

ABSTRACT

Race, Space, and Saving Face

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Despite diversity on college campuses increasing nationwide, higher education institutions still struggle to promote diversity and inclusion equally. The current literature shows a need to better understand the relationship between race, space, and interaction that forges approaches to understanding race in these contexts apart from the well-worn approaches of developmental stage theories. A few studies have previously addressed the purpose and importance of multicultural identity centers on higher education campuses, but none have used a framework that draws upon Goffman's (1959) dramaturgy to analyze the role that the multicultural identity center plays in the racial performance of Students of Color on campus. This study explored the following question: What role does the multicultural identity center play in the racial performance of Students of Color on campus?

Race, Space, and Saving Face

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DEDICATION

To my mentor Mrs. Pearl Beverly,
You were the source of my inspiration for this study.

CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

This qualitative study drew upon Goffman's (1959) dramaturgy to explore the role that the multicultural identity center plays in the attitudes, perceptions, and interactions of Students of Color with the greater campus environment. Dramaturgy uses the language of the theater to describe society; society is considered a stage, and individuals are considered performers. As such, this study examined the multicultural identity center and the wider campus environment as stages, and Students of Color as performers. This chapter introduces the central elements of this study: student racial identity as performance, the campus environment and climate, and identity centers.

Student Racial Identity

Over the past half century, college student identity has primarily been approached by scholars from a psychological perspective (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Erikson, 1968; Gildersleeve & Hernandez, 2012). Reconceptualizing identity, specifically racial identity, from a sociological perspective, though, offers a new possibility for understanding how students from underrepresented groups make sense of navigating college within particular racialized spaces (Burke & Reitzes, 1981; Goffman, 1959; Kaufman & Feldman, 2004; Stewart, 2015). Stewart (2015) critiques the psychological perspective of racial identity. She argues that a psychological lens portrays racial identity as an internal construct that is responsive to external factors, but growth and development is ultimately reflected by articulating an identity for oneself that excludes external

expectations. Stewart instead endorses a sociological understanding of identity as performance. Racial performances are not fixed but situational; they are not unconscious but deliberately chosen (Stewart, 2015).

Racial Identity as Performance

Indicative of the predominance of the psychological perspective, scant literature exists on racial identity as performance (Stewart, 2015; Willie, 2003). Willie (2003) observed as individuals negotiated and performed their identities; she argued that race is contingent, contested, and negotiated. Literature on the cultural production of identity articulation in higher education institutional environments identifies three themes: negotiating racial performances, embodying racial performances, and centering race (Stewart, 2015). Negotiating racial performances reflects how participant behavior, habits, and preferences are interpreted by others; embodying racial performance showed how gender intersected with expectations for racial performance; centering race focused more on the role of the college environment that participants inhabited and how a predominately White environment influenced participants occupation with race as a central element of identity (Stewart, 2015). Similar to Stewart, my study sought to uncover the relationships between participants, the identity center, and the greater campus environment.

Racial Stereotypes

Literature on the concept of stereotype threat parallels the idea of racial identity as performance. Stereotypes are exaggerated or overgeneralized beliefs about a racial group that influence members of the targeted group (Museus, 2008). Stereotype threat suggests

that individuals alter behavior in order to gain approval from others (Erba, 2018; Steele & Aronson, 1995). My study sought to explore racial identity as performance, and stereotype threat as an important aspect of how participants strategize and enact that performance. Some common stereotypes about Students of Color have been explored in the literature and are distinct by major racial/ethnic group (Davis, Aronson, & Salinas, 2006; Erba, 2015; Garfield, 2010; Museus, 2008; Museus & Park, 2015).

Asian and Pacific American Undergraduate Students

Asian Americans are one of the least understood populations in higher education; in a recent analysis of five of the most widely read peer-reviewed academic journals in the field of higher education, less than 1% of articles published within the last decade gave explicit attention to Asian Americans (Museus & Park, 2015). The absence of research-based understanding of Asian American undergraduates only contributes to the misconception that they are problem-free minorities. In actuality, Asian Americans reported experiencing multiple types of racism: racial harassment, vicarious racism, racial isolation, pressure to racially segregate, pressure to racially assimilate, racial silencing, the perpetual foreigner myth, the model minority myth, and the inferior minority myth (Museus & Park, 2015).

Black and African American Undergraduate Students

When it comes to higher education, two of the most common racial academic stereotypes are the idea of the model minority and the inferior minority. Although Asian Americans are typically placed in the model minority category, Black and African Americans are placed in the inferior minority category. They are often stereotyped as

being academically inferior and having questionable academic qualifications (Davis, Aronson, & Salinas, 2006; Museus, 2008). Black and African American men have also been stereotyped into the violent-Black-male role; two dimensions of this image include the criminal-black-male and the violent-Black-male roles (Garfield, 2010). These stereotypes portray Black men's moral character as less than human and their behavior as animal-like (Garfield, 2010).

Latino/a/x Undergraduate Students

Despite Latinx persons making up the largest racial/ethnic minority group in the United States, they have one of the lowest college graduation rates (Erba, 2018). Comparing Latinos and Latinas, research has found that Latina students attending PWIs reported more positive perceptions of the university environment than Latino students. Latino students reported feeling greater academic discouragement, greater racial discrimination, and racism on campus (Erba, 2018). Some of the typical stereotypes against Latinx students comes from the news and the media. Latinx males are more likely to be portrayed as perpetrators of crime or as lazier and less intelligent compared to White characters. Latinx females mainly play "sexy or household characters" (Erba, 2018). Latinx persons as a whole are often heavily portrayed as immigrants, often being called "illegal aliens" or "illegal immigrants," that are threatening the domestic populations of the United States (Erba, 2018).

The Dynamic Campus Environment

The campus environment has been researched extensively by scholars, with a wide range of foci from each study (Astin & Holland, 1961; Baird, 1988; Moos, 1979;

Strange & Banning, 2001; Temple, 2008). Foci have included characteristics of the student body and their influence on the college environment (Astin & Holland, 1961); demographic, perceptual, behavior, and multimethod categorizations of the college environment; learning spaces (Temple, 2008); and the environmental variables of the physical setting, organizational factors, human aggregate, and social climate/constructed environment (Moos, 1979; Strange & Banning, 2001). Regardless of the variety of ways the campus environment can be approached, the relationship between students and the campus environment is reciprocal and dynamic (Dey & Hurtado, 1995). Students shape the environments they belong to, and the environment provides the potential for transforming the individual (Dey & Hurtado, 1995). This study focused on three components of the campus environment: students, the multicultural identity center, and the greater campus environment as a whole.

Campus Racial Climate

Racial climate on the college campus has received considerable attention from scholars. The current literature is diverse but can be categorized in a variety of areas: how students from different racial groups experience their campus climate differently (Rankin & Reason, 2005; Reid & Radhakrishnan, 2003); attitudes, perceptions, observations, interactions, and experiences of the campus climate by Students of Color (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000; Hurtado, 1992; Hurtado & Ruiz, 2012; Johnson, Wasserman, Yildirim, & Yonai, 2014; Mwangi, Thelamour, Ezeofor, & Carpenter, 2018; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Reid & Radhakrishnan, 2003); racial conflict (Hurtado, 1992); campus climate for diversity among staff (Mayhew, Grunwald, & Dey, 2006); socioeconomic

status and campus climate (Park, Denson, & Bowman, 2013); student organizations, interracial friendships, and campus climate (Park, 2014).

One scholar went as far as to say that “probably few policy areas of higher education have received more recent attention than the issue of race on campus” (Hurtado, Clayton-Pedersen, Allen, & Milem, 1998, p. 279). The campus climate is an important part of this study, especially the attitudes and perceptions of the campus climate that come from each individual participant. Each participant’s racial identity plays out on campus differently because their engagement with the environment changes their environment. The campus climate influences each participants’ experience with the campus environment.

Differences in how Students of Color experience the campus is what sparked my interest in the relationship between the identity center, students involved in the identity center, and the greater campus environment. Campus environments, and campus racial climates are complex: Hurtado (1992) claims that there is no single element of the environment that produces racial tension on college campuses. Instead, it is a “configuration of external influences (historical and contemporary), structural characteristics of institutions and group relations, and institutionalized ideologies” (p. 564). Consequently, there are also no neutral or universal spaces. Spaces can be influenced by race in a variety of ways; both race and space involve struggles over their meanings, are fluid and historical, and interactional and relational, and are defined by inequality and difference (Neely & Samura, 2011). This study used the identity center and the greater campus environment as two spaces that are influenced by and are

influential of race. Influence of space and students is reciprocal and dynamic over time and among various users (Dey & Hurtado, 1995; Massey, 1994).

Identity Centers

The creation of identity centers came out of the civil rights movement and the Black student movement that followed in the 1960s and 1970s (Patton, 2006). Following the influx of Black students at predominately White institutions, colleges were underprepared to deal with the new population of students (Patton, 2006). As a way to bring together students, faculty, staff, and administrators of higher education communities, identity centers were created (Renn, 2011). The original identity centers were Black Culture Centers, but now ethnic, racial, gender, religious, ability, and sexual orientation identities are represented in identity centers on college campuses (Patton, 2006; Renn, 2011).

Despite this history, the presence of identity centers on college campuses is contested by scholars today. Identity centers have been accused of fostering separatism and self-segregation, only existing for Black students, and only serving a social mission (Patton, 2006); only catering to certain identities and excluding others (Fine, 2012; Marine & Nicolazzo, 2014; Ritchie & Banning, 2001); contributing to campus balkanization, and in-group discrimination (Renn, 2011). Identity centers have also been praised for responding to noninclusive campus climates, becoming a part of the ecology of identity groups on campus, playing a role in bridging academic and student affairs, carrying on traditions, and having a symbolic function (Renn, 2011); cross-racial interactions can also be enhanced by the presence of racial/ethnic identity centers, and

both Students of Color and White students can benefit from involvement in the center's programs and activities (Hurtado, et al., 1998).

Campus Environment as "Stage"

Erving Goffman (1959) was a social-psychologist who was interested in day-to-day, face-to-face interactions, and how individuals negotiate social expectations and meaning from the micro interactions of everyday life. Using the language and elements of a theatrical performance, Goffman (1959) compared individuals to performers, like actors on the stage of a theater. The environment the performance takes place in is the stage. My study positioned Students of Color as performers; the identity center and greater campus environment were the stages on which they performed. Anyone that the performers came in contact with, or performed for, were considered the audience; the audience witnessed and reacted to the performance on stage.

Statement of the Problem

Despite diversity on college campuses increasing nationwide, higher education institutions still struggle to promote diversity and inclusion equally. The current literature shows a need to better understand the relationship between race, space, and interaction that forges approaches to understanding race in these contexts apart from the well-worn approaches of developmental stage theories. This qualitative study used Goffman's (1959) dramaturgy to bring a fresh perspective to an exploration of the following question: *What role does the multicultural identity center play in the racial performance of Students of Color on campus?* This question was further explored through the following sub-questions:

- 1) In what ways and for what reasons do participants perform their racial identity within the campus environment?
- 2) In what ways does the campus climate and environment influence the attitudes, perceptions, and interactions of Students of Color?
- 3) What experiences have Students of Color had with the multicultural identity center?
- 4) What influence, if any, does the identity center have on the racial identity performances of Students of Color?

CHAPTER TWO

Review of the Literature

As institutions struggle to promote both diversity and inclusion equally, the role of the campus environment generally, and spaces intended to promote these aims specifically continue to represent important areas of inquiry theoretically and practically. Thus, the field of higher education would benefit from a more robust and complex understanding of the relationship between student's racial identity performance, identity centers, and campus environment. Despite more than 50 years of existence on college campuses, and their importance within the larger campus environment and in the lives of students, research on identity centers is sparse. Moving away from the psychological perception of identity and reconceptualizing racial identity as performance within a particular environment would offer fresh insight into the ways that underrepresented groups make sense of and navigate college. The themes that tie all of these elements together are race, space, and interactions.

Identity Centers

Historically, identity centers as a whole were created as a way to bring together students, staff, faculty, administrators, and other members of higher education communities at a time when institutions were rapidly diversifying (Renn, 2011). The purpose of identity centers on college and university campuses is to provide programs and services for groups that have been historically underrepresented in higher education (Renn, 2011). Although there are many different identities represented in identity centers,

they most commonly include ethnic, racial, gender, religious, ability, or sexual orientation identities (Renn, 2011). Racial/ethnic identity centers were the first such centers, and were formed following the civil rights movement (Patton, 2006). After the civil rights movement and the Black student movement that followed, the number of Black students at predominantly White institutions (PWIs) increased (Patton, 2006). PWIs were underprepared to deal with the new population of students; insufficient resources and a lack of support forced students seek out opportunities that would enhance their experiences and counterbalance the discrimination, isolation, and racism that permeated the PWi climate. What followed was the hiring of Black faculty and the recruiting of Black students; Black studies programs, minority affairs offices, and Black Culture Centers were also created (Patton, 2006).

Despite more than half a century of existence and their important role within the larger campus space and in the lives of individual students, research on identity centers is sparse (Kasper, 2004). Current literature on identity centers highlights their increasing prevalence on college and university campuses (Marine & Nicolazzo, 2014); other literature notes that some colleges and universities have not been as open to certain identity centers, like sexual minority identity centers (Fine, 2012; Marine & Nicolazzo, 2014; Ritchie & Banning, 2001). Current literature on racial/ethnic identity centers also focuses on outlining their historical roots (Hefner, 2002; Patton, 2006; Patton & Hannon, 2008; Young and Hannon, 2002).

One insight that emerges from the minimal literature on identity centers is the variety of approaches to the staffing, structuring, goals, and purpose of these offices. Some identity centers occupy entire buildings, while others are confined to a single room

or a space inside of a larger room (Renn, 2011). Some identity centers include multiple identities in one space (for example: race, ethnicity, gender, and religious) while others separate identities into multiple identity centers. Campuses also structure identity centers with a mixture of staffing strategies; full-time or part-time professional staff, graduate assistants, volunteers, students, paid paraprofessionals, and/or faculty members (Renn, 2011). Diversity in structure and organization of identity centers can make it difficult to collect data on identity centers, compare them to one another, and create a standard for comparison. Given the variety of forms, structures, and foci, identity centers deserve additional inquiry.

Identity centers also vary by population focus and aims. Some aims, goals, and missions include education, promotion of opportunities for experiencing and learning about various identities, addressing identity intersectionality, helping students cope with campus climates, providing support for underrepresented groups, and bringing together students, faculty, and staff (Renn, 2011; Patton & Hannon, 2008). Certain identities (e.g., racial, ethnic) are more commonly represented within identity centers on college campuses, and all identities are equally represented nationally. For example, only a small handful of American institutions have identity centers dedicated to sexual orientation (Fine 2012; Marine & Nicolazzo, 2014; Ritchie & Banning, 2001). Unequal representation of identity centers committed to all identities contributes to sparse research on identity centers overall. Racial/ethnic identity centers, one of the more common types of identity centers, have received more attention from researchers (Hefner, 2002; Patton, 2006; Patton, 2010; Renn, 2011). However, there are still elements that relate to the identity center that have not been explored.

Today, scholars and practitioners offer mixed reviews on the role and function of identity centers. Arguments have been made for and against the need for them.

Opponents charge that these centers foster separatism and self-segregation, they are for Black students only, and they only serve a social mission (Patton, 2006). Centers have been accused of contributing to self-segregation, campus balkanization, and in-group discrimination (Renn, 2011). Even with racial/ethnic identity centers, some scholars argue that the center should focus on only one race/ethnicity, like Black Culture Centers, instead of combining all races/ethnicities into one multicultural center (Patton, 2006).

However, other scholars claim that they respond to noninclusive campus climates, they are part of the ecology of identity groups on campus, some play a role in bridging academic and student affairs, and they carry on traditions and have a symbolic function (Renn, 2011). Scholars also point out that cross-race student interactions can be also enhanced by racial/ethnic identity centers; while Students of Color typically receive the benefit from these identity centers, they can help overcome the problem of White students showing less involvement in the identity center's programs and activities (Hurtado, et al., 1998).

With the growing literature on multicultural identity centers increasing, literature on how they relate to retention and campus climate is still virtually nonexistent (Patton, 2010). The literature that does exist on culture center and retention is contested, though. Some culture centers embrace programming that is aimed at retention of multicultural populations through things like peer mentoring, tutoring, and academic skills workshops. In other instances, culture centers have been accused of self-segregation when they engage in services promoting outreach, recruitment, and retention (Patton, 2010).

Professional staff members who work in culture centers are often perceived as advocates for Students of Color, thus assisting in recruitment and retention initiatives (Patton, 2010).

Much of the current research focuses on the importance of identity centers on campus. Researchers have also examined the positive components of identity centers and the scrutiny against them. Cross-racial interactions and the types of experiences Students of Color have versus White students have also been a point of interest. This study contributed to the research gap by examining the involvement experiences of Students of Color with the identity center and the greater campus climate surrounding the identity center.

Campus Environment

The relationship between students and the college environment is both reciprocal and dynamic (Dey & Hurtado, 1995). Students shape their educational environments, and the environment provides the potential for transforming the individual (Dey & Hurtado, 1995). Despite the reciprocal relationship, research on the relationships between the identity center, students, and the greater campus environment is largely nonexistent; my study contributed to the relationship between these elements. Research on the college environment varies greatly, is focused on a variety of elements of the campus and parallels a range of priorities from researchers (Astin & Holland, 1961; Baird, 1988; Moos, 1979; Strange & Banning, 2001; Temple, 2008).

Approaches to studying the college environment can be divided into four categories: demographic, perceptual, behavioral, and multimethod (Baird, 1988). The demographic approach is primarily descriptive and is based on data that can be recorded,

such as enrollment and academic major breakdown among students. A perceptual approach relies on student, faculty, and administrator responses to items and scales that access their perceptions of the institution. Behavioral approaches measure observable behavioral regularities of students, faculty, and staff. The multimethod approach combines all three previous approaches into a single assessment (Baird, 1988).

Other approaches to studying the college environment have focused exclusively on the students in the environment. The Environmental Assessment Technique focuses on eight characteristics of the student body to examine the college environment. Institutional size, intelligence level of the student body, and personal orientation of the student body; personal orientation of the student body classifies student's occupation in terms of six personality types: realistic, intellectual, social, conventional, enterprising, and artistic (Astin & Holland, 1961). The college environment has also been approached from the study of learning spaces in higher education, though this area has not historically attracted a great deal of attention from researchers (Temple, 2008). Temple (2008) acknowledges that additional research is needed to fully explore the connections between the university, space, and learning.

My study focused on the relationship between three components of the campus environment: the multicultural identity center, students, and the campus environment as a whole. With the relationship between students and the campus environment being reciprocal and dynamic, I added in the element of the multicultural identity center as a microsetting of the larger campus environment. Moos (1979) specifically notes that attention should be paid to the microsettings where individuals spend most of their time. These settings are meaningful, relatively homogenous and cohesive, and are likely to

have strong impacts on the individuals within the microsetting. Microsettings are more likely to be controlled by the individuals in them (Moos, 1979). The identity center was a key component of this study; the identity center was a microsetting where participants spent a great deal of time. The greater campus environment was equally as important, though. The identity center was a part of the greater campus environment, and both had the opportunity to transform students (Dey & Hurtado, 1995). For that reason, I investigated the identity center and the greater campus environment.

Moos (1979) identifies four domains of environmental variables useful to developing a multifaceted understanding of the college campus: the physical setting, organizational factors, the human aggregate, and social climate. The physical setting includes architecture and physical design, which can influence psychological states and social behavior. Organizational factors include “size, faculty-student ratio, average salary level, and affluence or wealth” of the educational institution; factors in this domain are then related to student behavior or achievement (Moos, 1979, p. 7). The human aggregate characteristics of students in a setting are situational variables in that they define relevant characteristics of the environment; this can include “age, ability level, socioeconomic background, and educational attainment” (Moos, 1979, p. 8).

Finally, the last domain is the social climate. The social climate itself has three dimensions: relationship, personal growth or goal orientation, and system maintenance and change (Moos, 1979). Relationship dimensions examine personal interactions in the setting; personal growth or goal orientation dimensions involve the varying goals of people in different settings; system maintenance and change dimensions assess the environment’s order, organization, clarity, control, and innovation (Moos, 1979, p. 248).

Moos notes that each of the first three domains (physical setting, organizational factors, and human aggregate) can affect the other two. They also have an effect on the social climate, which Moos says is “both a fourth domain of environmental variables and the major mediator of the influences of the other three” (Moos, 1979, p. 10).

All four of Moos’ domains were important to this study. I was looking at the physical campus as a whole on my campus tour with each student, but within that environment I was focusing on the identity center as a physical setting with social, human aggregate, and organizational aspects and implications. Moos notes that organizational factors have an influence on student behavior and achievement. The human aggregate idea is based on the notion that the social and cultural environment can be transmitted through other people; “the character of an environment depends in part on the typical characteristics of its members” (Moos, 1979, p. 8). In the case of this study, having interviewed only Students of Color, racial/ethnic background was one of the characteristics that each of the participants has in common that influenced the character of their environment.

After Moos (1979), Strange and Banning (2001) also examined how the college environment impacts students. Strange and Banning (2001) identify four sets of environmental components that comprise the various sources of influence on human behavior: physical, human aggregate, organizational, and constructed. Physical components include the physical condition, design, and layout; human aggregate components are the characteristics of the people who inhabit them; organizational components are organizational structures related to their purposes and goals; constructed

components are inhabitants' collective perceptions or constructions of the context and culture of the setting (Strange & Banning, 2001, p. 5).

In this study, identity centers were classified in multiple ways. Identity centers were physical spaces on campus; the specific identity center I worked in had its own office within the union building. However, I was also looking at identity centers through the lens of a non-tangible constructed phenomenon. I explored the attitudes, perceptions, and experiences of students who were involved in the identity center. Organizational components and human aggregate components did also arise during interviews as I explored students' racial identity as performance, following Goffman's (1959) idea of performance in dramaturgy.

Between Moos and Strange and Banning, three of their four domains/components overlap; physical, organizational, and human aggregate. The biggest different is between Moos' social climate and Strange's organizational component. Both approaches are useful, because they help in the evaluation of what my study provides. In this study I examined the role the identity center, a physical space, played in the perceptions and attitudes, a constructed component, of Students of Color, the human aggregate, with campus, another physical space.

Campus Tour

Although a variety of scholars have contributed to the field by identifying important facets of the physical campus environment (Moos, 1979; Strange & Banning, 2001), understanding that environment from the perspective of the student is a challenge requiring innovative methods. In part, this is because physical spaces are not neutral or universal (Neely & Samura, 2011). Both race and space involve political struggles over

their meanings, they are fluid and historical, they are interactional and relational, and they are defined by inequality and difference (Neely & Samura, 2011). Due to the fact that spaces are not race-neutral, spaces can lead Students of Color in certain racialized representations, roles, hierarchies, and more (Mitchell, Wood, & Witherspoon, 2010).

One of the foci of my study was the attitudes, perceptions, and experiences of Students of Color from the perspective of their involvement with the identity center. However, that aspect alone left out how students perceive the larger campus environment and campus climate. Therefore, accompanying students on a one-on-one alternative campus tour provided clues as to how racial identity played out on different campus environments for a given participant. The campus tour follows a ritual, or performance, of sorts (Magolda, 2000). Tour participants embody certain roles, whether that is the performer or the audience. All performers' roles accomplish instrumental tasks, like providing information, and convey symbolic messages.

The campus tour had the potential to reveal what lay at the intersection of the campus environment, campus climate, identity center, and student identity as performance. All space is encoded with social meaning and no space is a neutral space (Flint, 2019; Massey, 1994; Neely & Samura, 2011). Space should be thought of in terms of social relations that occur, and have occurred, and tend to occur there that the space echoes and reinforces (Massey, 1994). The meaning of space is produced and reproduced in everyday practices, constantly changing (Flint, 2019). Neely and Samura (2011) assert that there are four characteristics of space that overlap with conceptualizations of race: both space and race involve political struggles over meaning, both are fluid and historical, both are interactional and relational, and both are defined by inequality and

difference. Exclusively conducting one-on-one interviews only missed the opportunity to explore the other spaces that the student's racial identity exists in, and that are evoked by physically visiting said location (Flint, 2019; Massey, 1994; Neely & Samura, 2011). Conducting an alternative campus tour with each participant strengthened the data received from participants by triangulating accounts from interviews. The overlapping narrative of the tour and conversation expanded the narrative of how racial identity plays out on campus (Flint, 2019). The alternative campus tour contributed to participants revealing what spaces give them social meaning.

Students: Identity as Performance

Given that racial identity has become a central concern of the field, moving away from a primarily psychological assumption of identity (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Erikson, 1968; Gildersleeve & Hernandez, 2012) and reconceptualizing racial identity as role performance within a particular setting (Burke & Reitzes, 1981; Goffman, 1959; Kaufman & Feldman, 2004; Stewart, 2015) offers fresh insight into the ways that students from underrepresented groups make sense of and navigate college. Goffman (1959) is not the only scholar to approach identity from a sociological perspective. Kaufman and Feldman (2004) challenged the psychological assumption of identity, suggesting students formed felt identities in three domains: intelligence and knowledgeability, occupation, and cosmopolitanism. Intelligence and knowledgeability include the process of thinking critically, occupation coincides with career choices, and cosmopolitanism relates to cultural events and activities. The experience of the college environment, and those in the college environment, play an important role in student's forming felt identity (Kaufman & Feldman, 2004). Stewart (2015) also approached

identity from the sociological perspective, and she also compared racial identity to a performance. She demonstrated the value of this approach by arguing that racial performances are situational and deliberately chosen, as opposed to fixed and unconscious.

The experiences of the college environment and the individuals present in the college environment are important in determining identity. In this study I utilized Goffman's (1959) dramaturgy to contribute to the idea of racial identity as a performance. Goffman used the language of individuals functioning like an actor on a stage performing for an audience. There are two components to each individual: front stage and backstage. Front stage is where the performance actually occurs, and actors use impression management to convey their performance to their audience. The backstage is where the actor is safe and protected from the role they take on when they are performing in front of others.

Interaction, specifically face-to-face interaction, is defined by Goffman "as the reciprocal influence of individuals upon one another's action when in one another's immediate physical presence" (1959, p. 15). A performance is any and all activity of a given participant on a given occasion that has the purpose of influencing other participants or observers (Goffman, 1959). Considering a particular participant and their performance as a basic point of reference, those who contribute are referred to as the audience, observers, or co-participants (Goffman, 1959, p. 14-15). This study likened Students of Color to performers, the identity center and the greater campus environment to stages, and anyone that the students interact with as the audience; this approach

contributes to growing efforts to conceptualize racial identity and experience beyond the psychological perspective.

Students: Race/Racial Stereotypes

Many higher education institutions struggle, or fail, to fully commit to diversity and multiculturalism (Museus & Jayakumar, 2012). Despite the fact that racial and ethnic minority students make up a growing proportion of the students entering higher education institutions, disparities still exist between races in higher education (Kelly, 2005; Museus & Jayakumar, 2012). Disparities can be academic, but they can also comprise the attitudes and perceptions towards racial and ethnic minority groups (Museus & Jayakumar, 2012). Issues surrounding race on campus have been described as “one of the most volatile, and divisive, issues in American higher education” (Albacht & Lomotey, 1991, p. 3).

Despite efforts to increase and embrace diversity, attitudes and perceptions of Students of Color contribute to the struggle; these struggles on campus are often influenced by racial stereotypes. Racial stereotypes are exaggerated beliefs or overgeneralizations about a racial group that influence the thoughts, feelings, and behaviors of members of both the generalizing group and targeted group (Museus, 2008). Stereotype threat is a component of racial/ethnic stereotypes that affects all racial/ethnic minority groups (Erba, 2018; Steele & Aronson, 1995). It suggests that individuals purposefully change their behavior to avoid being perceived as confirming a stereotype about their group (Erba, 2018). Stereotype threat is important to consider because of the way racial/ethnic stereotypes relate to Goffman’s (1959) idea of performance and impression management. He suggests that individuals are constantly engaged in

impression management, where they change their behavior to gain approval from others. Stereotype threat does not affect all members of a group in similar ways (Erba, 2018) My study added to the exploration of how stereotypes, and stereotype threat, affected the performance of Students of Color. My study aimed to explore how racial identity as performance and stereotype threat contribute to attitudes and perceptions of Students of Color in the college environment.

Code switching is another element that connects students' impression management with performance. Code switching is defined differently by many scholars (Rabbani & Mushtaq, 2012). For the sake of this study, code switching was defined as the use of more than one language or language variety at the same time in conversation (Auer, 1988; Koch, Gross, & Kolts, 2001; Rabbani & Mushtaq, 2012).

Conclusion

This chapter provides a summary of the existing literature on identity centers, the campus environment, the campus tour, identity as performance, and racial stereotypes. The current literature demonstrates a need to better understand the relationship between race, space, and interactions. My study utilized Goffman's (1959) dramaturgical theory to examine the role that the multicultural center plays in the perceptions and interactions of Students of Color with the greater campus environment.

CHAPTER THREE

Conceptual Framework and Methodology

The Conceptual Framework

The conceptual framework provides a theoretical base for what a researcher is investigating, and it clarifies to readers what the researcher seeks to achieve and how it will be achieved (Leshem & Trafford, 2007). My conceptual framework drew upon Goffman's (1959) dramaturgy to explore the role the multicultural identity center plays in the attitudes, perceptions, and interactions of Students of Color with campus. Dramaturgy looks at society as a stage, and individuals are performers on the stage. My study looked at the identity center and greater campus environment as stages, and Students of Color are the performers on the two stages.

Interaction

According to social-psychologist Erving Goffman (1959), it is natural for individuals to seek information and social confirmation of role enactment when they enter into the presence of others. It is also natural for individuals to attempt to control the impression that others might form in the process of interaction. Interaction is any reciprocal action between individuals throughout any one occasion (Goffman, 1959). The normal day-to-day interaction of individuals was Goffman's interest. Dramaturgy, his theoretical analysis of these day-to-day interactions, conceptualized this person-to-person, face-to-face, everyday interaction between individuals that is likened to a theatrical performance (Figure 1, below).

When individuals interact, they leave an impression on observers of the interaction. When observers or participants evaluate an interaction, their response is based on two distinct kinds of expression: expressions given and expressions given off (Goffman, 1959). *Expressions given* is communication in the traditional and narrow sense; it involves “verbal symbols or their substitutes” (Goffman, 1959, p. 2). *Expressions given off* involves non-verbal and verbal messages that encode additional meaning beyond face value: “a wide range of action that others can treat as symptomatic of the actor, the expectation being that the action was performed for reasons other than the information conveyed” (Goffman, 1959, p. 2). Goffman’s focus was on the latter form, expressions given off. Of the two, this kind of expression includes non-verbal communication and is a “more theatrical and contextual kind” (Goffman, 1959, p. 4). Dramaturgy examines how the two kinds of expressions, expressions given and expressions gives off, influences interactions, social behavior, and the greater society.

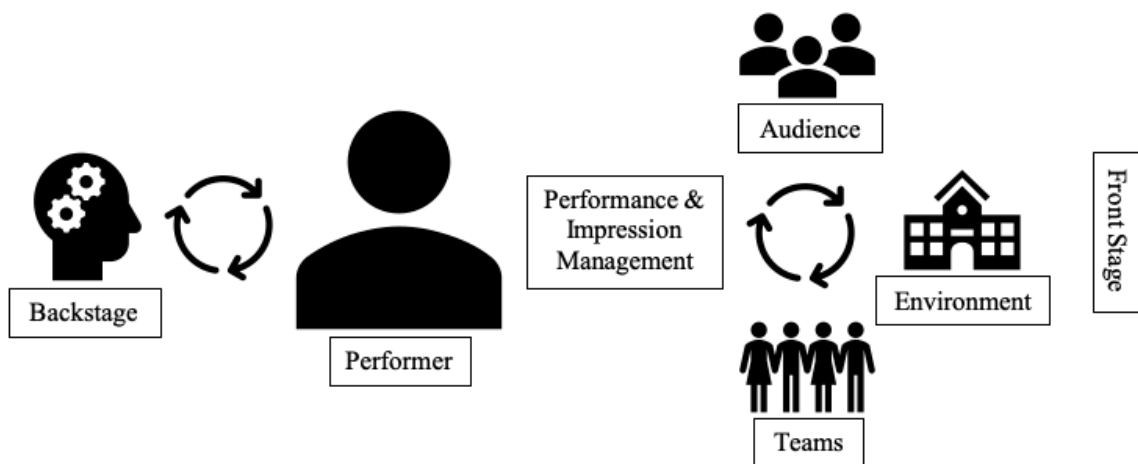


Figure 1. Dramaturgy

Performers and Audience

Using the language of the theater, Goffman compares individuals to performers, like actors on a stage. The *audience* (Figure 1) consists of any individual that is not the self; this individual, or possibly multiple individuals, observe the performance of the main performer and react to the performance. My study included Students of Color who are involved with a multicultural center as performers, and anyone they come in contact with can be classified as the audience.

Performances, Impression Management, and Roles

Goffman (1959) refers to a performance as any and all activity of a given participant on an occasion that serves to influence other participants. When an individual, or performer, performs they are asking the observers, or audience, to take seriously the impression they are conveying. Impression management (Figure 1) is central to Goffman's theory of dramaturgy. Impression management is the idea that as individuals interact, they are constantly trying to present themselves or behave in a way that others will endorse and view as legitimate. Impression management also helps all members involved in the social interaction to have the same definition of the situation; this includes how all individuals should behave, what the performers expect from one another, and what is supposed to happen in the situation.

Every person also performs multiple different roles based on the set of social positions they occupy and that are salient to a given context or performance. Examples of roles can be son/daughter, student, friend, and so forth. When an individual is performing a specific role, they adapt their behavior to fit into the role they are performing and the anticipated and perceived expectations of a given audience. Individuals typically take on

a role depending on their understanding of an environment. For example, an individual would take on the role of student when they were in the classroom. In my study, I examined the student's role as a Student of Color within, or in relation to, a multicultural center and the broader campus environment (Figure 1).

Teams

Interaction is not always one-on-one. Multiple individuals involved in the same performance make up a team (Figure 1). Goffman defines a *team* as “any set of individuals who co-operate in staging a single routine” (Goffman, 1959, p. 79). This study focused on both one-on-one interaction and team interaction. Racial identity is enacted as a social construct, within and among groups of peers, friends, and family.

Regions

Areas where performances take place are referred to as *regions*; the two regions are front stage and backstage. Goffman (1959) says that these areas can also be known as front regions and back-regions, but I refer to them only as front stage and backstage (Figure 1). The center of social negotiation is the mechanism of identity management that happens through the two processes of front stage and backstage.

Performers (Figure 1) can be in the front stage and backstage, but the audience only has access to the front stage (Goffman, 1959). The front stage is always where performances are held, so the front stage is where the performer “gives off expression” to the audience. The front stage includes sign vehicles that performers use to present themselves to the audience; this can include appearance, props (like clothing), and social setting (Goffman, 1959). The social setting is the physical location where interaction

actually occurs. Different settings, and different audiences, require that the performer alter their performance to appropriately fit each setting. Props decorate the social setting, and they give the audience cues on how the performer wants the audience to think of them.

Backstage, however, is available to the performer only. It is a completely internal mental process. When in backstage, the performer strategizes about how she will manage the social norms and expectations that will inform future front stage behavior. The performer can be more physically and mentally relaxed in backstage, often because they are in the backstage setting when they are alone. Despite the performer's ability to alter their appearance and behavior into a more authentic and relaxed version of themselves, they may rehearse certain interactions in preparation of an upcoming front stage performance. Even in backstage, the performer can be aware of the social norms and expectations that await them in the front stage (Goffman, 1959).

In both front stage and backstage, individuals are relating to past and future performances. Since it is impossible to observe or access the backstage of participants, backstage functions as a reminder that identities are constructed, to varying levels of intentionality, in response to social cues gleaned from front stage performance responses. My particular interest was how Students of Color perform their racial identity on the front stage of the identity center and the wider campus environment. My study also sought out how Students of Color interact with various audiences and teams and incorporate impression management into those interactions.

Summary

The dramaturgical theory offered by Goffman (1959) guided the study's exploration of the role the multicultural center plays in the perceptions and interactions of Students of Color with campus. In this case, Students of Color were equivalent to performers of a racial identity that was a response to what was expected based on known and perceived roles. The multicultural center was one of the stages, and the university campus as a whole was the other stage; as the researcher, I was a part of the audience, and other audience members included other students, staff, and faculty.

Methodology

Qualitative research pursues understanding of “the social meaning people attribute to their experiences, circumstances, and situations” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 4). The major dimensions of research are ontology, epistemology, methodology, and methods (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Ontology is an individual's belief system about the nature of reality, and epistemology is a “philosophical belief system about who be the knower” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 4). Together, ontology and epistemology form the philosophical basis of a research project (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Methodology is the theoretical perspective, and there are three strands: post-positivist, interpretive, and critical. This study used a qualitative approach to examine how Students of Color interacted with and performed their racial identity in relation to the identity center and the greater campus environment. In the interpretive strand, or tradition, research focuses on “understanding, interpretation, and social meaning” (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 17). This strand assumes the social world is constructed through group interaction, and social reality exists as collaborative meaning-making between the

researcher and participant(s). The specific approach of my study was Goffman's (1959) dramaturgy, which focused on social interaction as performance. Dramaturgy is considered an interpretive approach; these approaches are associated with the hermeneutic tradition, meaning research seeks understanding by interpreting the meaning that interaction, actions, and objects have for people (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). Finally, methods are the tools used to collect data that reflect the intentions and assumptions of ontology, epistemology, and methodology (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011).

Methods

Data Collection

I identified potential participants through a purposeful convenience sample of students who met the baseline criteria for this study: Students of Color currently enrolled and attending the four-year institution of my selection, and who were involved in the multicultural identity center. In order to meet the criteria of involved in the multicultural identity center, students must have been a member of at least one student organization that fell within the identity center. Included students belonged to various racial and ethnic groups, including African American/Black, Asian/Asian American, and Latinx. I recruited students that were classified as juniors and seniors.

I collected three types of data. First, through semi-structured interviews (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). All interviews were conducted in-person and audio recorded, lasting approximately 45-90 minutes. Second, I asked all participants to take me on an alternative campus tour. The campus tours consisted of only me and the participants. I asked students to identify spaces that were significant to their racial identity. The third form of data collection was not specific to the individuals mentioned above. Through my

work in the multicultural identity center, I had access to participants from three listening sessions held by the identity center. Each listening session took place during a cultural heritage month; one during Hispanic Heritage Month, one during Asian and Pacific American Heritage Month, and one during Black Heritage Month. These sessions gave students the opportunity to share their experiences as Students of Color at a predominately White institution.

Participant Selection

The institution where my study took place is classified as a predominately White four-year research university (PWI), with 37.7% of the students belonging to a racial or ethnic minority group (Institutional Research and Testing, 2018). The location was chosen based on the convenience of access to participants and presence of a racial identity center. The racial/ethnic breakdown as of fall 2019 was: 5.7% African American/Black, 0.4% Alaskan Native/American Indian, 10.9% Asian, 15.9% Hispanic, 0.1 Pacific Islander, 61.5% White, 4.7% Multiracial, 0.8 Not Specific/Unknown (Institutional Research and Testing, 2018).

I recruited seven participants; two to three participants from each major racial/ethnic group (African American/Black, Asian/Pacific American, and Latinx). I sought out participants in multiple ways. First, I used a purposeful convenience sample approach to recruit participants (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011). The Assistant Director of the identity center sent out an email, containing the details of my study, to the mailing list of the identity center's newsletter. Students were referred to contact me through email, if they were interested in participating. Based on my access to the identity center, I also

used referral sampling. Finally, I asked staff members of the identity center to recommend participants to me.

Table 1. Participant Demographics

Pseudonym	Race/Ethnicity	Gender	Classification
Alicia	African American/Black	F	Senior
Camila	Latinx	F	Senior
Emma	Asian/Asian American	F	Senior
Lucy	Asian/Asian American	F	Junior
Olivia	African American/Black	F	Junior
Pablo	Latinx	M	Senior
Tyler	African American/Black	M	Senior

My role as a graduate apprentice within the identity center may have contributed to concerns about participant selection (see Appendix). I worked directly with the student leaders of multicultural student organizations. My role and my relationship with student leaders meant I already had previous interaction with students that volunteered to be involved in my study. It may have been a conflict of interest to interview students I had previously worked with, or I may have had biases about students I had previously worked with, so I minimized conflicts of interest and bias by interviewing students with whom I had not previously worked.

Trustworthiness

Given the ontological assumptions of my study that rejected a fixed, knowable social reality, reliability and validity were incongruent aims (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). Rather, there are four elements that support reliability and validity and promote trustworthiness in qualitative research: credibility, transferability, dependability, and confirmability (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). In order to maintain credibility, or ensuring that findings are appropriate and accurate to the social constructions of participants, I utilized peer debriefing and member checking (Lincoln & Guba, 1985). My study was reviewed by my thesis chair and the entire thesis committee. I also asked my peers and colleagues, and those experienced in working with Students of Color, to review my study. Member checking also sought to maintain credibility; I asked participants of my study to provide feedback on a summary of my interpretation of the findings. I worked to accomplish transferability, or the ability for the information from my study to be applied to other contexts by providing a detailed description of all elements of the study that others can compare to their contexts for appropriate application of findings. In order to pursue dependability, or the ability to replicate my same study at a different time, I provided detailed descriptions of the entire research design. Finally, I sought to establish confirmability, or the pursuit of appropriate objectivity. I included a researcher positionality statement that acknowledged my personal experiences and biases. I also utilized member checking in order to remain as neutral and honest as possible.

Ethical Considerations

Protecting the identity of the participants of my study was of the utmost importance to me. Students of Color on a predominately White institution campus are a vulnerable population (Shi & Stevens, 2010). Participants received a detailed explanation of the study. I asked each participant to sign an informed consent letter indicating that they understood their rights and protections of those rights. Participants had the right to leave or withdraw from the study at any time. After interviews and data collection were completed, each participant was given a pseudonym. I referred to participants only by their pseudonyms in the discussion section. All interviews and files that included participant names and pseudonyms were kept exclusively between myself and my faculty advisor on password protected computers.

Due to the vulnerable nature of my research, I was prepared to direct students to university resources if they expressed an interest or need. Additionally, after interview collection was completed, all interviews were transcribed. I checked the transcripts and accompanying notes for information that may reveal individual identities.

Data Analysis

All interviews were recorded and then transcribed verbatim. I analyzed the data collected from both the interviews and the campus tours using a two-cycle coding process. I used NVivo 12 ethnographic software to follow the two-cycle coding process of initial fragmentation and subsequent recombination into categories and themes. The first type of coding I conducted was provisional coding, and the second was pattern coding (Saldana, 2015). Provisional coding applied tentative categories (in this case, the elements of my conceptual framework) in the first cycle of coding; pattern coding was

employed during the second round of coding, and it developed the initial codes into categories, commonalities, or major themes (Saldana, 2015). Provisional coding was primarily exploratory, while pattern coding primarily focused on classifying, synthesizing, and conceptualizing themes (Saldana, 2015). Throughout, I was careful to look for and integrate into my analysis data that did not fit my model or anticipated findings.

Limitations

The restricted time frame for data collection was a limitation of this study. While two forms of data collection, though one-on-one interviews and campus tours, were beneficial to this study, it limited the number of participants that could be interviewed in such a restricted time frame. Had time not been a factor, it would have been beneficial to conduct at least one more interview with an Asian American student and a Latinx student. This would have led to a richer data set that could have added more to what we know about racial performance in Students of Color. Nevertheless, the sample size I was able to use was sufficiently large and diverse to result in data saturation and is appropriate for a dramaturgical study.

A related limitation to this study was due to the fact that I did not have an open time frame to explore the beliefs of Students of Color who were not involved in the multicultural identity center. I set the study criteria to exclude Students of Color who were not involved in the multicultural identity center. As a result, the findings did not represent the full views of Students of Color on the institution's campus.

Finally, my experience as an individual working in the multicultural identity center where this study was conducted could have affected my interpretation of the

experiences of the participants of this study (see Appendix). However, participants knew of my status in the multicultural identity center, and it helped me build rapport with the participants and could have resulted in more open disclosures during the interviews.

CHAPTER FOUR

Data Analysis and Interpretation

This study utilized Goffman's (1959) concept of dramaturgy to explore the relationship between Students of Color, the multicultural identity center, and the greater campus environment. Specifically, this study sought to answer the question: *What role does the multicultural identity center play in the racial performance of Students of Color on campus?* The following sub-questions guided the data collection process, analysis, and interpretation:

- 1) In what ways and for what reasons do participants perform their racial identity within the campus environment?
- 2) In what ways does the campus climate and environment influence the attitudes, perceptions, and interactions of Students of Color?
- 3) What experiences have Students of Color had with the multicultural identity center?
- 4) What influence, if any, does the identity center have on the racial identity performances of Students of Color?

In this chapter, I will discuss five major findings that both answered the sub-questions and contributed to a greater understanding of the original research question. First, the influence that background has on the racial performance of Students of Color. Second, the campus climate and its effect on the attitudes, perceptions, and interactions that Students of Color have with the institutional environment. Third, the physical and

social spaces that are represented in the multicultural identity center and the greater campus environment. The fourth section highlights the multicultural identity center specifically. Fifth, performance of racial identity appeared through front stage and backstage interactions.

Background

Racial performance, a theme that will be woven throughout this chapter, does not exist for students exclusively in the setting of higher education. It begins as early as childhood, progresses through adolescence, and is prevalent in different ways and to different degrees in day-to-day life prior to students entering college. This section shows the importance of understanding that racial performance in college is the product of the accumulation of pre-college experiences, and racial performance often emerges well before a student enters college.

Participants spoke about their childhood experiences, household culture, and experiences in their K-12 education that all influenced their idea of how to “be” their racial selves; it came up naturally in stories with many of the participants. Background experiences influenced how comfortable participants were with their racial identity, how they approached the college setting, and what kind of cues they got from their families about their culture and racial identity.

Lucy, a first-generation Asian American student, described her experience in moving from China to the United States as a child. She spoke about the struggle she faced trying to decide how to identify herself – Asian, Chinese, American, or Asian American. It was not until after she struggled for years that she finally settled on “Asian

American.” She was able to settle on one classification only after becoming educated about her own culture and making friends within her same culture:

When I first moved here, I outright said I’m just Asian, just because I like ... I felt a lot of pushback against my culture and then I was like, oh, well... no actually that depends because to other students that were born here and are Chinese or Asian, I would be like, oh, this is that, but obviously I’m older now, I’m better than you because I grew up in China, in Macau or in Asian culture. But then I really wanted to be American, because I felt the push back against my culture and my heritage whenever I moved here at a young age. And then I was like, okay, I’m just American. But now I’m like, “I’m Asian American.” So, it’s not hard since growing up and being educated and finding more friends that have similar experiences as me and being proud of where I came from and who I am; what my family went through for me to be here. I don’t think it’s necessarily difficult, but that’s just my experience, because I literally grew up in both cultures.

Lucy was challenged to reevaluate her racial identity, and she felt conflicted when she was forced to do so. Her view of her own racial identity while living in Macau was suddenly different when she moved to the United States. The racial identity that she was used to portraying was now being forced to change in a new environment. Emma, an Asian American student, said her racial identity had been most influenced by her family upbringing. She was influenced in two different ways within the same culture, having a Korean mother and a Korean American father:

So, it's my mom occasionally speaks Korean, but I mostly grew up in, you know, an English-speaking household. And I do live in America. And so, I feel like American culture is an integral part of me but also, my mom really likes to remind us of our cultural heritage.

Emma did not experience the significant move that Lucy experienced, but family still played an important role in her racial performance. She was aware that she was a part of two cultures, Korean culture and American culture, and she sought to exist harmoniously in both cultures. She did not have as much of an inner struggle as Lucy did, and she received major cues about her racial identity from her family.

Alicia, an African American student, had not fully come to terms with her racial identity upon entering college. She felt pulled between being African American and growing up in a predominantly White area. Her desire to succeed academically was met with negative cultural stereotypes from her own family members. She spoke about how that made her approach college with the intention of proving the stereotype incorrect:

I went to school in a predominantly White area and I guess [my institution] is still predominantly White, but there have just been more spaces that I've been able to connect with other high achieving Black students. And so that has been a big change, because whenever I was in ... I guess all throughout childhood, particularly, most of my family members would say that I was a White girl just for the way that I talked, and so it had ... I have a negative view of being Black because it was just very ... I was made fun of, I guess, by my family. And so, then I guess I come into college and got to see the other individuals that had the same things happen to them from their families and just getting to talk to them, and also just understanding that ... I guess seeing Black people can still be high achieving and it's not an abnormality, because I guess that's how it seemed like in my childhood.

The racial self that Alicia anticipated embodying was challenged by her family. She did not receive the cues about how to perform her racial identity that she thought she would; instead, she was met with resistance by her family. Where she found acceptance about the racial identity she wanted to perform was from her peers who had similar experiences of their own racial performance. Alicia, Lucy, and Emma all show how influential family can be in racial performance.

By contrast, Tyler, also an African American student, attended an all-boys high school that had a high percentage of African American students. He found a great deal of comfort in that community, and he felt comfortable in his racial identity upon graduating. He related his high school community to the community that he was seeking out in college. He eventually found a similar community in college to the one he had in high school:

... I went to an all-boys school. It was a lot more African American students, a lot more Black people, and so we kind of in the same way that we have our Black [University], we kind of had my class we were just all cool with each other, we would be each other, we would get there at 6:00, 7:00 in the morning. For lunch we had a place where we sat, Black Student Union, different classes, and we had the familiarity, and then sports – it's your own community. So, we were always around each other.

Tyler's experience shows that education can be a place of congruence for individuals, but that is not the case for all individuals. Lucy and Alicia experienced tension surrounding their racial performance, whereas Tyler's experience of racial performance was accepted by his peers without him experiencing tension and change. The differences show how varied an individual's racial performance can be upon entering college.

Olivia, a student who is African American and Latinx, also attributed her family upbringing to having a heavy influence on her racial identity. Coming from a biracial background, she was encouraged to explore both cultures. She mentioned in the interview that she had had an estranged relationship with her father for many years, but when their relationship was rebuilt, he taught her Spanish:

I think just my mom and how she raised me. My mom is Black, so she raised me with that strong Black woman mentality. Also, she gave me room to explore my Hispanic identity even though she doesn't understand it, or speak Spanish. I do, she gave me the room to learn about it and she didn't ever reject the fact that I'm Hispanic. She's always like, "You're Black and you're Salvadorian, you can be both, thoroughly, however you want to explore that yourself." She never tried to put parameters on who I am based on my racial identity.

The racial performance that participants entered into college with was influenced by family upbringing, peer relationships, and adolescent experiences. Some experiences challenged and tested individuals to evaluate and change their racial performance prior to

entering college, and some experiences affirmed the racial performance that individuals brought to college.

Climate

The rest of this chapter evaluates participants' experiences while they are in college. This section evaluates participants' views of the campus climate; that includes the attitudes, perceptions, observations, interactions, and experiences of participants on campus.

Discrimination, Prejudice, and Stereotypes

Students were aware of discrimination, prejudice, and stereotypes. Discrimination and prejudice were present in participants' stories of secondhand experiences, targeted group events, and targeted individual events. Stereotypes consisted of events where participants were either aware of their portrayal of a cultural stereotype or they were on the receiving end of another individual making them aware of a cultural stereotype. Stereotypes surrounding speech and language also appeared through participant stories about code switching and cultural colloquialisms.

Emma felt stereotyped based on her physical appearance and use of language:

It doesn't happen so often, but people assume that if I look Asian or if I speak Korean to my friends then I am automatically not from the US. That's not that big of a deal, but it's just maybe an example.

Lucy felt stereotyped based on her physical appearance and the model minority myth that many Asian and Asian American students face. The model minority myth suggests that Asian and Asian American individuals are academically superior due to their racial/ethnic background:

I wish I was as smart as you are saying that I am. I think, it's not necessarily discouraging because I faced that since I was, you know, since I moved here. But it's kind of ... I mean, I guess it's like a good thing in a sense, because then people that don't know you will think that you're smart, but then people that find out, oh, you're not actually smart, then you're just like, yeah, we're just normal humans, just trying to learn. But yeah, I mean, it's not that bad, it's just something we face throughout.

Both participants were familiar with stereotypes against them. Both also tried to downplay the stereotypes they had experienced, I believe as a way to manage the impression that they give off to others around them.

Multiple participants were not only able to name personal instances of discrimination and prejudice but instances that they had heard of from their peers. Tyler could not personally think of experiences with microaggressions, but he was aware that many of his peers had experienced microaggressions:

So, the microaggressions here, it's more so that I've heard of through other people, because I don't believe ... I don't think that I've experienced many microaggressions, but I know what they look like, whether it's, "Oh, you look different," or "I didn't even recognize that that was you," just because people are like, "Okay, you changed your hair," it's like your professor that you've had for three months and then you walk in with different hair and they'd be like, "Is that ..." you know, for women especially.

Instances of discrimination and prejudice that targeted individuals, as opposed to groups of individuals, were aimed at individuals' language, physical appearance, name, and so on. Olivia had multiple stories about prejudice and discrimination:

Sometimes people just ask inappropriate questions. Like, I've been asked do I feel pressured to date Black men by somebody who was not Black. Or people touch my hair, and I've heard of other people who also have had that happen. Or they'll just ask what I deem inappropriate questions, something that you probably wouldn't ask someone if you didn't know them really well, regarding race. Or if you're learning something that's about the African American community people look to me for answers as if I can speak on behalf of my entire race.

There was not one instance that stuck out for Olivia, and she was aware that she was subject to these instances all the time. Pablo, on the other hand, had one specific example that kept recurring. He talked about the prejudice and discrimination he had experienced regarding his name:

I guess it's just hard to pronounce. I definitely have had to like, break it down for people and I've had people say it the wrong way. So, it's just, I don't know. It's just people bad with names or they just don't want to know it. I just get frustrated because you tell them one time, you tell them two times and they keep doing it. So, that just always been a challenge of mine, was just my name. People that can't pronounce it.

Participants who shared about targeted group events described instances of large-scale prejudice and discrimination. Lucy revealed the prejudice and discrimination she received, along with peers in her same racial/ethnic group, just for being a part of the Asian American community. The incidents came after an Asian American woman presented on campus and received major backlash after her presentation. Many of the incidents were online, on platforms like Twitter and Instagram, but many were in-person. Online incidents included blog posts, emails, and student organizations posting on social media and commenting back-and-forth at each other. In-person incidents included crude remarks and inappropriate questions directed at the Asian American community. Lucy had these reflections on what happened:

That was something. And there was just kind of something that brushed over. And then I feel like whenever these kind of things arise, the mentality, or at least - maybe I'm a little too negative about it. But I feel like [my institution's] perspective on us is, oh, we just kind of talk about it. And it will kind of blow over. But it's still something that is brought up at the end of the day. At least until my class forgets about it, I don't think that - we still talk about it to the younger students, about what happened.

Instances of discrimination, prejudice, and stereotypes have an influence on the attitudes and perceptions that Students of Color have towards their peers and the campus

as a whole. Findings showed both positive and negative attitudes, and students had both positive and negative reactions. Some instances solidified participants' racial performance, brought them closer to their peers, and gave them drive to change the attitudes. Other instances gave them negative attitudes and left a negative impression about the campus climate and environment. Discrimination, prejudice, and stereotypes gave them a negative perception about the campus climate and environment. In both situations, they interacted differently with the campus climate and environment.

Speech and Language

Speech and language were closely linked to stereotypes. Camila grew up in a diverse city, with a high population of Latinx families, and her parents spoke Spanish. Her parents chose to not teach her Spanish in the hopes that she could avoid discrimination, but she was still familiar with stereotypes against her:

Well, as I got older and being around other students who have come from something more diverse to [my institution], and they feel the same way about it, I realized that those things are microaggressions. That those things are people stereotyping me. That it's not a good thing for people to assume that I speak Spanish. And I didn't know that before. And I think that those moments made me realize that it does happen a lot more often than I think it does, or that I thought it did. Because that's not the first time. People hear my name, people look at me, and they just assume. And you know, I don't blame someone, but I also would like for them to be more aware and more understanding of the fact that I don't, you know. And so, I don't necessarily want to view those things as people being negative or people intentionally trying to harm me emotionally. But I also don't like hearing them. So, I guess my reflection on it would be that even though I know that it's not intentional, from a bad place, it does bother me. But I don't blame people for having thought it in the first place or for accidentally letting something slip. But I wish they were a little bit more educated about the things that are coming out of their mouths, you know.

Camila's story showed examples of how her racial identity was not challenged until she entered college. Pablo experienced stereotypes from his own peers over his use, or lack

thereof, of a Spanish. In this case, Spanish was considered a shared cultural experience, and his lack of Spanish language ability alienated him from his peers:

I just, you kept your Spanish and I lost my Spanish and I'm trying to get it back. And you know, maybe I don't do everything like Hispanic traditions do but I do most of them. You know, we pretty much grew up the same way. So, but apparently just because I can't say a couple words in Spanish right or can't do anything like that, apparently, I'm not Hispanic enough, so yeah.

In both situations, Camila and Pablo's racial performance was constrained by language ability. The expectation of language communicated to them by their families, cultures, and their peers had an impact on how they viewed their racial performance in relation to society. Outside of language ability, participants were aware of other uses of speech and language that impact their racial performance. Olivia described the complicated use of the N-word as a colloquialism in African American culture:

...I know there's a divide in the Black community whether we should use that word or not. For me, my perspective on it is that it should only exclusively be used by African Americans and no one else. Just because it is our word that we were called in a derogatory form and now we've kind of taken it back as a form of power. We use it to talk to each other. It's also like a relational thing. If I call someone that, that means we're pretty cool, or we're pretty good friends. I wouldn't just call a random Black person that, because it could be taken the wrong way.

Olivia was conscious that her own culture had controversial beliefs about the word, and she was aware that use of the word is situational. Similar to Camila and Pablo, Olivia's racial performance was constrained by audience and space.

Code Switching

Code switching was also common with many participants. Code switching occurs when an individual uses more than one language or language variety at the same time in conversation (Auer, 1988). It was a way for participants to manage the impression they

were making on others, and it showed an internal struggle that many participants were aware of when they were around peers within their same racial/ethnic group, peers outside of their same racial/ethnic group, and faculty and staff members.

Pablo, outside of the criticism he faced from his peers about the use of Spanish, was also aware of two different types of language he used. One type of language was for public use, and the other type was for private use:

When I'm here on campus, I do everything I possibly can to be proper and make sure I don't slip up with anything I say that could, you know, put me in a bind or be hurtful to other people or you know, some stuff like that. I mean, when I'm back home or even hanging out with friends here off campus or something, kind of the wall goes down, you start talking a little bit more loosely and stuff like that. So, for sure there's two different sides of how I talk. One, out in public, professionally, here on campus and then one more loosely at home and stuff like that.

Emma had a similar attitude towards what she considered more “proper” language:

So, with people who speak primarily English, I would try to speak more properly, I found myself, but then when I was people who are more similar to the way I talk, which is a bit of a mix of English and Korean, I just kind of switch back and forth without thinking about it. But then I have to think about it sometimes and be careful.

Camila was not able to identify exactly when the switches were happening, but she was aware that she altered her voice in different settings with different people:

It's something that I noticed slowly over time. My voice isn't that different either. It's not creepy different, like, “Oh, you're not the same person,” or anything. I guess I'm just more lax with my Latino friends, and it's something over time that I've noticed. I'm there are probably a couple instances where I caught myself, and I was like, “I've got to stop doing that.” But, when I'm notice that I do that, but I don't know if there's a specific instance when I was like, “Hey, I'm using my White voice.” I know that I do it on the phone. That's definitely something that's always been the case. But I don't know if it's necessarily my Latino-ness or that's me having to use phone at a young age, and I was like, “I need to sound as old as possible.” And that kind of transferring over now.

Olivia changed her language in certain locations and with certain people:

So, usually when I'm on campus, of course, in certain areas I'll avoid using certain types of language or speaking very loudly, usually in purely academic buildings like [academic building] or like [academic building] because I'm also a [minor] and there's just me and like four other people who are Black in that department that I've seen. So, I try not to really talk a lot in there. Then I'm especially like, I choose my words wisely. At businesses around [city], especially like downtown [city] at the little coffee shops. Usually in spaces where I'm the minority, which is a lot of the time, I try to monitor how I speak, especially like how loudly I speak.

Participants were very aware that they altered their language depending on where they were and who they were with. Altering language included switching between English and another native language, but it also included altering the pace and style of diction in order to best fit in with the setting around them.

Campus Climate

Students described two worlds that existed on the same campus: one for Students of Color, and one for non-Students of Color; in this case, non-Students of Color were considered the majority. The attitudes and perceptions that students had of their own experience with campus climate influenced their attitudes and perceptions towards the overall campus climate. Some students noted that the campus climate was different from what they were expecting, and some noted that their perception of climate changed over time. Factors like background, peer interaction, institutional support of Students of Color, and traditions came up as factors that altered perception.

Camila talked about how she was not even aware of her racial identity until coming to college. The climate of the institution is what made her realize her racial identity as a Latinx student.

So, coming here, I didn't realize it was going to be so different from [my hometown]. I also went to a predominately Hispanic high school. And the demographics had never really occurred to me to look at. You know, I'm Latino,

my friends are White, whatever. You know, I never really, I guess, understood that I was a Latina. You know, I knew that was my culture, I knew that was my heritage, but it wasn't something I felt like I needed to identify as, or anything like that. It wasn't something that I thought stood out more than anything else about me. Then I came to [my institution] and I noticed that things were very different, students were very different. It wasn't as comfortable. I didn't feel as at home, and I couldn't quite pinpoint why that was.

At this point in her racial identity development, Camila could not articulate why a new environment made her feel uncomfortable, but she knew it was related to her racial identity. She suddenly realized her identity as a Latinx student stood out, and she had to redefine what being a Latinx student was like in the college environment. Participants also talked about feeling like the college took advantage of Students of Color.

Participants mentioned the institution prioritizing diversity above inclusion, and they talked about feeling like a token minority, or simply being one of a number that the institution was required to have. Lucy shared that she felt like she was perceived by others as one in a group of token Students of Color:

Sometimes I think we're kind of viewed as a token, like a token Black person, you know, token People of Color, right? Because at the end of the day it feels like sometimes, especially with just how ... other things that [my institution] does push a lot, I know it's really hard, it's a big school, and we are in a region where it's just ... there's still a lot of societal things and aspects of it all, and I don't blame that at all, but sometimes it just feels like we are definitely just a number.

Comparing Students of Color to the majority, Lucy felt that Students of Color were valued less, and as result, her sense of agency was being minimized by the university.

Olivia also felt like the institution stressed diversity over inclusion:

I just think it's not in [my institution's] plan, like yes, they're for diversity and inclusion, but I feel like it's a lot of money is focused on the diversity and not necessarily the inclusion.

Pablo felt similarly to Lucy and Olivia. He felt like the university increasing diversity did not automatically include an increase in inclusion. He actually felt the opposite was true;

the institution was so focused on increasing diversity that they were leaving out the inclusion piece altogether. He felt that diversity should not exist without inclusion, but the university was lacking in inclusive practices:

I think the discrepancy is just like, I mean, they try to like ... we are more diverse and we're trying to get more diverse. But yeah, just take a walk to campus and you'll find out that it's different than what they say, you know, and it's also just groups and stuff. I know minorities usually tend to like, stay in close groups together. So, you really have to like seek them out. Which shouldn't be shouldn't be the case. You know? You should be able to walk through campus and see all the diversity that they say that they offer.

Pablo also suggests that Students of Color are staying in close groups together as a way to combat the lack of inclusion that follows an increase in diversity.

Traditions

University traditions were an obvious point of division for the students. Students of Color reported that they did not feel welcome at many of the traditions they said were for students belonging to the majority group. Many of the large-scale and university-wide traditions that were highlighted by the greater university were alienating to Students of Color. Traditions for Students of Color were not the same as the traditions that were associated with the greater university. The types of traditions that stuck out for participants as traditions for Students of Color were either hosted by the multicultural identity center or specific student organizations within the multicultural identity center.

Tyler shared his perspective on these types of traditions, and many of the other participants had similar thoughts:

I think some Students of Color at [my institution] are kind of thrown off at many [institution] traditions, just because they don't feel like they're tailored to us. And not tailored in a sense ... I mean, they're traditions, so every tradition, in a sense, for me, is tailored to you being a student at [my institution]. It doesn't have to be tailored to you being a person of color. But ... I lost my train of thought. Sorry.

But yeah, I think they think that traditions are just not for me. They don't highlight who I am as a Person of Color. Or they feel like I just wouldn't be invited or allowed to be there. Which is why it's cool when you actually get a group of people from Black [University], like [organization], when we go and travel there and then people are like, okay, it's not so bad. But you're just surrounded by people you know.

Tyler made an observation about the divide between university traditions among students from diverse backgrounds. Participants held the expectation that university traditions would be inclusive for all students, but many came to the perception that they were not inclusive for all students. Talking about an annual, university-wide event, Olivia pointed out how uncomfortable it was to be in a small group of Students of Color at an event with a large population of White individuals:

Well, because it encompasses the whole student body and usually a lot of Black students don't go, or if you go we all go together, but it's also like we're just a part of the majority White campus, so it even feels even more like we are the minority, because all you can see is just like a lot of the students who go to [my institution] who are usually White.

Similar to Tyler, Olivia was aware that certain populations would naturally feel more out-of-place at university traditions. Olivia either did not attend events altogether in order to avoid feeling uncomfortable, or she attended with her peers knowing that some level of discomfort was inevitable. Lucy also said that she felt the least comfortable being her racial self at events that were comprised of mostly White students, and she associated those events with university traditions:

Just any event that's predominantly White students, I think. If I were to go to ... what's that ... [tradition], or [tradition], it's just ... I just feel out of place. I have to act a certain way. I have to talk a certain way, just because that's just how they talk. That's totally fine, but it's just a cultural difference.

On the other hand, Camila talked about one of her favorite traditions for Students of Color, one that is annually hosted by a multicultural student organization:

It's been a taste of home. I know that, I mean, it has the negative connotation, but the first taste was me saying, oh, this is [tradition] and I was like ... that was my taste of home. I was like, yes, [tradition], that's my fun time at home, and so this was the closest thing to that, especially because it's around the same season and I can't go home in that season, because it's busy. So, I like that it's just the most [hometown] that [my institution] gets, is [tradition] and [tradition]. The food is amazing. It's all free. So, I appreciate that, because a good free meal is always good. And it's just fun. It's where a lot of my friends are out at one time, usually someone is stuck at home for something, so that's a good time because they all come out. It's just fun. I like it, too.

Camila associated one particular tradition hosted by a multicultural student organization with a sense of familiarity, like being home. Lucy, when thinking about one of the same traditions that other participants were talking about, had a different perspective:

See, that's something, I guess. It is a tradition for us. Yeah, that's true. That is true. I just never thought of it as a tradition. Just because the rest of [my institution] doesn't really go to it, right. It's just not rooted. When I think of tradition, I think of something that's like super long.

Despite agreeing that the same tradition was one for Students of Color, she did not originally name it as a tradition for Students of Color because it did not fit the criteria she had made up in her head. Participant perception was an important predictor of performance. The tradition is one that she had attended and enjoyed every year, but she thought that university traditions had to be longstanding in order to truly be traditions.

The consensus among participants is that most university traditions do not appeal to or cater to Students of Color, so they had negative associations with the majority of the university's traditions. The traditions that did cater to Students of Color, though, were often not associated with the larger institution. Participants highlighted traditions that were hosted by the multicultural identity center and student organizations within the multicultural identity center. Those types of traditions had a positive association with

welcoming Students of Color and providing them with an opportunity to see their own cultures showcased, something they felt the great university was lacking.

Space

The two spaces examined in this study were the multicultural identity center and the greater campus environment. Both spaces can be classified as physical spaces and social spaces; social space is the idea that all spaces are encoded with social meaning and no space is a neutral space. Spaces are made up of the social relations that occur in them.

Campus Tour

For this study I collected two forms of data with each participant; one-on-one interviews and a student-led campus tour followed after each interview. No two forms of data collection occurred on the same day; the interviews were purposefully scheduled for different days in order to give students time to reflect on the first interview. With many of the participants, the campus tour resulted in insight that would not have been possible if only one-on-one interviews were conducted. Students shared stories that were more in-depth, vivid, and emotional when they were standing in front of the physical space that were connected to their stories.

Participants received a campus tour prompt beforehand (see Appendix) along with a map of the campus. Upon meeting, participants turned in the map to me before leading the tour. On nearly every campus tour, participants stopped at spaces that were not mentioned during their one-on-one interviews and were not marked on the campus map they turned in. Seeing spaces in-person revealed memories and stories that may have been left out with only one form of data collection.

Physical Space and Social Space

Students discussed two distinct kinds of spaces; physical space and social space. Physical spaces were broken down by participants into two areas – spaces for Students of Color and spaces not for Students of Color.

Physical spaces that were classified as for Students of Color were neutral spaces that would normally be for every person on the campus, such as the library and the student union building. The multicultural identity center is located within the student union building on campus, and it was specifically singled out by participants as being for Students of Color.

The most notable reason participants gave for spaces being for Students of Color was comfortability based on a high number of Students of Color existing in the same space. The most notable space designation was diversity as comfort, or Students of Color simply classifying a place as “comfortable” due to the number of Students of Color. Camila said the student union building was the most comfortable space for her on campus due to its high traffic of Students of Color coming in and out:

I walk into the [union building] and I love that. I love that I know I’m going to walk into a bunch of Students of Color, because that’s just, you know, a zone for everyone to hang out at. It’s also where a lot of organizations are, or where they meet, not where they are, but you know. So, I know that that’s one of the most diverse buildings on campus.

Pablo said the same thing about the student union building being the most diverse and therefore the most comfortable:

Number one place I feel most comfortable as a student of color is definitely the [union building]. I believe it's probably the most diverse building on campus at any given time. It's just like a different world when you step into it; especially coming from like, the [academic] building and like that kind of area of campus. It really is like a breath of fresh air. You know, just seeing different minorities. Studying, eating, hanging out so definitely the [union building].

Tyler saw more spaces as being for Students of Color, but he still classified them based on the high traffic of Students of Color:

I guess for me it would be the amount of people that are there, as well as how frequently we're there, and kind of the attraction of that spot, because you hear about [the library] in a sense. ... when you go downstairs and you make the left, like it's just a whole bunch of Black people there, all in groups and stuff like that, and that's kind of where ... freshman year that's where everybody went and congregated. Did homework, but also it was the time where you could do homework and you could also talk. Same with the [union building]. It's daily, you have a certain spot where you'll see most Black people go, and then you're like, okay, most people are here, this is a spot where we normally end up, and then in the [recreation center], just because we like to play basketball, that's just another space where you see frequently and then most people just go there.

Outside of reference to the multicultural identity center, none of the participants were able to name a space that was solely dedicated to Students of Color on campus. Public spaces, generally intended to be open to and welcoming for all students on campus, were the only consistently named spaces from participants that were for Students of Color; the union building, the library, and the recreation center.

One instance of social space is the classroom. The classroom itself is a physical space, a space for every single student on a college campus, but many participants spoke about classrooms in social space ways. The classroom was a space where they did not feel like they could perform their racial identity, and they feel out of place and uncomfortable in many academic settings.

Camila felt uncomfortable in the classroom when she was singled out:

... It was predominately White and we had a moment we were talking about the Chicano movement. And as a Student of Color I had never before really thought that it was my job to give a history lesson, you know. I didn't think that people would think I knew more just because of my color. But at that moment, several students turned around and looked at me when he said Chicano movement, thinking that I was just going to be able to tell them more about it. Or that I would identify with it more, that I would be more interested. I really don't know why

they turned around. But when I noticed that they turned around, I just kind of looked back at them confused. In that moment nothing clicked. I was just like, okay, this is weird, I don't know why they did that, you know. And so, after the class was when I kind of went, wow, that wasn't cool. You know, so that was that moment.

Camila had experienced multiple instances of negative social space inside the classroom. When singled out, she was initially confused as to why her peers would look to her for comments. At that point she was still unaware of how her racial identity was viewed by her peers in the classroom. Olivia, on the other hand, was unable to name a specific example, but she had a similar overall feeling of feeling singled out in the classroom due to her identity as a Student of Color:

Just usually because I'm usually one of two, or maybe three people of color in the entire class. Especially with Black students I'm probably one of two in most of my larger classes at [institution]. So, I guess just the racial demographics within the classroom.

Multicultural Identity Center

Participants were all involved with the multicultural identity center, and involvement existed on a varied spectrum. Each participant was a member of a student organization housed within the multicultural identity center; participants mostly joined organization within their own racial/ethnic group. The most variety was found with how involved participants actually were with the multicultural identity center. Some were heavily involved and spent a great deal of time physically in the office, while others merely knew of the office but never physically visited the office space.

Attitudes Towards the Identity Center

The multicultural identity center represented a physical office on campus, but it also represented its own kind of social space. The physical space was associated with

safety, comfort, and familiarity. Nearly every participant spoke positively about their attitude towards the department, even if their attitude changed over time from their first interaction to their most recent interaction.

Alicia was initially turned off by the multicultural identity center, but her attitude changed quickly when she joined her multicultural student organization and got connected to the identity center:

Now, I know that it's this place where everyone in the office is there to help students, all students, not just Students of Color – anyone. These people are here for you beyond your student organization. They're willing to help you in any way they can and I also know that they're here for Students of Color and Students of Color organizations as well and that that's a big part of that. I mean, just here to help. I guess I just didn't see how personal those relationships could be until I started getting more involved in [the multicultural identity center]. I just thought it was an office, now I know that it's more personable, that there's something more intimate there that there's relationships built there and they're really important in your growth.

Alicia connected her involvement with the multicultural identity center to her growth as a young adult navigating college. She specifically cited the staff of the office for providing her with relationships that contribute that growth. Lucy described the identity center as a safe space where she felt understood:

... I think that this is a safe place. If I ever need anything, I know I can come here and ask. Whether it be more organization or anything. I don't know. I like it, because I know I can find people who will understand what I need. And [understand] my culture and how I view things. You know, I don't have to go an extra step to explain.

Lucy recounted that the identity center was a place where she could enact the racial identity of her choosing without additional explanation. As a result, she was more comfortable articulating her needs. Alicia's racial identity was also less constrained in the identity center than in other spaces on campus. She found it easier to be the racial self she wanted to be. Both Lucy and Alicia connected the staff to their ease of self-

determination. Many of the staff are People of Color or are allies of People of Color who have experience in multicultural identity centers, and that translates to the feeling of being more easily understood in the identity center than in other spaces. Olivia attributed the identity center to hosting events for Students of Color, which she did not feel like would happen on campus if the identity center did not take on the responsibility:

I would say the [multicultural identity center] is an office that's, what you mentioned earlier about whether I thought it was necessary or not, it's very necessary. Because I feel like without the [multicultural identity center], we wouldn't have events that target a certain audience, or I wouldn't know about events going on on campus that are held by organizations that target minority students or like especially Black students or even Hispanic students as well.

Lucy suggested that without the identity center and its associated student organization, there would be no designated entities on campus that cared for Students of Color. The identity center was vital to creating designated physical space and social space for Students of Color. It was the only space that participants described with this characteristic. Other spaces on campus may have been made more comfortable for Students of Color, but the identity center was the designated space. Pablo's attitude towards the identity center was linked to his involvement in his multicultural student organization, but he still connected the identity center to support that was available for all Students of Color:

That it was there, that if y'all need, like if there was something y'all needed, the multicultural [identity center] was going to be there for y'all. And then just like little things like you know, the support and the events we do and stuff like that ... it's just all there. For a lot of people that's all they need to know – that somebody's there.

Similar to Lucy, Pablo connected with the staff. He viewed the staff as a constant and reliable source of support that would be there despite any outside circumstances. Having trust in that perception facilitated his connection with the staff. While the physical space

provided a location for participants, the connection they had with staff resulted in the social space. The staff created an underlying sense of unwavering support for Students of Color in that social space.

The social space that the multicultural identity center provides was most evident when participants discussed their racial performance. Participants' involvement with the staff of the multicultural identity center, the actual space, our events and traditions, and involvement in student organizations associated with the multicultural identity center all contributed to them being more comfortable and open with performance of their racial identity. As they got more involved in the department, the more insight they had into how their racial self played out.

Camila saw her racial identity growing and flourishing through her involvement with the identity center. Establishing her identity as a Latina would not have been possible without the identity center.

I mean, I think that my answer is probably the same as its been, that I met these people with shared experiences and so that kind of understanding of the fact that I am different and that these experiences aren't just my own. That came from these student organizations and it came from being involved with [the multicultural identity center]. But also the office itself and not necessarily the student organizations, I think that just a proudness, I guess, and a comfort in embracing my Latina identity came from that. But again there's not like a Latina in the [multicultural identity center] ... I can't say I've had that specific mentorship in that sense, but as far as shaping my racial identity I think just a comfort in the fact that I know I can be proud of my Latin-inity.

For Camila, forming a solid idea of her racial identity came from both her involvement in multicultural organization and involvement in the multicultural identity center. Pablo saw his racial identity grow over the course of his time in college, also due to his involvement in the identity center and a multicultural student organization:

Like I said, I was a turtle freshman year and now I feel like I'm an eagle. Just flying. I've grown a lot. A lot of people have told me I've grown, who've known me for two or three years of my college career. Definitely is nice to know that growth is happening. It's in large part due to [the multicultural identity center] and the [union building] and joining my organization.

Pablo compared and contrasted his racial self from his freshman year to his senior year. As a freshman, he had not defined his racial identity for himself, and he made no plans to do so. After joining his organization and getting involved in the identity center, he figured out the racial self he wanted to be. Significant changes in his racial identity occurred concurrently as his involvement increased. He became a member of his student organization and then an officer in his student organization; his reliance on the identity center grew alongside his involvement, but his agency also increased at the same time constraint was decreasing. He had grown and become comfortable in his racial identity.

Influence on Racial Identity and Racial Performance

For multiple participants, their involvement in the multicultural identity center had a drastic influence on their racial performance. Camila's racial identity performance was solidified through her involvement in the multicultural identity center. She reflected on her racial identity development throughout her entire college experience:

It's definitely been something that I've been more aware of as a college student. When I was younger, of course, I knew my culture. I knew that my family spoke Spanish, I knew that they were brown, I knew that they were all these things that make up Chicanos and Latinos. I was aware of that, but I didn't really acknowledge it. It was just a part of my life. I didn't think there was anything special about it, because it didn't stick out more than other students' cultures did. And I think that that was a reason I wasn't as aware of it was because I was surrounded by so much that was like me that I didn't really need to understand that my culture is very special, very different. And then I got to [my institution], and being a college student, I recognized that I am a minority. And that with that, I am a Latina. And that I do have a very wonderful culture that I can look back at, and that not everyone shares that same culture. So, I am more inclined to, you know, be open about my Latina identity. I wear my Latin identity on my sleeve

and I'm okay with it. And that's something that I ever did before, because I just assumed that it was normal, I guess. Or that, not normal, because it is normal. But I didn't realize that I was a minority, I guess. So, coming to college, I was more aware of the fact that it is, you know, that there are different cultures, that the world doesn't share my culture, you know, that it is a very special thing to have, and what not.

Camila's realization about her racial identity was drastic over the course of her four years. Revisiting her background, Camila did not realize that she was a minority due to the homogeneity of her home environment. Her surroundings consisted of individuals who looked like her, spoke like her, celebrated the same culture as her, and she had little to no awareness of a community that was different from that norm. Entering college, and coming into contact with an environment completely different from the one she was used to, was her first exposure to the idea of racial identity. She experienced restraint of her racial identity for the first time, but it only strengthened her view of her racial self over time.

Olivia spoke about the relationship between getting involved and gaining knowledge through the identity center:

... It's just been more ... I've learned a lot of things about Black history and especially being a Black ... like the Black history of [my institution] I've learned a lot just being around [the multicultural identity center] and just getting to know different kinds of people. It's like opened my Black student identity in a way.

Although not as drastic, her racial identity still changed significantly over time. Due to the identity center, Olivia connected her racial identity to her identity as a college student. Her knowledge of both caused both elements to grow alongside one other. Pablo, just like Camila and Olivia, talked about how his racial performance changed over time, from freshman year to senior year, as he got involved in the identity center:

Yeah, so, like I said, you know, starting from last year, being an officer and then trying to move it slightly to not avoiding it, but just not needing it to now, just

going in there and having conversations with people and stuff like that and talking about my life experiences and my racial identity. Definitely been nice to have. I feel comfortable being in there. ... No, I mean, well, I've accepted myself more. Actually, since freshman year, like I said, I've always had that battle between, you know, trying to be more Hispanic but, you know, trying to just fit in and not cause problems. Now, just kind of just do me and I know who I am. So, people like it and people don't. I don't really try to fight it anymore.

Pablo's involvement in the identity center and his student organization triggered the establishment of his racial self, as seen in his analogy of moving from a turtle to an eagle. He also revealed the inner battle that occurred when he was working through the process. The racial self that he thought he wanted to be was influenced by his desire to fit in around others, but by the end of his college experience he was no longer allowing that outside influence.

Peer Community

As a part of multicultural identity center involvement, all participants were involved in some way in at least one multicultural student organization. Camila spoke positively about the community she found through her multicultural student organizations:

... Also, I mean, all of my friendships are ... I can't even think of any that are not ... all of my closest friends are from either my student organizations or from some sort of involvement with [the multicultural identity center]. That's all my personal relationships. My roommate that I've had since my sophomore year that I met her my freshman year in [my organization] and we've been roommates since then. It's been four years. My other best friend at [institution], also met her at [another organization]. We have been best friends since then. All of my closest friends from [another organization], all these student orgs ... I hang out with them regularly and they're my go-to people outside of school. Outside of anything academic. Even outside of my student organization. Anything.

Like Camila, Lucy found her strongest source of peer community through multicultural student organizations:

So, [my organization] has a huge, huge impact on my college career, can't deny that. Now [another organization], which is an Asian interest sorority on campus, the only one. But we are so intermingled to each other, I think it's kind of hard to pinpoint another one, but those two would be my main sources of reaching out to others.

Pablo also talked about finding support through his organization, but he only made the connection with the identity center after he joined his multicultural student organization:

... I mean, I think that's a great thing for people. And a lot of people kind of just go to the same routines you do, but it's in the back of your head, it's always nice to know that there is a place to go if you do need that support system because I know that a lot of people are strong minded and they think they can get through and sometimes you can't. I know, I've been like that sometimes. And so it's just one of those things that you know, you don't ... I don't know. Hundred percent honesty, if I don't join [my organization], I'd never hear about multicultural department. So, I mean it definitely did help me in joining a multicultural organization to get involved in the [multicultural identity center].

Pablo found his racial identity equally through the identity center and his student organization, but that was not always the case. He revealed that he would have never gotten involved in the identity center had he not joined his student organization. His attitudes, perceptions, and interaction toward the identity center was due to the introduction of the department he received from his peers.

Performance

Racial performance was a central theme seen throughout the findings in this chapter. However, it also appeared in standalone instances and stories. One thing that tied the performances of participants together was impression management, or the altering of behavior in order to gain approval from others.

Backstage

Backstage was an element of performance that appeared in multiple stories. Especially for Pablo, who initially shied away from expression of his own racial identity before fully accepting it and joining a multicultural student organization.

Freshman year. The first meeting or the first or second meeting of [my organization] my freshman year was in [academic building]. I had gone. I had walked all the way to [academic building]. It was in one of those last rooms or whatever. Walked in, heard everybody laughing and talking and everything. And I stopped myself. I stopped myself dead in my tracks. I was like, I can't do it. I walked all the way home. I was maybe ten feet away from ... maybe a different experience freshman year, and stuff like that.

Pablo reflected on this experience on the campus tour. He had completely forgotten about his experience almost joining his student organization until we were standing in front of the academic building where the organization's meetings took place. He reflected on the moment as a turning point in his racial identity development. Upon asking him to reflect on why he made the decision to turn around he was able to put words to it:

... I wasn't really fully ready to accept it... the commitment. You know, like I said, usually when you get into like, people like being ... when you get into [the multicultural identity center] it becomes your identity and stuff. And so to me, it was like, you know, this is what I want to do but I guess it was just that lingering thought in my head like, "Are you ready for it?" You know? Are you ready ... what are people going to think when you tell them you're in [student organization]? Stuff like that. Definitely very, you know, narrow minded. I remember that freshman year.. I was, maybe ten feet away from the door and never walked in.

Pablo was afraid of the impression he would leave on others, and he was not ready to redefine his racial self. Camila's backstage struggle to be comfortable in her racial performance appeared when she spoke about language. This topic came up quite a bit in her interview:

In some respects, I'm annoyed when people are like assuming that I don't speak Spanish, but at the same time I'm almost like left out of my own cultural group

because I don't speak Spanish. I feel like that's something I lost out on in a sense. But I don't blame my parents for it. I wish that I spoke Spanish, but then I'm like maybe I wouldn't have done as well in school. Maybe I wouldn't have been so well spoken, I guess. Maybe it was for a good thing. But I don't know, I mean, it's something that I would have liked to have but it does cause a little bit of a distance in some respects, because obviously I'm not White, I don't fit into that crowd, but I sound that way sometimes compared to my Latino friends. But, you know, I feel less Hispanic, less Latino when I can't quite keep up in a conversation.

Camila felt a significant inner struggle about her language ability. She wanted her proficiency in Spanish to be higher, but her parents did not want her to use Spanish, resulting in a greater loss of proficiency. She understood their reasoning but felt conflicted by the dichotomy of her experience with different groups. In the end, though, her current Spanish proficiency was looked down on by both her Hispanic and White peers. She felt like she did not fit in fully with either group of peers. Specifically, with her Latinx peers, she felt like her language ability made her racial identity less authentic than those who were more proficient in Spanish. She was torn between the racial identity she felt like she had to embody and the one she was actually portraying to others. When asked if there were situations in which Olivia did not feel like she could be her racial self, she said it happened a lot. She was unable to identify exactly when it happened because it happened so often:

I would say it happens a lot because very subconsciously, so if I'm in a certain environment then I'm just not going to be too Black, if that was ever a thing. But like that idea that one can be too ... when the identifiers are being too Black. I can't really give a specific example, but it's a very subconscious shift. I don't have to tell myself to do it, because I've been doing it for awhile. Because I've been doing it my whole life.

For Olivia, she was constantly in a state of monitoring performance of her racial identity. Even unconsciously, she regularly engaged in impression management to avoid racial

stigma. This self-awareness of impression management created a level of consciousness that majority students will seldom experience.

Front Stage

Performance varied in the physical spaces that participants existed in, and it varied based on who the participants were surrounded by. Performance in the classroom looked very different from performance within participants' student organizations. In the classroom, participants generally tried to subdue their racial selves and not draw attention to themselves.

Olivia described trying to blend in:

So, if I'm in a class and I'm usually like one of two or one out of three like Black students in a class, I usually will just reserve my racial self for the private moments. If I'm with one of my friends or something I kind of know pretty well in those spaces, but usually I just don't really exercise my racial identity. I just kind of try to blend in as much as possible, just like gain the respect of the professor and the respect of my peers as well.

Olivia described the intersection of her desired racial identity and the racial identity expected of her. She received cues about needing to subdue her racial identity, and that appeared in practice through her reserved behavior in the classroom. Lucy also spoke about not being outspoken because of past instances where she felt uncomfortable when she did speak up:

I guess whenever we do talk about racial things in English class, I think literature always ... whenever you mention that everybody is just like, oh, but I can't be as outspoken because I know I'll make people uncomfortable. If we're talking about ... I mean, American Lit, and we're talking about America and whenever everybody came here and my teacher was like, "What is one word that you think about whenever you think about early America?" And everyone was like "freedom," and the first word I thought was like ... oh my god, I completely forgot the word ... "colonization." I was like, I can't probably say that because everybody is happy about ... and America is a great country, it has pros and cons, but that was the first word that I thought of and I don't feel like I can just outright

say that, because everybody would be like, “Oh,” and I’d be like, “oh.” So, things like that.

Similar to Olivia, there was not agreement between the internal idea of self and the racial self she actually performed. She kept her perception to herself, unwilling to share it with her peers, so that she could manage the impression that the others in the class had of her. Student organizations, however, had a positive effect on performance. Olivia spoke about the support she received from her organization:

Also becoming a member of my sorority has helped me, because it’s a predominantly African American sorority that focuses on community service for the Black community. So, just being around a lot of strong African American women who identify with the same ideals that I have, has also influenced how I think of a Black woman.

Olivia’s student organization reinforced the racial self she wanted to be. She felt more comfortable as her racial self in front of peers that were similar to her. Participants also performed in other more obvious ways. Olivia often altered her physical appearance in a way that suppressed her racial identity:

Sometimes how I wear my hair will change. I’ll usually put it in a bun or a more contained style if I’m going around someone who doesn’t racially identify with me, or I’ll straighten my hair, or if I have braids I’ll take them out if I’m going to a more professional setting. ... It’s just so I make other people feel comfortable, which I shouldn’t do, but it’s so that other people feel comfortable so that they don’t seem as intimidating and then so I can also be taken very seriously. That’s just kind of the plight of being Black in America. We have a lot of stereotypes and people have implicit bias based on what they’ve heard or how they’ve grown up. You don’t know that going in, so we have to kind of do everything we can to be taken as seriously as possible, before you know the person well enough or get to know their intentions first.

The goal was not always suppression, though. Olivia also showcased her racial identity in the way that she dressed:

My style is pretty urban. That’s usually synonymous of being Black. ... I think it’s just like with hip hop culture, that’s an urban thing, and that’s usually when you think hip hop you think about Black people, those usually go hand in hand

because we were pivotal in the creation of hip hop, it's an African American art form, so ... and it's an urban at that, so the style kind of goes with the stereotypical who you would think listens to that music and where it's being produced from.

Olivia embodied her culture in a physical way, one that showed she embraced the racial self she wanted to be. Once she was comfortable enough in her racial identity to physically showcase it through dress, she did not notice any outside constraints.

This chapter addressed the major findings of this study. Background plays an important role in the level and type of agency that students bring to college. Experiences with family, culture, K-12 education, and the community all shape the racial identity of students. Upon matriculation, this emerging sense of agency is confronted by and sometimes altered by the campus climate and physical environment. The physical and social spaces also allow a fluidity of student's agency as they are met with various constraints to their preferred racial identity performance. However, the multicultural identity center enhances the agency of Students of Color by decreasing the constraint they experience in that space, even as the sense of incongruence with the larger collegiate racial climate may increase.

CHAPTER FIVE

Discussion

A few studies have previously addressed the purpose and importance of multicultural identity centers on higher education campuses, but none have used a framework that draws upon Goffman's (1959) dramaturgy to analyze the role that the multicultural identity centers plays in the attitudes, perceptions, and interactions of Students of Color with the greater campus environment. This chapter presents a summary of the findings, articulates conclusions, and outlines the implications for future research, practice, education, and training. In the following section I discuss six points of convergence within the conceptual elements of this study that elucidate the role of the multicultural center in the identity performance of Students of Color in this study.

Background and Racial Performance

Racial identity, as described by Goffman (1959), is a social construct, enacted within and among groups of peers, friends, and family. It does not exist in a fixed state; rather, it is one's understanding and feelings about one's self and one's history played out in current context. Participants' background influenced and established racial identity prior to a participant's matriculation into college. Most, but not all participants entered into college with some preconception of how their racial identity was to be performed, and in what circumstances. However, some participants, like Camila, grew up in a homogenous racial community where they were surrounded by individuals who had similar backgrounds. Camila's racial identity was not confronted or challenged until she

entered college; once it was, though, she started the process of establishing her racial identity and what it meant to perform her racial identity.

Other participants were challenged by their experiences prior to college and were forced to confront the need for deliberate performance of their racial identity. Lucy, who moved from China to the United States at a young age, was influenced by peers and the education she received about her own culture. It was the confrontation of learning about racial identity as performance that allowed her to come to terms with her performance prior to entering college.

This was also the case with Alicia, who felt conflicted being an African American growing up in a predominately White culture. She received different cues from her family members about what it meant to perform her racial identity. She expected that her family would affirm the same racial identity she wanted to perform, but that was not the case. Instead, she was forced to reevaluate her racial identity, but that allowed her to establish what kind of racial identity she wanted to perform in college.

Racial performance does not exist independently of an individual's pre-college experiences. It often emerges during childhood or adolescence, as awareness of race begins in children as young as pre-school (Tatum, 2017). Racial identity is questioned, challenged, and changed many times throughout this time period, as seen in many participants, and many individuals began to develop an idea about their preferred racial self-concept well before college.

Background, Campus Climate, and Racial Performance

The findings from this study show that participant Students of Color perceived that the campus climate was different for them than it was for their White student peers. This finding is in line with other studies that showed Students of Color experienced campus climate differently than White students (Rankin & Reason, 2005; Reid & Radhakrishnan, 2003). Participants in this study, all Students of Color, described their own experience as different from non-Students of Color. Relating to background, students had expectations of the campus climate that were either confirmed or contradicted.

Camila first had to develop a higher degree of intentionality with racial identity as she learned about the climate of the institution. The institution was starkly different from her hometown and her high school, which had a lot more Students of Color. She had not expected that the climate would be so different, and that led to a new feeling of discomfort about the climate of her environment. Other participants had similar preconceived notions about what the campus climate would be like, and they had to alter their performance in order to manage their impression on campus.

Another common theme regarding the campus climate was the institution's attitudes, perceptions, and interactions towards Students of Color. In this study I was originally looking at the attitudes, perceptions, and interactions of Students of Color with the institution, but participants revealed their awareness of the alternative: the institution's attitudes, perceptions, and interactions with Students of Color. This resulted in the concept of what I call siloed diversity.

In this study I define siloed diversity as the organizational isolation of Students of Color, along with their peers, to the multicultural identity as a response to the lack of institutional support of diversity and inclusion. Diversity in itself requires thought and understanding, but diversity is more than that. It is a call toward action. It must be a verb, something that can be demonstrated, behaved, or enacted (Winkle-Wagner & Locks, 2019). Participants as a whole felt that the institution was lacking in both diversity and inclusion; they were able to name ways that the university was focused on diversity, but inclusion efforts were often absent in their eyes. For participants, diversity was described as the institution's efforts to increase the number of traditionally underserved and underrepresented populations on campus. Inclusion, as defined by Winkle-Wagner and Locks (2019) is the "deliberate act of bringing people into the group, the norms, into the opportunities that will allow for a meaningful pursuit of happiness" (p. 3). This idea of being drawn in by the institution is what participants described as lacking or missing. In order to compensate for the lack of diversity offered by the institution, participants siloed themselves as a way to protect the racial selves they wanted to be.

Instances of discrimination, prejudice, and stereotypes had a heavy influence on racial performance. Multiple participants described the attention that was paid to their physical characteristics; their skin color, hair, dress, language, and so on, by White peers. They also described microaggressions, like being asked inappropriate questions about their lifestyle. Stereotype threat occurs when individuals alter their behavior in order to avoid being perceived as confirming a stereotype about their group (Erba, 2018). Participants engage in impression management and altered their racial performance to combat discrimination, prejudice, and stereotypes.

Climate among participants and their peers appeared in the findings through the perception that one environment existed for Students of Color separate from the environment that existed for their non-Students of Color counterparts. Overlap did exist between the two environments, but they were frequently polarizing to one another. This was apparent as participants spoke about traditions. Traditions that were advertised as welcoming to the entire campus were frequently described as uncomfortable and alienating for Students of Color. The majority of participants felt underserved and undervalued by the institution, even while being isolated in spaces designed for them. Thus, although students felt supported in those spaces, it came at the cost of identity incongruence with many other parts of campus.

The Influence of Space on Racial Performance

The findings of my study suggest that within the same environment, there are spaces interpreted as siloed that are separate and distinct from one another in their social meaning and function. The meanings of spaces are contested and power-laden; they are simultaneously helpful and unhelpful in encouraging agency and constraining the agency of Students of Color (Alleman, Holly, & Costello, 2013; Neely & Samura, 2011). Participants confirmed that the multicultural identity center, despite being a part of the greater campus environment, was siloed as its own stage. Every physical space, whether it be the library, the residence hall, or the classroom comes with its own influencers of racial performance. For Camila, Pablo, and Tyler, spaces with a high volume of Students of Color were considered the most comfortable for Students of Color on campus. The volume of Students of Color affecting the space is connected to the concept of human aggregate described by Strange and Banning (2001). The human aggregate components

of the environment are the characteristics of the people who inhabit them. The guarantee of participants knowing they would see other students like them influenced their level of comfortability. The opposite was true inside the classroom, where participants were often one of a handful of Students of Color in the room. Camila and Olivia were both uncomfortable when the vast majority of individuals in their classes were White. Often this discomfort came not from specific situations that happened, but from the anticipation that such situations might occur as they had in other class spaces.

Outside of physical space, social space exists when physical space is encoded with social meaning. Racial performance in these spaces can either be inhibited or facilitated by students' perceptions of and experiences with this social meaning. Camila and Olivia's racial performance was inhibited in the classroom, transforming it into an unwelcoming social space. Camila was singled out to speak on behalf of her entire racial/ethnic group, and Olivia felt singled out as one of the only People of Color in her classes. Their negative association with the physical space resulted in the physical space's social meaning.

Racial performance was easier and came more naturally for Students of Color in the space of the multicultural identity center and in multicultural student organizations. Racial performance was often more subdued and altered inside of academic settings. Again, Camila shared this experience. Not only was she uncomfortable in the classroom due to the small number of Students of Color, but she was uncomfortable due to the social cues she received in the classroom. Camila was asked to speak on behalf of her entire racial/ethnic group, a request that she had never been confronted with before. The spaces besides the multicultural identity center and the classroom were where racial

performance relied on environment and peer interaction the most. In environments classified as spaces for Students of Color, performance was easier but still required increased impression management. In spaces not classified as being for Students of Color, performance required additional adaptation.

The big influencer of racial performance in both physical space and social space is the perceived climate of the campus. Many of the participants' evaluated how openly they performed their preferred racial identity by the cues they received from social interactions and social implications of the space they were in. Spaces are not race-neutral. Both race and space involve political struggles over their meanings, they are fluid and historical, they are interactional and relational, and they are defined by inequality and difference (Neely & Samura, 2011). Physical space can lead Students of Color to perform racialized representations, roles, hierarchies, and more (Mitchell, Wood, & Witherspoon, 2010; Neely & Samura, 2011).

A common theme among participants was their inability to classify a non-identity center space as being solely *for* Students of Color; the closest they came was identifying spaces that Students of Color took as their own by increasing the volume of Students of Color that occupied the spaces. This phenomenon is described by scholars as self-segregation (Buttny, 1999; Park, 2018; Tatum, 2017; Villalpando, 2003). *Self-segregation* occurs when minoritized individuals purposefully cluster together in private and public spaces. Though contested, self-segregation has shown that Students of Color are able to recharge when they are around peers from similar racial/ethnic backgrounds. Lucy affirmed this when she described the identity center as a safe space where she did

not have to go to the extra effort of explaining her culture and how she viewed things. She could enter the space and naturally be known by the inhabitants of the identity center.

The Multicultural Identity Center

Research has shown that identity centers are an important part of the college infrastructure; they bring individuals together over a common purpose and offer services to groups that have been historically underrepresented on college campuses (Renn, 2011). The findings of this study confirm what studies already know about multicultural identity centers, but the role of identity centers in racial performance had not been explored.

My findings affirm that the multicultural identity center acts as a microsetting; microsettings are relatively homogenous and cohesive, they have a strong impact on individuals within the microsetting, and they are controlled by those individuals (Moos, 1979). Analyzing the components set forth by Moos (1979) and Strange and Banning (2001), the identity center also acts as predicted. It is a physical space that plays a role in the constructed agency of the human aggregates that are involved in it.

Findings suggest that the multicultural identity center provides students with a space to perform their racial identity as closely as possible to the racial identity they want to portray, even while tacitly reinforcing the importance of defining oneself racially. Although other spaces force students to alter their performance to manage a particular impression, the identity center gives Students of Color a freedom, and an expectation, that many other spaces do not allow.

The multicultural identity center also acts as a social space, something that also has not been explored thoroughly in other studies. Many participants spend casual time in the identity center and attend events hosted by the identity center, but many associated

the identity center with the relationships they built with staff that work in the identity center or the student organizations that are encompassed by the identity center.

Taking it to a deeper level, the staff of the identity center connected Students of Color with other individuals who then influenced their racial identity. Participants spoke of the faculty and staff who are also People of Color they have gotten to know as they have become comfortable with the staff of the identity center. Together, faculty and staff became a part of the participants' *teams*, or a set of individuals who co-operate in staging a single routine (Goffman, 1959). The teams together aid participants in their routine of racial performance.

Racial Identity as Performance

The conceptual framework of this study draws upon Goffman's (1959) dramaturgy to explore the role the multicultural identity center plays in the attitudes, perceptions, and interactions of Students of Color with campus. Dramaturgy looks at society as a stage, and individuals are performers on the stage. This study looks at the identity center and greater campus environment as stages, and Students of Color as performers on the two stages.

Racial identity has traditionally been approached from the psychological perspective (Chickering & Reisser, 1993; Erikson, 1968; Gildersleeve & Hernandez, 2012). The findings reinforce two previous studies about racial identity performance that are approached from a sociological perspective (Stewart, 2015; Willie, 2003). Overall, there are few studies that approach racial identity as performance, but the findings presented in this study confirm the suggestions by Willie (2003) and Stewart (2015) about racial identity as performance. Race is contingent, contested, and negotiated

(Willie, 2003). Stewart (2015) would agree that individuals negotiate racial performance, but also suggest that they embody racial performances and center race. Negotiating racial performances reflects how behavior, habits, and preferences are interpreted by others; embodying racial performance shows how gender intersects with expectations for racial performance; and centering race focuses on the role of the college environment that participants inhabit and how a predominately White environment influences participants' occupation with race as a central element of identity (Stewart, 2015).

Findings of this study demonstrate the most similarity with the concept of centering race and the influence of the college environment, specifically the environment of a predominately White institution. Across the board, participants found the strongest connection with other Students of Color in their same racial/ethnic group and performed their racial identity most openly and honestly with other People of Color. The multicultural identity center provided a safe space within the greater campus environment that gave participants a stage to perform their most genuine racial identity in.

Stewart (2015) also suggests that racial performances are not fixed but situational, and they are not unconscious but deliberately chosen. Findings of this study reveal that racial performances are situational. Racial performance varied significantly for participants based on who they were with, whether it be peers, staff, or faculty, and where they were, whether it be in the multicultural identity center, a student organization meeting, or the classroom. Olivia cited her multicultural student organization as having an effect on her racial identity. Being surrounded by other African American women, who she described as “strong” and having the “same ideals” as her, has influenced her idea of what it means to be a Black woman. On the other hand, when Olivia was in a

purely academic building or when she was aware that she was the “minority” she would heavily alter her racial performance through monitoring her language and how loud she was speaking.

The findings of this study show that racial performance is not always deliberately chosen, but it can be unconscious. All participants were juniors or seniors, and they were asked to reflect on their racial performance over the entire course of their college experience. As participants reflected, it was revealed that there were instances of racial performance they were unconsciously aware of during the real-time that it was happening.

Agency and Constraint

One emergent finding that ties all of these concepts together is the dynamic between agency and constraint. In this study, a student’s racial identity performance can be compared to their agency. Agency is defined as a student’s ability to enact their preferred racial self-concept. Constraint describes the result of factors and forces that externally restrict a student’s ability to enact the racial identity constructed backstage, or that cause a student to have to focus on a racialized self.

In the backstage, agency exists in its most authentic form. As Goffman (1959) notes, backstage only exists internally and is unique to every individual. It cannot be seen or understood by any observer, though it can be influenced by external forces in the form of audience, environment, and teams. The front stage is where agency is actually performed, and it is where the audience receives and influences agency most directly. As an individual performs, they are constantly engaged in impression management in order to control the performance that the audience receives, in part to align it with their own

idea of their desired performance, and in part to align it with what they understand to be expected of them; these two cannot be fully teased apart.

This study reveals that agency is constrained at different levels and in different ways by audience, climate, and space. The level to which the constraint occurs can vary depending on how clear and persistent the individual is with their own agency. Although this study did not observe participants' agency in their background, multiple participants spoke to agency formation pre-college. Interacting with their family members, participants felt constrained by them in various ways. Alicia, for example, received negative cues from her family. She anticipated her family would be both an audience and a team, moving together towards a common staging routine. However, she was not met with the affirmation that she was expecting. They made fun of her and compared her to a White individual because she valued education, causing her to alter how she performed her racial identity. She had not yet met the college peers that shared the same educational attainment goals as her, so she altered her agency in front of the audience that was her family.

When the audience consisted of peers in the same racial/ethnic group as participants, agency was least constrained; though a lack of constraint in these situations is not synonymous with a lack of influence. Nearly all participants referenced peers in their student organizations as individuals that contributed positively to their agency. By contrast, agency was most constrained in an audience of the majority, or when there was a large group of non-White individuals. Participants had to develop the most strategies to control the impression that was given off in the classroom, where their racialized identities were sometimes stereotyped, requiring defense of their preferred racialized self.

Lucy showed this was the case in the classroom, where her peers thought she was academically superior due to her race. She was used to being stereotyped in such a way, but she wished that her peers understood she was in college to learn just like them.

A sense of agency, or control over racialized performance, was strengthened the most as participant involvement increased with the multicultural identity center. The identity center also allowed performance of agency in the most authentic form that participants desired. Pablo spoke to this as he reflected on his racial identity development over the course of his four years. His freshman year he was completely uncommitted to his ability to determine his own racial identity. He was afraid of the impression he would give off to his peers if he got involved in a multicultural student organization and the multicultural identity center. However, as his involvement increased he was forced to come to terms with his agency related to racial performance. Identity centers play a complicated, complex, and sometimes contradictory role in identity conceptualization and performance.

Implications

This study reveals the need for a deeper investigation into the topic of racial identity as performance, the common denominator that ties this study's elements together. The following section outlines the implications for future research and practice.

Implications for Future Research

This study focused on Students of Color in their third or fourth year, looking at participants' racial performance within the multicultural identity center and greater campus environment. Participants were asked to reflect on their entire college experience.

The interviews showed that racial performance changed over time as participants became more involved on campus, more involved with the multicultural identity center, and interacted with peers from diverse backgrounds. Nearly all the participants were able to voice the shift of their racial performance over time, but many were also reflecting on their experiences in certain areas for the first time. Future researchers would further this work by conducting a more thorough study that begins with first-year students in order to gain an understanding of experiences that led to racial performance longitudinally. The findings of this study already show what an impact background has on students' racial performance upon entering college, and I believe starting at the beginning will show greater results. A longitudinal study of Students of Color throughout their entire college experience, from arrival to departure, would provide a more well-rounded perspective into the relationship between the attitudes, perceptions, and interactions of Students of Color on campus.

College juniors and seniors have had the most higher education experience in the classroom and in participation in activities outside of the classroom. Participants of this study were most involved with their student organization and the multicultural identity center as they spent more time in college. Future research, though, is needed on Students of Color from all classifications. Research could start with freshman students and continue through the entirety of their college experience, or freshman and sophomore students could be compared to junior and senior students.

Another implication for future research is the need to study Students of Color who are not involved in the multicultural identity center. This study focused solely on Students of Color who were involved in the multicultural identity center and a member of

at least one multicultural student organization. The insights that this group provided are valuable, but they should not be taken at the exclusion of the perspectives that other Students of Color with less involvement have to offer. It would be valuable to include Students of Color who are involved in other student organizations; Students of Color who join predominately White student organizations, Students of Color who are involved in National Pan-Hellenic Council fraternities and sororities specifically, or Students of Color involved totally uninvolved in the multicultural identity center. This would not only provide a new set of findings that provide valuable information on the racial performance of Students of Color, but it could also impact future practices for student affairs professionals.

The concept of acculturation could be incorporated into future research. Acculturation occurs when an individual adopts the beliefs and behaviors of a cultural group different from their own (Castillo, Conoley, & Brossart, 2004). The acculturation process has previously been thought of as a linear and one-directional model; more recent research, though, has adopted a multidimensional model to explain how individuals engage in the acculturation process (Castillo, Conoley, & Brossart, 2004). The racial identity of participant Students of Color was fluid depending on the audience and environment, and each participant engaged in impression management as a way to alter their performance. Acculturation would be another way to examine racial performance.

It would also be beneficial to conduct a study on the racial performance of Students of Color at institutions that are different from the one used in this study. Findings suggested that participants saw the multicultural identity center as undervalued

by the institution. It would be beneficial to conduct a study at institutions that have more resources for Students of Color.

Finally, future research would benefit from a larger sample. This could be achieved by utilizing a survey for data collection. A survey could easily be distributed to students from all classifications and backgrounds, thus resulting in a more diverse set of data.

Implications for Practice

Findings highlight the importance of the relationships that Students of Color build with the staff of the multicultural identity center. The staff of one department cannot adequately serve all diverse student populations across the campus, though. It is important that higher education institutions focus their efforts on hiring and retaining faculty, staff, and administrators from diverse racial/ethnic backgrounds. These efforts could equally be focused on hiring and retaining faculty, staff, and administrators who are advocates for and allies of Students of Color. Not all institutional representatives equally support diversity and inclusion efforts, so careful attention must be paid to hiring and training practices. Hiring committees and individuals conducting interviews should ask about the diversity and inclusion efforts of applicants. Special attention to those practices will benefit not only Students of Color but other students who come from traditionally underserved and underrepresented groups.

Multicultural identity centers should focus their efforts on approaching racial identity from the sociological perspective that Goffman (1959) offers, rather than the psychological perspective that dominates literature on identity. Staff of the identity center should adopt the language of performance offered by Goffman (1959) and use it in

conversations with students. This would be beneficial for students who are already aware of the impact that audience, teams, environment, and so on have on their racial identity. It may help them assign a name to their experiences. For students who have not yet become aware of the elements of dramaturgy and their impact on racial performance, it may help them reflect on their racial identity as performance for the first time.

Implications for Education and Training

My findings reinforce the literature that shows Students of Color perceive a divide between the university environment. The responsibility of bridging the gap between these two worlds that exist on the same campus belongs to higher education professionals.

The need for education and training programs for staff, faculty, and administrators across the institution is evidenced from the findings of this study. Participants formed deep connections and relationships with the staff of the multicultural identity center, and they saw them as the most qualified individuals to offer support. However, findings also showed that faculty, staff, and administrators outside of the identity center were lacking in training and education that would offer Students of Color adequate support. The siloed diversity that many participants experienced is evidence of a need for an increase in programs to all faculty, staff, and administrators. Programs that educate on serving traditionally underserved and underrepresented groups should be annually mandated for all higher education professionals.

Institutions of higher education should develop programs that educate faculty and staff on topics such as implicit bias and the difference between diversity and inclusion. Awareness of siloed diversity should result in organizational reconsideration of policy and practice. Identity centers should be highlighted by the larger institution as a resource

for Students of Color, even while reconsidered for the ways they reinforce a sense that racial climate issues have been dealt with. Advertising the identity centers at events hosted by enrollment management teams and orientation departments are just two ways to make students aware prior to entering the institution. Lastly, institutions should consider implementing similar training and education programs into curriculum for incoming students. Many institutions require first-year seminar courses, and diversity and implicit bias training could be beneficial for all students.

Conclusions

This study sought to answer the question: *What role does the multicultural identity center play in the racial performance of Students of Color on campus?* The findings of this study indicate that Students of Color are constantly engaging with and changing their racial identity through performance that is both enabled and constrained by the multicultural center. The identity center acts as an environment that combats siloed diversity and allows Students of Color to perform their racial identity, even while it is the product of that siloed diversity. Nevertheless, participants could perform their desired racial identity, with the least constraint, compared to any other environment on campus. Students of Color found valuable relationships with the staff of the identity center and the peer groups that were formed from joining multicultural student organizations, making their role on campus both important and conflicted.

Returning to the concept of siloed diversity, it is a culmination of racial performance, campus climate, and space, with the multicultural identity center acting as its own unique space. It is an organizational feature that places responsibility for diversity and inclusion on multicultural identity centers, and it is a functional aspect of identity

development that benefits students. The campus climate and spaces on campus, outside of the identity center, gave participants cues that their racial performance must be altered in order to assimilate to campus norms. In response, participants practice siloed diversity as a way to protect and maintain the racial selves they want to portray. When the institution is perceived as failing to adequately provide diversity and inclusion equally, another prong of the campus climate, students practice siloed diversity as a way to connect to peers who are also being underserved by the institution. The multicultural identity center, which provides diversity and inclusion through the nature of its staff, programs, and events, offers refuge to students where they are also least constrained in their agency. In this sense, the multicultural center simultaneously ameliorates and perpetuates issues with racial climate.

APPENDICES

APPENDIX A

Positionality Statement

My interest in exploring how Students of Color interact with and perform their racial identity in relation to the identity center and the greater campus environment stemmed from my work as a graduate apprentice in a multicultural identity center. As a part of my role, I worked closely with students who were involved in the identity center and/or held a leadership position in a student organization within the identity center. My role exposed me to the discrepancies in the experiences of Students of Color and White students at a predominately White institution. I became frustrated at the discrepancy that seemed to stem from students' racial/ethnic backgrounds, and that frustration prompted my desire to explore the experiences of Students of Color qualitatively.

Despite my goal of pursuing an understanding of “the social meaning people attribute to their experiences, circumstances, and situations,” my personal race/ethnicity needed to be addressed (Hesse-Biber & Leavy, 2011, p. 4). The institution where my study took place is classified as a predominately White institution because more than 50% of the students are classified as White. The specific racial/ethnic breakdown as of fall 2019 was: 5.7% African American/Black, 0.4% Alaskan Native/American Indian, 10.9% Asian, 15.9% Hispanic, 0.1 Pacific Islander, 61.5% White, 4.7% Multiracial, 0.8 Not Specific/Unknown (Institutional Research and Testing, 2018). I myself am a White female, and I graduated from a PWI. As a White female working at a PWI, there was no way I could put myself in the place of my participants. I could not pretend to know what

it was like growing up as a Student of Color in an oppressive society or imagine that my college experience compared to what their college experience was like. I expected that my position as a White female would hinder the study if I did not address it. In order to uphold honesty and integrity throughout this study, I sought to honor each participant as the expert related to their own experiences. I sought to create an atmosphere that was comfortable. I communicated the value of participant's attitudes, perceptions, experiences, and interactions.

APPENDIX B

Interview Protocol

Instructions to the Interviewer

REMEMBER:

- “Thank you for your time and willingness to be interviewed.”
- [Have they completed the demographic questionnaire?]
- Have they filled out the informed consent form? If not, they need to read it and verbally consent below, then can submit the signed document later.]
- “Do you have any questions about the study before we begin?”
- **[START RECORDER]**
- “Can you please state your name and verbally confirm that you have consented to this interview?”
- “Throughout, I may pause to give you time to reflect or to make sure I am not rushing your response, so that may be the reason for some silence.”

Research Question: What role does the multicultural identity center play in the racial performance of Students of Color on campus?

Sub-Questions:

1. In what ways and for what reasons do participants perform their racial identity within the campus environment?
2. In what ways does the campus climate and environment influence the attitudes, perceptions, and interactions of Students of Color?
3. What experiences have Students of Color had with the multicultural identity center?
4. What influence, if any, does the identity center have on the racial identity performances of Students of Color?

Student Demographic Questionnaire

What gender do you identify with?

- Woman
- Man
- Other _____

What is your race/ethnicity? Place check all that apply:

- Hispanic
- Asian
- Pacific Islander
- Native American Indian
- Asian Indian
- Black
- Caucasian (White/non-Hispanic)
- Other _____

What is your academic year? (Please include all years you have been in college, including if you transferred to your current university.)

- 3rd Year
- 4th Year
- 5th Year
- 6th Year
- 7th Year
- 8th Year

What is your age?

Please list your major.

What multicultural organization(s) are you a part of?

What kind of involvement have you had with the [multicultural identity center]?

Interview Guide

- 1. In what ways and for what reasons do participants perform their racial identity within the campus environment?**
 - a. How would you describe your racial identity as a college student?
 - i. How, if at all, has that changed since you came to college? If it has changed, why?
 - b. How would others who are part of your self-identified racial identity group describe you?
 - c. What experiences have been most formative to how you think about your racial identity?
 - d. What places on campus have most effected how you think about your racial identity?
 - e. What about you communicates your racial identity to others?
 - i. Dress?
 - ii. Ways of speaking?
 - iii. Background?
 - iv. Shared experiences?
 - f. What persons have been most formative to you racial identity in college?
 - i. In what ways – how did this influence come about?
 - g. What groups have been most influential to your racial identity in college?
 - h. How, if at all, does expression of your racial identity change when you are around individuals who are not a part of your racial identity group?
 - i. Campus Tour
 - i. Prompt: Appendix B
 - ii. One required stop will be the Multicultural Affairs office
 - iii. Follow-Up Questions:
 1. Why did you choose the spaces you showed me?
 2. What reflections do you have on those spaces now that the tour is over?
 3. Will you interact in those spaces differently after reflecting on them?
- 2. In what ways does the campus climate and environment influence the attitudes, perceptions, and interactions of Students of Color?**
 - a. Where on campus do you feel most comfortable as a Student of Color at Baylor?
 - b. Where on campus do you feel most uncomfortable as a Student of Color at Baylor?
 - c. Can you identify specific areas on Baylor's campus for Students of Color? If so, what are they? What do you base this perspective on?
 - d. Have you experienced prejudice or discrimination as a Student of Color at Baylor? In what situations – what happened?
 - e. Have you ever felt stereotyped as a Student of Color?
 - i. Where/when/how...
 - ii. What was that like?

- iii. What conclusions do you reach about that in reflection?
- f. Thinking of Baylor as a whole, how would you describe the culture surrounding Students of Color on Baylor's campus?
- g. Are there any faculty or staff that you view as advocates for Students of Color?
 - i. Can you provide examples?
 - ii. In what situations?
 - iii. What role have they played?

3. What experiences have Students of Color had with the multicultural identity center?

- a. In what ways have you gotten involved on-campus?
- b. Who did you get to know as a part of your minority group?
 - i. Where/when/how...
- c. What do you think about joining student organizations that are for Students of Color?
- d. Besides being involved in _____ organization, what are other ways are you involved in the Department of Multicultural Affairs?
- e. What do you think about joining student organizations that are _____ focused?
- f. How did you first hear about the Department of Multicultural Affairs?
 - i. What did you think about it at first?
 - ii. What do you think of it now?
- g. Who is the Department of Multicultural Affairs for?
- h. How is the Department of Multicultural Affairs perceived on-campus by Students of Color within your organization?
- i. How is the Department of Multicultural Affairs perceived on-campus by Students of Color outside of your organization?
- j. If you have friends on-campus that are not involved with the Department of Multicultural Affairs, why are they not involved?
 - i. What reasons have your friends given for not being involved in the Department of Multicultural Affairs?
 - ii. Why do you think your friends hold that view about not getting involved?

4. What influence, if any, does the identity center have on the racial identity performances of Students of Color?

- a. In what ways has your racial identity played out as you have gotten involved with the Department of Multicultural Affairs?
- b. In what ways has it played out on campus specifically?
- c. What idea of _____ identity do you get from the Department of Multicultural Affairs?
- d. How has that identity changed over time?

Campus Tour Prompt

The purpose behind the campus tour is for me to understand Baylor as your experience it – **what places are and are not part of *your* campus, particular as relates to your identity and experiences as a Student of Color?** Think about places where you spend most of your time; areas you tend to go or not go, places that you work, hang out, eat, study, meet people, and so on. Think about specific memories or experiences that make places stand out related to race and racial identity for you.

Within this general tour, my interest is in your experience as a Student of Color on Baylor's campus. Here are some things to think about before we meet:

- The Department of Multicultural Affairs is the only place that will be required on our tour. Think about how the department, its location and space, its staff, and your involvement in [student organization] influences your involvement with the rest of campus.
- Think about how your identity as a [African American/Black, Asian/Asian American, Latinx student] student makes you interact with the department and the rest of campus.

I intend this to be a conversational walk: as we go, I'd like you to narrate not just the destinations, but things you notice along the way, places you choose not to take us, etc. How do you perceive these places? **What do they mean to you, or to others?** There are no right or wrong answers – I just want to see the campus as you see it.

Finally, please consider the flow or route of the tour that moves us around campus to maximize our time together and minimize the amount of walking necessary. I have attached a campus map. If you could print it out and mark the places you want to go, that would be great!

Listening Session Questions

1. Where do you feel most at home as a _____ student at Baylor?
2. Where do you feel most uncomfortable as a _____ student at Baylor?
3. Have you experienced prejudice or discrimination as a _____ student at Baylor?
4. What do you think about joining student organizations that are _____ focused?
5. Are there any faculty or staff that you view as advocates for _____ students?
6. Who is the Department of Multicultural Affairs for?
7. How is the Department of Multicultural Affairs perceived on-campus by _____ students?
8. What idea of _____ identity do you get from the Department of Multicultural Affairs?
9. If you have friends on-campus that are not involved with the Department of Multicultural Affairs, why are they not involved?
10. Can you identify specific areas on Baylor's campus for minority students?
11. Thinking of Baylor as a whole, how is the culture surrounding _____ students on Baylor's campus?
12. What have we not asked that you think is important for us to know about _____ students at Baylor?

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