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EXPANDING REPRESENTATION: PROMOTING FURTHER INCLUSION OF
PERSONS OF COLOR IN GLBTQA CAMPUS ORGANIZATIONS,
PROGRAMMING, AND SPACES

A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Master of Humanities

By

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B.A., Wright State University, 2007

2014
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WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY

GRADUATE SCHOOL

December 11, 2014

I HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER MY SUPERVISION BY Jennifer Marie Money ENTITLED Expanding Representation: Promoting Further Inclusion of Persons of Color in GBLTQA Campus Organizations, Programming, and Spaces BE ACCEPTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF Master of Humanities.

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ABSTRACT

Money, Jennifer Marie. M.Hum. Master of Humanities Program, Wright State University, 2014. Expanding Representation: Promoting Further Inclusion of Persons of Color in GBLTQA Campus Organizations, Programming, and Spaces.

Gay, bisexual, lesbian, transgender, questioning/queer, and ally (GBLTQA) programming and spaces at predominately White universities often struggle to meet the needs of GBLTQA students of color. Findings from questionnaire results, interviews, and focus groups demonstrate many of the factors that prevent GBLTQA programming and spaces from increasing inclusion. The main goal of this research is to explore the current problems that exist in terms of race in the Wright State University GBLTQA campus community. I will then discuss strategies that GBLTQA organizations and higher education administrators can employ to increase representation of GBLTQA students of color in programming, resources, and spaces.

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I. Introduction

“It is not those differences between us that are separating us. It is rather our refusal to recognize those differences, and to examine the distortions which result from our misnaming them and their effects on human behavior and expectation”

(Lorde, 2007, p. 115).

The inspiration for this study came from casual conversations with students of color in the Wright State University (WSU) gay, bisexual, lesbian, transgender, queer, and ally (GBLTQA) community. During dialogue, students expressed dissatisfaction with GBLTQA affiliated programming, spaces, and resources. I then decided to initiate a study to investigate the experiences of GBLTQA students of color in WSU GBLTQA programming. Prior to the data collection process, I built relationships in the GBLTQA community in order to develop a greater understanding of the manifestations of racism and the limits of inclusion in the GBLTQA community at WSU.

Student leaders in the GBLTQA student organization Rainbow Alliance were a vital part of this study, and I had many interactions with current and previous Rainbow Alliance executive board members throughout the research process. A few student leader participants openly discussed many of the problems and frustrations they felt while leading student programming. Executive board members also helped me gain access to potential participants and allowed me to discuss the nature of this study at meetings. Input from student leaders on the current state of Rainbow Alliance programming aided me in generating my research questions and they provided information on the process of

program planning for the organization. Students who did not participate in Rainbow Alliance who identify as students of color disclosed valuable data on why there is reluctance by some students to participate in GBLTQA programming. Having conversations with both participants and non-participants in Rainbow Alliance enabled me to examine GBLTQA programming from multiple perspectives.

During focus group and interview conversations, many GBLTQA students of color stated that programming and spaces primarily focus on White, first-year students. GBLTQA students of color spoke about the lack of relevance of their racial identities in GBLTQA programming and spaces. Participants described a lack of community available to them on campus that fits their needs. The lack of a community is attributable to an insufficiency of space that helps them to integrate both their GBLTQA and racial identities simultaneously. Thus, isolation is part of the reality many GBLTQA students of color face at Wright State University, as well as many other campuses across the country (Harris, 2003; Hunter, 2010; Patton & Hannon, 2008; Poynter & Washington, 2005; Smith & Moore, 2000).

To explore student perspectives on race in the WSU student organization Rainbow Alliance, as well as affiliated GBLTQA spaces, this study employed qualitative feminist methods and grounded theory methodology (Glaser & Strauss, 1976). To contextualize my study, I conducted multiple unofficial observations of Rainbow Alliance meetings. I also performed unofficial observations of the spaces affiliated with the program, specifically the GBLTQA Resource Room, and the Rainbow Alliance Office. The purpose of the observations was to garner a basic understanding of the

programming and spaces and to introduce myself to potential participants for subsequent data collection.

A goal of this study was to provide valuable information on strategies to increase inclusion of persons at WSU. While this study is specific to WSU, many problems discussed from this study's participant findings exist at many other campuses nationwide (Harris, 2003; Hunter, 2010; Patton & Simmons, 2008; Smith & Moore, 2000; Stevens, 2004). Inclusion is not only a challenge in GBLTQA programming, but also in race-based and cultural organizations. Black student organizations are spaces in which students of color build connections that decrease isolation at predominately White universities (Smith & Moore, 2000), yet some GBLTQA students of color do not disclose their sexuality in race-based communities (Moore, 2010; Patton & Simmons, 2008). My findings indicated that GBLTQA students of color have a compounded sense of isolation that often leaves their needs unmet by both race-based and GBLTQA communities. While this study focused primarily on GBLTQA programming, some participants expressed discomfort participating in race-based programming as a GBLTQA individual. When students do not feel comfortable gaining support from GBLTQA and race-based and cultural communities, many of their needs for support and community are left unmet.

Due to the feminist and activist components of this research, my goal was to create a list of strategies that could increase equity for GBLTQA students of color at WSU. The strategies for change created from my data findings are designed to better meet a broader spectrum of students' needs in the GBLTQA community. Specifically, in this study I question how WSU GBLTQA programs, and physical spaces in their current state represent GBLTQA students of color. I also interrogate problems that exist in

GBLTQA programs and resources. To explore my research questions, I analyze the data disclosed in questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups about Rainbow Alliance programming and affiliated spaces and resources.

Many changes are necessary in the current state of programming, spaces and resources in order to meet the needs of students of color. My research primarily focuses on race, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and gender. Throughout questionnaire data, transgender students, graduate students, and non-traditional students also expressed underrepresentation in programming. As a limitation to this study, my thesis does not explicitly discuss the underrepresentation of transgender identities, graduate students, and non-traditional students in programming, spaces and resources. A further discussion of other marginalized populations in GBLTQA campus communities would be a significant topic for future research.

II. Literature Review

In this chapter I examine scholarship in feminist theory and higher education as it relates to my study of the experiences of GLBTQA students of color. Feminist theory—specifically intersectionality—is relevant to my thesis. As my findings demonstrate, GLBTQA students of color often experience interlocking racism, homophobia, and sexism at universities. This chapter concludes with examples of other studies conducted about the intersections of race, sexuality, and gender in higher education environments.

Feminist Theory and Intersectionality

To garner an understanding of GLBTQA students of color, it is important to discuss intersectionality. Intersectionality provides a lens to explore multiple oppressions. While this study focused on campus environments, it is important to understand the intersection of oppressions many GLBTQA individuals of color experience in society more broadly. In this study, I primarily examined the intersection of racism, homophobia, classism, and sexism. To demonstrate praxis model studies that put theory into action (Bignell, 1996), intersectionality is discussed as it relates to interlocking identities and how oppressions affects individuals in different social contexts, specifically in academic environments.

Legal scholar Kimberle Crenshaw (1989) coined the term intersectionality. In her analysis of race discrimination cases, Crenshaw placed Black women at the center of analysis to demonstrate their experiences of the interlocking oppressions of racism and

sexism. Black women's experiences were historically silenced in both feminist theory and anti-racist movements and were therefore "theoretically erased" (p. 139). Thus, Crenshaw argued that viewing sex or race from the lens of a White woman or Black man analysis is problematic. Neither White nor masculine viewpoints address the specific nature of the intersection of oppression that Black women face.

Prior to and during the time Crenshaw coined the term intersectionality, other feminist scholars of color created a corpus of literature that embodied the nature of this theory. Audre Lorde (2007), Patricia Hill Collins (1986/1989), Barbara Smith (1998), bell hooks (1998), June Jordan (1981), and Angela Y. Davis (1983) are just a few examples of foundational authors of Black feminist thought who discussed the effects of racism, sexism, and homophobia when they intersect. Warrior poet Audre Lorde (2007) named and situated her identities in a few of her essays, notably in *The Master's Tools Will Never Dismantle the Master's House*, delivered in 1979 at a Second Sex Conference. In this speech she directly names her identities as a "Black lesbian feminist" (p. 110). By naming her multiple oppressed identities, Lorde spoke to the intersections of identity prior to the creation of the term. She stated that the United States is a country "where racism, sexism, and homophobia are inseparable" (Lorde, 2007, p. 110). GBLTQA persons of color experience racism, homophobia, and sexism both institutionally and socially. In academia, oppression exists on multiple levels. Examples of the marginalization of GBLTQA persons of color in higher education include homophobic and racist micro-aggressions (Solórzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2001), institutional discrimination through ineffective diversity policies (Iverson, 2007), and a small number of marginalized individuals who discuss social justice issues (Lorde, 2007).

For scholars to examine the nature of racism, sexism, and homophobia, it is imperative that the voices of the individuals who experience these oppressions be part of the knowledge generation and discussion around these topics. Otherwise, individuals with social privilege are speaking on behalf of other individuals, not in solidarity with them. Lorde's (2007) speech brought attention to well-intentioned White and heterosexual scholars who spoke on the behalf of oppressed individuals in academic environments. Lorde responded to the lack of women of color presenting at a conference about women by stating, "the master's tools will never dismantle the master's house" (2007, p. 112). Thus, the exclusion of minorities in the creation and presentation of knowledge around social factors such as racism, sexism, and homophobia thereby reinforces institutional oppression and maintains hegemonic power in higher education (Lorde, 2007).

In recent scholarship, the intersecting identities of Black lesbians are referred to as "triple jeopardy," which causes particular stressors (e.g., Greene 1995; Bowleg, Huang, Brooks, Black, & Burkholder, 2003). From their empirical study, Bowleg et al. found that 79% of their participants named racism as their "most mundane and stressful challenge" (p. 94) in regards to their identities. Racially-induced stress ranged from blatant racism to micro-aggressions.

In Bowleg et al.'s (2003) study, participants suggested that race and sexuality are "inextricably linked" (p. 95). Bowleg et al. state that, "women rarely spoke about the stress of sexism absent of the challenges of racism" (p. 95). Participants explained that the sexism they faced was not the same sexism a White woman may experience due to racism in society. Heterosexism compounded the racism and sexism participants endured, and varied based the participant's gender presentation. Participants who chose to reveal

their lesbian identity or displayed non-traditional gender roles, such as studs or butches, were at risk of disownment from families, termination from employment, and harassment by religious communities. Participants described discomfort while interacting with Black men, engaging in public displays of affection, and being out in the workplace. Some participants chose not to disclose their sexuality in particular environments; an example of this is a lesbian who chose not to disclose her sexuality at work or to family members. Non-disclosure of sexuality was not always a choice for Black lesbians who did not adhere to traditional, cisgender representations of feminine identities (Bowleg et al., 2003). Non-disclosure of one's sexual orientation is an example of one way a Black lesbian may also participate in identity negotiation.

Identity negotiation is when individuals decide which aspects of their identities and personalities they will reveal in particular social contexts (Swann, 1987/2005). Often, individuals will lead with aspects of their identity that support positive verification from others and they will avoid presenting aspects of the self that leads to criticism (Swann, 2005). I chose to particularly mention a few works by Gloria Anzaldúa related to intersectionality and identity negotiation due to her insights on the hybridity and complexity of identity. Anzaldúa's body of literature explored multiplicity in both physical and spiritual realms of the human experience, particularly in regards to persons of color and GBLTQA identified individuals.

Anzaldúa (2007) examined identity negotiation in terms of Chicana identities, and the hybridity that exists in these and other "mestizaje" identities rooted in multiple cultural backgrounds and non-binary identities. Anzaldúa's borderlands theory was drawn from her experience of living on the Mexico-United States border as a Chicana

lesbian. Borderlands theory voiced the multiplicity of identity in the borderlands in regards to race, class, sexuality, cultural background, and religion. She discussed the origins of Chicano(a) identities as stemming from Indigenous, Spanish, and North American origins.

Mestizaje identity can refer not only to Chicano(a) individuals, but also other individuals with mixed racial and cultural backgrounds and GBLTQ individuals, especially of color. Anzaldúa described that la mestiza is:

Cradled in one culture, sandwiched between two cultures, straddling all three cultures and their value systems, la mestiza undergoes a struggle of flesh, a struggle of borders, an inner war. Like all people, we perceive the version of reality that our culture communicates. Like others having or living in more than one culture, we get multiple, often opposing messages (Anzaldúa, 2007, p. 100).

This quote demonstrates the conflict faced by many individuals with blended racial identities, as well as those who have multiple oppressed identities. Like Lorde, Anzaldúa also named her identities in her work as an academic, a lesbian, a Chicana, a woman, a multi-lingual individual, a writer, as someone born working-class, as someone with middle-class privilege, and as a feminist, thus demonstrating the intersectional nature of her work.

In terms of identity negotiation, mestizaje individuals experience isolation in academia as a result of the colonization of the education system (Anzaldúa, 2009). Much of this isolation is stemmed from the perception that White dominant discourse is the only truth. Epistemologies, history, and cultural narratives have been presented largely from the perspective of White men in the U.S. education system (Collins, 1986/1989; Anzaldúa, 2009). Some disciplines based around the lives of women and persons of color challenged these discourses. Anzaldúa argued that disciplines established in traditional

power are “not going to relinquish it easily” (2009, p. 204). Thus, silenced narratives of marginalized individuals contribute to identity negotiation; a step towards equity for GBLTQA persons of color in academia is to reveal the voices and histories of the oppressed.

Identity negotiation stems from the pressure to prioritize identity statuses such as racial or cultural identities, thereby presenting aspects of the self considered socially appropriate in that context (Jackson, 2002). In particular to GBLTQA persons of color, some individuals may participate in behaviors such as “covering” aspects of their sexuality in order to garner social acceptability from their racial or cultural groups (Goffman, 1963; Moore, 2010). When an individual wishes to garner acceptance in a particular community, social pressures encourage that individual to conform to social expectations. Moore (2010) demonstrated how identity negotiation occurred for Black GBLTQ individuals in Black environments and communities. Moore based her study on ethnographic data she collected in the African American community during the time of Proposition 8 in 2008. After a passing vote, Proposition 8 amended the constitution to state that marriage should only be valid if it is between a man and a woman.

Both historically and in present day, there is a social cleavage between gay rights issues and the Black community. This split is attributed to White gay activists spending little time in predominately Black areas and Black individuals often choosing to stand in solidarity with their racial identity over their sexual orientation out of “fear of apathy” from the African American community (Moore, 2010). Moore stated:

People at the forefront of an intraracial struggle for acceptance... genuinely perceive the difference between themselves and Whites, including White LGBT people, to be greater than the points of divergence between themselves and members of the larger Black community” (2010, p. 330).

Moore also attributed solidarity with the Black community by Black LGBT individuals based on shared social factors such as police brutality, poverty, and inadequate educational opportunities for Black youth.

There is little visibility of GBLTQA individuals of color in mainstream media. Media depictions of the gay experience and gay activism often place White individuals in privileged social position at the forefront (Bérubé, 2001). The opinions and narratives of GBLTQA persons of color are often missing from television, movies and other media sources. The invisibility of GBLTQA persons of color in the media contributes to Black individuals viewing gay issues as White issues (Bérubé, 2001; Moore, 2010). Thus, GBLTQA persons of color are often silenced in both the gay rights movement and in race-based communities.

Many persons of color negotiate their GBLTQA identity to normalize themselves in race-based communities by non-disclosure or downplaying of their sexuality to foster a sense of belonging (Moore, 2010). In historically Black communities in Los Angeles, “there are very few institutions in these environments that openly cater to Black gay populations” (Moore, 2010, p. 317). Thus, this is an example of how it is difficult for GBLTQA persons of color to seek support from one another in their race-based communities, therefore contributing to feelings of isolation.

In higher education, the experiences of GBLTQA persons of color are underexplored (Deblaere, Brewster, Sarkees, & Moradi, 2010). Identities of GBLTQA individuals and persons of color are often examined separately as opposed to simultaneously in scholarly research. Research on GBLTQA individuals is typically conducted on White participants, and research on persons of color is conducted on

heterosexual participants (Deblaere et al., 2010). Since stories from persons of color are left untold in research of GLBTQA individuals, silencing takes place. Silencing of the GLBTQA persons of color then leads to identity negotiation in the GLBTQA community and race-based communities. Identity negotiation stems from not having full support and visibility in either community. Thus, the personal narratives and political struggles of GLBTQA individuals of color are often “displaced” or rendered invisible (Hunter, 2010, p. 82).

Race and GLBTQA Identity In the Campus Environment

In this section, I explore race and GLBTQ identity on the college campus through empirical research from a higher education perspective. Many of these studies examined components of sexuality and race through an intersectional lens, focusing on gay men of color or lesbians of color. I primarily examine studies conducted at predominately White institutions (PWIs), though there is one study that took place at a historically Black college. I chose to juxtapose these studies to demonstrate that the isolation of GLBTQA students as a widespread issue and that discrimination of GLBTQA students of color is not a monolithic experience.

Racism systematically infiltrates academic institutions and affects areas like student acceptance, inclusion on campus, and harassment (Rankin & Reason, 2005). Institutionalized racism affects factors such as retention, graduation, and classroom learning (Patton, McEwen, Rendón, & Howard-Hamilton, 2007; Harper, Patton & Wooden, 2009). Institutionalized racism is covert in ways such as not providing adequate resources and programming that are relevant for students of color. In academic institutions, White individuals are often used as the “standard against which to measure

minority progress and success” (Iverson, 2007, p. 594), which is problematic because diversity policy is therefore based on the needs of a majority group.

Many GBLTQA communities are often viewed as “whitewashed” (Bérubé, 2001). Edwards (2009) attributes Whitewashing to:

[A] falsehood, based on stereotypes of African-Americans as wholly heterosexual and the LGBT community as mainly White and upper-middle class, [which] has injured both movements’ quest for equality and silenced the voices of many LGBT people of color (2009, p. 51).

Often it is White, middle-class individuals who are more visible in gay rights movements and in the media (Bérubé, 2001; Edwards, 2009). Whitewashing with GBLTQA movements happens not only in larger society, but also in smaller GBLTQA campus movements. GBLTQA students of color often experience not only racism, but also homophobia. Some GBLTQA students also experience homophobia in their communities of color both on and off campus (Patton & Simmons, 2008).

Stevens (2004) explored the construction of gay identity in the college environment. He examined the interaction between gay contexts in relation to constructing gay identities. While participating in on-campus spaces, gay individuals assess spaces for homophobia to measure their congruence in relation to the environment. Along with this, when students construct a gay identity, they also explore other dynamics in relation to their homosexual identity such as race, ethnicity, religion.

According to Stevens (2004), many gay men of color in his study experienced rejection in the gay community. Rejection stemmed from gay men of color not fitting the desired stereotypes and beauty standards set in the gay community. An exception to the rejection of persons of color in the gay community is if the participant fit an eroticized

standard of acceptable beauty. Participants spoke about not only rejection based on gay beauty standards, but also their invisibility in the gay community.

Participants in Stevens' study described feelings of isolation and a lack of self-acceptance (2004). Gay students described their isolation as a result of the perception that they are the only gay men of color on campus. The men in Stevens' study described searching for other gay men of color to interact with, but experiencing difficulty finding them. Racism and homophobia directed towards gay men of color has damaging effects on identity formation in the university environment. According to Stevens, "For gay men of color, racist attitudes complicated their developmental process because they often had to maneuver through homophobic tendencies in race-based communities and racial prejudice in gay communities," (p. 202). Thus, isolation as a result of compounded racism and homophobia contributes to the psychological harm of GBLTQA students of color.

Harris (2003) explored the identities of African American homosexual men in a campus study. His research took place at a Predominately White Institution (PWI). Harris indicated that African American gay men face four factors that affect their college careers. These factors are: "(1) campus climate, (2) the double-burden phenomenon, (3) 'down-low' issues, and (4) programmatic issues" (Harris, 2003, p. 48). Campus climate issues examined are factors such as racial tension, discrimination, harassment, hostility, and a lack of White privilege.

Harris (2003) commented on the double burden as the homophobia African American homosexual men face in the African American community and the racism they face in the gay community. He argued that religiosity in the African American

community fuels homophobia, which maintains the double burden phenomenon. Harris explained down-low issues as men who engage in sex with other men but do not speak about it. Some men who engage in sex with other men still engage in sex with women, and these men identify as heterosexual, bisexual, or they do not use labels to describe their sexuality. Harris went on to discuss programmatic issues, finding that programs do not address the needs of African American homosexual men, even in LGBT centers due to a “lack of involvement and low visibility” of African American homosexual men in programming.

Patton and Simmons (2008) conducted a study that examined Black lesbian identity in historically Black university environments. From their study, they found three themes found on historically Black university campuses, (1) Coming In, (2) Triple Consciousness, and (3) Sister/Outsider. Coming In, unlike coming out, refers to Black lesbians reconciling their identities internally despite outside perspectives based on their identities. Patton and Simmons (2008) described isolation as a factor in the process of coming in. Isolation occurred as a result of behaviors such as downplaying of one’s identity or the negotiation of one’s identity, especially when the participants were around their families.

Triple Consciousness is a play on W.E.B. DuBois’ Double Consciousness in *The Souls of Black Folks* written in 1903 (DuBois, 1994; Patton & Simmons, 2008). Patton and Simmons (2008) argued that having the vantage point of a Black lesbian produces a heterogeneous perspective, thus Black lesbians have “awareness of the difference between how people see themselves and an awareness of how others may perceive them” (p. 206). Patton and Simmons (2008) indicated that the three oppressed identities Black

lesbians maintained could present at any time and two or more could intersect dependent on the given experience or social context (Patton and Simmons, 2008). As a result, sexual orientation or gender may be negotiated, silenced or downplayed in a given context based on perceived threat of danger, judgment or discrimination.

Sister/Outsider refers to Lorde's (2007) book by that same title. This factor described the conflicting view that the participants' identity is perceived as accepted, though there are conversations around the topic that say otherwise. In this study, participants labeled their sexual identity as other and viewed themselves as an outsider. Participants described a lack of campus resources and support related to their lesbian identities. One participant described receiving support based on her sexuality from a local gay nite club.

In the Sister/Outsider theme, Patton and Simmons (2008) argued that participants often downplayed their sexuality in order to fit in. Some participants explained that they chose to wear cisgender feminine attire to traditional events such as homecoming, and participated in other heteronormative behaviors in order to garner a sense of approval on campus regarding their sexuality. Some participants described feeling as if their sexual orientation was unimportant. Participants also commented on a disassociation with LGBT symbols such as rainbows or other paraphernalia, stating that they did not want to "flaunt or advertise their sexuality" (p. 208).

Throughout Patton and Simmons' (2008) study, the role gender plays in the lives of Black lesbians was discussed at length. According to Patton and Simmons, gender roles are often the cause of the threat of violence against the Black masculine lesbian body or the silencing of the femme lesbian body. In this study, masculine Black

lesbians described that Black heterosexual men on campus threatened to inflict violence on them and directed jealousy towards them due to their masculine gender display. Femme Black lesbians described facing hostility when they rejected attention from men on campus. They also described feeling disregarded based on their feminine gender display, as they are described as “too pretty to be gay” (p. 207).

Poynter and Washington (2005) discussed the lack of community for GBLTQA persons of color, as well as GBLTQA religious students. Poynter and Washington argued the need for higher education administrators to strive to understand the intersections of identity. Factors such as racism and homophobia in gay and race-based communities increase the need for administrators to understand diverse populations in student organizations. There are many identities in the GBLTQA community; “gay does not always imply White or atheist” (p. 42). It is necessary to recognize the complexities of identity of GBLTQA individuals to build community in the GBLTQA populations on campus. Poynter and Washington (2005) went on to discuss that building community begins with meeting the needs of a diverse population of students. Meeting these needs involves expanding learning and communication across cultures, races and other identity statuses in the GBLTQA community.

Collaboration is one method of creating spaces and programs in higher education that are welcoming to GBLTQA students of color. Diversity and inclusion in higher educational programming is an intentional process that involves a close partnership of multicultural centers and student affairs. Patton and Hannon (2008) discussed the need for collaboration in student affairs and multicultural centers. Collaboration allows groups of students that may not typically engage with one another

to create connections across race and culture, as well as other social categories.

Socialization outside of a student's comfort zone increases the likelihood that students will find comfort in participating in diverse areas of programming across race, class, sexuality, and gender (Cress, 2008).

In this chapter I explored theoretical concepts from feminist theory that inform my research. I also provided examples of empirical studies that have common themes with my own research in this study. The research I discussed is part of the conversation related to race and sexuality in on-campus environments into which my research enters. In the next chapter, I will examine the methodology and methods I employed in this study.

III. Methods

In this chapter, I describe the grounded theory methodology employed for this study. During my discussion, I consider a brief history of the methodology, and the strengths and limitations of utilizing grounded theory in my study. I then reflect on my reflexive position in this research and the ethics considered in this study. The chapter will conclude by describing the research site and explaining each of the methods employed. In my discussion of the research methods, I present demographics of the participants, sampling methods, and the processes utilized for the questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups.

Grounded Theory

Grounded theory was the foundation for my data collection and analysis process. Glaser and Strauss (1967) described grounded theory as the “discovery of theory from data” (p. 1). Grounded theory is a way of systematically collecting data that allows empirical researchers to develop a data collection process in a refined and specific manner. Thus, the researcher can fine tune questions they ask participants and utilize appropriate new methods of data collection throughout the research process.

Grounded theory is a qualitative methodology. Qualitative method allows researchers to create new ways of knowing concerning research through revealing subjugated knowledge of marginalized individuals (Hesse-Biber, 2011; Naples, 2007). Qualitative research places value on the subjectivities of the researcher in relation to their studies. Subjectivity enables researchers to appropriately place themselves within their

research so they can reflect on how they influence or are influenced by the data they collect. Subjectivity is especially important when privileged individuals research marginalized populations to ensure that the research benefits the oppressed (Harding, 1992).

Grounded theory enabled me to develop specific conversation topics during subsequent interviews and focus groups based on previously collected information. My initial interview with the participant Alice, discussed later in this study, helped me develop questions topics for subsequent interviews and focus groups. My final interview with Alice, conducted at the end of this study, gave me the opportunity to ask follow-up questions from earlier previous data.

Grounded theory enabled me to collect data that contained rich, "thick descriptions" of participant viewpoints and experiences. Thick descriptions require constant engagement with the data (Geertz, 1973). In an effort to stay constantly engaged with the data, I kept a research journal in which I recorded field notes and memos. Thick descriptions emerged in my data from taking detailed field notes prior to, during, and after data collection, coding, and analysis. My research journal was useful throughout the research process to record possible interpretations of interview and focus group data, literature, field notes, and memos, allowing me to reflect on the ways my interpretations of the data shifted throughout the research process.

Memo writing is another component of grounded theory, which enables the researcher to expand on "processes, assumptions and actions that are subsumed" under codes (Charmaz, 2004, p. 347). Memo writing enhanced my analysis of codes from interview and focus group data. I then organized codes thematically into categories, and

wrote memos to later inform my data analysis. Theory should emerge from the “fullest possible diversity of categories and properties” (Glaser and Strauss, 1967, p. 41) and categories are best when they emerge organically, and are not forced by the researcher’s hypothesis or the literature review. In my study, core themes I used to shape my analysis predominately emerged from interviews and focus groups. After each interview, I then shaped subsequent interview and focus group guides in accordance to new themes.

I primarily reviewed literature based on themes and codes in my findings. Many grounded theorists choose to conduct a literature review after the final stages of the data collection process based on the recommendation of Glaser and Strauss (1967). The appropriate time to conduct a literature review is debated by grounded theory scholars (Cutcliffe, 1999; Dunne, 2011). Some grounded theorist scholars, such as Hutchinson (as cited in Cutcliff, 1999) contest that a literature review should come prior to data collection and analysis. Hutchinson argued that conducting a literature review in the initial stages of the study helps to “identify gaps in knowledge” and justifies the need of the study (Cutcliffe, 1999, p. 1480). I chose to conduct my literature review at a later point in the research to construct codes and themes that are not influenced by the findings of other studies. After undertaking my literature review, I discovered there was congruence between my findings and the findings from other empirical studies, thus strengthening the findings of this study.

I acquired participants through theoretical sampling. Theoretical sampling is an essential component of grounded theory methodology (Coyne, 1997; Glaser & Strauss, 1967). For my study, theoretical sampling was necessary to collect data specifically relevant to my research questions. I recruited student leaders, Rainbow Alliance

members, and also students of color that do not participate in GLBTQA programming. Past and current student leaders of Rainbow Alliance provided information that other students may not have access to about GLBTQA programming, resources and spaces. Capturing information from multiple perspectives allowed me to understand why some GLBTQA students of color do not seek out GLBTQA related support, as well as the problems that exist for students who do.

After I began collecting data, new participants were sought out based on leads given by previous participants and further topics and questions were then explored. A limitation of theoretical sampling is that it can be interchangeable with purposeful sampling, which involves a “calculated decision to sample a specific locale according to a preconceived but reasonable initial set of dimensions” (Cutcliffe, 1999, p. 1477). In this study, to some degree purposeful sampling was unavoidable because of my familiarity with WSU. As a graduate student at WSU, I had less difficulty obtaining information on GLBTQA programming, and I was able to identify gatekeepers of knowledge concerning GLBTQA students of color at WSU.

Because participant perspectives were a critical component of this study, I employed grounded theory from a feminist perspective. My intersectional feminist lens shaped the questions I asked about oppression and inclusion on campus. As a feminist qualitative researcher, I recognized the responsibility to investigate various participant standpoints and to emphasize the causal relationships of social phenomena (Borgatti, 2007, p. 3). Clear representation of participant voices was the main objective during the coding and interpretation phases of data analysis. Interpretations of research “must

include the perspectives and voices of the people whom we study” (Strauss & Corbin, 1994, p. 274) to address the problems that population.

Ethics and Researcher Reflexivity

Qualitative feminist research considers voices that have “long been excluded from knowledge construction, both as researchers and research subjects” (Hesse-Biber, 2011, p. 22-23). Both feminist method and grounded theory require a significant focus on subjectivity, reflexivity, and research ethics within the qualitative study (Charmaz, 2004; Harding 1992). Grounded theorist Charmaz argues “the interaction between the researcher and the research produces the data” (2004, p. 340). Thus, there is a need for researchers to be conscious of their reflexivity and subjectivity in participant-researcher relationships to work to neutralize imbalances and collect data that represents participant voices authentically.

Throughout the research process, I carefully and clearly communicated to participants about how their data would be used in the study. I adhered to ethical research standards of informed consent in which each participant signed a cover letter agreeing to have their voices used in this study. To maintain the privacy of participants I used pseudonyms, often ones chosen by the participants. For participants in leadership positions on campus, I received additional verbal consent to discuss their highly visible campus roles, since they are easier to identify within this study.

For participants I knew prior to the study, I did not include my previous knowledge of them and conducted the interviews in the same manner as all other participants. I also asked them to give further needed information, even if I already knew the answer, in order to ensure that they were able to choose which data were included in

the study. To create transparency about the study, I began by explaining the nature of the study as well as how their words would be used. I later gave each of the participants a copy of the study sections containing their quotes and my analysis of them to ensure I was fairly and accurately analyzing and representing their statements. It was important that participants had a chance to view and respond to any data analysis that may place them in a vulnerable situation, such as outing them as GBLTQA or revealing parts of their identity that may be recognized by readers of this research.

To create a study that held true to feminist research methods, I reflexively analyzed my own position in this research. Engaging with one's reflexivity increases awareness of possible power imbalances and exploitation in research (England, 1994). Therefore, as researchers we should "integrate ourselves into the research process, which admittedly is anxiety-provoking in that it increases feelings of vulnerability" (p. 251), but on the other hand creates research that is respectful and representative of participants.

I am considered what Merton (1972) refers to as both an insider and an outsider in this research in regards to my social identities. As a fellow student at Wright State, I had the ability to establish rapport with my respondents. However, power differentials exist between my participants and myself in the role of researcher, and this was necessary to account for in regards to the research ethics of my study (Stake, 2010). As a graduate student, I also had visibility and power as a classroom assistant at WSU, and therefore considered the impact this might have had on the responses of the participants. Though I did not perceive that power differentials as a result of my student status hindered the results of my study, it can be considered an additional possible limitation to this research.

My position as a queer-identified woman in the GLBTQA community gave me an insider perspective and enabled me to gain knowledge about the GLBTQA community that someone who identified as heterosexual may not necessarily be able to access. Sexuality is often a vulnerable topic for GLBTQA identified students. I am out as a queer-identified individual and often attend GLBTQA events on campus. I also speak out in classroom contexts involving GLBTQA identity. Participants may have felt more comfortable speaking on issues of sexual identity with someone who is in their community; thus I have a level of “privileged access” as a queer-identified individual (Merton, 1972, p. 11).

I was considered an outsider within this research based on my whiteness. As a white individual, I had anxiety about establishing trust with participants of color. I confronted my own apprehensions about doing race work through educating myself on the challenges and limitations I face as a white individual doing race work. There is a possibility that participants may not have fully trusted me based on racial differences and social hierarchy. I believed that there was trust because participants revealed to me their struggles faced in regards to race. It is difficult to say if I established full trust, or if I would have had the same findings if I were a person of color doing this same research.

Duneier (1999) conducted research with homeless men of color, and he questioned if a researcher can ever truly gauge if they successfully established trust with participants in their research. He discussed an assumed level of trust based on private information participants shared with him, including illegal activities that took place during his observation. On the other hand, Duneier explained at times he felt that participants were suspicious of him even though it appeared that they trusted him on the

surface. Duneier stated, “though participant observers often remark on the rapport they achieve and how they are seen by the people they write about, in the end it is best to be humble about such things,” (p. 14) because it is impossible to know if full trust is established.

Duneier (2001) spoke on a conversation he had with one of his main informants, Hakim. Duneier provided an example of how racial privilege can create cleavages in social research, which creates particular challenges for those to choose outsider research. Hakim explained that there are both skepticism and mistrust towards White scholars from persons of color due to a history of exploitation from White scholars in academia. Hakim states, “My suspicion is couched in the collective memory of a people who have been academically slandered for generations.... African Americans are at a point where we have to be suspicious of people who want to tell stories about us” (p. 169). The history of exploitation and participant suspicion were important for me to keep in mind during my role as researcher in this study. By continuously engaging with my subjectivities on race, I constantly checked in with myself to move away from preconceived notions on this topic.

As a White, working-class, cisgender woman, queer-identified, master’s level graduate student, I explored the ways each of these identity statuses affected the data I obtained as well as my analysis of them. Through critical analysis of my power, privilege, and oppression, I examined the ways I may have impacted responses as well as the way I interpreted the data throughout the analysis process; for instance, participants may have held back information out of anxiety or fear, or they may have stated what they perceived that I wanted to hear. Thus, there is a need to view one’s own work from

multiple viewpoints to ensure that research does not do more harm than good (Stake, 2010).

A related piece that largely influenced my study was Bérubé's (2001) "How gay stays White and what kind of White it says" in the book *The Making and Unmaking of Whiteness*. He reflected on the many whitening practices that often take place in the GBLTQA community. Bérubé explored his identity as a White gay man, and he then positioned race and class at the center of his work to examine White privilege in the GBLTQA community. He spoke about how many gay activist groups remains primarily White, therefore mimicking racial separation within larger society. Often, the gay rights agenda remains separate from other social justice movements, especially in relation to class and poverty issues. In order to normalize themselves in mainstream society, many "gay organizations and media began to aggressively promote the so-called positive image of a generic gay community that is an upscale, mostly men, and mostly White consumer market with mainstream, even traditional, values" (p. 235). Normalization of gay issues as White, middle-class issues leads to a divide in the GBLTQA community in regards to race and class.

Bérubé's work is especially relevant to my position in this research. He examined his reflexivity as a White gay researcher who discussed the whitening practices in the gay community. This thesis study also speaks on these whitening practices but more specifically in campus environments. Many of my findings demonstrate whitening practices that take place in WSU's GBLTQA programming in Rainbow Alliance and the affiliated spaces. Bérubé also discussed the role of White anti-racist allies in research and

activism, which is relevant to my identity as a White anti-racist ally and queer feminist researcher.

A few times during the research process I acknowledged my privileged identities when it was relevant to the discussion. One participant, Lorenzo, discussed that it is important for individuals with privilege to speak out against injustice and inequality and that allies are necessary in social movements. Privileged members of society who are against social ills such as White supremacy and homophobia have a responsibility as members of the dominant group to help create social change. Those in marginalized groups should not be the only individuals fighting injustice and oppression; it is a shared social responsibility by all. Harding (1992) discussed that just because a member does not belong to a marginalized group does not mean they cannot be a part of the change that takes place in research. Harding stated:

Members of dominant groups – all of us who are White, ethnically privileged, or men, or economically privileged, or heterosexual ... can learn to take historic responsibility for the social locations from which our speech and actions issue. This is a scientific and epistemological issue as well as a moral and political one (p. 189).

I found this passage to be very relevant to my goal of this research. In this study, I used my privileged identities as a White individual and a graduate student to speak out against racism in the campus GBLTQA community.

Research Site

Wright State University (WSU) is a Predominately White Institution (PWI) located in Dayton, Ohio. According to the WSU website, there are currently, approximately 16,656 students enrolled at the main campus and a total enrollment of approximately 17,595 students. There is a total minority enrollment of approximately

2,817 students (16%). 66% of those students are African American. (Wright State University, 2013).

Rainbow Alliance is a GBLTQA organization on WSU's campus. The mission of Rainbow Alliance is to build a community that provides support for GBLTQ students and the allies that support them. Rainbow Alliance is led by a four student leadership team called an executive board—or, e-board for short. The e-board consists of a President, Vice President, Public Relations Officer, and Internal Affairs Officer leads Rainbow Alliance and is co-advised by the Graduate Assistant of GBLTQA Initiatives and the Director of Student Activities. Rainbow Alliance has an office space in the Student Union, which serves as a space for the executive board of Rainbow Alliance to work, plan programming, and conduct meetings and office hours. Students can gather in the space during open office times. The Rainbow Alliance office space has a desk and computer for official use. There are also two couches for use by visitors of the office.

In addition to the main organization office, the GBLTQA Resource Room is a relatively intimate space where students can stop by to ask questions, request resources, and obtain referrals in regards to the GBLTQA community both on-campus and off-campus. The Resource Room also houses a library of books and DVDs specifically related to the GBLTQA community. In the space, there is seating and a television. The GBLTQA Resource Room houses the weekly ALLIES program meetings, which is an organization for GBLTQ faculty and staff members as well as allies and the weekly transgender, a-gender, intersex, gender-fluid and ally (TAIGA) meetings. Volunteers run the Resource Room during normal business hours and distribute resources and referrals to visitors of the room on request.

Research Methods

The main requirement to participate in this study was that the individual had to be a current faculty member, staff member, or student at WSU. I chose to recruit a broad range of participants so that I could gather information across race, class, gender, sexuality, and education levels in order to examine satisfaction for a diverse sample. To participate in interviews and focus groups, individuals were required to fill out a questionnaire to capture demographic information and their basic thoughts about Rainbow Alliance programming and GBLTQA spaces at WSU.

I conducted several observations of Rainbow Alliance meetings during fall semester 2013 and spring semester 2014. These observations were used solely to establish rapport for participant recruitment. I also examined programming and organizational spaces to get a sense of the basic operations and to contextualize student comments during questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups. Prior to meetings, I often sat in the Rainbow Alliance office to get a sense of the space and have conversations with students. I also visited both the Rainbow Alliance office and the GBLTQA Resource Room to investigate the space in terms of resources such as handouts, pamphlets, books, magazines, and movies for people of color.

I chose to do a preliminary interview with Alice, a leader of Rainbow Alliance. This interview assisted me in shaping and refining questions I would later ask on the questionnaire, as well as alerting me to specific problems to be discussed in interviews and focus groups. From questionnaire responses, I revised my initial basic interview guide, emphasizing specific problems that these early participants identified within GBLTQA programming. These first-round questionnaires enabled me to follow-up on

responses given by participants who additionally chose to be interviewed. From the second round phase of one-on-one interviews, I then revised focus group questions, centering on specific recommendations for strategies that administrators and leaders in GBLTQA programs can employ to make programming and spaces more inclusive to GBLTQA persons of color.

After the focus groups, I did one final interview with Alice to ask her any follow-up questions based on previous participant data. I chose to do two interviews with Alice based on her experiences serving as President of Rainbow Alliance. I decided to do one interview at the beginning of her term and one at the end to capture how her perspectives on GBLTQA programming and spaces may have developed over the year.

My initial aim in this study was to better understand how GBLTQA programming serves not just students, but also faculty and staff. A limitation to my study is the lack of participation from faculty and staff, especially those who are both GBLTQ and of color, thus I limited the scope of my study to focus solely on students of color. During this study, I was also unable to recruit non-Black participants of color except for one multi-racial participant. A lack of non-Black persons of color in the study limits the perspectives discussed from the GBLTQA community, though over half of the POC population at WSU are Black.

Questionnaires. For the questionnaire portion of my research, I posted advertisements across Wright State campus that described the nature of my research, as well as my contact information. I distributed advertisements to members of the Wright State community via the announce list and on various WSU-affiliated Facebook pages. Many professors also forwarded my advertisement to their students via e-mail.

Participants had the option of sending their questionnaires by e-mail or dropping them off in my on-campus mailbox in the Women's Center. I attended several meetings of Rainbow Alliance over the course of spring semester 2014, where I explained the study to students to recruit participants who were currently active in this organization. During Rainbow Alliance meetings, I gave students the opportunity to take and turn in questionnaires in person or to take them and return them at a later date.

I analyzed and coded questionnaire data by looking specifically at the satisfaction and dissatisfaction of individuals in regards to GBLTQA programming, resources, and spaces. The satisfaction levels of white students were then compared to the satisfaction levels of students of color. I then coded the recommendations respondents gave to improve programming, resources, and spaces and separated them by race to see if there were race-based differences.

A total of 25 participants completed the questionnaire. The participant sample ranged in terms of age from 18 to 62. Demographics such as sex, race, and sexuality also encompassed a spectrum of identities. For demographic questions related to identity, participants wrote in responses to self-identity as opposed to choosing from a pre-selected option. Self-identification is essential for participants to discuss their identities and label them as they choose. As a feminist researcher, I recognize the non-dichotomous, non-binary spectrum in terms of gender and sexuality and the complexities identity. Table 1 captures the demographics of the questionnaire participants:

Table 1

Participant Demographics

Characteristic	Participant Response (n=25)
Age	
18-21	12
22-25	6
26-29	2
30-39	2
40+	3
Gender Expression	
Woman	17
Man	4
Transgender Woman to Man	1
Transgender Man to Woman	1
Androgynous	1
Genderqueer	1
Sexual Orientation	
Gay	5
Lesbian	10
Bisexual	2
Pansexual	2
Queer	2
Questioning	1
Heterosexual	3
Race	
Black/African-American	7
Multi-Racial	1
White/Caucasian	17
Wright State Affiliation	
Student	21
Faculty	2
Staff	2
Level of Education	
1 st Year	4
2 nd Year	2
3 rd Year	4
4 th Year/5 th Year	8
In Master's Program	3
Master's Degree	3
Housing	
On-Campus	7
Off-Campus	18

Interviews. For the interview portion of the data collection process, I selected participants based on whether they indicated that they were willing to participate in further research on their questionnaire. From this pool, I chose current or former student leaders in Rainbow Alliance or students who identified as a GBLTQA person of color, as these demographics were best situated to provide relevant information for the study. Three out of five participants were former or current executive board members of Rainbow Alliance. I interviewed one multi-racial gay man Irvin (age 22), two Black lesbians named Alice (age 20) and Nonie (age 22), one Black bisexual woman named Janice (age 21), and one White gay man named David (age 23). As a reminder, participant names have been replaced with pseudonyms in order to protect their identities and preserve their privacy.

Interviews focused on problems that exist in current programming. I used interviews as a chance to clarify questionnaire data related to this topic. I conducted interviews in a small, private office space on WSU campus. This space allowed participants to more safely divulge personal experiences with racism and homophobia on campus.

Focus groups. I selected focus group participants from the questionnaire pool who indicated they wanted to participate in a focus group. The first focus group consisted of four students, including two people previously interviewed--Alice and Nonie. Other participants of focus groups included a Black gay man named Lorenzo (age 21), and a White lesbian named Bethany (age 20). The second focus group consisted of previous interview participant David and a White lesbian staff member named Vickie (age 53).

I scheduled focus groups based on participant availability. Although I did not purposefully separate focus groups based on social identities, one focus group was composed of predominantly Black participants, and one had only White participants. Participants may have felt less anxiety speaking about race-based issues with members of their own race-based group. The focus groups took place in Millet Hall in the College of Liberal Arts (COLA) conference room. This room is private, which allowed participants to share their experiences in a comfortable atmosphere. Participants sat around a round conference table, which allowed them to face one another. During the focus groups, we elaborated on problems that exist in programming, resources, and spaces and then moved into brainstorming.

In this chapter, I have presented the methodology that I utilized in the data collection and analysis process. I also discussed the ethics involved in this research and my reflexive position in the study. The chapter concluded with a description of the research site and the methods employed in the study. During the next chapter, I will present my findings from the data I collected.

IV. Findings

In this chapter, I reveal my findings from questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups. Some participants are mentioned more than others in this chapter; I attribute this to some participants having more knowledge about programming and race-based issues on campus. Also, participants with White racial privilege were not able to speak about race-related programming issues with the same detail as the participants of color.

Many overarching themes emerged from my interview and focus group data. I separated the findings thematically by problems that currently exist in GBLTQA programming and spaces at Wright State University. The challenges discussed in this section are a starting point, but there are possibly other problems that exist in GBLTQA programming that were not explored in this study. The core themes regarding GBLTQA programming used to organize and frame this chapter are: (1) isolation and a lack of community, (2) identity negotiation, (3) visibility, (4) lack of space, (5) a lack of relevance and comfort in programming, (6) a lack of GBLTQA mentors of color, and (7) a lack of intersectional GBLTQA training. I conclude this chapter with a discussion of WSU GBLTQA-affiliated spaces and the resources, such as pamphlets, books, and movies housed in those spaces.

Isolation and a lack of community. During interviews and focus groups, participants expressed feelings of isolation in both the GBLTQA community and in programs and spaces designated specifically for students of color. Students described feelings of disconnect from both race-based and GBLTQA communities, thus

demonstrating a perceived lack of community that accepts their intersectional identities on the Wright State campus.

During the first focus group, Lorenzo, A Black gay man, age 21, revealed his isolation in the GLBTQA community, specifically in the gay community. Lorenzo described a struggle to find other Black gay men who are comfortable with discussing sexuality and relationship issues particular to them, for instance AIDS in the Black community is a topic he mentioned throughout the focus group. He particularly expressed how Rainbow Alliance does not currently meet his specific needs as a gay man of color.

I can reflect on when I was younger. I think that for at least people of color or for anyone, I think that people of color have maybe a hard time stepping out into organizations like this [Rainbow Alliance]. For one, putting their sexuality out and standing in a stance. When we see Rainbow, and then we don't see faces that look like us, we don't feel included. We don't feel like we need to be there or that it's really a place that we want to be there. Honestly, the experience and conversations and issues I deal with as a gay Black male is not the same. I don't deal with the same issues gay White males deal with. Which sounds kind of crazy, but I don't... So I think that you kind of just deal with your sexuality yourself, you don't want to be in a community, and when you do you don't always want to be with people who are just White, who don't understand your experience, and have to always explain that... There are so many men that are experiencing whatever sexuality they're experiencing alone, and it's like it's kind of sad they don't have anyone to talk to that feels comfortable to help them navigate that. I don't know what could we do to make them feel comfortable and speak on those issues.

Lorenzo also discussed isolation due to a shortage of other persons of color who are active in Rainbow Alliance. He described this isolation as stemming from insufficient conversations on race that take place in Rainbow Alliance programming. Lorenzo's statement reflected how problems such as a lack of visibility of students of color and a lack of community are interconnected.

During their interviews, participants Nonie, a 22-year-old Black masculine-of-center lesbian, and Janice, a 21-year-old Black bisexual woman, explained that the

experience of being a GBLTQA individual is different for persons of color. Lorenzo also mentioned this in the statement above. As mentioned earlier in this study, GBLTQA persons of color often experience double or even triple oppressions in regards to their gender, race, and sexual orientation. GBLTQA students of color also frequently face homophobia in their race-based communities and racism in the GBLTQA community. Thus, the experience of the GBLTQA person of color is minimized or silenced when there is a lack of space and programming for persons of color in this community. Nonie stated:

I would like to see the people coming together as a community and know that you they're not alone in the struggle. Because I feel that being gay and Black and being gay and of color and being gay and White are like two different things, two different experiences.

When there is insufficient community for GBLTQA students of color, there is a sentiment expressed by participants that GBLTQA equals White in terms of programming and resources on campus.

Janice spoke to the difficulty faced as a person of color in the GBLTQA community and her desire to have race-based conversations in Rainbow Alliance. Janice mentioned an example of having an expert come in to have a conversation based on racial issues in the GBLTQA community as a means of increasing inclusion. Janice stated:

I feel like they could incorporate more for all of the LGBT communities. Otherwise, I feel like they could talk more about racial identity and how that affects the LGBT community.... I know they had a panel before. I didn't go to that, but I thought we should talk more in the Rainbow. I feel like certain people, they have like no idea. It's kind of hard when you're Black and part of the LGBT community. I felt they could bring somebody in who has that experience.

The lack of awareness of problems that exist in the GBLTQA community by white individuals is another factor that leads to isolation of GBLTQA students of color.

Identity negotiation. Identity negotiation is another struggle that GBLTQA students of color experience. Participants expressed having to downplay their gender expression and sexual identity in the Black community. Students of color also revealed not feeling included in GBLTQA spaces and programming based on their racial identities. During her first interview, participant Alice, a 20-year-old Black cisgender lesbian, explained that often her race is what comes first in terms of identity negotiation because race is what is more outwardly noticeable. She expressed that from her experience, race is where many GBLTQA persons of color experience a higher degree of marginalization and oppression on campus.

Alice explained feeling like a traitor when she identified with one community over another, thus highlighting another instance where identity negotiation takes place. Racial discrimination in society can create higher levels of solidarity within race-based communities rather than sexual identity communities due to the visibility of race (Moore, 2010). Alice referred to Gloria Anzaldúa's *Borderlands* (2012) in her discussion of the ways she negotiates her multiple identities on campus. Alice explained:

We can't just address the culture of the Rainbow Alliance; we have to address the culture of the entire university. Often students or people feel marginalized as Black folk alone, and a lot of times our race comes first. That's where we have the most oppression; we can choose to suppress our GBLTQ identities, but the race is always going to be there.... We can typically hide or mask our identity as a GBLTQ person, but we cannot typically hide whether we are people of color unless we can pass, and that is rare. Even if you do pass you exist in what Anzaldúa describes as a borderland. You want to be a part of this world, but you know that identifying with this world is more beneficial and then you feel like some kind of traitor or like you don't have a clear identity. So naturally a lot of times we may find more troubles being Black.

Alice revealed that many individuals might choose to hide their sexuality, but they cannot hide their race. This is why some individuals choose to lead with their race as opposed to their sexual identity.

In his interview, Irvin, a 22-year-old multiracial gay man also described racial prioritization in terms of identity negotiation. Like Alice, he also expressed that sexuality is less visible on campus compared to race. Irvin stated:

If everybody walked around naked, nobody would say that's a gay guy, they would say that's a Black guy. So if I walk into a room and I see a bunch of people the first thing I'm going to see is their color, not their sexuality. So a lot of people they see color and they instantly get uncomfortable, not even getting to know that connection yet of sexuality. That's what Rainbow does; they try to bring people together to create connections based off of sexuality. People can't get race; they can't get past the race card. It's just like why? But, at the same time I understand because I've sat in meetings and been like "this shit just caters to White people."

Irvin described a perceived discomfort from white individuals towards persons of color. He describes Rainbow as an organization that brings students together based on sexuality but insufficiently incorporates race into programming. Irvin expressed that while participating in Rainbow Alliance, he felt that they offered programming directed more toward White individuals.

During the first focus group, Lorenzo revealed his frustration concerning identity negotiation in spaces that are supposed to be welcoming and inclusive. Lorenzo stated:

I feel like I constantly have to negotiate, even at Rainbow about my identity. I feel like that is off-putting for me to feel like that's the place I'm supposed to be who I am, but I can't. I have to do everything to prove who I am, and then I also feel like there is no one who can provide me a service on what I want to talk about.

Lorenzo spoke to a lack of support when he explained that there is not a space where he can discuss his interlocking identities and have conversations on topics relevant to his life.

In her interview, Nonie discussed her gender expression in terms of identity negotiation. Her gender identity of masculine-of-center further marginalizes her in her race-based community, thus isolating her further from both race-based and GBLTQA communities. Nonie does not desire to conform to stereotypical cisgender feminine gender norms in order to garner a higher degree of acceptance from her race-based community. Nonie stated:

Well for one it's like the stereotype that the Black community doesn't really accept LGBT people, and then if you are LGBT it's like they expect you to fit the society norms of your gender, and I don't so it's like you know "oh you need to be more feminine" and "you need to wear a dress" and all this other stuff I don't really want to do any of that.

Nonie's stated marginalization based on her gender expression highlights the way gender is another social identity that ties into acceptance of GBLTQA individuals in race-based communities.

In Alice's first interview, she unpacked identity negotiation in terms of religion, race, sexual orientation, and gender expression. Alice stated:

Statistics still stand that Black people are the most religious in the United States. So, sometimes you just have to pick your battles. I don't want to everyday have to fight the whole being gay is not a sin battle. It is also getting the religious forces from that community to be able to identify with my community. So it is religion that often gets in the way in regards to leading with my lesbian identity in the Black community. I'm honestly a woman, you know, especially since I have a more feminine gender presentation. I have to justify, clarify, and do all of these things.

Alice revealed that from her experience, religion is one of the main causes of homophobia in the Black community. She described the negotiation of her sexual

orientation in her race-based community as picking her battles. Alice also spoke on gender expression when she reflected on her feminine identity as a lesbian. Alice alluded that cisgender lesbians are more likely to garner a sense of acceptance in the Black community than a masculinized expression of lesbian identity. This is attributed to the femme lesbians adhering to traditional gender roles, thus “covering” their sexuality (Goffman, 1963)

The final element of identity negotiation explored in this study was Alice’s negotiation of her race in relation to her leadership position in Rainbow Alliance. During Alice’s second interview, she asserted that her position as president hindered her ability to communicate about race with members of Rainbow Alliance. Alice stated:

After my role as president of Rainbow, I have felt a little bit restricted about what I say in regards to race and the GBLTQ community and how Wright State handles it. I feel restricted because I've had to feel so politically correct about the whole thing. And I'm going to have to continue to be because I was the president, and I'm going to be it a pseudo-operating position role.... I'm so used to censoring myself as president while trying to educate people about race.

Alice expressed difficulty airing her race-based grievances due to her position as a leader of Rainbow Alliance. She did not speak about such problems so she could appear to be neutral, which led to race-based self-censorship.

Visibility. Visibility, within this context, refers to a lack of presence of GBLTQA students of color. When students of color only see White faces in events and programming, many of them feel that the programming is not applicable to their lives. Alice was the only participant who spoke at length about visibility. Her views on visibility developed from her position as President of Rainbow Alliance. Alice revealed how her visibility as president of Rainbow Alliance as a Black lesbian initially increased the membership of students of color that attended meetings. She went on to express that

her visibility alone was not enough to retain students of color over time due to factors including the lack of relevance in programming and resources. During the second focus group, Alice stated:

I think one of the major problems is visibility. That has been largely affected this year because I'm quite visible. It did, in fact, increase the amount of people of color that we had at the beginning of the school year. However, visibility is not enough, and it's proven that because our numbers have dwindled. Naturally it could be the circumstances of the students, but I also think that if the organization presents things the students want, they will come because it has been ingrained in them to do so.... It becomes a priority. I think that one of the major issues is a lack of resources and a lack of programming that addresses issues that are relevant and important to gay people of color, or queer people of color, or trans people of color.

Lack of space. Throughout interviews and focus groups, many students indicated the need to create a student group that is aimed specifically for GBLTQA persons of color. Alice explained why Rainbow Alliance alone is not sufficient to address the needs of GBLTQA students of color and why a committee specifically for them is necessary. She based her observations off of another student committee in Rainbow Alliance called TAIGA, which addresses transgender, intersex, and gender-fluid identities and their allies. This committee garnered an increase in membership due to the support the TAIGA group received from Rainbow Alliance. Alice commented on the need for smaller subcommittees based on the wide array of identities that exist within the GBLTQA community. Without these specific committees, Rainbow Alliance is unable to focus fully on needs that arise from multiple intersecting identities. When smaller committees address needs, there is likely to be an increase in overall satisfaction in the larger campus organization, as demonstrated through Alice's comments on TAIGA. During the second focus group, Alice stated:

I think we have proof from the TAIGA committee, which is a transgender and gender-queer ally network. We have proof from that committee that having a committee that specializes in a group of persons affects the retention of those kinds of persons. I would say that a large portion of the Rainbow members who are consistent and are there are members of TAIGA... the thing is that Rainbow is like a general surgeon, and Wright State University is the body, our communities, our committees act as specialized surgeons. So TAIGA would be like Ortho, you know, so an orthopedic doctor is not a general surgeon. They can't do everything in the body; they do Orthopedics, and they do it well that's TAIGA. Our QPOC [queer person of color] committee would be us specializing; it would be like cardio-thoracic surgeons. Rainbow itself as an entity has to be able to do everything in the body, and that's Wright State. So I think if we are going to talk about connecting with people, the reason a lot of things seem on the surface is because it is important that our organization is a place where people who are in the GBLTQ community can come, a place where allies can come.... We're doing a lot of things at one time, we don't specialize we're general surgeons. Being a general surgeon is a specialty but it's a specialty of its own... if you break a bone then that general surgeon will have to look to Orthopedics. So that's kind of how we operate, it's hard for us to do everything that is needed because we have to do so much and also be available for everyone else. And that's why I really think, especially as a Black lesbian, we need a QPOC... and for people to understand why and get it. To have to defend ourselves and answer [for] ourselves is very off-putting.

Alice went on to unpack the need to start and maintain a committee for GBLTQA students of color. She explained the need for privacy in order to create a safe space share common experiences and create a sustainable community. Alice also explained that some individuals might judge a group specifically for GBLTQA students of color as exclusionary, separatist, or "reverse racist." The following quote revealed a fear of alienating White allies versus establishing a need for space that is meant solely for GBLTQ students of color. During the first focus group, Alice discussed:

I think that we can balance the anonymity and the safety and the community of the QPC [queer people of color], by having a balance between our meetings [that] are exclusive... [and] meetings [that] are basically on the DL [down low].... We could have programming where we collaborate, and that could be in Bolinga, I already talked to the president of the Black Student Union, and he thinks it's a great idea. So we could have events that are public, but it's not mandatory for you to do it. The main Rainbow collective would be able to take part in that event because we had an event planning committee. So I think we

could just balance our meetings and our topics, and that's our small community. And then how do we do the outreach to get more people, I think.... It's just like, you know, a big problem with wanting to establish a space for people of color is that it seems like it is exclusionary, separatist or racist.... You will hear; they will drop it; you will hear people say that is racist.

Alice expressed that there can be a balance of creating space meant for GBLTQ students of color while incorporating White or heterosexual allies into collaborative events and programming. Establishing a balance provides space for GBLTQA students of color while fostering a strong group of anti-racist allies.

In his interview, Irvin also commented on the lack of space relevant to his intersecting identities. Irvin states:

I feel like there is a venue for sexuality, there is a venue for race, there is a venue for... outside activities or whatever your hobbies are. I don't think there is a venue that conglomerates all of them into one thing, which sucks. I feel like I don't have one label.... But I would like to have at least more than one label. So um, no I don't think that there is place where I can just be Black, gay, Hispanic, enjoy singing... unless you make it.

Irvin expressed that on-campus programming often focuses primarily on sexuality without taking into account multiple identities, thus often keeping communities separate from one another.

A lack of relevance and comfort in programming. A lack of relevance in programming and spaces was the most frequently mentioned problem in questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups. Each respondent of color specifically addressed it in various ways.

In the questionnaire, I asked participants to rate their satisfaction with GBLTQA campus organizations. I sorted questionnaire findings into two separate groups: White individuals and persons of color. White participants (N=17) averaged a mean of 3.8 based on a 5-point Likert scale. Participants of color (N=8) averaged a mean of 3.5. These

results indicate there is a slightly higher rate of satisfaction from White participants than persons of color. When I asked participants what types of programming they would like to see more of in GBLTQA programming, 4 out of 8 participants of color responded that they would like to see more intersectional programming and programming that focuses on the experiences of GBLTQA persons of color, while no white participants mentioned race, which demonstrates that White individuals with racial privilege may be unaware that many students of color do not feel represented within the GBLTQA community on campus.

During Alice's first interview, she commented that she had studied the history of Rainbow Alliance and overall found it to not be highly relevant to persons of color. Alice connected this to the general White-centric nature of the GBLTQA community, especially in conglomerate gathering spaces such as pride rallies. Mostly White faces have inhabited the WSU GBLTQA community historically, which can leave the impression they are for White GBLTQA individuals. Alice went on to tie the White-centric nature of Rainbow Alliance programming to the overall nature of institutional racism and a lack of inclusion in predominantly White universities. Participants suggested that GBLTQA students of color are discouraged from participating in programming, and that it is not satisfactory to their needs and wants. During Alice's first interview, she stated:

When we talk about pride rallies, . . . when we see the pictures, when you Google them, and when you even look into Rainbow's archives it does really appear to be a space for people of color. I am not saying it's segregated, I'm not saying it's exclusionary, I'm just saying that it is not fulfilling. . . . We need to see the need and then fulfill it. It's not anything that is very difficult. It is not a highly complicated formula. . . . Let's think about Wright State as an entity, it is predominately White, there is an issue there as well. First we have to make all of these spaces aware of the need for more inclusion in regards to race. Then we

have to find a way to fulfill those needs. But we have to understand that we can't do the same thing as we did to get most people in there. I am realizing that more and more, because we have the pride rally, and I believe that more of the members would be willing to step forward and speak in front of other people about being proud because we do it in the meeting. But then what I fail to think of is that it is a safe space for them, and we need to broaden that safe space from more than just gender identity and sexual orientation and romance and sex and all of those things. We need to expand it to include race, because race has been left out of the equation, and when we leave race out of the equation, then the only thing that stands is whiteness.

In this quote, Alice demonstrated the need to create a safe space in programming that encompasses all identities beyond just sexual orientation and gender.

Alice further unpacked the invisibility of persons of color in the history of the GBLTQA movement. She explained the ways class often intersects with race in GBLTQA identity, therefore creating different priorities for those who experience poverty. Alice suggested that for GBLTQA persons of color, there may be a greater focus on other social justice issues such as poverty and police brutality, and therefore gay marriage may be less of a priority.

Alice described White, male-centric domination in the GBLTQA community that appropriates Black women's culture, and this appropriation creates an unwelcoming environment for GBLTQA persons of color. Alice feels a higher level of solidarity and trust with other GBLTQA persons of color than White GBLTQA individuals due to not feeling safe or welcome as a black lesbian. She described her attempt to recruit other students of color, but then later realized that because the programming was not relevant to their lives, there was no interest in attending the meetings.

When there is discussion of race in WSU GBLTQA programming, it is often done in a way that helps White individuals understand concepts of racism. Persons of color experience their race on a daily basis and often these conversations around race can

lack a needed depth. Some participants revealed needing a deeper level of conversation regarding race in the GBLTQA community. During Alice's first interview she stated:

Historically the GBLTQ movement didn't appear to be one that was very inclusive; it didn't appear to be one that is for people of color. People of color tend to have different needs. You will find that most people of color are less inclined to complain about not having the right to marry their partner, you'll find they are probably more interested in getting better income or health care or poverty in the racial community, that tends to be at the forefront. I personally found that there were few GBLTQ people of color that cared as much about the whole Chick-Fil-A thing, when they're like it doesn't matter because I still can't eat good food.... We are marginalized in different ways than [White] GBLTQ folks.... GBLQ culture is very White. It's very whitewashed and White-centric. It's also very male-centric. So it's really like cis White gay male culture that appropriates the culture of Black women. So it's just not very welcoming. Because even in this group where we are supposed to feel safe and comfortable, we're not. But in the persons of color GBLTQ community there's solidarity, there's community, there's true trust. I have more than a handful of friends who are in the GBLTQ community and of color. When they started not coming to the meetings, I asked them "why do you not come to the meetings?" And they're like "I'm going to come, I'm going to come." And then I stopped asking them, because I realized what the problem was. That it didn't pertain to them. They didn't have to be schooled on intersectionality.... I think our programming could be more inclusive if we had programs or events that dealt directly with race and ethnicity. Currently in our list of programs we have homophobia in the Black community, however that is named or executed depends on the executive team, but I'm pretty sure that is the only thing we do that directly, explicitly deals with race.

Alice explained that there is only one event per year that explicitly discusses race or ethnicity--"Homophobia in the Black community,"--which is insufficient in terms of discussing the complexity of race in the GBLTQA community.

In the first focus group, Lorenzo further unpacked the lack of depth in race-based conversations in Rainbow Alliance. Lorenzo mentioned that conversations that go deeper may be scary to those who are new to the GBLTQA community or to allies.

Lorenzo stated:

I was just going to say retention has a lot to do with just talking about things that are relevant, things that really matter. I know that Rainbow, based on the times I

have been there, seems surface because people just coming into it. It can get scary if you come like whew we are real gay. We are about to go really hard on all these gay things.

Surface-level conversations in Rainbow seem to be more comfortable for new members, who are typically White freshman, according to interview and focus group participants.

In his interview, Irvin revealed feeling torn. He mentioned that Rainbow attempts to be welcoming, but the approach is not necessarily effective in terms of drawing in students of color. Irvin also argued that a lack of GBLTQA students of color leads to the further silencing of what needs are not being met. He commented on the limited voices of GBLTQA students of color who state their needs in the organization. Irvin expressed that due to the different levels of power in the organization, as long as the leaders do not see a problem, the needs of GBLTQA students of color will continue to be unmet. Irvin stated:

I feel like Rainbow is welcoming, but yet their approach does not cater towards Black people. But also it doesn't help that Black people aren't in the group, their not voicing their opinions, so how is somebody to know. So it sucks; everything is like grr. I can see this side, but I can see this side.... Black kids will be like oh no way it is all White kids. The bad thing is, is that what Rainbow is doing is good and they're like "we are trying to get everybody" but if you look at the hierarchy, somebody on top is White they don't see a problem with the organization. It is like "We're doing our part; we're bringing in students." I think it sucks because they're doing great by bringing in students, and they're doing great by you know having all these venues, but who are you catering to?

David, a 23-year-old White gay man participant, has previously served on the Rainbow Alliance executive board. During David's interview, he noted what he perceives as a lack of comfort by persons of color to join Rainbow Alliance. He described that perhaps some individuals do not feel comfortable aligning themselves with a GBLTQA organization or community. David stated:

I would definitely say they [Rainbow Alliance] are open, but that doesn't always translate. It's the same thing as work practices. If a work is open to diversity but they either don't promote it the idea promote it in the org, cause I illustrate this in org theories, ideas. Like, you can promote it and have people in the org that are of some sort of diversity, but if you aren't leading it by example, that's where you're not going to get it. It also depends on if people of color want to join Rainbow Alliance, if they feel comfortable to join Rainbow Alliance, maybe there is a comfort level that might not be there, which might be inhibiting that.... Just the comfort level with being an ally or being part of the GBLTQ community can be a big issue, so they might not even want be part of it. And also just in general, a lot of reason's why people don't want to be a part of Rainbow Alliance is because they don't want to be part of the community.... So even though they might identify as allies, or GLBT they might not want to be a part of Rainbow Alliance, because they don't want to be in the gay club or be a part of the community. So that's another thing that may hinder that, plus people of color but that could apply to everyone too.... There are way more gay people on campus than that are in Rainbow Alliance, and I think that people find better things that they are more comfortable with. Or they just don't want to be as involved in GBLT community, or they are not comfortable with themselves therefore they wouldn't be comfortable to join Rainbow Alliance, so there's a lot of factors that could inhibit someone who is of a different race or color from joining.

David revealed that Rainbow Alliance is open, but others do not always perceive it as open. While David recognized that students of color might experience discomfort, he did not specifically attribute it to a lack of relevance in content and a lack of representation in programming.

David described how Rainbow tries to focus on diversity in programming, though there are many topics to cover over the course of a year. During his interview, David stated:

I would say we try to focus on diversity. And again there is so much diversity that it's like sometimes race and ethnicity that's a topic that might just be one meeting that we discuss. Versus when we talk about bisexuality, or transgender, or being gay or lesbian, or history so there is just a lot to go over, so I wouldn't necessarily say there might be a focus in the meetings of that if that makes sense.

Because of the plethora of topics to cover, many are touched on in separate meetings as opposed to incorporating multiple topics into each meeting.

A lack of GBLTQA mentors of color. Participants revealed the need for more consistent mentors in the GBLTQA community, especially in terms of staff and faculty. The main advisor to GBLTQA programming is a graduate assistant, which is a two-year position. Executive board members often switch every year unless they are chosen to lead consecutive years. During the first focus group, Alice stated:

I think we would have to address the nature of the beast that is student leadership and student employment. Because you know, like you said, because the life cycle at universities, particularly Wright State, removes not every semester, but every school year. Once that leadership changes, people lead differently and people prioritize things differently. And I think speaking about collaboration is with the assumption that student organizations are actually doing the jobs they need to do.

With the shifting nature of Rainbow Alliance in terms of leadership, students described a need for a long-term individual to serve as a mentor to the ever-changing leaders, someone who is highly involved in programming. Students also expressed a need for staff and faculty mentors of color in the GBLTQA community.

During the first focus group, Lorenzo commented that he and other GBLTQA students of color at WSU do not have mentors who are GBLTQA persons of color.

Lorenzo stated:

This year you (Alice) being of color and that face that people come to you. I think that needs to be someone consistent. Maybe if it's a faculty member or something that they are also a faculty advisor or something. I am this Black male or Black woman who you can come to me and feel comfortable and maybe that be an extra step to get them in there. Because I think that they don't know who to go to and when they see White faces they just choose not to come, they don't feel as comfortable.... I need someone of color to stand up and be a face and an advocate for other people to come out. Because their not going to feel safe, coming to someone that that they already know don't understand their experiences.

GBLTQA mentors of color are needed to seek out for support and to increase the comfort of GBLTQA students of color on campus.

During the first focus group, Alice further supported Lorenzo's statement that there is a lack of staff and faculty of color in the GBLTQA community who are out that students can seek out. Alice stated:

I think what would be truly important is kind of like what Lorenzo said, in making sure that we have a stable faucet of university employees who are continuous and who will be here who can maintain, but who can make that stability happen. The only thing is I haven't met any queer people of color who are staff members or faculty members.

Alice suggested that having a staff or faculty member serve as an advisor would increase stability in the GBLTQA community, especially for students of color.

During the first focus group, Lorenzo expressed the need for staff support to make the operation of Rainbow Alliance more efficient. As Lorenzo mentioned, the Rainbow Alliance executive board often does not have an individual with years of experience on it. Lorenzo stated:

I think that Rainbow, which other organizations but especially Rainbow because it is so important they need extensive training from staff people like the summer during transition, talk about all of these different issues, talk about all these different areas. And how you do that, how you make that up? And I don't think that it should be up to just the president, thinking based on, (to Alice) you've only been here however many years. You don't have ten or twenty years of experience dealing GBLTQ or have been to all these conferences, they should be providing you guys with the resources of trainings how do you create discretion, how do you build this type of cohort, how do you bring up these issues, that shouldn't be up to you. Your staff should be supporting you in that so that you can run your organization better. That is something I think that should happen now.

Having increased support by a GBLTQA programs staff member would make training new executive board members of Rainbow Alliance a more fluid process. In-depth training would thus improve the quality of programming in Rainbow Alliance.

In the second focus group, Vickie, a White lesbian staff member, age 53, questioned if GBLTQA staff and faculty members of color recognize the need for support from GBLTQA students of color. Vickie stated:

I'm thinking along the lines of a few staff members of color that I know. I would be amazed if they were not out at work. I wonder if staff is aware of the need. Maybe you to step out and say, "we really need it" or send out some kind of solicitation for a prospective panel meeting and you see what you get.

Vickie suggested that perhaps students could solicit their need for GBLTQA mentors of color, but this could possibly pose a challenge due to privacy issues and the risk of discrimination involved in being out in the workplace as a GBLTQA person of color. Events and programs that encourage GBLTQA students, staff, and faculty members to interact may create opportunities for mentoring relationships in the GBLTQA campus community.

Lack of intersectional GBLTQA training. Participants revealed a desire to have more intensive training beyond the Safe Space, which is a WSU program that educates the community on ways to be an ally to GBLTQ individuals. Safe Space is offered at several intervals through out the year. Training is available to everyone at WSU and attendance is voluntary. This training would need to discuss more categories of social identities in the GBLTQA community, such as race, ability, and class, and go in-depth about intersectional, oppression-based issues. Due to the complex nature of these types of trainings, it would possibly need to be a series of trainings as opposed to a one-time training, as it is currently offered. During her second interview, Alice stated:

We have our safe space training. And I think that's great, but, I think that we need to be more elegant. I think we need to expand on the design of our programming like safe space. We are going to talk about our gender and sexual identities, but what's next? For everything that we do with Rainbow, we've made a great start, but the question what's next? So like with me this year I really did try to bring in the question and the concept of race and intersectionality a lot this year. I would argue that the meeting we had on intersectionality was one of the best that we had.

Alice argued that amplified training of the Rainbow Alliance executive board and the general WSU community would further the understanding of complexity of intersecting GBLTQA identities.

Discussion of Spaces and Resources

There are two primary spaces for GBLTQA students on campus: The Rainbow Alliance office and the GBLTQA Resource Room. During my data collection, many participants discussed these spaces in terms of inclusivity of students of color and the relevance of the available.

On the questionnaire, I asked participants to rate how satisfied they were with GBLTQA resources based on a 5-point Likert scale. White participants (N=16) averaged a mean of 3.7, while participants of color (N=7) averaged a mean of 3.4. These results indicated a higher rate of satisfaction by White participants. When participants were asked what types of resources they would like to see more of, participants of color responded that they would like to see more resources for GBLTQA persons of color. Participants of color also expressed that they would like to see more resources based around international identities, gender identity, and trans-phobic aggression. In the questionnaire data, no White participants suggested a need for more race-based resources, revealing that often there is ignorance of needed resources for persons of color by White members of organizations. Interview and focus group participants stated that ignorance of

the needs of GBLTQA students of color is one of the reasons GBLTQA spaces and resources remain White-centric. Often students of color do not insert their voice because they are on the margins in the GBLTQA community. I discuss each of these GBLTQA campus spaces separately below, incorporating participant voices.

Rainbow Alliance Office. The location of the Rainbow Alliance office is in the Student Union. It is located alongside “The Big Six,” which includes other student organizations such as Greek Life and the Black Student Union. This space houses a work area for the executive board but also serves as an area for GBLTQA students to hang out during executive board office hours. In the space, there are many posters of previous guest speakers who came to campus, as well as many rainbow-themed items. Nonie mentioned that many of these campus guest speakers have been White. She states, “you like walk in there and there are posters of all these White people everywhere.” This demonstrates a perceived lack of visibility of persons of color in the Rainbow Alliance office.

Alice commented that the office does not leave individuals with an impression that GBLTQA students’ needs are met or included in the space. Alice mentioned that she caused visitors some confusion because of her Black presence in a white-dominated space, demonstrating that gay often equals white in GBLTQA campus spaces. Throughout the year, she was frequently asked if the Rainbow Office was the Black Student Union (BSU). BSU is next door to Rainbow Alliance Office. Alice expressed that she felt that students confused the Rainbow Alliance Office for BSU based on her race despite the pride flag hanging on the wall. During her first interview, Alice stated:

I think when you walk into the Rainbow Alliance office one is going to initially assume that it is not meeting the needs of GBLTQ students of color because all

of the speakers, all of the posters, most of those things, they are White people. I will be in the office working at the computer and someone walks in and they look around and see all of these very gay things and fortunately the pride flag has become like a socially recognized thing, so it is obvious we are gay but the person looks at me and they say “is this the Black Student Union?” They look so confused.... Naturally my question either does the person have it in their mind that Black people cannot be gay or did they just assume it was the Black student union because I was a Black person sitting behind the person working. Both of those things are problematic

GBLTQA Resource Room. The GBLTQA Resource Room is a space that houses GBLTQA resources such as pamphlets and a library of books and DVDs. The GBLTQA Resource Room is also in the Student Union on campus. While it is not in the highest traveled area of the Student Union, it is still an area that receives a lot of traffic. Lorenzo spoke about the physical location of the GBLTQA Resource Room, and he explained that it lacks privacy. During the first focus group, Lorenzo stated:

I personally feel like for me the resources room is not really safe. I don't find it in a in a space that I would want to go in confidently and speak to someone if I was riding the fence on how I felt. 'Cause it is right by student activities, a lot of people come in and out of that hallway.

Alice commented on the lack of resources available for persons of color in the GBLTQA Resource Room. During the first focus group, Alice stated:

You can go through and look at the resources and some of them aren't contemporary, which is a thing. Another problem is that very few of them actually speak on being in the GBLTQ community and being part of the beloved community, you know what I mean?

Other interview and focus group participants commented on the lack of resources that are relevant to their racial identity. I did a walk-through of the GBLTQA Resource Room and looked at available materials. By looking at titles and subjects of the books and movies, few materials appeared to be relevant to persons of color.

In this chapter, I have unpacked problems that exist in WSU's GBLTQA programming, spaces, and resources as they were identified by participants in my study. In the following, conclusion, I consider the implications of these findings as well as strategies.

V. Conclusion

In this chapter, I present strategies for problems that exist in terms of race in WSU GBLTQA programming and spaces. Each of these recommendations derives from my participants' responses. While these findings and strategies are specific to WSU, it is my hope that higher education administrators throughout the United States find these strategies useful. My suggestions are predominantly directed towards executive members of GBLTQA programs, as well as higher education administrators, staff members and faculty advisors that play a part in leading programs and operating GBLTQA spaces and resources on campus.

Many people in leadership positions in the GBLTQA community are unaware that there are inclusion-based problems due to “whitening practices” (Bérubé, 2001, p. 237) in the GBLTQA community. To encourage participation from GBLTQA students of color, organizations should critically examine their programming and ask how they can improve it in order to create an environment that embodies an intersectional approach. Unless a conversation takes place about race and other intersectional identities, programming will continue to isolate students of color. Both anti-racist and GBLTQA allies are essential for increasing representation of students of color in programming. Part of being an effective ally is to engage in self-education about racist issues that students of color face.

Bérubé (2001) considered the pressures that gay activists of color have faced as a result of gay Whitening practices. He stated:

Gay men of color, working against the stereotype, have engaged in long, difficult struggles to gain some public recognition of their cultural heritages, political activism, and everyday existence. To educate gay White men, they've had to get our attention by interrupting our business as usual, then convince us that we don't speak for them or represent them or know enough about either their realities or our own racial assumptions and privileges. And when I and other gay White men don't educate ourselves, gay men of color have done the face-to-face work of educating us about their cultures, histories, [and] oppression. (Bérubé, 2001, p. 237).

Bérubé argued that silencing voices of GBLTQA persons of color reinforces gay Whitening practices. Allies doing self-education is essential to move forward and create intentional inclusivity in the GBLTQA movement.

It is necessary to create programming and operate spaces that are intersectional and representative of all identities within the GBLTQA community. While my study focuses on race and ethnicity, other social identities that are often silenced in the GBLTQA community are also important to recognize in programming and spaces. These silenced identities in need of exploration in future studies include class, religion, ability, age, the gender spectrum and transgender identities, bisexual/pansexual/queer identities, and level of education. While these identities were not a main focus of this particular study, there were multiple times that participants spoke to the need for more intersectional inclusion of identities in the questionnaires, interviews, and focus groups.

Strategies for Change

The following strategies for change were drawn directly from conversations with participants in interviews and focus groups. My strategies were created to work in connection with one another. If WSU's GBLTQA organizations were to employ only a few of these strategies, there would still be a void that may continue to isolate GBLTQA students of color and keep them from participating in programs and spaces.

Increasing visibility. During her interviews and focus group, Alice discussed her visibility as a Black lesbian who was president of Rainbow Alliance. Her identity as a Black lesbian did temporarily increase the number of GBLTQA students of color at the beginning of the school year. The number of GBLTQA persons of color later dwindled in Rainbow Alliance due to a lack of relevant programming regarding the lives of GBLTQA persons of color. Visibility of student leaders of color in GBLTQA plays an integral part in gaining more members of color. It is necessary for higher education administrators to encourage students of color to run for leadership positions in campus organizations.

GBLTQA mentors of color. Student participants stated a need for faculty and staff of color who are out to serve as campus organizational leaders. As discussed in the focus group, finding faculty and staff of color in the GBLTQA community is a particular challenge at Wright State University. I was unable to find any willing participants in this demographic through snowball sampling. Students revealed the need for a faculty or staff member to provide GBLTQA students of color with mentorship, support, and advising in GBLTQA persons of color programming.

During the second focus group, Vickie, a WSU staff member, recommended programming throughout the year, such as mixers, with participants from both GBLTQA student groups and faculty and staff groups. She asserted the likelihood that this would bring together individuals across age, race, class, and educational level in the WSU GBLTQA community. She maintained that mixers might provide students with more faces from their community to come to for support on campus. Another means of increasing the visibility of GBLTQA mentors and role models of color is to bring speakers to campus or hold events that feature prominent persons in that community.

Inclusion in marketing. Inclusive marketing shows students that an organization is welcoming to individuals from all backgrounds. One marketing strategy is to create posters that feature persons of color in them. Placing students of color on posters provides an element of visibility and shows students of color that they are welcome. Deblare, et al. (2010) spoke to the importance of visual advertising that includes “culturally inclusive terminology” (p. 342) that appeals to various demographic groups. Some individuals may not relate to terms such as “gay” or “lesbian.” Examples of culturally-inclusive terminology for persons of color include terms such as “woman-loving-woman” or “man-loving-man.”

Social media sources, such as Facebook and Twitter, are another effective tool to engage students of color. Social media can be utilized to highlight events, especially those events and programs that are intersectional in nature. Advertisements for events can be shared on the pages of different multicultural centers across campus and on the pages of various student organizations. Word of mouth is also an effective marketing strategy. If students of color hear from other students that there is relevant, inclusive programming, then they are more likely to attend and to invite their friends to join them. Participants maintained that word of mouth was the most effective strategy to recruit members.

Another marketing strategy that was explored by focus group participants was tabling. Tabling is when student organizations set up displays around campus and have volunteers on hand to recruit new members. To avoid the perception that the organization caters to a single sex or gender, focus group participants recommended a presence at the table from GBLTQA persons of color who are of multiple gender expressions. The

presentation of the information on the table was also discussed. In the first focus group, students suggested that student organization contact information should be visible from a distance for students who do not wish to approach the table directly due to privacy concerns.

Privacy and discretion. Privacy and discretion is a factor that participants discussed at multiple points during the first focus group. Privacy is vital due to the vulnerability that many individuals who identify as a person of color in the GBLTQA community experience. Participants recommended the enforcement of a strict “no-outing” policy. This is recommended not only for general programming, but also especially in any GBLTQA race-based programming. Privacy is vital due to the homophobia that exists in some cultures and race-based communities. According to Alice, “from my cultural perspective and understanding of Black people and other people of color, is that we don’t as a collective have the privilege of being open and out.” There is thus an essential need for privacy in GBLTQA programming.

Another issue indicated by focus group participants was the need for private spaces for GBLTQA students of color to meet and share their experiences. Students of color need a space that is secluded in order for students to be able to converse about their identities freely without the fear of being outed. Participants particularly mentioned that it would be helpful to have the meetings away from high traffic spaces such as the Student Union. Meetings should also be held away from spaces like the Rainbow Alliance Resource Room due to the closeness in proximity to the Student Activities office. Location is imperative to keep in mind in order to create a safe and open space for GBLTQA students of color.

Creating inclusive spaces. The participants in this study revealed a need for a space that encompasses their various intersecting identities. Space refers not only to a physical space, but also to a community from which students of color can seek out support. Poynter and Washington (2005) argued that when students are isolated as a result of their race and sexuality, the process of finding a community is difficult. Therefore, there is a need to have conversations about all minority identities in order to foster a sense of community.

One recommendation from both interviews and focus groups was the creation of a group for GBLTQA persons of color. Some students voiced that the GBLTQA students of color group should be affiliated with the larger GBLTQA program. Another suggestion was that the GBLTQA students of color group should meet separately from the larger organization to better address their needs. As I previously discussed, past creation of specialized committees and groups has worked to increase retention rates of those members, as demonstrated by the TAIGA committee.

It is also important to increase the visibility of persons of color in physical spaces on campus. It is necessary to take into account the visibility in the spaces from multiple standpoints. Does the space predominately represent White GBLTQA students? Is the space filled with only White faces? Does the space only feature White faces on displayed posters, brochures, magazines, books, and movies? Placement of resources that are specifically relevant to the lives of people of various cultural and racial backgrounds, and posters that feature GBLTQA persons of color, all contribute to creating a place of acceptance for students of diverse backgrounds. When GBLTQA resource libraries carry

books and movies that speak to diverse cultural and racial narratives, this also increases organizational relevance to the lives of students of color.

Intersectional training. Students in the first focus group strongly recommended providing many levels of intersectional trainings to faculty, staff, and students, similar to but expanding on the Safe Space program that is currently offered. While this training is already effective in increasing understanding of GBLTQA identities and issues, there is room to extend the conversation to include a wider array of identities that exist in the community. Students in this focus group suggested trainings that go more in-depth about the ways that oppression due to race, class, gender, and sexual orientation interlock. It was also recommended that leaders in programs such as Rainbow Alliance should receive more intensive levels of training on ways to create inclusive programming. Increased training assists in developing new programs to increase membership beyond first-year White GBLTQA students.

Collaboration. Participants proposed a need for collaboration on various levels. There was a need expressed to bridge the gaps in programming not only racially, but also in terms of other intersections of identities. One idea was to have more mixers and social gatherings between programs like Rainbow Alliance and GBLTQA faculty and staff groups. Another idea was to have more collaborative events with on-campus groups such as the Black Student Union, as well as The Multicultural Center offices, which include, the Women's Center, the Bolinga Black Cultural Resources Center, and AHNA (the Asian, Hispanic, and Native American Center). When programs have strong ties in other student programs, there is a higher retention rate and sense of community (Patton and Hannon, 2008). Patton and Hannon (2008) explained that many students in multicultural

or student organization groups rarely explore other organizations and spaces on campus besides the ones in which they are primarily involved. Collaboration offers students a chance to participate in activities or programs that they would not normally participate in. This also increases dialogue and interaction amongst students who are from diverse backgrounds.

Relevant programming. Participants in the focus groups suggested that programming should focus more in depth on issues that impact the GBLTQA community as a whole. GBLTQA programs can foster depth in programs around race, ethnicity, class, age, and educational level alongside gender identity and sexual orientation to better incorporate and retain members beyond freshmen students. Participants recommended offering educational programs specifically for new members and freshman separately from other programming in order to provide those returning members with fresh, new information. From this study, I also recommend that student leaders and staff members in GBLTQA programming periodically check in with students through surveys and conversations. These conversations should take place both within and outside of the program to get new ideas of topics that members might be interested in.

Conclusion

I recognize that there are many more strategies that will emerge as GBLTQA programs move more towards an intersectional approach in order to better support diverse populations of students. While this list of strategies for change is not exhaustive, it was created through directly using the voices of GBLTQA students of color on the Wright State campus, based on their stated needs. Higher education administrators should continuously check in with students of color, as well as other persons with marginalized

identities, to ensure that there is equity in student affairs programming. Campus programming should encompass the multiplicity of identities in the GBLTQA community.

Since I completed the data collection phase of this research study, there is now a newly formed group on the Wright State campus called the Black Rainbow Coalition. Black Rainbow Coalition is a student group specifically designated for GBLTQA persons of color. Hopefully, Black Rainbow Coalition will be a step in addressing some of the problems mentioned throughout this study.

WSU also recently brought Laverne Cox from the show *Orange is the New Black* to campus as a guest speaker. Cox is a Black, transgender woman who has recently garnered media attention in regards to transgender visibility and advocacy. Cox spoke about her road to womanhood during the lecture. She incorporated discussion about intersectional identities and spoke about individuals claiming these interconnecting identities. Having Cox speak on campus was an example of an action that universities can take to promote the visibility of persons of color in the GBLTQA community.

It is also worthwhile to mention that a portion of this data was collected, analyzed, and written up during a time period when many protests took place regarding racism and police brutality across the United States. Events such as the shooting of an unarmed Black man, Michael Brown, in Ferguson, MO, and the shooting of John Crawford here in Dayton, Ohio at a local Wal-Mart have sparked political unrest. Both events spoke to the institutional racism that still exists in society. Many of the participants involved in this study actively protested the above-mentioned events, and their lives were very much affected by them. This research is just one small contribution

to shed light on the isolation and oppression that persons of color experience as a result of racism and homophobia in higher education and across society.

It is important to create conversations about racism in higher education. Racism is buried deep in the bones of this country. Factors such as employment discrimination, housing discrimination, and disproportionate educational opportunities perpetuate institutionalized racism. Discriminatory practices also exist in the racialization of crime and the disproportionate criminalization of Black bodies (Brewer & Heitzeg, 2008). Violence and discrimination are carried out towards individuals of color in overt and covert ways more than many individuals with racial privilege often realize. My study is just one example of the challenges faced by persons of color in the GBLTQA community.

For those individuals with White privilege, it is important to recognize unearned privilege and use it to speak out against injustice. White allies are a necessary and important part in creating equality. Allies should bear in mind that what makes a great ally is not the act of attempting to save someone, but instead it is asking, "How can I help?" Education on oppression and privilege is another essential step in becoming a good ally. It is not necessarily the responsibility of a person of color to educate others on race unless they choose to do so, but there are many articles, studies, books, and videos on this topic. Another step in being a good ally is listening non-defensively to the experiences of GBLTQA persons during race-based conversations. Conversations with my participants increased my consciousness about problems that exist for GBLTQA persons of color. My hope is that more race-based conversations will take place in the GBLTQA community at WSU.

It is essential for higher education administrators to recognize the non-monolithic nature of the GBLTQA community. More work is needed to increase intersectional representation in order to break the perpetuation of whitening practices in the GBLTQA community. This study could take place at many other predominately White universities and they would likely garner many of the same findings due to racism that exists in the larger GBLTQA community and higher education. Increasing awareness and visibility of non-monolithic identities in the GBLTQA community is an essential step in welcoming all GBLTQA individuals into campus programming and spaces. Creating change within the WSU GBLTQA community is not an overnight process; it involves constantly examining programming, resources, and spaces critically and acknowledging areas that can be improved.

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Appendix A

Cover Letter

EXPANDING REPRESENTATION: PROMOTING FURTHER INCLUSION OF PERSONS OF COLOR IN GBLTQA CAMPUS ORGANIZATIONS, PROGRAMMING AND SPACES

March 18 2014,

Dear Participant,

You are being invited to participate in a study by completing a survey Wright State GBLTQA programming, resources and spaces. There are no known risks for your participation in this research study. The information collected may not benefit you directly. The information learned in this study may be helpful to others. The information you provide will contribute creating more inclusive spaces for GBLTQ persons of color. The questionnaire will take approximately *20 minutes* to complete. Prior to completing the questionnaire you may be asked to participate further in an interview and focus group. If you wish to participate further please include your contact information on the questionnaire.

Individuals from the Department of Humanities, Women's Studies and Sociology department, my faculty advisor and committee members may inspect these records. In all other respects, however, the data will be held in confidence to the extent permitted by law. Should the data be published, your identity will not be disclosed.

Taking part in this study is voluntary. By completing this survey you agree to take part in this research study. You do not have to answer any questions that make you uncomfortable. You may choose not to take part at all. If you decide to be in this study you may stop taking part at any time. If you decide not to be in this study or if you stop taking part at any time, you will not lose any benefits for which you may qualify.

If you have any questions, concerns, or complaints about the study, please contact: Jennifer Money at money.3@wright.edu or you can reach my faculty advisor, Julianne Weinzimmer at (937) 775-2667 or j.weinzimmer@wright.edu.

Sincerely,

Jennifer Money

I _____ consent to have data collected from my survey, interview(s), and focus group used in in this study. I understand that information gathered may be published from my participation. I also understand that no contact information or names will be published. I consent to have both interviews and focus groups recorded for transcription purposes.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Appendix B

Advertisement

Participants are needed who identify as a Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender, Questioning or Ally (GBLTQA) to participate in a study.

What is the study?

The project explores expanding representation and inclusion of GBLTQA person's of color in GBLTQA campus organizations, programs, resources and spaces.

How do I participate?

You will be asked to fill out questionnaire that will approximately 20 minutes to complete. Select participants will then be asked to participate in a interview and focus group. Interviews will discuss GBLTQA programming, resources and spaces on campus. Focus groups will discuss strategies to increase inclusion and representation of persons of color in GBLTQA programming, resources and spaces on campus. The interview and focus group will each take approximately one hour. Interested candidates should send an e-mail to money.3@wright.edu to set up a time to complete the questionnaire and to possibly set up and interview/focus group time.

Appendix C

Questionnaire

GBLTQA CAMPUS ORGANIZATIONS AND RESOURCES QUESTIONNAIRE

DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION

Age: _____

Gender:

Sexual orientation:

Race and cultural background:

Country of birth:

WSU affiliation (Check all that apply):

Faculty Staff Student

Level of education (check your current academic standing):

High school diploma 1st year student
 2nd year student 3rd year student
 4th year student 5th year student
 Currently in Master's program Master's degree
 Currently in Doctorate program Doctorate degree

Do you currently live on WSU campus? Yes No

GBLTQA CAMPUS ORGANIZATIONS

Have you participated in any of the following WSU Gay, Bisexual, Lesbian, Transgender, Questioning and Ally (GBLTQA) campus organizations? (Check all that apply)

Allies (organization for GBLTQA staff)

When did you participate and how often? _____

Rainbow Alliance (organization for GBLTQA students)
When did you participate and how often? _____

How satisfied are you with the current WSU GBLTQA campus organizations?

Very Satisfied Satisfied Neutral
 Not Applicable Unsatisfied Very Unsatisfied

What topics or programming would you like to see in the future in WSU GBLTQA campus organizations?

Are there any topics or programs you have found meaningful when participating in GBLTQA campus organizations? (If so, please describe)

Are there any GBLTQA campus organizations or groups you would like to see on campus that are not currently active? (If so, please describe)

Additional comments about WSU GBLTQA student organizations:

GBLTQA CAMPUS RESOURCES

Have you visited or contacted any of the following WSU GBLTQA campus resources?
(Check all that apply)

- Rainbow Alliance Office
- GBLTQ Resource Room
- WSU Safe Space Program
- Other _____

How satisfied are you with current WSU GBLTQA campus resources?

- Very Satisfied Satisfied Neutral
 Not Applicable Unsatisfied Very Unsatisfied

If you have participated in or used any WSU GBLTQA campus resources, what have you found the most helpful or meaningful?

Are there any GBLTQA resources you would like to have available at WSU that are currently unavailable? (If so, please describe)

Additional comments about WSU GBLTQA resources:

Do you wish to participate in future interviews and focus groups for this study?

- Yes No

If you wish to participate, what is the best way you can be reached?

Phone Number _____

E-mail Address _____@_____

Participant ID number:

Appendix D

Interview Guide

1. Have you ever visited the Rainbow Alliance office, the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual, Transgender and Ally (GLBTQA) resource room or the Multicultural Center?
 - Which of these did you visit?
 - Do you frequently visit these spaces? How often?
 - Do you feel comfortable in these spaces?
 - What resources in these spaces do you find useful/helpful?
 - Do resources would you like to have available in these spaces?
 - Do you feel that your identities are represented in these spaces?
2. Please discuss your involvement in WSU GLBTQA organizations.
 - What organization are you affiliated with?
 - Discuss your role in this organization.
 - How frequently do you participate?
 - Do you enjoy meetings or programming?
 - Do you find the topics interesting in meetings and programs?
 - Do you feel comfortable going to meetings and participating in programs held by WSU GLBTQA programming?
 - Do you feel comfortable having conversation with others in these organizations?
 - Do you actively participate in programs and meetings?
 - What topics would you like to see in future meetings and programs?
3. Do you feel comfortable disclosing your sexual orientation on campus?
 - Are there areas on campus you feel uncomfortable discussing your sexual orientation?
 - Is there a space on campus you can discuss your sexual orientation openly with others?
4. Do you feel that current WSU GLBTQA student organizations and resources are welcoming to persons of color?
5. Have you had any conflicts in the past with any areas on campus relating to your sexual orientation, race or ethnicity?

Appendix E

Focus Group Guide

In what ways can organizations like Rainbow Alliance and Allies improve their representation of persons of color in programming and meetings?

- Discuss strategies for increasing involvement and creating leadership opportunities for GBLTQA persons of color

In what ways can resources offered at WSU for GBLTQA individuals better represent persons of color?

- Discuss strategies on how to obtain more representational materials
- Discuss strategies to make spaces more welcoming to GBLTQA persons of color

Do you have any general thoughts on ways to increase inclusion and collaboration between the spaces such as the Multicultural Center (Bollinga, AHNA, and the Women's Center) and student organizations such as Rainbow Alliance and Allies WSU campus?