



Research White Paper Spring 2017

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The White Paper is a resource provided by the Gender and Sexuality Knowledge Community (KC) of NASPA in fulfillment of its mission to provide avenues for the personal and professional growth of its members, increase awareness and acceptance of GLBTQ professionals and students, and promote understanding of GLBTQ professional and student needs within the field of higher education and student affairs administration.

The KC produces White Papers, which are compilations of current and cutting-edge research summaries and briefs. The goal of the White Paper is to share knowledge and information about issues related to the status of the GLBTQ community in higher education that will prompt discussion, further research and showcase scholarship being conducted by students and professionals in the field. Higher education and student affairs professionals can consider these recent findings/results when tailoring programmatic and pedagogical efforts on their campus. All scholars, researchers and professionals are welcome to submit summaries or briefs about their scholarship to the White Paper; membership in NASPA is not a prerequisite.

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Breaking Binary: A Case for Gender Inclusive Policies in Higher Education

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The growing trans*¹ and gender nonconforming student populations at institutions of higher education have led to an increase in awareness, acceptance, and allocation of resources (Nicolazzo and Marine, 2015). Nicolazzo and Marine (2015) point out that while some institutions are beginning to offer resources to these students, such practices are from the norm. Many institutions are still steeped in the dualistic assumptions of the binary nature of gender, or the paradigm that assumes that there are only two sexes: male and female (Butler, 1990). Most have bathrooms and locker rooms that are segregated by “male” and “female” designations, organize their residence halls to have “single-sex” rooms or floors, and lack official policies that allow individuals to designate their preferred name and pronouns (Beemyn, 2005). These structures illustrate how trans* and gender nonconforming college students may experience oppression through the “fusion of institutional and systematic discrimination, personal bias, bigotry, and social prejudice...” (Bell, 2013, p. 21).

Reducing the presence of the gender binary within the academy is necessary to dismantle the negative impacts of oppression on trans* and gender nonconforming students. This may include practices such as creating gender inclusive² restrooms, implementing gender inclusive housing policies, and changing existing policies to include preferred names and pronouns on official university documents instead of legal names (Beemyn, 2005).

While many institutions have some gender inclusive policies in place, many policies, practices, and structures are still entrenched in the gender binary. In this paper, we provide a brief review of existing literature regarding ungendering institutions, and examine three categories of gendered policies that affect trans* and gender nonconforming student’s college experience.

Theoretical Frameworks

Through our understanding of gender in the academy, and our study of power, privilege, and oppression, we identified two major theories that can guide the task of ungendering college campuses: Queer Theory and Critical Trans* Politics (CTP). Queer theory’s flexibility makes it helpful for student affairs practitioners who seek to dismantle the conception of the “so-called normal and abnormal” gender embodiments on college campuses (Torres, Jones, & Renn, 2009, p. 584).

¹ The use of the asterisk in the term trans* serves to disrupt the dualistic assumption that all trans individuals fall within the gender binary. The asterisk is intended to represent the wide array of gender identities and expressions encapsulated within the transgender community (Tompkins, 2014).

² We chose to use the term “gender inclusive” rather than “gender neutral” to reflect the spectrum of gender identities on a continuum, which may include identifying as having no gender at all.

Critical Trans* Politics (Spade, 2011) specifically discusses how administrative units police gender by forcing individuals to fit neatly within the male/female dichotomy in our society. CTP also advocates for policies to be inclusive, rather than exception based, a change Spade (2011) suggests can contribute to the restructuring of the way institutions “administer gender” (p. 142). These theories provide a rationale for the importance of our work, as well as insight into three policy categories that would benefit from change.

Literature Review

The gender binary is a widespread, social concept that recognizes only two sexes - male and female - and assumes that gender “mirrors sex, or is otherwise restricted by it” (Butler, 1990, p. 6). Arlene Lev’s (2004) conceptualization of the gender binary states that society forces individuals to align their sex, gender identity, gender role, and sexual orientation to “fit” with each other. The pervasive paradigm of gender as dichotomous, along with the conflation of sex and gender identity, creates power structures that do not recognize identities outside the binary as legitimate or worth recognition. The repudiation of gender identities outside of the binary can (and does) negatively affect all individuals who do not conform to the gender binary. However, most of the literature on gender nonconformity has thus far has focused specifically on the experiences of trans* individuals. For the purpose of this paper, “transgender” or “trans*” is used to describe an individual whose gender identity does not align with the biological sex they were assigned at birth (Nicolazzo & Marine, 2015).

Julia Serano (2013) argues that trans* folk experience a distinct type of oppression called “cissexism,” or the “belief that transsexuals’ identified genders are inferior to, or less authentic than, those of cissexuals” (p. 444). Serano discusses how the most prominent form of cissexism includes denying trans* people “the basic privileges that are associated with trans* person’s self- identified gender” (p. 444). Such privileges may include being referred to by one’s preferred name, safely accessing the bathroom, and living within a comfortable and accepting environment. To deny these privileges to a specific group contributes to the marginalization of those individuals by denying their full participation in society with others. Iris Marion Young (2013) marks marginalization as “perhaps the most dangerous form of oppression” (p. 39).

Though the actions that marginalize may not be purposeful, college administrators contribute to cissexism and marginalization of gender nonconforming students by failing to adopt inclusive policies that subvert the gender binary. Patton, Renn, Guido and Quaye (2016) state that “binary gender normativity is so pervasive that even with growing awareness of transgender individuals in society and on campus, genderist microaggressions, discrimination, harassment, and violence remain substantial obstacles to student success (Bilodeau, 2009; Nicolazzo, 2015)” (p. 83).

Proposed Policy Revisions

Institutions that seek to be supportive and inclusive of their trans* students “must consider how they are often physically and socially structured in ways that enforce a binary gender system” (Beemyn, 2005, p. 78). While some institutions are already working to ungender their campuses through broad gender inclusive policies on housing, bathrooms, and preferred names, there is still work to be done.

Gender inclusive housing practices allow any student, regardless of their sexual orientation, gender, or gender identity, to live in the same on-campus space, allowing students to select who they wish to live with (Willoughby, Larsen, & Carroll, 2012). Assigning students to single-sex rooms

based on their birth gender can fail to provide trans* and gender nonconforming students with living spaces that are safe and comfortable (Beemyn, 2005). Many of the institutions that have implemented policies have made them exception-based; while these policies allow students to request gender inclusive accommodations, the request process can be intimidating for students, and is in direct opposition to Spade’s (2011) suggestion of avoiding exception-based policies.

When an institution enacts a preferred name policy, it allows students, staff, and faculty to easily designate which first and last name they wish to be addressed by within the electronic and paper identity records of the institution. Having (and using) preferred name policies is pivotal to creating safe and accepting campus environments for all students, but especially for trans* and nonconforming students. For trans* students, being called by their birth name, rather than their preferred name, can be psychologically and emotionally traumatizing; the trans* community has coined the term “deadnaming” to describe the “verbally violent offense” of referring to a trans* person by their (no longer used) birth name (Ennis, 2016).

For those “whose appearance or identity does not quite match the ‘man’ or ‘woman’ signs on the door, bathrooms can be the sites of violence and harassment, making it very difficult for [them] to use them safely or comfortably” (Chess, Kafer, Quizar, & Richardson, 2008). These factors not only create needless obstacles to a student’s education, but can cause them to risk their physical health as well (Beemyn, 2005). Single occupancy restrooms somewhat alleviate these issues, but a trans* individual may still encounter opposition as they either enter or exit a single sex bathroom and may still feel the need to avoid using a bathroom on campus. Gender inclusive single occupancy restrooms allow transgender individuals the ability to “pee in peace” (Beemyn, 2005, p. 81).

Conclusion

Because of gendered assumptions and the slow adoption of trans* friendly policies, “transgender students typically feel isolated and marginalized, rather than welcomed and included” (Beemyn, 2005, p. 78) by their colleges and universities. Beemyn (2005) further points out that institutions that seek to be supportive and inclusive of their trans* students “must consider how they are often physically and socially structured in ways that enforce a binary gender system” (p. 78). Implementing institution-wide policies aligns with Spade’s (2011) assertion that institutions must restructure the way they “administer gender” (p. 142), rather than making exceptions on a case-by-case basis. We advocate for the implementation of institution-wide gender inclusive policies to create campus climates that are supportive, safe, and inclusive for all students, regardless of their gender identity or expression.

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Fostering Nepantla Practice; Fomentando la Práctica de Nepantla

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“A border is a dividing line, a narrow strip along a steep edge. A borderland is a vague and undetermined place created by the emotional residue of an unnatural boundary”-
(Anzaldúa, 1987)

What does it mean to be a queer Xicano/Latino student affairs professional invested in student activism? This question provides a platform and guides my practice for the development of my work. In my current role at the University of Nevada, Las Vegas (UNLV), I utilize theoretical practices and pedagogy centered on a muxerista identity. This identity focuses on dismantling all forms of oppression as a Xicano/Latino scholar feminist and activist towards individual and collective liberation. The use of a muxerista identity comes from the work of Dr. Anita Revilla, professor in Gender and Sexuality Studies at UNLV, whose work with Raza Womyn, at the University of California Los Angeles, employed an approach termed “muxerista pedagogy”. Additionally, my use of a muxerista identity did not start until I started working with queer and trans Latinx activists. As a muxerista scholar activist, it informs my positionality and how I navigate my work to show up authentically in various spaces of the institution to better serve the needs of our students.

As a Minority Serving Institution (MSI) and aspiring Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI), the University of Nevada, Las Vegas is comprised of 55% students of color with 27% of students identifying within the Latinx community (Institutional Analysis & Decision Support, 2016). Positioned in the heart of the desert, Las Vegas, the institution prides itself on being one of the most diverse institutions in the nation. However, diversity goes far beyond representation. Institutions must make space for the sharing of narratives for individuals whose voices are often left out of the higher education conversation. For students who hold multiple marginalized identities, specifically queer and trans Latinx students, feeling as though their voice is not being heard can be a recurring experience.

During the college process many students engage in a process of self-discovery, which can come from a result of learning about their “racialized, gendered, classed, and sexualized identities and their stories” (Revilla, 2004). For Queer and Trans Latinx students navigating race, class, gender, and sexuality can create a third space, the borderlands, honoring multiple lived realities of social identities held. With the fluidity of gender and sexuality, this third space is one in which joteria, queerness, makes and remakes itself (E. Alvarez, personal communication, May 28, 2015). This transformation is one of resistance against white supremacist, classist, and patriarchal ways of knowing while simultaneously liberating towards a true authentic self.

Situated in a place of borderlands erupts the feeling of being neither from here nor there; pushing us to explore multiple facets of our realities. This sense of having to navigate various spaces in different ways propels us to explore the position of nepantla in our life, with respect to the social identities we hold. Nepantlera, a sense of living in-between fluid realities, is who and what we are: construyendo puentes, building bridges, to a place of authenticity. As Anzaldúa (1987) theorized,

“one who moves between and within worlds of reality, developing a third world, encompassing a true self”.

As student affairs professionals, we must be intentional and forward thinking in fostering authenticity from a critically conscious lens to provide developmental opportunities that capture the holistic stories of our students. Critical consciousness is defined as the ability to perceive and take a sociopolitical view of how we interact and read the world around us (Freire, 1973). My work with queer and trans Latinx student activists has provided insight into the importance of integrating a Nèpantla and muxerista approach within my professional and personal practice. This approach honors the lived experience of consistently being in the borderlands, navigating in and out of spaces that speak truth to reality. While there are many ways institutions can support queer Latinx student activists, the creation of affinity spaces and communities and use of theoretical frameworks are two that have been integral in my work. We must also remind ourselves that institutions are driven by individuals (e.g., higher leadership administration, student affairs professionals, faculty, etc.), therefore, we must place responsibility on individuals to create commitments for our student’s success.

First, creating affinity spaces serve as a reminder to students that they belong on campus. Affinity spaces and communities of practice support student’s interactions and the creation of meaning (Gina Nuñez-Mchiri, personal communication, November 2, 2015). Identity-specific centers/departments/programming disrupt the traditional narrative of higher education only being a space for white, cisgender, middle-class, men. But what happens when an institution does not have any institutionalized affinity spaces? Theoretically, shared responsibility must be an integral part of our work, meaning we should all strive to serve all of our students. However, the practicality of this is not always in a shared way. Creating intersectional initiatives rather than one-dimensional when it comes to social identities should fall on the work of everyone.

We must continue to engage in asking ourselves, are we doing enough for our students? Is social justice an integral part of my student affairs practice, even if your work does not fall under the purview of multicultural affairs? For student activist, the practice of having to keep demanding resources and asking questions that our leadership should have been asking can be taxing and can take its emotional toll on them. Working with queer Latinx student activists has made me reassess how I create an inclusive space, how I choose to develop programming, and how I choose to advise the students. This can be seen in making spaces more reflective of our students through the use of art in the space I oversee, making intersectionality an integral part of student programming, such as talking about race other times other than during identity specific months, and practicing vulnerability and authenticity as a student affairs professional. I do want to highlight that we all define authenticity and vulnerability in many different ways and that there are times when engaging in this is not an option. Moreover, as student affairs professionals we must continue to challenge ourselves to think outside outdated student development theories.

“Future and current professionals are not being taught in many places how to skillfully deal with the realities of race that will for sure confront them and await them on campuses in their first job” (Harper, 2016) This may also be true for confronting other parts of our students social identities.

Employing theoretical frameworks outside of traditional student affairs models which capture the experiences of students who hold marginalized identities allows us to provide the space for self-development rooted in vulnerability and authenticity. Utilizing critical consciousness and pedagogy, such as Critical Race Theory (CRT), Queer Theory, Borderlands, etc., provides the space for them to name themselves in a way that is affirming and validating. With this in mind we must build spaces to

validate and affirm students' lived experiences while providing the space for deeper exploration of oneself.

While the above is centered around queer and trans Latinx activists of color, the same could be applied when working with other queer communities of color. Being in a place of Borderlands is a reality for many that navigate multiple marginalized identities. As Anzaldúa (2002) states, "a vague and undetermined place" which can give way for the creation of our students *conocimiento*, self-awareness. Simultaneously, I have found that engaging in this practice has also provided me with the space to further delve into my own social identities to make deeper meaning out of them. For example, it was not until I started my work with queer Latinx student activists that I started identifying as a queer Xicano/Latino. Rather, this work made me redefine how I view being gay and pushed me to identify as queer, which for me captures the intersection of race and sexuality working together rather than stand alone. Sustaining our work around activism requires us to feed, bathe, and take care of our livelihood in order to move with intentionality (E. Alvarez, personal communication, May 28, 2015). This journey of *conocimiento* reinforces the idea of being authentic with mind, body, spirit, and captures *Nepantla* in the process.

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TRANSforming Higher Education

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Introduction

On May 13, 2016, the Departments of Education and Justice released a “Dear Colleague” letter, announcing to institutions of public education that Title IX protections should extend to trans, non-binary, and/or gender-nonconforming (TGNC) students, thereby protecting assigned sex and gender identity. This letter was intended to foster a “safe and nondiscriminatory environment” that ensures TGNC students’ access to gender-segregated restrooms that most correspond with their gender identity; however, the directive falls short of understanding the difficulties and harassment TGNC students still face when accessing gender-segregated spaces. Much of the existing literature on TGNC restroom access highlights the need to create more gender-neutral restrooms in public spaces, rather than in hidden corners or unknown pockets. In part due to “naturalized assumptions about bodies, genders, and sexuality,” TGNC individuals are especially vulnerable to violence and misunderstanding in public spaces (West, 2010); therefore, we call for the centering of the lived experiences of TGNC students in decisions affecting us. Using the examples of restrooms and campus housing, we argue that a transformation of gender-segregated spaces, *in addition to* creating more gender-neutral spaces, is a highly effective and tangible way to address issues of accessibility on college campuses.

TGNC Restroom Access

Due to cissexist fears of TGNC individuals “peeking” at cisgender women through the stalls, TGNC students who do not “pass as cisgender” are often stared at while in the restroom; some are outright denied restroom access by strangers (Seelman, 2014; Seelman, 2016; West, 2010). Many TGNC students avoid using gender-segregated restrooms altogether. Because so few gender-neutral restrooms exist on college campuses, behaving according to one’s “bladder’s leash” can lead to negative health outcomes, such as urinary tract infections, bowel and bladder problems, or an overall decrease in participation in public conversations (OSHA, 2015; West, 2010).

The Department of Labor’s Occupational Safety and Health Association (OSHA) Sanitation Standard necessitates equal “toilet rooms separate for each sex,” which has been interpreted to mean equal male and female-designated restrooms; however, multiple-occupancy, gender-neutral restroom facilities with lockable single-occupancy stalls are recommended (OSHA, 2015). A truly liberatory restroom environment requires the removal of gender or sex-specific bathroom signs, and the installation of changing tables and accessibility infrastructure, including automatic doors, braille, and wider stalls. While schools can, and should, create policies stating that TGNC students have a right to access restrooms on campus, degendering restrooms changes the culture around restrooms, displaying to all restroom users that people of all (a)genders can, and already do, use the restroom together without physically or sexually assaulting one another. Fears often revolve around cisgender women (rarely cisgender men) being raped by a male perpetrator “pretending” to be a woman in order to access isolated space with women. This fear ignores several key facts: 1) TGNC students, particularly trans femmes (of color), face enormous violence within restrooms, 2) perpetrators of rape already have the capacity to enter women’s restrooms, and 3) rapists are typically individuals that the victim

already knows. The perpetuation of this panic to protect cisgender women in restrooms infantilizes women, as it assumes they cannot protect themselves, creates harmful expectations of men, as it assumes they can protect themselves, and further perpetuates a binary framework of gender that is harmful to people of all (a)genders.

Housing Accommodations for TGNC Students

Beyond providing restroom access to TGNC students, institutions must recognize that residence halls, as sex-segregated spaces, also require transformation. Conservative policies within academe have assumed that men must live with men and women with women, otherwise rape, sex, and any other supposedly or truly harmful behavior may ensue. LGBTQ+ students, students of color, and students with disabilities may not always feel comfortable living with any random person, as university housing is not free of bigotry and discrimination. For example, while a Resident Advisor at the University of Utah, alithia was witness to the writing of racist and queerphobic slurs in their hall and the vandalizing of social justice bulletin boards by their residents. The housing administration did little to address these instances of violence, leaving their students' needs unmet.

Although gender-neutral housing is becoming increasingly available on campuses, these programs often fail to consider the preferences of TGNC students. Until her third year as an undergrad, Alexandra's university offered no program for TGNC students to be placed in gender-congruent or gender-neutral housing, and she was forced to live with cisgender men throughout her social and medical transition. In her third year at Georgia State University, the university introduced a "Gender Inclusive Housing" program that sought to offer students housing with people regardless of biological sex. However, the program was poorly documented; to opt in on the housing contract was not sufficient for placement in the program. Alexandra worked for several weeks to contact housing staff and ultimately was not placed into the program until a few days prior to move-in. Her assignment further failed to take into account her preference to not live with men, and she was forced to share a room with a transgender man.

As autonomous adults, students should be given the capacity to express their discomfort living with particular (a)genders for any reason. Students of color may not feel comfortable in a space with white students; students with disabilities may not wish to live with abled students; likewise, trans students may not feel comfortable with students of their assigned sex. Secondary and higher education has far to go in educating students about racism, ableism, cissexism, heterosexism, consent, and sexuality. Institutions accepting students must trust that students can make choices regarding their own body, can understand other people's desires and choices to not live with them, and can use public spaces without enacting violence upon others.

Campus Climate for Gender and Sexual Minorities

While we begin with a discussion of gender-segregated spaces, accessible facilities are only the foundation. Institutions of higher education must create opportunities for TGNC students to be mentored by other TGNC students, staff, and faculty who can relate to their experiences, needs, and wants. On many campuses, this space comes in the form of LGBT Resource Centers or Multicultural Centers. Spaces such as these have been critical for queer students to make space for themselves on campuses; however, trans students are significantly more likely to avoid LGBTQ spaces on campus (Seelman, 2016). Jordan previously worked as a graduate assistant in a Multicultural Center, a space that was predominantly cis, straight, and of color. Although competency around issues of race was high, the same cannot be said for TGNC issues. Efforts to alleviate tensions around gender and

sexuality, such as Safe Zone trainings, were well-intentioned, but by their very nature, rudimentary. Participants of such trainings often expressed an obsession with “not offending people” by “saying the wrong thing.” Many participants felt the need to memorize the terminology that TGNC use to describe themselves instead of challenging their binary views of gender and sexuality.

If our goal is transgender liberation, universities must create spaces for TGNC students, as well as advance programming, policy change, and advisement. To do so, these spaces need to center their hiring practices around ensuring staff are representative of marginalized students, as students often look for places where they can find others like themselves. These centers also need full-time staff and directors that are paid wages comparable to other student affairs directors and staff who are provided with budgets to implement necessary programming, workshops, and institutional change. Centers devoted to gender and sexual minorities are often envisioned as solely “safe spaces” for students to congregate. If provided the proper budget, however, they have the potential to offer the mentoring that many students of color, TGNC students, queer students, and disabled students need to navigate and transform racist, cissexist, homophobic, and ableist institutions. These institutions are sites in which marginalized populations should be able to seek advice from people they trust. Additionally, these spaces can host social networking events for TGNC faculty and staff, as students are not alone within often unsafe, isolating, and unsupportive institutions.

Conclusion

As these spaces manifest, we must construct them in such a way so as to ensure intersectional policy change. Treva Ellison, an interdisciplinary scholar at Dartmouth, explained, “For harm and violence based on sexual orientation to be legible, it is delinked from other types of violence. Racialized sexualities are produced as the excess of sexual orientation rendered through multiculturalism” (2016). Even though TGNC people of color face more systemic violence than white TGNC people, “[t]he protection of sexual orientation... is narrated as racially neutral” (2016, pp. 332). Because institutions often assume that they already have protections against racism, they fail to understand the specificities of racialized sexual violence and racialized gender violence. Patricia Hills Collins described intersectionality as a crash at a traffic intersection in which a car or cars may hit from any direction producing varying and disparate results (1989). In this same fashion, the crashing of heterosexism, cissexism, racism, and ableism is not additive but rather a complex system of violence that must be addressed by centering the lived experiences of TGNC students (of color and/or with disabilities) in our efforts to radically transform institutions of higher education.

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SuperQueero Sydrome: Field Notes on Working With Queer Trans Students of Color, 2015-Present

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Entry #1-Fall Quarter 2015

Queer Trans Students of Color (QTSOC) stared at me with wonder and excitement. We shared hugs that radiate love and relief. I just met two BlaQ (Black and Queer)



students who said, “we are so happy you’re here!” I have never felt a sensory overload like this before. My intuition is telling me that something is going on here.

It is my second week on the job at Stanford. So far in my career as a student affairs administrator, I regularly feel like a mutant on campus as a Gender Non-Conforming Administrator of Color but I feel a heightened awareness of my mutantness here. While this is the most racially diverse student affairs staff I have ever been a part of, I feel like my gender nonconformity and expression really makes me stand out here. Where is my community? How can I build community here? What is the QTSOC community like here?

Entry #2- Later in Fall Quarter 2015

I’m introduced to Stanford Duck Syndrome by student affairs administrators. I’m told Duck Syndrome describes too many Stanford students who on the outside appear calm, cool, and collected while on the inside they are completely stressed out. Visualize a duck gliding along the water. She looks very serene, calm, and pleasant. Then, if you look under the water, she is paddling frantically. It’s a fake it ‘til you make it mentality. I keep this metaphor in mind as I continue to meet students across campus. Over the past two months, my diversity and inclusion projects have led me to fraternity and sorority houses and large residence halls but I did not meet many



QTSOC there. Where were they? How could I connect to them? I feel like Professor X of X-Men trying to channel out to fellow mutants in the universe from his school for gifted youngsters. I make it my explicit priority to find and center QTSOC going forward.



Entry #3: Winter-Spring Quarter 2016

I set out to find and hire QTSOC to work with me on staff. I reached out to the first two students I met during my first weeks on campus and hired them. To find others, I initiated meetings with student groups on campus and asked my recent hires to introduce me to other QTSOC. Through their word of mouth, I was able to be a part of the network and I hired three more students to the roster. The students I hired had organized #blacklivesmatter demonstrations on campus, were frequent contributors to campus publications, led LGBTQ student groups, were outspoken, and worked with activist organizations in the bay area. I was proud to have these students on staff as they were well respected and regarded on campus. Most of the students



knew of each other but I looked forward to having them all in a space working together and building community. I scheduled weekly staff team meetings to convene the team I had assembled. To start our first meeting, I began by asking: “How are you.” Silence hung in the air for several minutes and the students hesitated to respond. My mind raced-- Was this inappropriate? How much silence should happen? After a few minutes, the students began sharing how they were feeling and what their workload was like at the moment. They all were feeling overwhelmed. I instituted the practice of asking this question--How are you?-- and holding space for the answer rather than using it as a salutation to start each meeting. Over time, students answered the question with more depth and familiarity. One meeting during finals never got past the check-in as each student shared that they were severely struggling and we used that time to talk about coping, survival tactics, and to affirm each other. QTSOC on staff started dropping by my office beyond their scheduled hours to do homework, share space, and talk. I saw common threads between them: they were tired, burnt out from front line campus activism, often asked to do emotional labor for free, checked out in classes because of microaggressions by peers or instructors, at capacity but kept taking on more leadership roles, feeling under attack, and/or depressed. I started buying them lunch when we met and I learned



that they might not have eaten all day or planned to eat otherwise. I asked if they were speaking to other administrators about some of the things they were struggling with or if they were seeking counseling. They told me that they mostly didn't share how they were really doing with other staff people and they only opened up to their friends. I asked if they were sleeping and they revealed that they often slept less than five hours a night. I asked if they could prioritize their rest and recovery but they looked at me with blank stares. “I have too

much to do. I have to keep doing all I can. I can sleep over the weekend. Maybe,” they would say. This team of QTSOC I had assembled were running themselves ragged trying to do so many things for others while neglecting themselves. Who does that? They started sounding like superheroes to me. When I think of superheroes, I think of individuals who are compelled to help others and constantly put themselves at risk. Superheroes are committed to justice, fighting evil, and helping others at whatever cost. I saw similar qualities in the QTSOC I was working with. They were all deeply committed to activism, social justice, and supporting others while their own care suffered. Where does this mentality come from? I think it comes from us as administrators and our institutions. How many campus events have you been to where we tell our students that they will change the world? That they have to. That we expect them to and we are counting on them to make the world a better place without any mention of taking care of themselves in the same breath? It is a death sentence.

I thought about Stanford duck syndrome and whether it applied to these students who were treading water before my eyes. The metaphor didn't work for me anymore because of how hard it was for me to find QTSOC. It seemed like they were rarely at the pond with the majority of the other Stanford ducks. Rather, they were swimming at the margins of the margins. When I gathered some of them together and gave them space and time to share how they were doing, they spoke honestly



about their challenges and let their guard down. Their struggles were readily apparent and I could see the toll things were taking on them physically and emotionally. I started to view them as Superqueeros instead. I think more about their superpowers at Stanford. I've noticed that they are deeply empathic and communal. They are fearlessly expressing their gender every day in more daring and artistic ways. They are working on decolonizing their minds and bodies while meditating deeply on their connections to people of the global majority and to the earth. They are working on their connections to their ancestors and finding ways to heal themselves and their communities not centered on western medicine. They are often speaking up in classrooms challenging narratives, leading protests, and writing demands to move us into the future they dream of.

Entry #4: Summer Quarter, June-August 2016

The students are gone over the summer. The campus is a ghost town. The Orlando shooting has shaken me. It was both the deadliest mass shooting by a single shooter and the deadliest incident of violence against LGBTQ people in United States history. The majority of the victims were Latinx and Black. Where are we safe as LGBTQ people of color? The murders of Black Trans women, Alton Sterling, and Philando Castile this summer have launched me into a new spiral of darkness. For the first time, I find it hard to get out of bed. I have taken several personal days to try to attend to my mental and spiritual health. I keep in contact with my QTSOC who are all around the world over the summer. I meet up with some of them in the bay area. We are overwhelmed by the violence in our world. Thinking about them coming back to campus keeps me going and gives me a sense of purpose to keep living for.

Conclusions

To center QTSOC, you must find them on your campus. I had to venture out to the margins of the margins. As I continue to work with this community, I try to regularly create spaces for students to share what is going on with them. Throughout my time at Stanford, I have come to learn that these students are holding so much more than I could have imagined. I try to do the little things--ask them if they're sleeping, get them food, keep my office door open--to care for them. I find myself telling them that they can only do so much and that they would be better able to care for others if they care for themselves. As a gender non-conforming Queer administrator of color, I know the students feel a sense of comfort around me because we share identities. We are open and honest with each other as we navigate systems that were not created by people like us and often not with us in mind. The superqueeros I'm surrounded by have made me optimistic about the future and I'm working to make sure we see it together.

Homosexuality, Spirituality and College: How Student Affairs Professionals Can Help LGBTQIA LatinX Students Reconcile Parts of Their Identity

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While research attempts to further understand the experiences of LGBTQIA (lesbian, gay, bisexual, transsexual, queer/questioning, intersex, asexual) students, Latinx students, and religiously-affiliated students, respectively, there still remain opportunities for further areas of interest within the intersection of those said identities. Through this narrative, I will outline implications of the saliency of race, spirituality and sexuality. This paper attempts to underscore the need for implementing initiatives on college campuses that support identity development for students with intersecting identities.

“En el nombre, del padre, del hijo, y del espíritu santo, Amen.” Being catholic is as salient to my Mexican identity as is being a gay man. Ever since I can remember, an important aspect of my childhood involved the Catholic Church. When I was young, my family spent every Sunday sitting in the pews of the big cathedral five blocks from our house. I was an altar server from the day I turned 5 years old until my late teenage years. I can still remember the crisp white robes and the smell of the consecration oils used on special Sunday mass services. At the age of 8, I began violin lessons. This newly developed skill turned into another facet of my involvement within the church, from 5th grade to 11th grade, I played the violin in the music ministry. Devoting my allegiance to God, not only in prayer but also in service framed my development. Growing up, the teachings of Christ were a constant motivator for the actions I engaged in. The amalgamation of Catholic and Mexican traditions, and their implied expectations, created a very narrow conceptualization of what it meant to be a “good person”.

Several rigid rules exist in both Mexican and Catholic communities. Throughout my formative development, I was relentlessly inundated with messages that regulated aspects of my masculinity. Messages that shackled my perception regarding the type of person I was expected to be. Messages that ruminated at the forefront of my working memory while being imbedded in the deepest parts of my subconscious, telling me how I should shape my life based on what the Catholic doctrine deemed appropriate. Learning to navigate between my spiritual and racial identities was no easy feat, and my self-concept was rendered even more fragmented as I realized that my sexual attraction to the same sex and gender was oppositional to the core values upheld in both the Mexican and Catholic communities. When you’re a child, you don’t necessarily know the extent of what being gay means, you do however, have some awareness that it is not something to be shared or celebrated. I constantly regulated my behaviors to not appear to be gay I became riddled with shame, I prayed every night that God would cleanse me of sin; though I could never verbalize to others what I perceived my sin to be. I feared being gay would cost me both the love of my family and the love of God. I was so critical of myself. My thinking became dichotomous; good or bad, loved or hated, saved or condemned. I was restless yet exhausted, constantly in analysis of my thoughts, actions, self-concept and concept of others in relation to my identity.

At 18 years old, a freshman in college, my surroundings began to affirm my identity as a gay man, as a Latino man, and even as a Christian man, but never simultaneously validating the intersection of all three. My first semester as a college student I was so excited to find there were many resources and student involvement opportunities that celebrated my Mexican-American identity. At my college there were many LGBTQIA student organizations, I even became the vice president of the Gay and Straight Alliance my second semester. There were also two chapels near campus and several student fellowship groups, which allowed me to continue to be involved in spiritual service. However the compartmentalization of my identities was persistent and reinforced by the separation of the different groups I belonged to. I was never a Latino, gay, Christian male in the same context in any of the communities I navigated between.

Almost ten years after my first semester in college, now as a student affairs professional working at a large public university, I am reminded to see there persists to be few spaces that affirm and celebrate the intersectionality of sexual orientation, racial identity and spirituality. As student affairs professionals, dedicated to students' academic success and commitment to providing support, we must aid in all aspects of their development. For people of color, our sexual identity is as salient as the color of our skin, moreover our spirituality is also a deeply embedded aspect of who we are and must be considered in the initiatives designed to support student development. Students of color that are reared in religious households may need assistance reconciling parts of their identity that are at odds with their families' beliefs about sexuality or gender expression. While some people of color may choose to abandon the ideologies rooted in their spiritual upbringing, others may choose to seek reconciliation and help in learning how one is able to be gay and still love God. It is our duty as student affairs professionals to foster support and safe spaces where students' intersecting identities can be affirmed and celebrated.