiple lenses

This examination of queer students of color's perceptions of campus climate strived to reflect values and principles described by the Queer of Color theoretical framework (Chapter 4). The theory influenced methodological and aesthetic choices throughout this dissertation. Here, now, is a discussion of how the study's themes can contribute to our understanding of the three Queer of Color tenants.

Disidentification

Queer of Color critical theory introduces disidentification, a key concept that imbues actions and words with multiple subversive meanings (Ferguson, 2004). Munoz (1995) de-

scribed it as a form of mimicry of colonial power that simultaneously demonstrates a mastery of symbols from the colonizer's language and culture while also putting those symbols to use for purposes they were never intended for. It has also been associated with Foucauldian and feminist philosophies about individual acts of resistance to power structures (Sawicki, 1991).

To disidentify is "to constantly find oneself thriving on sites where meaning does not properly 'line up'" (Munoz, 1995, p. 84). It brings "both similarities and differences simultaneously to bear on one's identity" (Medina, 2002, p. 664).

Classroom Environment, Educators, and Self-Advocacy were the themes most likely to involve disidentification when students became their own self advocates and educators in spaces that otherwise may be perceived as heteronormative. For example, Patti and Roger actively worked to show how their queer identity was both similar and different within their fraternity or sorority. Roger expressed a desire to expand normality and Patti coined the term "queer normative" standard, implying she perceived a way of maintaining an LGBT identity but still being accepted as a part of the normal fabric of life.

Students most clearly disidentified in the classroom, by far the site of the most microaggressions and isolation. The students changed or adapted class assignments to support their own understandings of their own queer identities. In fact, China admitted that she had deliberately chosen an LGBT topic because she knew the professor would be more inclined to give her a better grade. She used her queer identity and knowledge to flip the power relationship of pupil/teacher. China said: "Another reason I like doing queer research is so that when they read it, they can actually learn something and not do too harsh of the grading."

Oppositional Consciousness

The ability to employ a “differential mode of oppositional consciousness” has been observed in studies involving queer women of color (Alimahomed, 2010) and Two-Spirit women (Walters, Evans-Campbell, Simoni, Ronquillo & Bhuyan, 2006). Oppositional consciousness is best described as “a flexible strategy that allows for the analysis of the particularity of domination in any given situation, thereby opening up the possibility to assume a position in response to that domination” (Alimahomed, 2010, p. 154). I interpret Alimahomed’s description to mean the ability to resist or defy the entrenched bias in the environment without yielding to it. Examples of “responses to that domination” that Alimahomad and others have discussed included passing, covering (Yoshino, 2006), or managing the visibility of one’s marginal identity (Lasser & Tharinger, 2003) in order to remain close to power or in a space. This phenomena is best observed through the themes of Context and Civility, which reflect students’ ability to read clues from the environment and shift their behavior or the responses in order to remain in and participate in the space. Students employed oppositional consciousness when they engaged their multiple subjective positions and used the resources at their disposal to strategically shore up their identity in situations in which they are vulnerable. Consider the experience of Victor, who joined a student advisory board. He soon realized that his contributions and those of other students of color on the board were being ignored. His response was to remain on the board, saying “you have to be there to show them that you are there.” In fact he recruited others. He added: “So second year, sophomore year, I took my friends into a meeting. I brought two people in. We sat in every meeting.”

Another aspect of oppositional consciousness is the capacity to hold multiple simultaneous frames of reference for oneself. Thus, one frame of reference can be switched to or

muted depending on the social situation. As a result a person could express empathy or affinity for members of a group whose social identity they do not hold. Walters, Evans-Campbell, Simoni, Ronquillo & Bhuyan (2006) observed that the Native American women their team interviewed embraced traits and interests that may be associated with men. They found gender binaries to be problematic and inaccurate. Similarly, queer women of color in this dissertation's study did not shy away from discussing having masculine traits, interests, even attractions that they thought was unusual. Despite their self-perception of this tolerance and empathy as unusual, collectively, it was one of the strongest patterns observed among the women study participants and provides the building blocks for the Wo/Man theme.

Intersectionality

The final component to the Queer of Color way of knowing and analysis is intersectionality. Intersectionality, in the context of the Queer of Color Critical Theory focuses on the “process by which [social categories] are produced, experienced, reproduced, and resisted in everyday life” (McCall, 2005, p. 1783). The Queer of Color Critical Theory is intersectional because it acknowledges the tenuous nature of identities by acknowledging its status as a temporary, conditional place marker while still affirming its existence every time a person of color disidentifies or shifts positions. It makes no truth claims except those that can be legitimized by the lived experiences or scholarship of queer people of color. Ultimately, it is intersectional because it preserves the group lens of queer people of color and yet recognizes the individuality. As Bowleg (2008) wrote, “Black and lesbian confers a unique experience, above and beyond being Black or lesbian” (p. 319).

The themes of Friends Network, Queer Person of Color Dream and Loneliness most reflect an intersectional nature. The themes recognize at once that the students see themselves as individual agents who frequently experience the climate by themselves and in discrete identities yet the themes also reflect a larger undeniable desire or fantasy of the possibility of holding an integrated identity and a community under different circumstances than the campus could allow. Some of them even cultivated affinity spaces among their friends.

Adrian's story may benefit from an intersectional analysis. He relied heavily on his friends network for information about social or educational opportunities that related to his queer or Latina identity. He was very close and loyal to a small group of queer-identified women, some of whom he actually knew before attending the school. The content of his stories was most frequently about his extracurricular activities with his friends. At the same time, the silences in his stories, or the topics that he had little to speak about were the times when he or his friends actually engaged in meaningful discussion about their experience as queer students of color rather than talking about being Latino students; discussions of being queer were rare, despite the shared identity of his friends. Consider also that Adrian said he regularly attended events held by a racial student organization of which the vice president was a gay man. Yet Adrian did not know he was gay. In fact, he said, "Honestly I don't even know any gay men here."

Thus, the possibility emerges of Adrian being a well-adjusted, content student who has found his niche, and also a student who lives in a general silence and misinformation about the QPOC community around him and an inability to reflect on his identity in a holistic, intersectional manner.

Conclusion: Mobius Strip

Adrian's was only one example of the complicated and multi-layered student experiences this study revealed and in which one can observe the building blocks of a Queer of Color Critical lens. This study's themes of Classroom Climate, Self-Advocacy and Educator showcase disidentification. Through Context, Civility and Wo/man, one can observe oppositional consciousness. QPOC Loneliness/Dream and Friends Network demonstrate Intersectionality. Although these are only a couple of themes singled out for demonstration, elements of many more themes support the idea that there is a particular Queer of Color perspective on campus climate. Furthermore, the Queer of Color perspective lends to an ever more complex methods of reporting and envisioning the results. The themes were paired deliberately because they represent two ends of a spectrum (i.e. Classroom Climate/Educator; Civility/Context; QPOC Loneliness/Friends Network).

The individual and social construction of sexual orientation and race make lesbian, gay, and bisexual people of color a particular challenging population to study and write about. Huang, Brewster, Moradi, Goodman, Wiseman, and Martin (2010) conducted a content analysis of research on LGB people of color. Their work established several important best practices for researching and discussing the subject of LGB people of color. They pointed out the presence of multiple conflicting themes in the literature about LGB people of color. For example, studies frame them as helpless subjects at the mercy of multiple systems of oppression and therefore at risk for a myriad of health dangers; additional studies frame LGB people of color as exemplars from whom we can learn effective strategies of resilience and conditioning. They called for greater sensitivity and complexity in the treatment of LGBT people of color as research subjects. Moradi and DeBlare (2010) furthered Huang et al.'s

argument, suggesting a strategy called perspective alternation, referring to the practice of “taking on and moving between different perspectives” (p. 456) in order to resolve and link together dissimilar or opposite perspectives.

The findings of this study are equally rich with potential to be interpreted or misrepresented in one way or another. Therefore, I include in Appendix B, a visual model of the themes that emerged from this study’s interviews in a way that reflects the issues faced by the participants of this study. The model displays all twenty-nine themes as points aligned along a Mobius strip. I am inspired by McIntosh (1985) who used the image of a Mobius strip to represent to sides of a single argument. I argue that although some themes may seem to be diametrically opposed, they must be understood as variations or alternatives. They do not necessarily conflict; in fact they may at times reinforce one another. The Mobius strip is fashioned in such a way that if one were to follow on one side of the strip with their finger, the strip will actually twist in such a way that one will find themselves on the opposite side without ever lifting their finger. Consequently, both sides of the twisted strip are in fact the same side. On one side of this strip are qualities that can easily be attributed to individual and group-level strategies of self-empowerment, self-reliance and resilience demonstrated by queer students of color and on the other side are more sinister, tragic aspects that represent powerless and systematically oppressed and underserved subjects.

Complex problems require complex solutions that are multi-pronged and long-term. This study can contribute to the growing literature and theory base that explores the intersections of race, gender and sexual orientation. The fact that there is resonance of the Queer of Color Critical Theory in the experience of this study’s queer students of color encourages the use of interdisciplinary research and methodologies. The Queer of Color theory draws from

fields such as ethnic studies, sexuality and gender studies, and sociology; these fields may offer useful lessons for the study of the impact of the college environment and social factors on social identities.

Surely the use of multiple approaches or layers of analysis is crucial to the proper assessment of campus climate and support for campus climate. In the next chapter, I share final conclusions and recommendations for the increasingly complex ways that educational policy makers, student affairs practitioners and researchers can understand and capture campus climate and queer students of color.

Chapter IX: Implications

In this chapter, I present implications and recommendations for various stakeholders in higher education. Specific recommendations will be shared, categorized again by the dimension of campus climate. In the discussion of each dimension, I mention some functional areas that may have the most influence in order to make change. In addition to campus climate, I share thoughts on what methodological lessons this study has to offer about assessing campus climate.

Behavioral

Themes: Bubble, Civility, Coming Out, Diversity Appreciation, Educators, Friend Networks, LGBT as White, Narrow Race and No Intersectionality

The behavioral dimension of campus climate, or the amount of interaction and cross-cultural exchanges of groups, is in some ways irreconcilable with the persistent image of the ivory tower as a rarified environment made up of individuals who are intellectual and social exceptions. The ivory tower narrative definitely fed the bubble theme that the students in this study articulated. However in the context of sexual orientation and race, the bubble also referred to an environment of high standards for social mobility and social justice. Many colleges attempt to leverage this status by promoting social justice, academic freedom, and appreciation of diversity. The results of this study that students frequently feel their queer identities offer a view of their community and their identities in which binaries are not useful and variance should be embraced is also consistent with higher education's social justice mission.

Professors and practitioners who model healthy and public social identities will open the environment for students to feel comfortable coming out and living out. I use coming out

here not only to refer to publically disclosing one's gay identity but also coming out in the sense of engaging in dialogue about their feelings and perceptions about the nature of identity and community. Such dialogues are likely to occur among friends informally, however a healthy discourse that promotes diverse experiences of social identities, can foster a safer environment. Bias response protocols offer a useful tool to communicate to the community what range of behaviors are acceptable on campus and what material consequences and benefits people may receive when they violate community standards.

Nurturing a campus in which justice and equity is communicated verbally, through policy and passive communication is important. However, large and small scale programs such as public lectures, addresses by campus officials, and traditions and rituals that bring the community together for cultural exchange can play a key role in making an impact on the behavioral dimension of campus climate.

Psychological

Themes: QPOC Dream, Self-advocacy, Development, Not enough, No Binary, Human, Involvement as Safety

The psychological dimension of campus climate may be the most difficult to have significant impact on because each individual's psychology is so unique. Furthermore, all the other dimensions not only overlap, but converge in the psychological level, making institutions ill-fitted to address, since disciplinary boundaries and silos are commonplace. Still, valuable implications can be made from the findings of this study's themes. Higher education professionals ought to provide students freedom and autonomy in order to make meaning and develop their own strategies for survival and resilience. Professionals who administer student

activities and advise student organizations stand to have the most influence creating and supporting student organizations that offer students the ability to become involved and craft spaces of safety that will reinforce their psychosocial development. Student services professionals need to work in collaboration to offer programs and activities such as leadership retreats or formal student advisory boards in which students can reflect individually and collectively on how they can improve their situations and also observe the difference they can make as stakeholders and agents of change in the campus community.

Sociohistorical

Themes: Entrenched, Family, Off Campus, Wo/Man

The socio-historical dimension was the level of campus climate that produced the least amount of themes. Notably, this is also the dimension that is least studied by researchers of campus climate, perhaps because it is the dimension most impacted by non-campus based factors. However, this dimension is no less important to consider. The observations concerning women's understandings of gender and identity alone provide enough evidence of the value of using focus groups or snowball sampling of specific populations in measurements of campus climates. Additionally, factors such as the amount of pressure students feel from their families and their perceptions of the general level of bias in society or locally influence their decision of which school to attend. Professionals in areas of the university such as Admissions, Strategic Enrollment Management and Off-Campus or Government Relations could all have significant impact on the messages students receive about campus and nature of the interactions between members of the on-campus and off-campus community. For example what campus populations are highlighted in marketing, what outreach is conducted to

students' families, and how much parents are included in college decisions, are all ways that can impact campus climate for the better. In the classroom, service-learning projects conducted through courses offer opportunity for students to engage with the off campus community in positive ways and build familiarity with, and empathy for issues important to members of marginalized communities.

Compositional or Structural

Themes: Bill of Goods, Campus Resources, Classroom Climate, Context, QPOC Loneliness, Faculty/Staff Mentorship, Hypersensitivity, Integrity, Microaggressions

Ever since the Brown vs Board of Education case desegregated educational institutions, the presence of diversity in the student body has been a popular and easy strategy to impact campus climate. Too often colleges do not advance further than increasing the percentage of students of color (or women, international students, etc). However, the findings of this study demonstrate the varied and intersecting ways students perceive their individual and group membership in the campus environment. Each of the various ways individuals experience their identity contributes to the local construction of the identity. For example, the experiences of Patti or Roger as queer students of color are different than the experience of Bob or Nadine. Thus the construction of the queer student of color as a marker of identity is nuanced and varied and only becomes more nuanced as those students (or others) interact with the environmental factors such as campus resources, pervading attitudes around race, and so forth. The interaction of the students' identities with contextual or local environments creates a local iteration of the queer of color identity. Patti and Nadine and the other students are a

part of a queer of color identity that would not be the same in an urban environment, for example, (as stories such as those of Audre or Alex illustrate.)

Picking up on the idea of local constructions of identities, this research raises interesting questions about the nature of microaggressions. Particularly, how are racial microaggressions different than LGBT microaggressions? Shelton and Delgado-Romero (2011) actually found that microaggressions against LGBT individuals tend to fit the patterns and taxonomy of Sue's (2010) work on microaggressions. They further suggest that intent of LGBT microaggressions are less clear because of the "invisibility" of LGBT identities. Shelton and Delgado-Romero wrote: "Targets of racial microaggressions can attest that a perpetrator's subtle discriminatory practices were based on ones' perceived racial identity..." They go on to add that "the invisibility of sexual orientation does not provide LGBQ [people] with the same luxury of correlating feelings of confusion or invalidation to the behaviors or actions of another" (p. 218). Shelton & Delgado-Romero examined therapeutic settings, in which, perhaps LGBQ identities are invisible. The way that the students in this dissertation deliberately employed methods to obscure their sexual orientation suggests that LGBQ identities are in fact very visible and frequently not be obscured without conscious thoughts and efforts. I remain unconvinced of the so-called "luxury" of the "invisible" LGBT identity. Notable that 13 out of their 16 study participants identified as White, again illustrating that for White people, the LGBT identity can be invisible, since gayness can be synonymous with Whiteness, as observed in this present study's theme of LGBT as White. Nevertheless the difference between racial and LGBT microaggressions is an area worthy of further research. Another interesting line of future research would be the nature of microaggressions within oppressed

populations. What is the impact of gay people saying gay is the new Black? Or a gay Black person saying a light-skinned gay person is not a person of color because they can pass?

Campus resources such as identity or advocacy centers can create programming or promote research that explores these and other competing and intersecting identities. are crucial to the retention of diverse populations but they cannot be relied upon to steer the change alone. What we learn from this study's queer students of color description of the environment is that there is a general level of bias that they can deal with or navigate. Therefore increased numbers of students of color or LGBT people would likely lead to increased microaggressions. That increased likelihood would lead to increased feelings of hypersensitive and difficulty holding an identity with integrity and cohesion.

Increasing the discrete numbers of community members from diverse populations needs to be paired with increased training and specifically-targeted support that reflects the appropriate needs of that population. If students of color are to be recruited from low-income populations, for example, then changes need to occur in the way financial aid is administered. Human Resources and Federal Affirmative Action plans can be valuable assets and partners in providing culturally sensitive training and recruiting a diverse work force of individuals who have the potential to offer mentorship and guidance.

Methodology

Here I share a series of observations and recommendations for administrators who study campus climate:

- Traditional quantitative survey-based climate surveys may be most useful to survey the dominant attitudes present in a single campus environment. How-

ever the results of those surveys will be mitigated by a variety of variables, including the location, context, and salient identity of the person taking the test.

As such, campus climate assessments must be carefully constructed to gather both quantitative and qualitative data, perhaps at different phases of the study.

- Different stakeholders or populations within the campus community (and off-campus) will wish to analyze the campus climate with varying lenses. It would be wise for campus administrators to collaborate with faculty or researchers to ensure the assessment's questions are carefully crafted in order to gather useful information that will allow for multiple levels of analysis.
- Administrators would further be wise to make the results of campus climate surveys available for researchers or other stakeholders to be analyzed and the results localized to the particular campus interest. Even after the official university report on the results is issued, the university can promote and encourage others to comment on or revisit the data in innovative or alternative methodological ways.
- All members of the campus environment have a hand in contributing to campus climate. The classroom remains the most impenetrable aspect of the campus climate for policy makers to craft responses or interventions. In those environments, faculty have the most influence. Having said that, student affairs practitioners can work with faculty to craft project such as social justice retreats or intergroup dialogue.

The findings of this study relative to the various levels of campus climate and their impact on multiple dimensions of identity raise a myriad of questions for further research.

For example, how instrumental to identity development is the college environment really? How useful is it to frame certain theories as college student development rather than just human development? It's time that higher education professionals consider the limits of their impact positively or negatively on young peoples' development, considering the influence of other factors that may or may not be within our control.

Objectivity must not be the enemy of validity and methodological boundaries were made to be broken. I encourage researchers to blend methodological and theoretical borders in order to add depth, breadth and applicability to social science. Further, multiple approaches to the same subject can unlock meaning that mere scientific methods would have left unexplored.

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APPENDIX A: Study Participants

Disidentifying the rainbow: Perceptions of campus climate of queer students of color

Adrian 19-year old Latino (Puerto Rican) Gay man Sophomore Studio Art	Nadine 19-year old Multi-racial Trinidadian Pansexual woman Sophomore Human & Family Development
Alex 19-year old Latino (Dominican, El Salvadoran) Lesbian woman First year Gender & Women Studies	Patti 21-years old Multi-racial Trinidadian Queer woman Senior Women & Gender Studies
Audre 19-year old Hispanic African American Lesbian woman Sophomore Social Work	Reggie 21-year old Black Gay man Junior Political Science
Blanche 19-year old African American Bisexual woman Junior Film Studies	Roger 21-year old Biracial (Caucasian and Filipino) Gay man Senior Art History
Bob 20-year old African American Gay man Junior Medical Laboratory Sciences	Sellie 26-year old Black Queer woman Sophomore Environmental Studies
China 23-year old Dominican/Black Queer woman Senior Business	Sinath 22-year old African-American Lesbian woman Senior Psychology
Linde 22-year old Chinese Pansexual woman Senior Environmental Science	Victor 20-year old Vietnamese Gay man Junior Political Science/Asian Studies

APPENDIX B: Mobius Strip

Disidentifying the rainbow: Perceptions of campus climate of queer students of color

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- **FACULTY/STAFF MENTORSHIP**
 - **NO INTERSECTIONALITY**
 - **CLASSROOM CLIMATE**
 - **MICROAGGRESSIONS**
 - **HYPERSENSITIVITY**
 - **CAMPUS RESOURCES**
 - **QPOC LONELINESS**
 - **LGBT AS WHITE**
 - **BILL OF GOODS**
 - **NARROW RACE**
 - **QPOC DREAM**
 - **NOT ENOUGH**
 - **OFF CAMPUS**
 - **ENTRENCHED**
 - **CIVILITY**
 - **HUMAN**
 - **BUBBLE**
 - **FAMILY**
 - **WO/MAN**
 - **CONTEXT**
 - **NOBINARY**
 - **INTEGRITY**
 - **EDUCATORS**
 - **COMING OUT**
 - **DEVELOPMENT**
 - **SELF ADVOCACY**
 - **FRIEND NETWORKS**
 - **DIVERSITY APPRECIATION**
 - **INVOLVEMENT AS SAFETY**

APPENDIX C: Study Themes

Disidentifying the rainbow: Perceptions of campus climate of queer students of color

Behavioral (amount of interaction and cross-cultural exchanges of groups)

- **Bubble:** the general environment on campus that was perceived to be privileged and protective; inclusive of a diverse array of experiences and identities
- **Civility:** the willing and deliberate compromises or adjustments of one's public behavior and demeanor in order to avoid conflict and tension with other students
- **Coming out:** the various ways students managed their public queer identities and the social benefits they received personally from disclosing or passing
- **Diversity appreciation:** the promotion and appreciation of plurality and diversity in their identities and those around them that students particularly expressed stemming from holding a queer identity
- **Educators:** students actively or passively taught other campus community members about their identities and how to be sensitive to their needs
- **Friend networks:** the families of choice that provided valuable relationships students cultivated in order to affirm and reflect the identity and values they espouse
- **LGBT as White:** Students and organizations and community events that project normalize and promote conduct that is associated by students with Whiteness
- **Narrow race:** Specifically expressed as a restrictive construction of racial identities, perhaps stemming from solidarity, but didn't allow for complex or intersecting identities
- **No intersectionality:** the lack of intentional or deliberate spaces focusing on bringing attention multiple identities

Psychological (level and nature of institutional commitment felt by individuals)

- **QPOC dream:** the fantasy and glimpses of the possibility that students could find acceptance and fellowship over a shared QPOC identity
- **Self-advocacy:** referred to the ways the students became the catalyst for changes in the environment, whether deliberately or through their role modeling
- **Development:** described the sense of accomplishment or growth that students felt for having faced hurdles and incorporated lessons learned from being challenged by the campus environment that sometimes made college attendance worthwhile
- **Not enough:** self-defeating and nagging sense that their acceptance in the community was conditional or provisional and they haven't earned proper credentials for their identity
- **No binary:** the state of complexity and tension through which students viewed their world and their identities
- **Human:** the desire to have a simple, easily comprehensible, normal or accepted identity
- **Involvement as safety:** student organizations and other formal leadership opportunities in which students learned about themselves and offered safety and resistance

Sociohistorical (political, cultural, off-campus influences)

- **Entrenched:** knowledge that a certain level of bias was systemically infused in the culture and was tolerated
- **Family:** racial and cultural heritage and legacy students felt from loved ones that provided foregrounding and often conditional support for the students' present identities
- **Off campus:** the sense that the environment around campus that was generally insufficiently diverse and not as tolerant as campus
- **Wo/Man:** a sense of empathy or affinity expressed by women that reflected an embrace of their feminine and masculine traits and sexual or emotional fluidity

Compositional or Structural (percentage or discrete number of individuals of "diverse" backgrounds)

- **Bill of goods:** described the lack of ability to support and retain students and fulfill the implicit commitment the institution communicated in order to recruit the students, resulting in regret or remorse in students
- **Campus resources:** the extent to which students are aware of or seek support from university-sponsored student services that target their particular identities
- **Classroom climate:** impact of the classroom environment, where students were subject to microaggressions and other isolating events that resulted in a hostile environment
- **Context:** the general attitudes or expectations of a given space or one's role in that space that impacted the salience of their identity
- **QPOC loneliness:** the sense of marginalization; students felt they were alone in their identities and always vulnerable to bias for one or both of their target identities
- **Faculty/Staff mentorship:** the extent to which students feel queer people or people of color are represented in the staff and faculty and what impact that has on the students' perceptions of inclusion and safety for their own identities
- **Hypersensitivity:** generalized anxiety and sense that students were being personally targeted by or complicit in acts of bias and injustice
- **Integrity:** a hard-won pride and sense of responsibility to maintain and a healthy self-image and project an impressive public identity
- **Microaggressions:** specific instances of students being marginalized through deliberate or unintended mundane acts a part of living in communities of difference

SPN Notes

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- ⁱⁱⁱ Terrell L. Strayhorn, Amanda M. Blakewood, and James M. DeVita. "Factors affecting the college choice of African American gay male undergraduates: Implications for retention." *NASPA Journal*, 11, no 1 (2008).
- ^{iv} Vivienne. C. Cass. (1984). Homosexual identity formation: Testing a theoretical model. *Journal of Sex Research*, 20, 143-167.
- ^v Ronni. L. Sanlo. (Ed.). *Working with lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender college students: A handbook for faculty and administrators*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press, (1998).
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- ^{viii} Marcia Baxter Magolda. "The activity of meaning making: A holistic perspective on college student development." *Journal of College Student Development*, 50(6) (2009): 621-639.
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- ^x James T. Sears. *Youth, education, and sexualities: An international encyclopedia*. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Press, 2005.
- ^{xi} Sears, *Youth, education, and sexualities: An international encyclopedia*
- ^{xii} Matti Bunzl. "Inverted appellation and discursive gender insubordination: An Austrian case study in gay male conversation," *Discourse & Society* 11, no. 2 (2009): 207-236.
- ^{xiii} Sherryl Kleinman, Matthew Ezzell, and A. Corey Frost. "Reclaiming critical analysis: The social harms of 'bitch.'" *Sociological Analysis* 3, no. 1 (2009): 47-68.
- ^{xiv} Livingston, "Paris is burning" [Film].
- ^{xv} Philip Brian Harper. "The subversive edge": Paris is burning, social critique, and the limits of subjective agency. *Diacritics* 24, no. 2 (1994): 90-103.
- ^{xvi} Harold Bloom. *Walt Whitman's song of myself*. Philadelphia: Chelsea House Publishers, 2003.
- ^{xvii} Hurtado et al., *Review of Higher Education*
- ^{xviii} Hurtado et al., *Review of Higher Education*
- ^{xix} Ettinger, "The Pocahantas paradigm," 51
- ^{xx} Hurtado et al., *Review of Higher Education*
- ^{xxi} Karin Aguilar-San Juan, "Landmarks in literature by Asian American lesbians," *Signs* 18, no. 4, (1993): 936.
- ^{xxii} Beth Brant, "Giveaway: Native lesbian writers," *Signs* 18, no. 4, (1993): 944.

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- xxiii bell hooks, "An aesthetic of Blackness: Strange and oppositional." *Lenox Avenue: A Journal of Interarts Inquiry* 1 (1995): 66.
- xxiv Patricia Hill Collins, "The social construction of Black feminist thought," *Signs*, 14, no. 4, (1989): 751.
- xxv Kenji Yoshino, *Covering: The hidden assault on our civil right* (New York: Random House, 2006), 4
- xxvi Yoshino, *Covering*, 4
- xxvii Yoshino, *Covering*, 12
- xxviii Yoshino, *Covering*, 13
- xxix Yoshino, *Covering*, 13
- xxx Janet Pollack, "Lesbian/Gay role models in the classroom: Where are they when you need them?" In Garder, L. (Ed.), *Tilting the tower* (pp. 131-135). (New York; Routledge, 1994), 133.
- xxxi Pollack, "Lesbian/Gay role models," 133
- xxxii Robert Rhoads, "Implications of the growing visibility of gay and bisexual male students on campus," *NASPA Journal* 34, no. 4 (1997): 275-286.
- xxxiii Yoshino, *Covering*, 17
- xxxiv James M Croteau and Julianne S. Lark, "On being lesbian, gay or bisexual in student affairs: A national survey of experiences on the job," *NASPA Journal*, 46, no. 3 (2009): 382-394.
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- xxxvii Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Resource Professionals. (2006). "2006 Self-Study."
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- xxxix Annette Friskopp and Sharon Silverstein, *Straight jobs, gay lives: Gay and lesbian professionals, the Harvard Business School, and the American workplace*. (New York: Scribner, 1995)
- xl E. Lynn Harris, *What becomes of the brokenhearted* (New York: Doubleday, 2003), 94
- xli Harris, *What becomes of the brokenhearted*, 100