DISSERTATION

STUDENT LEARNING ACROSS CULTURES AND DIFFERENCE IN CO-CURRICULAR

CAMPUS SPACES AT A HISTORICALLY WHITE INSTITUTION

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ABSTRACT

STUDENT LEARNING ACROSS CULTURES AND DIFFERENCE IN CO-CURRICULAR

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This study examines what undergraduate students say they learn about engaging with difference and across cultures in the Michigan Union and the Trotter Multicultural Center at the University of Michigan, a historically white institution. The University of Michigan is a historically white institution because of its majority of white students, long-preserved values of eliteness and prestige, and history of racial inequity. This research is a constructivist, triangulated multiple case study (Bhattacharya, 2017) with the college union and multicultural center as the two cases. Information-rich maximum variation sampling (Patton, 1990) was used to inform participant recruitment. Using Strange and Banning's (2001, 2015) four component model of the campus environment and Pope et al.'s (2004, 2009) multicultural competence model, this study describes how co-curricular environments shape and influence student learning. Multiple semi-structured interviews were employed, including an education journey mapping exercise (Annamma, 2017) between participants and the researcher.

Key findings emerged from this research about the Michigan Union, the Trotter Multicultural Center, commonalities across the two cases, and participant patterns. The Michigan Union data categories were: (1) Core to the University; (2) Connecting with Others; and (3) Learning with Others. The data categories from the Trotter Multicultural Center were: (1) A Central Meeting Place; (2) A Space Where You Can Be Yourself; and (3) Interactions with Difference. The four commonalities across the two cases of the Michigan Union and Trotter

Multicultural Center were: (1) The Spaces were Birthed for Different Reasons, But They are Both Unionizing Spaces; (2) The Dominant Features Represent the People Who Inhabit Them; (3) Both Centrally Located, But Not Equitable in Size; and (4) Students' Range of Emotions About Both Buildings. Lastly, four patterns across the study's participants included: (1) Black, Indigenous, and People of Color (BIPOC) Participants Saw Themselves in the Trotter Multicultural Center; (2) White Participants Connected Effortlessly in the Michigan Union; (3) Multicultural Competence is A Work in Progress for Everyone; and (4) All Participants Wanted to Disrupt Campus Structures That Do Not Work for Everybody. The researcher discusses findings considering current literature, implications for theory and practice, and recommendations for future study.

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First, I want to acknowledge the University of Michigan students who participated in this research study. I am motivated by your learning journey and excited for your future. The students' enthusiasm for my research, desire to talk about their lived experiences and multiple identities, learning alongside me throughout the study, and commitment to action-oriented leadership for positive change are impressive and inspiring. I also want to offer a special acknowledgment to Jocelyn Cha, the University of Michigan student who beautifully designed the visual representation of the connection between this dissertation's two conceptual frameworks.

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mentorship and collegial conversations, enthusiasm for my writing about co-curricular campus spaces and the experiences of students with minoritized identities, posing helpful questions for me to consider, introducing me to the Lory Student Center, and your regular encouragement. Oscar, thank you for encouraging me to be passionate about my experiences and values, saying what needs to be told to strengthen inclusive and equitable learning environments for underrepresented students, reminding me to consider multiple perspectives, and helping me with qualitative research. While he could not serve on my committee because of his retirement, I would also like to acknowledge Jim Banning for his coaching early in the doctoral program, meeting with me, emailing me countless articles, and even mailing me a signed copy of one of his books about campus ecology.

I began this doctoral journey six years ago. This journey has forever changed my life. I remember when Linda Kuk called me to let me know that the faculty accepted me into the Ph.D. program and that D-L Stewart expressed interest in advising me. I was with my then-fiancé, John, at a cell phone store. I called my parents on my new phone, thrilled and apprehensive about the doctoral process to come. With encouragement, I decided to do it. My first trip to Colorado was the first summer residency for the 2017 cohort. We convened at the Fort Collins campus a handful of times to be in community with each other before the pandemic stopped travel.

From California to Connecticut, the 2017 cohort was pivotal in this doctoral process of learning, unlearning, and discovery. We were each working professionals who decided to take on a Ph.D. program. I thank my Higher Education Leadership (HEL) cohort members for contributing significantly to my experience. Thank you to Angela, Bri, Chad, Eileen, Kelsey, Nikki, Pamela, Sarah, Ria, Sean, and Yvette. During the best and worst times, we figured it out together and offered vast opportunities for learning and joy. I appreciate your friendship! Thank

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and niece, Emily, I completed doctor school! As you progress through your life, I hope you will value lifelong curiosity, learning, and take on opportunities for advanced education as you would like. I hope Uncle Nick has made you proud. To my sister-in-law, Melissa, and brother-in-law, Matt, your strong value of higher education helped inspire me to complete my Ph.D., even when I thought I could not finish! Thank you, also, for moving back to Michigan from New York City. Having you and your children, our nephews, Andrew and John, nearby has meant the world to me and John. To my mother-in-law, Ruth, and father-in-law, Bill, I appreciate your support of the doctoral process, especially when I have had to miss family gatherings. To my grandparents, Jim and Marcia, I probably would not have started a Ph.D. without your stories, sage advice, encouragement, support, belief, love, and enthusiasm to refer to me as Dr. Smith. I have been lucky to have you in my life for more than four decades.

Finally, to my life companion, my love, my partner, my husband in good and bad times, John, you have earned the biggest vacation and honorary degree from me after having joined me the most in the Ph.D. process! Remember when you moved into my condominium while I was attending the first summer residency for the 2017 cohort? Despite the added weight of time and energy that I spent with the Ph.D. program, you still decided to marry me in 2018. You have joined me on subsequent Colorado trips, introduced our birds to cohort friends on Zoom, befriended cohort members with me, helped me set and accomplish writing deadlines, held me accountable to goals, read my writing, celebrated with me, listened to me figure things out during difficult times, stuck with me through the coronavirus pandemic when we were quarantined for so long, rubbed my back when I felt anxious, and have loyally endured through life's obstacles. I love you and am eternally grateful for you. Now, let us go on a big vacation and continue to build our lives together!

DEDICATION

To my husband, John Edward (Gosdzinski) Smith,

Thank you for your enduring love and believing in me!

To my grandfather, Reverend Doctor James Trenton Grooms,

Thank you for sparking my curiosity and ambition for the doctoral journey!

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

Social tensions and public health crises worldwide have posed rapid change and significant challenges for higher education over the past several years. As a result, it has become increasingly critical for educators to prepare college students to engage, work, and lead across difference in polarized and turbulent environments. For decades, higher education scholars have recognized the educational benefits of students learning across difference and cultures. Scholars have also identified how students engage in educational spaces differently based on their social identities and how they see the world. In this chapter, I begin by describing the purpose of this study and why it is increasingly important today. Next, I describe my motivation for this research. Then, I situate this research study in two conceptual frameworks and state my research questions. I also present assumptions and delimitations to this study. I conclude this chapter by offering a statement about the significance of this research.

Purpose of the Study

Through this research, I present an understanding of students' awareness, knowledge, skills, and actions to engage with difference and across cultures that they learn in the co-curricular learning environments of the college union and multicultural center at a historically white institution, the University of Michigan. Campus environments shape the quality and frequency of positive educational outcomes with diversity and cross-racial interactions (Chang et al., 2006). In addition, Braun (2011) pointed to the fact that students' different social identities within the institution affect how students experience diverse, engaging learning environments created by administrators. This matters because higher education institutions should be learning

environments where students can effectively explore differences to prepare them for life during and after college.

Everyday social tensions between people and communities based on "us" and "them" narratives, leading to increasing polarization (Somer & McCoy, 2019), are limiting students' willingness to discourse across difference in higher education environments (Kiraly & Gerig, 2019). Scholars have urged educators to create conditions for college students to spend time together, increasing their chances and frequency of interactions and learning across difference (antonio, 2001; Chang et al., 2004). Carcasson (2017) posited higher education institutions could remain intellectual arenas for collective learning where social tensions are mitigated by institutionalizing constructive dialogues between people with different worldviews. There should be places for college students to experience different perspectives, life experiences, and worldviews while developing a sense of community and responsibility to others (Rullman & van den Kieboom, 2012).

An equitable lens on the campus environment recognizes that students do not all start from and have the same experiences as they navigate higher education with other students (McNair et al., 2020). Minoritized students can be more at-risk of leaving institutions when belonging needs are unmet, particularly on historically white campuses (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Strayhorn, 2016). Explicitly, in this study, I do not capitalize "white," as explained by Crenshaw (1991, p. 1244, footnote 6), because it is not a proper noun and does not constitute specific cultural groups. However, "Black," "African American," "Latinx," "Asian American," and other underserved groups are specific cultural communities and proper nouns. I do capitalize "white" in APA style headings in alignment with APA guidelines (American Psychological Association, 2020). Also, I use the term "historically white institutions" rather than "predominantly white

institutions," as explained by Givens (2016, p. 56, footnote 2), because it denotes a history in which these universities were created for the betterment of white students while (academically or socially) excluding other racial groups. Furthermore, some institutions are no longer "predominantly white," given the increase in students' racial diversity on some college campuses. Using "historically white institutions" or "HWI" still acknowledges the whiteness of most colleges and universities. Minoritized students' lack of belonging is critical for higher education leaders to address.

Strayhorn (2012) defined a sense of belonging as "students' perceived social support on campus, a feeling or sensation of connectedness, the experience of mattering or feeling cared about, accepted, respected, valued by, and important to the group (e.g., campus community) or others on campus (e.g., faculty, peers)" (p. 3). Researchers have found that a weak sense of belonging is associated with poor mental and physical health (Gummadam et al., 2016). Most recently, the disruption of the college experience due to the COVID-19 and racism pandemics exacerbated issues with students' health, connection, and belonging to their campuses (Levine et al., 2021). Issues of racism are recognizably nothing new, as researchers found in previous studies how a hostile racial climate directly negatively affects minoritized students' sense of belonging (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Sense of belonging is a phenomenon that "captures the individual's view of whether he or she feels included in the college community" (Hurtado & Carter, 1997, p. 327). Stewart (2018) suggested higher education leaders can provide a sense of belonging by considering four aspects of the environment: (1) physical, (2) human aggregate, (3) organizational, and (4) constructed climate. Developing a sense of belonging, creating conditions for students to feel safe, and providing mechanisms for active involvement allow students to develop community with each other (Strange & Banning, 2015).

When students are in community with each other, learning takes place. In addition to formal learning through the classroom, the learning that happens through co-curricular learning environments ultimately helps students construct their identities with others. Co-curricular learning also helps students prepare to live, work, and lead in a multicultural world. Co-curricular campus spaces in student life, such as college unions and multicultural centers, serve as community building centers where students come together (Butts et al., 2012; Jordan & Vakilian, 2013; Patton, 2010; Stewart, 2011).

College unions, often described as *the living room* (Butts et al., 2012) of campus, offer programs, services, and spaces for the community to gather, meet, learn together, eat and use needed services. Multicultural centers, often described as counterspaces (Yosso & Lopez, 2010) to hostile campus climates, offer programs, resources, and spaces for students to express themselves in an affirming space without rejection in hegemonic campus environments. Both public spaces are open to anyone.

In reviewing the research about college unions and multicultural centers, authors have discussed the history and purpose of the spaces and how specific populations make meaning of each of these spaces (Camputaro, 2018; Lang, 2020; Oliveira, 2017; Patton, 2006; Reid & Ebede, 2018; Rodriguez, 2019). Researchers have also discussed students' sense of belonging and community there. However, research does not document what students learn about engaging with difference and across cultures in these campus spaces.

This research study furthers Stewart's (2012) call for campus activities professionals in college unions to apply multicultural competence characteristics to their work with students in transforming campus communities for inclusion and equity. He also recommends a partnership between campus activities and multicultural student services to serve students better.

Furthermore, this research extends Kinzie & Mulholland's (2008) recommendation to combine

ecological and cultural perspectives to uncover positive and problematic environmental issues

for specific student populations. This approach would help foster multicultural learning

environments. Lastly, this research remedies a gap in Kwon et al.'s (2020) quantitative study

about students' skill development through co-curricular student organizations by including what

students learn about engaging with difference and across cultures in co-curricular campus spaces.

Student life educators in higher education must create co-curricular learning environments that

help students construct their own identities, learn about people different from themselves,

develop skills for working across differences, and advocate for and support others in our society.

Researcher Subjectivity Statement

It was a December evening in 2016 when I was sitting in my living room reflecting on

the social and political upheaval in the United States. I feared what our country and the world

would become and what my campus would experience. I serve as Associate Director of

University Unions and Director of Campus Involvement in University Unions at the University

of Michigan in Ann Arbor. I spent the fall term responding to and developing a campus support

system in partnership with the Dean of Students Office to ensure human safety during constant

student activism. At least four times a week, I was with students, primarily minoritized students,

who were scared for their lives but felt no other choice than to speak out against hatred at

spontaneous and scheduled die-ins (a protest in which people gather and lie down as if dead),

demonstrations, marches, and vigils. On the one hand, I cherished responding to student and

student organizations' vigorous campaigning for political and social change. This type of

community engagement for justice has been a core motivation for my work in higher education.

On the other hand, our country's political and social polarization was worse than ever, and I desired to invest time in more strategic, systematic change.

Before the fall of 2016, I completed a 14-month additional appointment as a facilities coordinator working alongside the new Director in the Trotter Multicultural Center at the University of Michigan. The Trotter Multicultural Center resisted the dominant discourse and homogenous social identities that I was living in University Unions. As an out queer white person, the Trotter Multicultural Center modeled how to work against the heteronormativity and white supremacy that I both experienced and perpetuated in University Unions. I realized how, even with the rhetoric of diversity, equity, and inclusion in University Unions, I regularly maximized my privileged identities at work by focusing on perfectionism and the right way of doing things, focusing on the written word in policies, and fear of open conflict within the organization. Okun (n.d.) describes these behaviors as white supremacy thinking. I have been both an insider and an outsider in these places. In the multicultural center, it was clear that University Unions maintained a concentration of power for co-curricular spaces, given their resources and establishment on campus. I was an accomplice to that power, receiving feedback from students about how I practiced oppressive organizational policies and not naming defensiveness and conflict avoidance as organizational problems in that I participated. I was also an antagonist of that narrative, having shaped and been shaped by a heterogeneous, queer, dialogic environment where students and staff celebrated difference and decolonized campus narratives in the Trotter Multicultural Center. My work experiences in University Unions and the Trotter Multicultural Center modeled the interaction of my own social identities and interconnected queer, white cultures.

This reflection about my experiences with the polarizing environments of University Unions and the Trotter Multicultural Center, along with the social polarization in our country, was the start of my ecological questioning about how humans interact with difference and separate environments. Even though I had studied campus ecology (Strange & Banning, 2001) in my higher education master's program, it was years later when the concept hit me in practice. I knew that it was time for me to examine my experiences. I knew it was time to renew my commitment to this work through doctoral-level research. As a scholar, I learned that I could contribute to ecological activism (hooks, 2009) within higher education spaces and places. In her book, hooks (2009) referred to ecological activism in her journey to care for her rural Kentucky homeland. She opposes colonizing actions that have destroyed the natural land for development. In my work, ecological activism resonates as an action to humanize and disrupt systems of power and oppression in campus environments. Learning how positive institutional transformations can occur over time brings me joy. In the winter of 2017, I was accepted to Colorado State University to study higher education structures and systems, equity and justice, and how to be a transformational scholar-leader.

Conceptual Framework

My firsthand experiences and beliefs directly relate to what I want to study. As a qualitative researcher, I am interested in understanding the meaning students have constructed in the co-curricular environments (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016) in which I have worked. Campus ecology and multicultural competence conceptually framed this research. In this research, I illuminate how environments shape and influence student behavior by situating this study in these two concepts. I also describe students' learning about engaging across cultures. Strange and Banning (2001, 2015) described campus ecology in a four component model for how people

engage in environments given physical components, human aggregate, organizational structures, and how people construct meaning about their environments. I used Strange and Banning's campus ecology model to understand my study's campus spaces. Multicultural competence is about individual awareness, knowledge, skills, and actions to engage with difference and across cultures within power structures (Pope et al., 2004, 2019). In Chapters Five and Six, I use Pope et al.'s multicultural competence model of awareness, knowledge, skills, and actions to analyze students' learning in the co-curricular campus spaces. I further discuss these conceptual frameworks and their connection in Chapter Two.

Research Questions

Through this study, I endeavored to answer the following research questions:

1. What do students say they learn about engaging with difference and across cultures in co-curricular campus spaces at a historically white institution?

    a. What do students say they learn about engaging with difference and across cultures in a college union?

    b. What do students say they learn about engaging with difference and across cultures in a multicultural center?

Assumptions

I designed a constructivist, triangulated multiple case study (Bhattacharya, 2017) using information-rich maximum variation sampling (Patton, 1990) to inform my participant recruitment. I embraced the idea of multiple realities by exploring multiple forms of evidence. In Chapter Four, I explain the research methodology. The knowledge garnered from participants about what they learn in co-curricular campus spaces and my own as the researcher were subjective and co-constructed.

Delimitations

I delimited this study to two research cases, the Michigan Union and the Trotter Multicultural Center. I also delimited this study to interview University of Michigan students on the Ann Arbor campus to answer the research questions about what they say they learn about engaging with difference and across cultures. Lastly, I conducted this study between the period of June through September 2022.

Statement of Potential Significance

Higher education administrators at HWIs are responsible for supporting students' learning and engagement with difference and across cultures. HWIs were not originally designed to be decolonized spaces where campus leaders created equitable, humanizing environments and challenged dominant power structures. Yet, higher education leaders educate students to live and work in a multicultural and currently polarized society. The university is a microcosm of our larger society, with students exhibiting polarized views and attitudes and a commitment to learning how to challenge the present and enrich the future. If HWIs are going to educate all students, higher education leaders have to talk about their institutional histories, how spaces were formed, for whom they were developed, and what higher education leaders are working towards in the process of being in service to the most marginalized and minoritized student communities.

Many HWIs offer co-curricular spaces, such as college unions and multicultural centers, where the student community comes together. Understanding how these different environments shape and influence student learning is important. This study describes aspects of the learning environment from the most diverse student participant group possible for higher education leaders to consider in their work. This matters because higher education institutions should be

learning environments where students can effectively explore differences to prepare them for life during and after college (Labaree, 1997).

Chapter Summary

Higher education administrators are charged with creating conditions in co-curricular learning environments, such as college unions and multicultural centers, that provide students with knowledge, skills, and attitudes to engage across diverse views and people. My experiences working in the college union and multicultural center at the University of Michigan in relationship with the development of interconnected queer, white cultures fueled my passion for this study. It is ever-so-important now in our turbulent world. I used the conceptual frameworks of campus ecology (Strange & Banning, 2001, 2015) and multicultural competence (Pope et al., 2004, 2019) to discern the physical spaces I studied and analyzed students' learning in them.

Using a qualitative constructivist approach (Bhattacharya, 2017), I endeavored to answer what students say they learn about engaging with difference and across cultures in the co-curricular campus spaces of a college union and multicultural center at an HWI. The structural bounds of this multiple case study were the Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. Hopefully, this study benefits administrators and students at and beyond the University of Michigan as they construct co-curricular environments for students to learn.

This dissertation includes six chapters. Chapter One introduced this dissertation study. In the next chapter, I critically review key literature relevant to this study. In Chapter Three, I describe the institutional context for this study. Chapter Four includes my dissertation's methodology, data collection, and data analysis approach. Chapter Five includes my findings. Lastly, I offer a discussion, implications, and conclusion to my study in Chapter Six.

CHAPTER 2: LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter overviews literature about cross-cultural student learning. Then, I describe the development of college unions using characteristics of whiteness as property (Harris, 1993) and multicultural centers as counterspaces (Yosso & Lopez, 2010) at historically white institutions. I conclude by introducing and demonstrating the value of the conceptual frameworks of campus ecology and multicultural competence for this study.

Cross-Cultural Student Learning

Campus learning environments work best when they are inclusive and equitable. All students should be able to be involved in the campus community. Researchers have studied students' attitudes, experiences, and their use of places on campus for community building (Bennett & Benton, 2001; Mojtahedi & Schermer, 2013; Vaccaro & Newman, 2016). In the following paragraphs, I describe each of these studies. This research has demonstrated that HWIs remain challenging for the most minoritized students.

Mojtahedi and Schermer (2013) examined whether there is a meaningful relationship between place attachment and social capital for international students on college campuses. The researchers sought to realize how international students use the place of the campus as a resource for the community. The researchers implemented a single case study strategy to provide an in-depth study of a single phenomenon: the ecology of quality social relations (social capital) and the physical environment in two main social hubs at the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee. These two social hubs were the UWM Student Union and UWM Library. The two participants in this study identified as women—one from China and one from Iran. The researchers did not describe the participant sampling process and why they identified the student union and library

as social hubs on campus. Through semi-structured and in-depth interviews and observations of the spaces, Mojtahedi and Schermer analyzed data simultaneously during data collection. Patterns evolved throughout this process that led to five findings: (1) participants tended to maintain closeness to a particular place due to physical components such as access to natural light, sound/noise level, and amenities; (2) participants desired places with clear institutional character displayed in the physical features; (3) participants preferred places where they could connect with similar groups or communities rather than different ones; (4) participants needed the environment to be helpful and trustworthy; and (5) the library offered the strongest place attachment with both private and open spaces. The researchers did not discuss how the participants' social identities influenced their views and engagement in the U.S. campus environment. However, Mojtahedi and Schermer's (2013) study did affirm the need for supportive campus spaces where students can see others like themselves.

Using attribution theory, Bennett and Benton (2001) investigated whether first-year college students attribute different characteristics to a university upon viewing photographs of campus buildings that vary in architectural style. The researchers selected 10 photographs from an online college search guide about four-year colleges. Bennett and Benton created an instrument using a semantic differential scale with 14 variables, such as pleasant-unpleasant and relaxed-tense. They hypothesized that students would differ by styles of architecture and binary gender. The researchers conducted a principal components analysis, using a scree plot, to detect the minimum number of factors on the semantic differential. Bennett and Benton identified four factors— (1) Evaluation of Individual Success; (2) Potency of the Campus Environment; (3) Activity or Stimulation of the Campus; and (4) the Status of the Campus—that they correlated with demographic variables. This study suggested that participants attributed greater individual

success and positive stimulation to colleges with modern architecture than traditional ones. There was also a significant difference between men's and women's attributions of college architecture. Across all photographs, men attributed a greater likelihood of individual success than women. Research by Banning (1992) showed a bias toward those who identify as men than women in campus architecture because of the historical dominance of men funding, designing, and constructing college buildings. However, both researchers only looked at binary gender rather than the fluid and dynamic understandings of gender that have long existed before Western concepts of gender (Sheppard & Mayo Jr, 2013). Bennett and Benton (2001) encouraged future research to understand students' perceptions of campus buildings.

Using a critical constructivist, triangulated ground theory approach, Vaccaro and Newman (2016) explored how first-year students defined and made meaning of their emerging sense of belonging. The setting for this study was a mid-sized public university in the Northeast. Vaccaro and Newman began with purposeful recruitment, posting flyers in first-year residence halls, advising offices, and campus diversity centers (e.g., disability services, women's center, Hillel, LGBT center). Twenty-one students volunteered for the first round of data collection. Students identified largely with privileged social identity groups, except for one student of color and one bisexual student. During the researchers' constant comparative analysis, unique narratives of the two self-identified minoritized students suggested there may have been a more complex story for them about belonging on campus. Vaccaro and Newman (2016) then decided to use grounded theory theoretical sampling to increase the participation of minoritized students. They focused recruitment through campus diversity centers. As a result, 31 self-identified minority students selected to join the study, totaling 51 first-year students. Researchers facilitated a series of two semi-structured, individual interviews; the second interview included follow-up

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items from the first interview. To analyze the interview transcripts, they used four levels of

grounded theory coding: (1) initial; (2) focused; (3) axial; and (4) theoretical (Charmaz, 2006).

The researchers used member checking with students during two stages of the data analysis

process and regular reflexivity about their own social identities and positionalities.

Vaccaro and Newman (2016) did not begin with a conceptual model of belonging in line

with constructivist grounded theory. Instead, they asked participants to define and make meaning

of belonging in their own words. Two common themes from both privileged and minoritized

students emerged. These themes were (1) being comfortable and (2) fitting in. However,

minoritized students added the word *safe* to the meaning of belonging. Additionally, there were

three key factors students described as contributing to their sense of belonging: (1) environment;

(2) relationships; and (3) involvement. In sum, belonging required an environment where

students could be their authentic selves. Minoritized students said they could most often be

themselves in their student organizations or (multi)cultural centers. Privileged students described

belonging environments as friendly and fun; minoritized students described themselves as

outsiders or the only ones in most campus spaces. All participants described the importance of

relationships to their sense of belonging. For privileged students, being familiar with others,

having fun, and gleaning task-related support were essential features of relationships that evoked

belonging. On the other hand, minoritized students desired deeper, authentic relationships rooted

in self-awareness. The way involvement shaped their emerging sense of belonging differed

among minoritized and privileged students.

Vaccaro and Newman (2016) designed a model of belonging for privileged and

minoritized students showing that involvement enhances belonging for privileged and

minoritized students in different ways. To develop a sense of belonging, minoritized students had

to locate involvement opportunities where they could be authentic. Conversely, having fun and mattering was relevant for privileged students.

At HWIs, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives, of which the concept of student belonging is often included, typically do not challenge white supremacy (Braun, 2011). Nevertheless, HWIs have continued to develop and implement diversity initiatives over the past 50 years in conjunction with federal legislation (Patton et al., 2019). For example, due to the increased numbers of students of color on campuses after the passage of the 1965 Higher Education Act and subsequent student protests aimed at securing adequate and applicable services, 43 institutions looked to the creation of cultural centers, among other initiatives, as avenues to offer student support within the existing campus system. This research indicates that while some attention has been paid to addressing DEI issues, nothing has significantly shifted over time. It is also worth noting that while there has been federal legislation related to DEI initiatives, there has also been state legislation to restrict DEI education, particularly related to antiracism (Stout & Wilburn, 2022). Patton et al. (2019) argued that DEI values should be infused into the institutional culture instead of ascribing an approach that renders subsequent initiatives as a secondary function of the institution. Similarly, Ahmed (2012) warned against allowing the notion of diversity to become so normative that it takes the place of commitment and subsequent action. She contended, "The use of diversity as an official description can be a way of maintaining rather than transforming existing organizational values" (Ahmed, 2012, p. 57). Patton et al. (2019) stressed that incongruence between institutional claims and actions is evident in cases where institutions, despite their commitment to promote DEI in their mission and vision statements, continue to make financial decisions that downsize or eliminate significant diversity efforts.

I have seen this play out at Michigan through years of unsustainable base funding support for the Trotter Multicultural Center. University leaders allocate general fund resources to the Center when it is needed by admissions or a part of a diversity, equity, and inclusion strategic plan. For example, when President Schlissel became the 14th president of the university in 2014, he championed the development of a Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Strategic Plan. This plan included building a new multicultural center in a visible location on Central Campus. Consequently, from 2014 to 2019, University leaders dedicated considerable resources to the organization. Today, since the shininess of the new building has waned, the Trotter Multicultural Center staff have to advocate annually for base funding to meet their needs and growth opportunities. Where university decision-makers allocate financial resources speaks volumes about institutional priorities (Weisbrod et al., 2011).

Co-Curricular Learning through Student Organizations

Researchers suggested that students place high levels of importance on co-curricular learning experiences, including student organization involvement (Cheng & Zhao, 2006; Griffin & McIntosh, 2015; Holzweiss et al., 2007; Kwon et al., 2020; Vaccaro & Newman, 2016). The types of co-curricular learning experiences can vary across student demographic groups. While student organizations offer a supportive space for many students, students are more likely than not to spend time with same-race peers, with a few exceptions (Chang et al., 2004; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Park, 2014). Research has shown that involvement in ethnic organizations can be associated with ethnic divisions (Sidanius et al., 2004). This finding of ethnic organizations and ethnic divisions does not necessarily mean students do not engage across cultures. Antonio (2021) found that those students who have made the greatest efforts to engage cultural difference and develop relationships with people different than themselves are the same students who suffer

the most often from exclusionary experiences based on race. College students are likely in a learning period when establishing interracial friendships on historically white campuses, dominated by a cultural norm defined by racially homogeneous friendships. Throughout students' college experience, interracial interaction has significant and positive correlations with leadership ability (antonio, 2021). Student organizations with members who have different worldviews can cultivate socially-responsible leaders and strengths-based outcomes (Haber & Komives, 2009; Soria et al., 2019).

Designing for Inclusion and Equity

Physical spaces have an impact on student learning, perceptions of institutional values, academic persistence, and student retention (Astin, 1993; Renn & Patton, 2011; Rullman & Harrington, 2014; Strange & Banning, 2001). The physical attributes of learning environments should meet the needs of students across cultures (Holeton, 2020; Museus et al., 2017). As population demographics have evolved in the United States and social norms have shifted, higher education institutions have, knowingly and unknowingly, disproportionately supported white people in constructed environments that erase Indigenous lands and their people (Holeton, 2020). In addition to structural features, learning spaces have symbolic and socially constructed characteristics. As such, architecture communicates a narrative of codes and meanings that promote certain values and beliefs that might be welcome to some and raise fears for others. Understanding students' lived experiences with physical space on campus is critical to ensure inclusive and equitable designs (Doshi et al., 2014). Culturally responsive space design can empower communities (Campbell-Whatley & Booker, 2018; Strange & Banning, 2015).

The Development of College Unions: Preserving Whiteness as Property

For over 200 years, college unions have been a centerpiece for many higher education campuses (Camputaro, 2017). They are a catalyst for student connection and learning outside the classroom that cultivates community and belonging among diverse students, faculty, administrators, alumni, and guests. These programs, services, and spaces bring people together and develop an enduring connection to the institution (ACUI, 2020a). Through this literature review, I explore the historical development of college unions. College unions have been historically exclusionary by race, sex, and gender. The origins and context of college unions are clubs organized by white, elite men (Meyer & Love, 2012). College union administrators did not desegregate college unions until the mid-20th century. Although college unions make statements today about their commitment to diversity and inclusion, many fail to demonstrate their commitment to communities of color (Lang, 2020) by ignoring historical issues of race, power, and whiteness. Whiteness refers to how white people, their customs, culture, and beliefs operate as the standard in society, comparing all other groups to whiteness. Throughout this section, I use the perspective of whiteness as property (Harris, 1993) to critically examine the literature about the development of college unions.

Harris (1993) used whiteness as property to understand how white people use their racial identity to create a system of oppression. In the United States, white people built an oppressive system that manifested into the dispossession of Indigenous land and peoples and the enslavement of Africans. Harris (1993) described four rights of whiteness as property within U.S. laws. One, the rights of disposition ensure whiteness can only be passed from one white person to another white person. Those who do not fit the social parameters of what it means to be white cannot access whiteness and its privileges. Legacy admissions of white students into elite

higher education institutions are examples of the right to disposition. Two, the right to use and

enjoyment allows white people to enact their white privilege for social, academic, and economic

advantage. People of color do not have this unearned privilege. A white person who spends time

"climbing the corporate ladder" with leaders who look like themselves is an example of the right

to use and enjoyment. Three, reputation and status property rights ensure that being seen as white

is seen as a whole person who has value to the nation. This whiteness property bestows the

privilege of automatic trust and respect without justifying or proving anything. White people

gathering in groups or driving down the street without fear of fanatic monitoring by police are

examples of reputation and status property rights. Four, the absolute right to exclude means those

who possess whiteness can decide who is white, with associated privileges, and not white. In this

right, whiteness is an exclusive group and subjugates those not white—Black, Indigenous, and

People of Color (BIPOC). White settlers in the United States built higher education institutions

using their right to exclude by vanquishing Indigenous communities and using the slave

economy they constructed to build universities (Wilder, 2014). In this section, I address the right

to use and enjoyment and the right to exclude in critically examining the literature about college

unions' history in higher education.

Right to Use and Enjoyment

The right to use and enjoyment as a characteristic of whiteness as property (Harris, 1993)

is discernible through the literature describing a legacy of white dominance and racial

segregation in college unions. Historically, college union leaders have affirmed whiteness as a

normative practice through guiding policies. The legacy of white privilege and its effect on

BIPOC has been complicated for college union administrators to understand and address. This

difficulty could result from limited research about whiteness and the specific experiences of

BIPOC in college unions. College union administrators have expressed a need to strengthen diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives within their guiding documents and practices, suggesting whiteness permeates college unions.

White Men's Clubs

Berry (1964), Butts (1971), Butts et al. (2012), and Jordan and Vakilian (2013) described the history of college unions. Students developed college unions as exclusive clubs for men. White racial identity and social status were absent from these authors' historical texts. Unmarked white status is an example of how the authors immortalized whiteness as normal and expected.

Since the founding of the college union movement in England in the early 1800s, students who were white men have been allowed to use and enjoy college unions, gathering freely and openly debating ideas (Berry, 1964). As these clubs increased in popularity for social and academic advantage, white men created attributes such as dining and smoking spaces with social and intellectual engagement opportunities. The Attic Society at the University of Oxford was among the first debate societies for men, exclusive to white men (Butts, 1971). The Attic Society eventually became the Oxford Union in 1823. The structure of the Oxford Union influenced students at Harvard University. As a result, Harvard men established the Harvard Union debate society in 1832 (Butts et al., 2012), which ensured the colonization of the concept of British debate societies in the United States.

Houston Hall at the University of Pennsylvania was the first physical college union building dedicated to student programs and activities. It opened in 1896 as a place for all to meet on common ground (Butts, 1971). However, "all" did not include BIPOC. As the debate activity tapered off over the following years, white men made more significant provisions for various social activities, organizations, meetings, and food. Students using these union spaces identified

a need for self-governance structures, community recreational spaces, and social activities, along with full-time professional administrators to operate the unions (Berry, 1964).

White men continued to erect college union buildings at Brown University, the University of Michigan, the University of Wisconsin, the University of Minnesota, The Ohio State University, the University of Illinois, Indiana University, Case Western Reserve University, and the University of Toronto, in this order. College unions took on the role of a social center for white students in college. Advantaged alumni substantiated this notion over time as they contributed financially to preserve these spaces (Berry, 1964). Alumni even funded bedrooms for themselves and their distinguished guests so they could return to campus to assert their values and knowledge with current students (Rowe, 2005).

In the mid-20th century, student governing boards passed higher activity fees and continued to collect funds from wealthy white alumni to build new college union buildings (Berry, 1964). In response to the gender exclusion practiced by men's clubs, white women at the University of Michigan established their union using money from wealthy alumnae (*The Women's League*, n.d.). Women's unions also excluded BIPOC. As World War II ended, some existing and new men's college unions became war memorials to the white men who died in combat, called Memorial Unions (Jordan, & Vakilian, 2013). Purdue University, University of California-Davis, Oregon State University, Arizona State University, and many other campuses include memorial unions. These memorial unions honor white people's social advantage, particularly white men, at colleges and universities.

A Common Approach to College Unions

In seeking a common approach to college unions among universities, college union leaders established a professional organization and began documenting the college union's story.

The National Association of Student Unions (NASU), known today as the Association of

College Unions International (ACUI), hosted its first conference in 1914 as representatives of

early college unions in the United States sought to establish mutual values and operational goals

for these spaces (Berry, 1964). An influential college union leader and "The Father of the

College Union Movement" (Butts et al., 2012, p. 249), Porter Butts, compiled the first story

about the evolution of the college union idea from its beginning through the 1960s in his book

The College Union Idea (1971). The book's purpose was to tell "the story of an adventurous idea

in education, and of the forces that have shaped it, diminished it, and enlarged it-to be read as an

adventure story" (Butts, 1971, pg. ix). Despite the pervasive history of whiteness in the

establishment of college unions, there was no mention of white privilege in college unions.

For additional context about Porter Butts, he was a student employee and leader at the

University of Wisconsin-Madison. He championed the fundraising campaign to build the

Wisconsin Union, served as the Wisconsin Union director from 1927-1968, and ACUI president

in 1932 (Butts et al., 2012). In 1967, Butts was the first recipient of an award in their name.

Edgar Whiting, secretary-treasurer of ACUI from 1941-1968, also received the award at the

same time as Butts. The Butts-Whiting Award, established by ACUI, recognizes "outstanding

college union leaders for distinguished achievement." The Butts-Whiting Award is the most

prestigious honor for college union and student activities professionals (ACUI, 2020b).

From 2017 to 2018, ACUI researchers examined allegations that Porter Butts was

involved in a student organization that took on the same name as the national Klu Klux Klan

(KKK) while he was an undergraduate student at the University of Wisconsin (ACUI, 2020c).

These allegations called into question the namesake of the Butts-Whiting award. ACUI

researchers found his fraternity leaders selected Butts in 1922 to represent them in an honorary

society called the Klu Klux Klan. The University of Wisconsin recognized this honorary society at the time. It had a national connection to the Knights of the Klu Klux Klan, a white nationalist organization. Five other universities had similar chapters in the 1920s, a time of pervasive white nationalism in the United States. Researchers found the KKK chapter at Wisconsin officially changed its name to Tumas in 1923 because many people confused the student organization with the national organization (ACUI, 2020c). By changing the name, white student leaders avoided visible conflict with the national KKK organization. However, Tumas was still a white nationalist organization.

ACUI researchers (2020c) found Butts published an editorial denouncing the KKK and its masks, secrecy, and terrorism after witnessing a cross burning by the national KKK on the Wisconsin campus in 1924. Through the investigation, ACUI researchers also found substantial evidence Butts became committed to a more diverse and inclusive college union during his professional tenure in the Wisconsin Union. Butts' inclusive actions included providing campus venues for Black public figures such as Marian Anderson and Rev. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. Butts would also not allow socially exclusive practices at Wisconsin Union events. Using a preponderance of evidence standard, ACUI researchers, with the ACUI Board of Trustees' approval, interpreted that Butts was not a racist (ACUI, 2020c). In the same report, based on correspondence found from 1975, ACUI researchers suggested Butts may have experienced shame and embarrassment for his involvement in the KKK chapter at Wisconsin and missing opportunities to denounce white nationalism.

ACUI researchers and the ACUI Board of Trustees upheld the rights of use and enjoyment as a characteristic of whiteness as property by white people when they published their decision indicating Butts was not a racist. They missed acknowledging Butts' complicity in

racism, particularly as a white person, because he became more aware of the injustice over time. This decision provides affirmation to white people exhibiting similar behaviors. A racist supports racist policy through their actions or inaction (Kendi, 2019). Racist actions do not have to be overt to be racist. The inaction of ACUI researchers and the ACUI Board of Trustees appeased the white racial majority through their decision. In their report, the ACUI researchers acknowledged many ACUI members of minoritized communities might find the decision about Butts not being a racist untenable (ACUI, 2020c). The ACUI researchers did not include the voices of members with minoritized identities in their report.

As I mentioned earlier, Porter Butts compiled the first story about college unions from its beginning through the 1960s in his book *The College Union Idea* (1971). Decades later, seven ACUI contributing editors published a second edition of *The College Union Idea,* updating Butts' original book sections with new historical findings and adding chapters describing the decades between the 1970s and 2000 (Butts et al., 2012). The second edition editors included accounts of activism, civil rights, and cultural understanding throughout recent decades. Yet, they ignored historical issues of race, power, and whiteness in the college union by following the example set by Butts in the original text.

Sustaining Use and Enjoyment through the Decades

Rather than supporting college union administrators to identify how well they served diverse students, many higher education leaders identified opportunities to make money through college unions instead. This decision reinforced white privilege and economic advantage within college unions. Blackburn (1988) described the 1980s as an identity crisis for college unions, a conflict between values and money.

During this decade, college union administrators sought to be more responsive to the needs of an increasingly diverse student body. ACUI leaders charged college unions with embracing multicultural education and becoming multicultural organizations (Strong, 1986). As such, college union administrators began calling themselves community builders. They sought to help cultivate a sense of belonging with the diverse student population and offer social, cultural, and educational activities in college union spaces (Butts et al., 2012). The college union is a part of students' educational experience by offering development opportunities through student organizations, programs, and flexible socializing options. Webster and Sedlacek (1982) found that students from minoritized racial and ethnic backgrounds were likelier to use the college union as a space for studying and meeting with friends than white students.

Despite the efforts of college union administrators, in the 1980s, campus leaders strengthened their perspective on college unions as business enterprises (Willis, 2014). College unions became moneymakers for higher education institutions because they could generate their own revenue. Major concerts, beer, and wine bars, leased shopping and eating places, conferencing, and more profit-driven services became central to college union operations. This focus on student consumerism and market-based use and enjoyment in college unions has benefited mainly the (white) privileged who can pay for services (Bok, 2003). This income-generating focus has threatened college unions' credibility with the educational mission. Students often view college unions as spaces for all with pay-for-play services rather than educational places to meet the diverse student population's needs. During her 2012 state of the college union address at the ACUI Annual Conference, Former ACUI Executive Director Marsha Herman-Betzen warned, "in too many instances, we are perceived on campus as no more than an auxiliary enterprise that is rarely coupled with the educational mission of the institution"

(Butts et al., 2012, p. 247). She told ACUI members it is up to them to do the tiresome work on their campuses to course correct in service to present and future generations.

Right to Exclude

College unions have been an avenue through which universities carry out exclusionary practices. The right to exclude as a characteristic of whiteness as property (Harris, 1993) is evident in establishing college unions by white people on historically white campuses. Many minoritized students were not allowed to enter college union buildings until the late 1960s and 1970s (Thelin, 2004). Many BIPOC sought cultural or multicultural centers other than college unions for representation and cultural capital. The right to exclude shows up in documented actions by college union leaders and researchers.

The Right to Exclude in Practice

In the 1960s, student activism prompted cultural centers on historically white campuses to represent and affirm the cultural wealth of communities of color (Yosso & Lopez, 2010). However, college union leaders were not meeting Black, Indigenous, and People of Color's needs. In 1962, white student leaders in the Wisconsin Union at the University of Wisconsin-Madison debated welcoming or shunning minoritized students in a student leadership course (Butts et al., 2012). According to Indiana University's former Dean of Students, Michael Gordon, Black students did not feel comfortable meeting in their student center on campus to plan for the development of a Black Student Union organization. They feared white students would be alarmed at seeing a large group of Black students together (Meyer & Love, 2012). At the University of Nevada at Reno, police used chemical mace and a fire extinguisher on 17 Black students before arresting them for demonstrating to get a space for the Black Student Union in the student union building (Butts et al., 2012). In 1972, Black and Puerto Rican students

occupied the student center at Pratt Institute for eight days due to the administration's lack of sensitivity to BIPOC students' needs. BIPOC had to physically and psychologically navigate oppressive environments to develop their organizations and make demands through activism for recognition, while white students could easily exist in college unions.

In particular, through the decades, BIPOC have endured significant labor in holding higher education institutions accountable for their whiteness and exclusivity. In another example, the Students of Color Coalition members at the University of Michigan occupied the Michigan Union tower for 37 days (Kassab, 2001). In 2000, they forced the secret senior honor society Michigamua out of their Michigan Union tower office space. Michigamua student leaders played a prominent and privileged role in building the Michigan Union, originally a club for white men. Michigamua and its members' racist practices mocked and appropriated Anishinaabe culture and the land's Indigenous peoples (Kasper, 2006). Several juniors were "tapped" each year to accept exclusive access to Michigamua and use the Michigan Union tower office. This selective process was an example of how white students exercised their right to exclude by only selecting white students. The privileges associated with membership status were at the expense of Indigenous people. Over the decades, more progressive student leaders in Michigamua have since changed the organization's name, mission, and practices. Most recently, they are known as the Order of Angell. They have been more visible with diverse student membership. Their website includes a statement about the organization standing for diversity, inclusion, and transparency (Order of Angell, 2021). On February 22, 2021, the current student leaders voted to disband the organization because of its harmful, elitist, and racist history. Today, some BIPOC still seek restitution for past harm caused by the organization and the university.

The Right to Exclude in Research

In addition to the practice of exclusion by college union leaders, most research about college unions reflects the right to exclude. In a study of 22 college union directors, Janisz (2014) found some college union administrators lost their focus on students and their educational mission. Instead, college union administrators focused on building operations, services, and revenue. The research findings by Camputaro (2018), Harrington (2014), Maxwell (2016), and Smyth (2016) generally found students with different social identities value the sense of community within college unions across multiple campuses. However, the specific experiences of BIPOC were not central to this research. However, three scholars have explicitly centered the experiences of non-white participants in their studies about college unions.

Lang (2020) conducted a mixed-methods study of a college union at a large, public, historically white, four-year institution in the Midwest. She explored the effect of college union involvement on student perceptions of belonging and campus climate, oversampling and focusing on the perspectives of students of color. Lang facilitated a journaling exercise with 10 students to gain insight into racially diverse students' experiences. Also, she gathered survey data from 478 college union student employees and programming board volunteers. The Culturally Engaging Campus Environments (CECE) model (Museus, 2014) informed the survey scale because of its quantifiable factors centering on students of color. Lang found white students perceived a greater sense of belonging and a more positive campus climate than students of color and international students, regardless of how they were involved in the college union.

In a qualitative narrative study framed in the CECE Model, Rodriguez (2019) explored how and in what ways Latinx people experience Latinidad in the college union through the lived experiences of Latinx student affairs administrators. Participants shared their personal

experiences and their experiences supporting current Latinx college students. Rodriguez responded to Hurtado and Carter's (1997) finding that Latinx students did not feel welcome in college unions. They viewed college unions as part of the dominant culture. Rodriguez's study also responded to Barrett's (2014) assertion that minoritized populations lack insight into college unions. Rodriguez (2019) found that Latinx students will go elsewhere if they do not identify a safe place of belonging with others in their community, cultural validation through shared identities with administrators and mentors, and cultural identity through college unions' artifacts and attributes. Rodriguez charged college unions to be more humanizing.

Lastly, Godfrey (2018) conducted a qualitative single case study exploring whether the college union building serves a purpose on a historically Black college campus and whether there is a relationship between the student union facility and student engagement. Godfrey framed their study in Strange and Banning's (2001) conceptualization of campus ecology, student involvement theory (Astin, 1968), and student engagement theory (Kuh, 2001). They interviewed and observed students and administrators to understand participants' experiences with the student union. Godfrey found students at the historically Black college identified barriers in college union policies, limitations for using space, and a lack of awareness of student needs. College union administrators thought they offered ample opportunities for student engagement. Administrators suggested students' use of technology was a reason for their lack of participation. However, administrators expressed a commitment to learning more about students' needs to make necessary changes to the college union environment. Listening to students' needs and making necessary changes, especially when the changes challenge white standards, is a call to action for college union administrators and student leaders.

These three researchers spotlighted the experiences of BIPOC within college unions. Lang (2020) showed people of color and international students struggle to find a sense of belonging in college unions. Rodriguez (2019) found Latinx students will go elsewhere if they do not experience cultural validation in college unions. Cultural validation means students see their cultures represented in spaces. Representation can happen through shared identities with staff, faculty, and other students. It can also occur through artifacts or cultural languages others use within spaces. Also, the flexibility of the environment to adapt to the needs of students can be an important aspect for students feeling connected to spaces. Finally, Godfrey (2018) found students at a historically Black college also identified barriers in college union policies. Many college union administrators have designed policies through informed practices in the college union field. These informed practices have principally served the white student majority, satisfying the right to exclude, a characteristic of whiteness as property (Harris, 1993). Researchers could benefit the field of college unions by including and centering diverse BIPOC perspectives. BIPOC perspectives may challenge the normative white student experience. Findings from this research may challenge administrators to engage in difficult discussions with students about cultural representation in college unions, particularly racial privilege and racial subordination. Results may also challenge college union administrators to engage more directly with their institutional leaders about the college union's role.

The Role of the College Union

The *Role of the College Union* is a statement of purpose for college union leaders (ACUI, 2020a). It promotes the college union as the heart of the campus community, bolstering the educational mission and unifying the institution by embracing its diversity. It affirms college union leaders' responsibility to advocate for inclusivity and equity, foster respect, and affirm all

individuals' identities (see Appendix A for full text). This call for diversity and inclusion

suggests the college union is laden with whiteness. College union leaders can use the *Role of the*

College Union on their campuses to consider how their organizations are or are not living up to

the statement of purpose. Additionally, there are professional standards for higher education

leaders responsible for college unions to assess their work (Council for the Advancement of

Standards in Higher Education, 2019). Finally, college union leaders can invest in what could be

uncomfortable yet critical steps to address systemic racism, privilege, and exclusion in college

unions by decentering white normative notions of *the right to use and enjoyment* and *the right to*

exclude.

Conclusion

Whiteness has served as a barrier to effective change in college unions. Racial privilege

and subjugation in these organizations have primarily gone unexamined. I used the perspective

of whiteness as property (Harris, 1993) to critically examine the literature about the development

of college unions. For my analysis, I used two of the four rights of whiteness as property—*the*

right to use and enjoyment and *the right to exclude*. It is evident college union leaders and

researchers have constructed whiteness, ensuring white privilege, within the college union.

Campus leaders have also viewed college unions as business enterprises rather than educational

spaces. This business focus has been challenging to balance with the educational mission.

Throughout the decades, college union leaders experienced challenges meeting the diverse

student population's needs. BIPOC have gone elsewhere for affirmation and community. As I

described, a few researchers have recently highlighted the oppressive effects of college unions on

BIPOC. The lack of college union literature studying BIPOC and other underserved communities

shows whiteness at work. College union leaders can use the *Role of the College Union* (ACUI,

2020a) and the perspective of whiteness as property (Harris, 1993) to do the hard work of systemic change on their campuses.

Multicultural Centers: Counterspaces at Historically White Institutions

This section describes the literature about the development of multicultural student services, including cultural and multicultural centers. I explain how student activism ensured the development of spaces for cultural affirmation and resistance at HWIs. Today, multicultural student services also exist at minority-serving institutions to support the heterogeneity of racially minoritized students (U.S. Department of Education, 2021). Next, I describe how the institutional context informs the mission and funding of multicultural services and centers. Multicultural centers are generally open to the community and offer programs, resources, and spaces for students to express themselves without hostility or rejection. I explain the importance and value of multicultural center physical spaces on higher education campuses. Finally, I emphasize how multicultural centers can be a counterspace (Yosso & Lopez, 2010) and a source of identity representation for underrepresented students at historically white institutions.

Student Activism

Student activism has been a part of the fabric of higher education institutions for centuries as students of their time championed change to meet community needs. Student activism is an avenue through which college and university students express their views and positionality within democratic citizenship (Hamrick, 1998). Particularly relevant to the development of multicultural centers, the 1960s ushered in identity-related issues as a new focus for student activism (Hoffman & Mitchell, 2016). Nguyen and Gasman (2015) cited that the Civil Rights Movement found its place on university campuses when minoritized students discovered that to advance the needs of their communities, they had to create activist

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movements. Through these movements, student activists fought to accomplish the mutual goal of racial equity as they addressed the challenges of their respective groups in environments with hegemonic whiteness (Nguyen & Gasman, 2015).

Harper and Hurtado (2007) conducted a qualitative study at five HWIs using racially homogeneous focus groups with 278 students and staff members. The nine themes that emerged from their work illustrate the challenges affecting campus racial climates: (1) cross-race consensus regarding institutional negligence; (2) race as a four-letter word and an avoidable topic; (3) self-reports of racial segregation; (4) gaps in social satisfaction by race; (5) reputational legacies for racism; (6) white student overestimation of minority student satisfaction; (7) pervasiveness of whiteness in space, curricula, and activities; (8) consciousness-powerlessness paradox among racial/ethnic minority staff; and (9) unexplored qualitative realities of race in institutional assessment. The importance of this line of research points to the need for institutions to acknowledge where these elements exist within campuses and to assess where intentional and directed actions and decisions are warranted to address racial inequities. As such, race-based student activism may result from a negative campus racial climate, particularly when higher education institutions foster racial tension through the support of exclusive or divisive priorities (Hurtado, 1992).

Moreover, institutions like the University of Michigan that promote traditional conceptions of quality that prioritize selectivity, resource levels, and reputation tend to have a greater association with perceptions of high racial tension (Hurtado, 1992). At institutions where campus leaders are ineffective at advancing racial equity, students often assume the labor and roles of critic and change-maker to bring attention to and contribute to remedying unfavorable situations. Because the changing needs of society shape universities, students have sought to

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embrace and enact their social agency as members of their campus communities. Hurtado et al. (2012) stressed that the scope of institutional diversity should extend beyond structural diversity (the numerical representation of individuals from various populations) and consider the implications of inclusive and exclusive traditions that reflect the positioning, perceptions, and interactions of certain populations on campuses. Harper and Hurtado (2007) asserted, "If accountability for student learning is a high priority, dialogue and strategic efforts must be directed toward addressing undercurrents of racial segregation that inhibit the rich learning that occurs in cross-racial engagement" (p. 21). These scholars emphasized that institutional personnel must proactively create the appropriate context for effective change by acknowledging how their curricular and co-curricular responsibilities respond to such challenges (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Faculty and staff have opportunities to engage with students inside and outside the classroom to address the factors that comprise a positive campus racial climate. Furthermore, since learning occurs in all pockets and corners of a college or university, staff and faculty can promote the idea that knowledge production can be a form of change.

Contextual Background

Amidst student activism in the 1960s and 1970s, the field of student affairs expanded to include multicultural student services, which included cultural centers (Shuford & Palmer, 2009). Cultural centers were first established at HWIs to support the academic and social development of Black students (Shuford, 2011). Based on the success of Black cultural centers, other cultural centers emerged to support the needs of different students and their communities, such as Indigenous, Latinx, Asian and Pacific Islander, queer- and trans-spectrum people, and religious groups. Higher education leaders developed multicultural centers on some campuses to support all historically minoritized identities. The word *multicultural* is broader than just race. The

findings of a study conducted by Stewart and Bridges (2011) substantiate the trend of increased

services and broadened scope of multicultural student services offices, including cultural centers,

to meet the heightened needs and demands of an increasingly diverse student body.

Multicultural student service offices and cultural centers have similar missions though the

physical spaces and functions may vary (Shuford, 2011). There is no single model of cultural

centers on higher education campuses. However, there are professional standards for higher

education leaders responsible for multicultural student programs and services to assess their

work (Council for the Advancement of Standards in Higher Education, 2019). Multicultural

centers face the unique challenge of supporting historically marginalized communities and

facilitating multicultural education to the majority community (Malone, 2020). Some have

critiqued multicultural centers as a one-size-fits-all approach to meeting the diverse needs of all

underserved communities (Shotton et al., 2010). A one-size-fits-all approach may not provide the

best services to unique student communities. In particular, multicultural student service offices

have been symbols of institutional commitment to a diverse student body at HWIs. They have

been used as recruitment tools in the admissions of historically marginalized students. In four

experiments conducted as part of their quantitative study, Kirby et al. (2020) found that when

students read that their university was creating an ethnic space, more underrepresented students

of color reported greater belonging than white students. Multicultural student service offices

demonstrate a variety of cultural programming, activities, and experiences to the majority

community.

The majority community in higher education institutions is not always white. At

minority-serving institutions, higher education leaders still serve a population that

overwhelmingly looks alike (U.S. Department of Education, 2021). Minority serving institutions

include, but are not limited to, Asian American Native American Pacific Islander-Serving

Institutions (AANAPISI), Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU), Hispanic

Serving Institutions (HSI), Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions (ANNH), and Tribal Colleges

and Universities (TCU). There remains a need at minority-serving institutions for learning across

cultures and multicultural spaces for students to explore the many ethnicities and ancestral

nationalities with racial groups as well as other spaces for students with underrepresented social

identities to go for affirmation and support. Not all minority-serving institutions designated by

the U.S. Department of Education have the majority of students coming from underrepresented

communities.

I offer three examples of minority-serving institutions with cultural centers, with most

students from underrepresented communities. It is important to remember that students have

multiple identities that inform their experiences and worldviews (McShay, 2017). First, an

HBCU, the North Carolina Agricultural and Technical State University has an Office of

Intercultural Engagement includes an LGBTA Resource Center designed to advocate and create

an affirming climate for students, faculty, and staff across sexual orientation and gender identity

spectrums (LGBTA Resource Center, n.d.). Second, an AANAPISI and HSI, California State

Polytechnic University, Pomona has an Office of Student Life and Cultural Centers that includes

an African American Student Center, an Asian and Pacific Islander Student Center, a Native

American Student Center, a Pride Center, a Womxn's Resource Center, and the César E. Chávez

Center for Higher Education (Office of Student Life and Cultural Centers, n.d.). Lastly, an

HBCU, Bowie State University has an Office of Multicultural Programs and Services (n.d.). The

office is located in the student center and supports all social identities in addition to convening

diversity education campus-wide. These three examples present the variety of minoritized

students' identities served in different cultural center structures in higher education.

Mission

Each institution of higher education is different, and its historical narrative surrounding

historically minoritized communities is also unique (Malone, 2020). Historical narratives of

oppression on campuses inform higher education leaders to develop programs, services, and

physical spaces for minoritized communities. Shuford and Palmer (2004) offered a three-part

expanded mission for multicultural student services offices as: (1) to provide support to

underrepresented cultural groups; (2) to provide multicultural education for all students; and (3)

to promote systemic change that fosters a multicultural perspective across campus (p. 22).

Within these tenets, the scholars assert that the typical functions of these offices are: pre-college

recruitment; leadership development programs; academic and financial aid advising; tutoring

services; personal counseling; career development; student activities, and cultural programs

(Shuford & Palmer, 2004). According to Young (1991), the programming functions of cultural

centers may include educational and social opportunities, such as art exhibits, cultural

celebrations, lectures and discussions, and film screenings. Scholars identify the general purpose

of cultural centers is to cultivate opportunities for campus community members to: (1) learn

about themselves and the history, culture, and experience of others; (2) engage across

differences; and (3) participate in unique developmental experiences (Ladson-Billings, 2010; Liu

et al., 2010; Lozano, 2010; Mena, 2010; Patton & Hannon, 2008). Jenkins (2008) presented a

cultural programming framework for cultural centers through a five-point plan, which consists

of: (1) cultural education; (2) cultural engagement; (3) cultural student development; (4) cultural

community building; and (5) cultural environment enhancement. Outlining an annual strategic

plan for service and program delivery solidifies the position of a cultural center beyond a passive venue for cultural programs created by others at an institution of higher education. Cultural centers are vital instruments for advancing the university's mission to promote cultural understanding (Young, 1991).

Cultural centers continue to receive criticism that they are spaces that separate groups from one another or foster a practice of self-segregation (Renn, 2011). Patton (2011) stated the problematic nature of this criticism is that it situates the majority of students as deprived by others. Young (1991) posed two models of cultural centers that are both functional but differ in their approach to offering support and education. The first model, which Young (1991) referred to as the "safe haven" model and Patton (2011) described as the "fortress" model, positions a cultural center as a space of shelter and protection for students of color who feel isolation and exclusion on campus. As an alternative, the "oasis" model positions a cultural center as a space that is open to all and offers "relief from the surrounding sameness, as a place where cultures meet, exchange, interact, and then emerge renewed, refreshed, and made stronger for the sharing" (Young, 1991, p. 52). However, Liu, Cuyjet, and Lee (2010) offered that cultural centers should serve as social gathering places where students can learn about ethnic cultures besides their own. In addition, Young posited that an effective cultural center must be adequately staffed and funded and be considered complementary to the other essential aspects of an institution.

Funding

Institutional contexts determine the level of financial resources allocated to cultural centers. Some may have large operating budgets and state-of-the-art facilities, while others may have limited funds for programming, staffing, and facility maintenance (Mena, 2010).

Institutional commitment and resources to multicultural centers are often lacking (Malone, 2020). In acquiring adequate funding at institutions where resources are tight, perceptions of value are key to a center's existence. Stewart and Bridges (2011) asserted that multiple institutional factors affect the budget size of cultural centers. According to Stennis-Williams, Terrell, and Haynes (1988), "Funding has always been accomplished by a combination of creativity and expediency" (p. 94). This perspective underscores cultural centers' pressures to be innovative with their requests and propose timely efforts. Common funding streams include institutional funds earmarked for student services or general purposes, educational grants, fundraising activities, and gifts from private donors. However, it is possible that cultural centers must submit requests to student governments or student programming boards that are likely to emphasize program attractiveness to (white) students (Stennis-Williams et al., 1988). Some critics argue that multicultural centers are: (1) divisive, separatist, and discriminatory; (2) promote special interests; and (3) run counter to the academy's mission (Patton, 2011; Young, 1991). Such circumstances may fuel the arguments of administrators who seek a reason to reallocate resources away from multicultural centers, thus illustrating the tension that exists between the need for and the utilization of these centers.

Physical Space

A necessity of multicultural or cultural centers is access to campus space, which provides opportunities for programming and interactions (Jenkins, 2010). By residing in a self-contained or free-standing facility, the physical separation of a cultural center sends a strong message to students about the center's value in supporting students (Young, 1991). Multicultural center space is also a tangible symbol of institutional commitment to a center's purpose (Renn, 2011; Young, 1991).

The cultural centers established in the 1960s and 1970s were typically located in old

houses on the borders of campuses, similar to the original Trotter House at the University of

Michigan. More recently, some multicultural centers have been housed in a suite of offices in a

student services building, which is more formal and offers spaces for meetings and programs

(Lozano, 2010). As described by Jenkins (2010), "Culture centers across the country range in

size and scope from very small, one-office, one-person operations to very large organizations

housed in multimillion-dollar buildings with several staff members" (p. 145). While the size and

condition of facilities vary from one institution to another, scholars agree that adequate space

should be provided for multicultural centers to accommodate administrative offices, meeting

rooms, display areas, a library, a kitchen, and restrooms, along with designated areas for student

organizations, programming, and storage (Jenkins, 2010; Lozano, 2010; Young, 1991).

The visibility of cultural centers relies upon their proximity to the center of campus,

which Lozano (2010) and Young (1991) argued is vital for attracting students and creating

opportunities for campus engagement. Precipitated by student feedback, increased visibility and

access were why campus leaders moved the new Trotter Multicultural Center at the University of

Michigan to the center of campus rather than keeping it on the outskirts of campus. Scholars

indicated that these spaces must be comfortable (Lozano, 2010), culturally welcoming (Jenkins,

2010), and feel like home (McDowell & Higbee, 2014) for students.

Counterspaces at Historically White Institutions

A multicultural center can be a source of identity representation and expression for

underrepresented students. Multicultural centers serve as counterspaces that enable underserved

student communities to disrupt the embedded white culture at HWIs (Yosso & Lopez, 2010). In

addition, multicultural centers help address the unresolved societal issue of providing equity to

victims of exclusion and injustice (Young, 1991). Renn (2011) specified four justifications for the presence of cultural centers: (1) they respond to noninclusive campus cultures; (2) they are part of the ecology of identity groups on campus; (3) some centers play a role in bridging academic and student affairs; and (4) they carry on traditions and have a symbolic function. Young (1991) argued that cultural centers transmit educational justice by correcting the historical wrongs endured by populations of color and those committed against the majority by limiting their learning to a Eurocentric lens. Although not an indicative factor, the value of a cultural center is generally associated with its utilization.

As a current multicultural center administrator, Malone (2020) recognized the need for a research study examining how the multicultural center supports marginalized communities and facilitates multicultural education within the institution. As a Black woman, she attended a HWI, finding support and safety within the multicultural center. This experience led to her career and doctoral research in this area. Malone used a qualitative multiple case study design to understand multicultural centers and how they operate at predominantly white institutions. She studied six sites that varied in size, location, and model. Malone conducted 15 interviews within those six sites with current staff. In addition, she conducted a document analysis of websites. Malone did not include direct observation of the physical spaces as Stake (2006) and Yin (2018) recommended in the case study design.

In her study, Malone (2020) found multicultural centers had similar missions but various structures, programs, services, and target audiences. Mission statements demonstrated an intent to reach every person on the campuses. However, campus attitudes, misconceptions, and interest impeded their success. Malone indicated that the Black-white binary still exists, which drives communities to fragment and divide campus to separate spaces. Multicultural centers provide

underserved students with a sense of belonging, persistence and success, and identity development. The number of resources for the number of programs the centers offered was not equitable. Many of these centers were founded by campus leaders after an already-established affinity or cultural center existed. The structures of these centers varied greatly by institutions that Malone could not identify one structure or model as a benchmark. Lastly, Malone found that social justice frameworks through the multicultural centers were not supported at institutional levels because that would seek to dismantle the systems of privilege and oppression. Social justice frameworks would raise awareness and seek to dismantle the social, structural, and systematic policies that oppress historically marginalized communities. Rather, institutions preferred that multicultural centers focus on diversity education.

According to scholars, while it should be the responsibility of every department and office on campus to advocate for students from minoritized populations, provide cross-cultural learning opportunities to students in the majority, and foster equitable environments for all students, these tasks are often left to the multicultural center (Patton, 2011; Patton & Hannon, 2008; Young, 1991). Reid and Ebede (2018) found that students understood the purpose of cultural centers to affirm the cultural wealth of historically marginalized student communities and provide intercultural engagement, but they were unsure of their impact. Importantly, not all students make sense of cultural or multicultural centers in the same way due to their identities and experiences (Diaz, 2019; Garcia-Pusateri, 2019). The identities and roles of staff in multicultural centers are critical in supporting students' experiences, learning, and development (June, 1996). More research is needed to understand further student engagement and learning that happens through multicultural centers at HWIs.

Conclusion

  Nguyen and Gasman (2015) cited that the Civil Rights Movement found its place in the microcosms of university campuses when minoritized students discovered that to advance the needs of their own communities, they had to create their own activist movements. Particularly at HWIs where campus leaders are ineffective at advancing racial equity through embedded systems, students often assume the roles of critic and change-maker to bring attention and contribute to remedying unfavorable situations (Hurtado, 1992). Amidst student activism in the 1960s and 1970s, the field of student affairs expanded to include multicultural student services, inclusive of cultural centers (Shuford & Palmer, 2009). Scholars identify the general purpose of cultural centers is to cultivate opportunities for campus community members to: (1) learn about themselves and the history, culture, and experience of others; (2) engage across differences; and (3) participate in unique developmental experiences (Ladson-Billings, 2010; Liu et al., 2010; Lozano, 2010; Mena, 2010; Patton & Hannon, 2008). On some campuses, there are identity-specific cultural centers and, on other campuses, there are multicultural centers or multicultural services offices to explore, learn, and share students' many identities. Cultural centers are vital instruments for advancing the university's mission to promote cultural understanding (Young, 1991). In their study, Malone (2020) found multicultural centers across six different universities had similar missions but various structures, programs, services, and target audiences. Institutional contexts determine the level of financial resources allocated to cultural centers. Today, student activism at HWIs is oftentimes essential to develop and sustain adequate multicultural student services.

Conceptual Framework

This section introduces and demonstrates the value of the conceptual frameworks of campus ecology and multicultural competence for this dissertation study. My research focused on what students say they learn about engaging with difference and across cultures in co-curricular campus spaces at a historically white institution. Co-curricular campus spaces are social learning spaces outside classroom learning environments (Matthews et al., 2011). These spaces, such as college unions and multicultural centers, offer various student engagement and community-building experiences (Butts et al., 2012; Jordan & Vakilian, 2013; Patton, 2010; Stewart, 2011a). Through this research, I aimed to understand students' learning about knowledge, skills, and attitudes to engage with difference and across cultures in a college union and multicultural center at an HWI.

This research responds to recommendations to extend previous findings of the positive educational outcomes from diversity and cross-racial interaction to consider the campus environment and opportunities that shape the quality and frequency of these interactions (Chang et al.,2006). Braun (2011) pointed out that students' different social identities within the institution affect how students experience diverse, engaging learning environments created by administrators and faculty. Despite campus efforts for inclusion, underserved students at HWIs often remain dissatisfied with programs, departments, and resources. These services do not address dehumanizing, hegemonic institutional systems. This research also furthers Stewart's (2012) call for campus activities professionals to apply multicultural competence characteristics to their work with students in transforming campus communities for inclusion and equity. He recommended a partnership between campus activities and multicultural student services to serve students better. Kinzie and Mulholland (2008) urged educators to apply the ecological model

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with cultural perspectives to identify positive and problematic environmental issues for specific

student populations. This application could suggest ways to develop multicultural learning

environments. Lastly, this research remedies a gap in Kwon et al.'s (2020) quantitative study

about students' skill development through co-curricular student organizations by including what

students learn about engaging with difference and across cultures in co-curricular campus spaces.

Based on my experience, student life educators in higher education must create co-curricular

learning environments that help students construct their own identities, learn about people

different from themselves, develop skills for working across differences, and advocate for and

support others in the community.

I used campus ecology (Strange & Banning, 2001, 2015) and the multicultural

competence model (Pope et al., 2004, 2019) in my study. These concepts helped me understand

what students learn about engaging with difference and across cultures in the co-curricular

campus spaces of a college union and multicultural center at an HWI. Stewart (2012) was the

first scholar who combined these concepts to apply a multicultural lens to campus activities and

student union settings. As Strange and Banning (2001, 2015) described, the idea of campus

ecology provides a valuable lens to understand the ecological system of how students relate to

each other and their environment. At the same time, I considered the complexity of hegemonic

norms and unequal power structures in the co-curricular campus spaces and how they informed

how students function (Jones & Stewart, 2016). The multicultural competence model (Pope et

al., 2004, 2019) helped me understand and examine how the research participants engage with

difference and across cultures within an institutional context of privilege and oppression. I used a

qualitative multiple case study (Stake, 1995, 2006). I approached this research believing that

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creating higher education co-curricular campus spaces with and for students should cultivate human dignity and support learning across differences.

Campus ecology and multicultural competence conceptually framed this research. These ideas are each based on prior research. Strange and Banning (2001, 2015) described campus ecology as how people engage in environments given physical components, human aggregate, organizational structures, and how people construct meaning about their environments. This campus ecology model helped me discern the campus spaces I studied. Multicultural competence is about people's awareness, knowledge, skills, and actions to engage with difference and across cultures within power structures (Pope et al., 2019). The multicultural competence model helped me analyze students' learning in the campus spaces I sought to understand.

Campus Ecology

Strange and Banning's (2001, 2015) conceptualization of campus ecology is a four component model of campus environments and a hierarchical model of environmental purposes and design. Strange and Banning's conceptualization of campus ecology is within a family of ecological models. The origins of campus ecology are in the foundational theorization of social psychologist Kurt Lewin (1936). Lewin's psychological equation states behavior is a function of the person and their environment. The relationship between behavior and environment can be understood today from various disciplines, including architecture, urban planning, anthropology, ecology, and cultural geography (Kinzie & Mulholland, 2008). In 1974, Banning and Kaiser presented their ecological perspective built on Lewin's theory to analyze the college campus environment and its effects on students. It suggests students' development results from their relationship with the environment (Banning & Kaiser, 1974). Bronfenbrenner's (1977) ecological systems theory in psychology described how multiple social environment systems

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affect human development. The environment can determine ways of thinking, emotions, and preferences. Banning (1978) presented his conceptualization of campus ecology through a person-environment perspective. This campus ecology model was the first to articulate how the relationship between students and campus is a complex transactional one. Today, Strange and Banning's (2001, 2015) campus ecology framework is a foundational concept in higher education student affairs.

Campus ecology is rooted in the concept of place. It is helpful to distinguish between space and place. Space consists of the material world, such as co-curricular campus spaces. Space is transformed into a place when imbued with emotional or physical meaning by individuals or groups (Creswell, 2004). Academic researchers tend to agree that place is a multi-dimensional concept, including the material world, the built environment, social relationships, patterns of interaction, and socially constructed meanings (Thomas & Banning, 2017). The interaction of these dimensions creates approaches for organizations to explore, understand, and implement organizational place-building in spaces.

Place in Research

Tuck and McKenzie (2015) discussed a need to bring Indigenous knowledge into academic research practices in response to generations of exploitation and abuse of Indigenous communities by researchers. They interrogate dominant westernized notions of place. The westernized notions of place suggest individuals and communities make meaning of their environments when they inhabit them. Strange and Banning (2001, 2015) include westernized notions in their conceptualization of campus ecology. Alternatively, Tuck and McKenzie drew upon Indigenous worldviews to describe decolonized place-based paradigms. Notably, the concept of decolonization is about the repatriation of land by white people to the Indigenous

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communities. This notion unsettles white people. Through dominant U.S. education, they learned

that this land was unoccupied and available to them upon colonization centuries ago. White

people stole this land from Indigenous peoples who already inhabited it. Tuck and McKenzie

described an ontology of land that prioritizes and centers the community's collective life rather

than the ontology of place that centers the individual human experience as a principle in

westernized notions. Individualism focuses on personal interests and needs rather than on the

community good. Indigenous methodologies study relationships and reciprocity between

humans, land, and the energies that connect all entities in the universe. Some recommended

research methods of Indigenous methodologies include: (1) walking interviews and analyzing

where feedback is shared; (2) engaging students in memory reflection about spaces; and (3)

using education journey mapping where participants provide visual representations of their co-

curricular engagement spaces. In Chapter Four, I orient myself in the space and place where I am

researching.

Overview of Strange and Banning's Four Component Model of Campus Environments

As of 2016, more than 900 scholarly manuscripts have included the concept of campus

ecology (Banning, 2016). As a foundational framework in higher education that scholars have

used in research about college unions and cultural centers, Strange and Banning's (2001, 2015)

campus ecology framework provides a helpful frame for this study. Strange and Banning

emphasized educators need to acquire a more thorough understanding of the physical

environments on campus to eliminate features that do not work and create features that do work

for student learning and development. There are four components of environments identified in

Strange and Banning's campus ecology framework: (1) physical environments; (2) human

aggregate environments; (3) organizational environments; and (4) socially constructed

environments (Strange & Banning, 2001, 2015). Further, Strange and Banning developed a hierarchy model of environmental purposes and design. In this hierarchy model, Strange and Banning promoted inclusion and safety as foundational within the four components of environments to cultivate student engagement and community development. In the following sections, I describe these components, adapted from Strange and Banning (2001, 2015).

Physical Environments. The physical environment is complex. It includes the built layout and design of the space, offering many human response possibilities. Physical environments create symbolic nonverbal messages to which students react. Rodriguez (2019) found that Latinx students would only choose to engage in college unions if they experienced Latinidad, seeing themselves there through people and physical components of the spaces. The physical features could include culturally affirming areas, student organization space, behavioral traces left by the Latinx community, cultural artifacts, and staff representation.

According to Strange and Banning (2001, 2015), physical environments should be: (1) *functional* to enable students to focus on work tasks; (2) *sociopetal* to encourage serendipitous interactions; (3) *flexible* so individuals can adjust personal needs; (4) *aesthetic* to inspire creativity; (5) *reflective* to promote quiet time for meaning-making; and (6) *regenerative* to restore energy. A considerable amount of student learning happens in co-curricular spaces outside the formal classroom environment. Therefore, the built layout and design can have a lasting impact on students' college experiences.

Human Aggregate Environments. Environments are partially a function of the collective characteristics of the individuals and groups who inhabit them. Elements can include social identities (i.e., gender, age, race, ethnicity) and psychological aspects (i.e., personality types, interests, learning styles, and strengths). The design of educational settings, such as

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college unions and multicultural centers, can be enhanced by understanding the influences and student cultures that result from human characteristics.

Organizational Environments. The organizational environment focuses on how administrators make decisions and communicate the purpose, goals, and distribution of resources. Administrators who offer organizational environments with a balance of formal structures and adaptable elements for students to shape and innovate help ensure a sense of investment and ownership. The complex connections between the humans in the environment, the degree of flexibility or rigidity in the organizational operation, and the environment's size affect the organizational environment's performance.

Socially Constructed Environments. The identity and meaning of places are formed by history, culture, and those who engage in them today. Students' perceptions of their environments influence their engagement in spaces. Perceptions are measured, and meaning-making occurs through the environmental press, social climate, and campus culture. Notably, students' perceptions are their reality in constructed environments for engagement and learning.

Overview of Strange and Banning's Hierarchical Model

Strange and Banning (2001, 2015) offered an ascending model of environmental purposes and design in the college environment. Foundationally, spaces must be inclusive and safe environments. Safety and inclusion can occur physically through the architecture and use of space, through the human aggregate with resources and services to meet the diverse student body's needs, through the organizational offerings and community resources, and through design elements such as artifacts and images students' socially construct. Progressively, after feeling included and safe, Strange and Banning suggested that students are encouraged to participate and engage in the environment by investing time and energy in various roles and responsibilities.

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Students' investment of time and energy in multiple responsibilities cultivate active membership within their environment.

Analysis of Strange and Banning's Campus Ecology Framework

This conceptual framework helped me study co-curricular campus spaces as symbiotic systems of people, the layout and design of spaces, the organizational operations of the spaces, and students' perceptions of the spaces. It also helped me understand what students need to engage and participate in their environments. However, Strange and Banning have not gone far enough to address the disproportionate ways individuals and communities perceive and experience campus environments. Cabrera et al. (2016) offered a critical whiteness analysis of Strange and Banning's (2001) campus ecology framework. The authors recommend administrators should conceptualize inclusivity and safety with systemic power, privilege, and marginality. For researchers, this means exercising a critical analysis of systemic oppression when understanding students' perceptions of their experiences. Critical whiteness studies as a lens on campus ecology disrupts white racial comfort and ignorance, challenging white students to self-reflect on their unconscious racial biases. Using critical race theory (CRT) and Latinx critical race theory (LatCrit), Diaz (2019) critiqued Strange and Banning's (2001, 2015) campus ecology framework.

Diaz (2019) examined the experience and ecological factors associated with Latinx/o men's sense of belonging in the Latinx cultural center at a predominantly white institution. Through purposeful sampling, with the support of the cultural center administrator, he invited 10 Latinx/o undergraduate men who met participant criteria to join the study. Six individuals agreed to participate in the study. Diaz used triangulated data collection procedures, including participant-driven photo-elicitation, three semi-structured interviews, and researcher

observations within the Latinx cultural center. Thematic findings of Latinx/o men's sense of belonging were *political safety*, *shedding machismo*, *person-environment congruence through cultural validation*, and *physical space as counter-narrative for sense of belonging*. Latino participants felt physical, mental, and emotional safety in the cultural center from the current political hatred expressed on campus. Additionally, the combination of physical space and the human aggregate of the Latinx cultural center actively challenged the societal socialization of masculinity, specifically, what it meant to be a Latino man. One participant shared that the Latinx cultural center is the place where he goes to refill his "Mexicaness" (Diaz, 2019, p. 144), which was an indication the general campus lacked appropriate outlets for support beyond the Latinx cultural center. While these men found their campus to be generally unsafe and hostile, they found the Latinx cultural center to be a place of counter-narrative to the white normative sense of belonging at the institution.

When utilizing Strange and Banning's (2001, 2015) hierarchy of environmental purposes and design, Diaz (2019) found that it is important to consider the implications of Latinx-centric intersecting identities such as race, legal status, class, language, sex, and gender in the creation of a learning environment. In his findings, Diaz presented a Latinx Purposeful Ecology Model that is not hierarchical or defined through a white lens, such as Strange and Banning's (2001, 2015) model. Instead, the Latinx purposeful ecology model is fluid and determined by intersectional Latinx-centric identities and Diaz's (2019) thematic findings and experiences on a predominantly white campus. His study sought to inform Latinx cultural centers and higher education leaders on facilitating a sense of belonging for Latinx/o men at predominantly white institutions.

Multicultural Competence

The concept of multicultural competence has been around since the early 1980s in the counseling psychology field (Pope et al., 2004, 2019). In 1982, Derald Wing Sue and additional authors first described the core multicultural competencies necessary for counseling in a tripartite multicultural competence model: (1) *awareness* of one's own beliefs, values, biases, and attitudes; (2) *knowledge* of the worldview of culturally diverse individuals and groups; and (3) *skills* and strategies to use in culturally appropriate situations. They sought to prepare culturally competent counseling professionals to meet the needs of a multicultural society (Sue et al., 1982). Multiculturalism referred to race, ethnicity, and culture focused on Asian, Black/African American, Latinx/Hispanic, and Native American groups. Several revisions and expansions of the original model have occurred. In the latest addition, Sue (2001) argued that multicultural competence "must be about social justice—providing equal access and opportunity, being inclusive, and removing individual and institutional barriers" (p. 801).

Multicultural competence has been in student affairs literature since the late 1990s (Pope et al., 2004, 2019). In 1997, Pope and Reynolds first adapted multicultural competence from the counseling field to student affairs. The authors describe the domains of multicultural awareness, multicultural knowledge, and multicultural skills that were "essential to working effectively with others who are both culturally different and similar" (Pope et al., 2019, p. 2). These tripartite domains have remained constant over the years. However, scholars' understanding of multicultural competence has evolved.

In their first book, *Multicultural Competence in Student Affairs*, Pope et al. (2004) addressed the emerging concept of social justice by discussing the need for advocacy, action, and institutional change among student affairs administrators. They explained the need for

conscientização (Freire, 1970) or critical consciousness. Conscientização focuses on achieving an in-depth understanding of the world, reflecting on underlying assumptions and perceptions, and taking action against oppression. Their work, and the work of others at the time, focused on developing social justice allies. Pope (2014) published a book for higher education professionals called *Creating Multicultural Change on Campus*, describing systemic and systematic change tools to develop multicultural campus leaders. More recently, Pope et al. (2019) recognized a need to educate students and administrators about multicultural competence for societal change. The significant injustices and inequities among social groups in higher education and the United States are reasons for doing this work.

Pope et al. (2019) discussed multicultural competence and social justice perspectives. Some scholars believe these perspectives are congruent. Social justice is central to multicultural competence. Others acknowledge the realities of (white) privileged groups turned off by social justice. People with these entitled and mediocre perspectives think it is acceptable to demonize other people. It is not. Social justice is about human dignity and human rights. As a researcher, I strive for social justice by examining and understanding power distribution and recognizing where redistribution of power needs to occur to enhance the most vulnerable communities' well-being. Reason and Watson (2011) suggested that structural changes are critical to further social justice. Culture is a part of everything—structural and interpersonal differences. Pope et al. (2019) stated that student affairs administrators and faculty must combine multicultural and social justice issues in complex ways to further research, education, and work practices.

Overview of Pope, Reynolds, and Mueller's Multicultural Competence Framework

Multicultural awareness, knowledge, skills, and actions inform people how to understand multicultural competence's relevance and meaning (Pope et al., 2004, 2019). Multicultural

competence speaks to many aspects of difference, including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender identity, sex, age, sexual orientation, disability, and nationality. The definition of multicultural awareness, knowledge, skills, and actions includes understanding social justice. Pope, Reynolds, and Mueller (2019) added the fourth domain of *action* in their latest model. The model has been most recognizably a tripartite one (Pope et al., 2004). It is now a quadripartite model (Pope et al., 2019). Importantly, these domains build on each other. For example, a person cannot gain multicultural skills without first gaining multicultural knowledge. The following sections, adapted from Pope et al. (2019), describe the four domains.

Multicultural Awareness. A person's culture and cultural heritage shape their values, beliefs, attitudes, assumptions, and biases. These values, beliefs, attitudes, assumptions, and biases influence a person's worldview, self-awareness, and ability to relate to others. Self-evaluation is critical in this domain. When necessary, a person has the willingness to challenge and change their own values, worldview, assumptions, or biases. Having the ability to self-evaluate one's social privileges and strengths, a person further understands themselves and how they interact with others in the world. Multicultural awareness also includes a personal commitment to social justice and change.

Multicultural Knowledge. This domain includes knowledge about various cultures and social identity groups. People should use caution and not assume that all members of the same social group have the same characteristics. For example, religion does not have the same importance to all followers. Multicultural knowledge also involves understanding cultural constructs such as, but not limited to, social justice, oppression, identity development, individualistic and collectivist cultures, privilege, microaggressions, cross-cultural communication, and white supremacy. The domain also includes the knowledge to create

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culturally inclusive campus environments, programs, and services. This domain speaks to the campus ecology critique of Strange and Banning (2001, 2015), not going far enough to address the disproportionate ways individuals and communities perceive and experience campus environments.

Multicultural Skills. This domain is a behavioral dimension of multicultural competence. Communication skills and the capability to empathize and genuinely connect with individuals who are culturally different than themselves are crucial elements in this domain. People should understand how cultural differences influence verbal and nonverbal communication beyond language differences. This understanding includes the ability to deconstruct a person's assumptions, beliefs, and biases. It also includes the ability to make individual, group, and institutional multicultural interventions. Conflict often arises when people are not culturally conscious, inflicting microaggressions or disparaging uneducated remarks. Additionally, multicultural skills include people's ability to recover after making cultural errors and learning from these situations.

Multicultural Action. This domain is where people operationalize their awareness, knowledge, and skills actively and directly. Pope et al. (2019) stated, "it is not enough to have multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills if they are not put into action to change the environment and act in an advocacy role" (p. 44). Operationalizing could include advocating with others who are regularly underserved, challenging dualistic thinking, being accomplices with others, decolonizing practices, or disrupting harmful structures. If a person learns or recognizes that there are problematic issues of power dynamics or inequities, it is their responsibility to do the hard work to address them.

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Analysis of Pope, Reynolds, and Mueller's Multicultural Competence Framework

Multicultural competence is a core competency in higher education student affairs graduate programs today (Pope et al., 2004, 2019). It is a model developed for the self-assessment and development of student life educators. Major and Mangope (2014) identified in their research that it is essential for all student affairs professionals to have multicultural awareness, skills, knowledge, and sensitivity to offer all students meaningful services. Pope et al. (2004) designed this framework for student affairs educators in their quest to become more multiculturally competent. This framework's domains are also a helpful lens to apply to college students to help ensure that educators develop culturally competent students and future leaders in society. Student life educators have an obligation and responsibility to teach students how to engage with each other across difference and cultures, particularly urgent in an increasingly polarized world.

In other fields, such as public health, researchers critique the notion of cultural competence because we cannot ever be truly competent in someone else's culture (Chavez, 2018). The term competence is also problematic because it implies that a (privileged) group has decided what content to assess and achieve competence. It also implies a binary construct, meaning either competence or incompetence. Importantly, it is worth noting Pope et al.'s (2004) multicultural competence model in higher education is not about being culturally competent in someone else's culture. The characteristics of *multicultural awareness* depict understanding oneself and how one interacts in the world. The description of *multicultural knowledge* illustrates an understanding of cultural characteristics and cultural constructs such as privilege, oppression, individualistic and collectivist cultures, and white supremacy.

Linder and Cooper (2016) offered the concept of critical consciousness to strengthen the multicultural competence framework. By engaging in critical consciousness, educators can understand how context, power, and shifting identities influence how students experience campus environments. In their quest for multicultural competence, educators should not assume all students in one social identity group have the same experiences and needs.

There are several strategies for educators interested in developing critical consciousness and inclusive campus environments (Linder & Cooper, 2016). The authors suggested asking questions about who is and who is not included in campus spaces and policies. For example, are non-binary, gender-inclusive bathrooms available for people? Linder and Cooper acknowledged no space can be all things to all people. However, educators can create identity-explicit spaces. For example, a multicultural center can plan regular community gatherings for Queer Transgender, Black, Indigenous, and Students of Color (QTBIPOC). The authors encouraged a "yes, and…" (Linder & Cooper, 2016, p. 387) perspective to help ensure educators create opportunities and meet the needs of multiple groups of students, not just the dominant group. Do all videos and films include live captioning for participants who are deaf or hard of hearing? Linder and Cooper suggested educators must find ways to care for themselves as they play important supportive roles in students' lives. Educators may face compassion fatigue or similar trauma to experiences students share. The authors emphasized ongoing self-awareness of current issues locally, nationally, and globally because current events significantly impact students' experiences. Lastly, Linder and Cooper suggested educators participate in critically conscious communities for ongoing personal and professional development. Educators contribute to a deeper understanding of critical consciousness when participating in communities of people who

share interests in identity development, and social change and who can challenge and support them.

The multicultural competence tripartite model (Pope et al., 2004) informed my data collection process to answer my research questions about what students learned. I considered the fourth domain of *multicultural action* (Pope et al., 2019) when analyzing and discussing my study findings. Multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills lead to multicultural action. I was regularly reflexive of my multiple identities and experiences to remain critically conscious throughout this multiple case study research. I describe how I practiced reflexivity in Chapter Four.

Connecting Campus Ecology and Multicultural Competence

The concepts of campus ecology and multicultural competence work well together to describe college students' multicultural learning through the environment. Researchers can use these two concepts to understand what students learn within physical environments. Educators often leave students' development of multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills to luck, rather than shaping multiculturally competent learning communities within co-curricular campus spaces. This learning ultimately helps students construct their identities with others, helps prepare students for life during and after college, and helps students take action steps to change the environment. The findings of this study show how student life educators have integrated or could integrate multiculturalism into physical and organizational environments to support student learning. The following page includes a visual representation of the connection between the four component model of campus environments (Strange & Banning, 2001, 2015) and the tripartite model of multicultural competence (Pope et al., 2004) to frame students' multicultural learning that can happen through the environment.
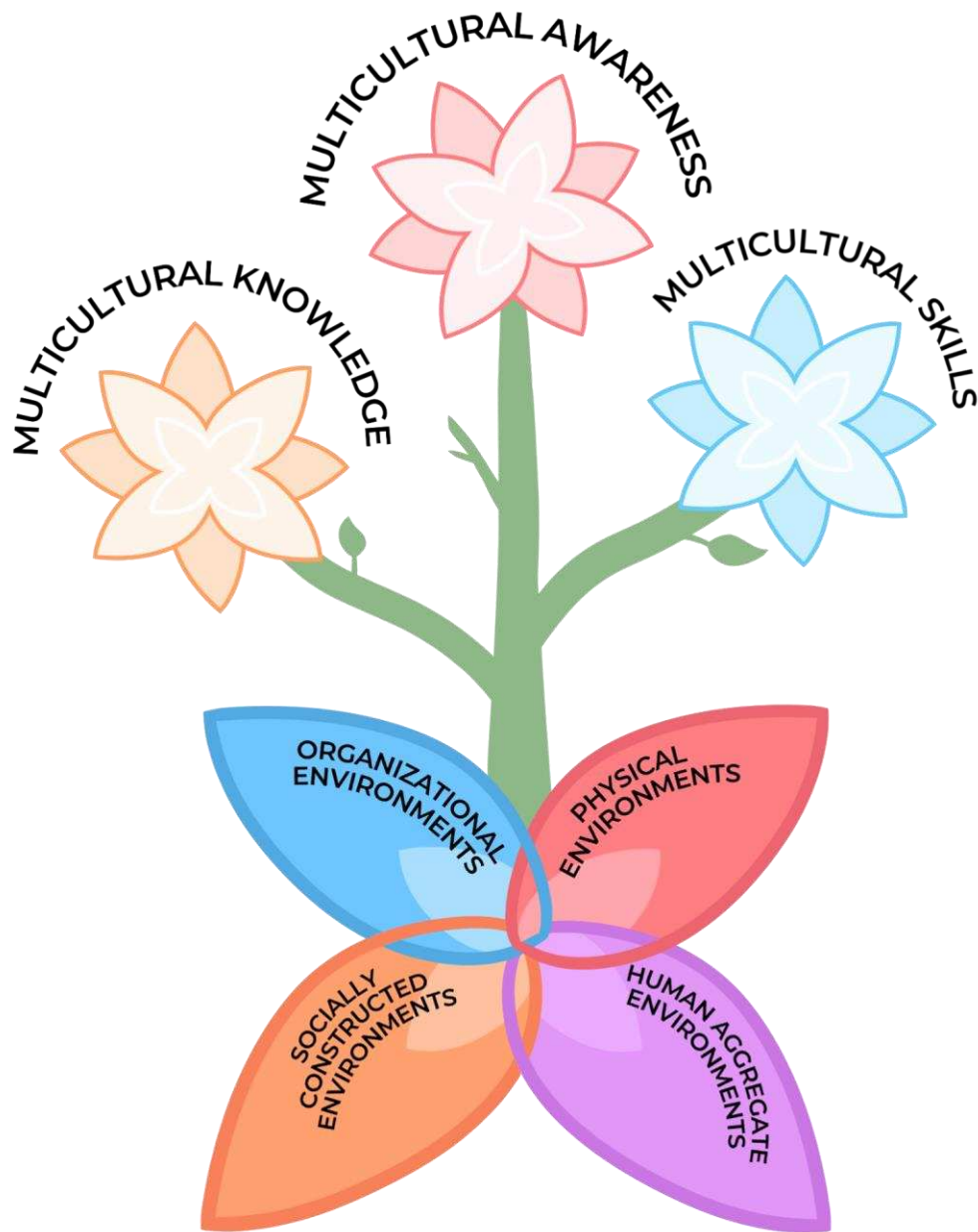
Figure 2.1. Multicultural Learning through Campus Environments. Copyright 2022 by J. Cha.

Figure 2.1 visually depicts an alignment where the four components of Strange and Banning's (2001, 2015) model come together to cultivate the growth development of multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills (Pope et al., 2004). The spaces of the environment, not just the physical space, have the opportunity to facilitate students' development

of multicultural competence. The connection of these conceptual frameworks support the consideration of the concepts of power, privilege, and oppression in the environmental design of the cases in my study.

Conclusion

Strange and Banning's (2001, 2015) conceptualization of campus ecology and Pope et al.'s (2004, 2019) multicultural competence were complementary conceptual frameworks to conduct this multiple case study. This study examined what students say they learn about engaging with difference and across cultures in the co-curricular campus spaces of a college union and multicultural center on a historically white campus. This study furthers scholars' call to action to understand what students learn about engaging across cultures. While each conceptual framework has its limitations and scholarly critiques, prior research informed the development of campus ecology and multicultural competence. Also, administrators and scholars have used both conceptual frameworks for decades. Using a lens of campus ecology and multicultural competence, I conducted a multiple case study (Stake, 1995, 2006) that may provide data to help inform critical institutional change.

Chapter Summary

Physical spaces in higher education have an impact on student learning and engagement (Malone, 2020; Museus et al., 2017; Renn & Patton, 2011; Rullman & Harrington, 2014; Strange & Banning, 2001; Young, 1991). For centuries, college unions have served student populations as community building centers outside of the classroom, offering programs, services, and space open to all (Camputaro, 2018; Lang, 2020). College union leaders on historically white campuses have struggled to meet the needs of BIPOC students, though. There is also not enough college union literature studying BIPOC and other underserved communities. Through student activism

led by minoritized students, multicultural student services and centers were founded in the mid-20th century as counterspaces (Yosso & Lopez, 2010), or spaces of cultural affirmation and representation, amidst white norms. Multicultural student services and centers are differently structured on higher education campuses based on their historical and contemporary context. Despite structural differences, multicultural student services and centers are vital to promoting cultural learning (Young, 1991).

Using Strange and Banning's (2001, 2015) conceptualization of campus ecology (2001, 2015) and Pope, Reynolds, and Mueller's (2004, 2019) multicultural competence model for this dissertation study, I analyzed the co-curricular campus spaces of a college union and multicultural center. I uncovered students' awareness, knowledge, skills about engaging across cultures within these campus spaces. The two concepts framed what I care about, what I wanted to know through this research, and informed the research methodology. Next, I describe the institutional context where I conducted this research.

CHAPTER 3: INSTITUTIONAL CONTEXT

The University of Michigan is a historically white public research university in Ann Arbor, Michigan, in the Midwestern United States (University of Michigan, 2021a). I describe the University of Michigan as an HWI because it has long-preserved values of eliteness and prestige (Johnson, 2020) and enrolls a majority of white students. Final fall 2022 enrollment at the University of Michigan showed that 51,225 students were enrolled on campus (Jordan, 2022). Among all undergraduates, 55.8% identified as white, 19.6% identified as Asian, 9.1% identified as Hispanic or Latino/Latina, 4.5% identified as Black, 0.1% identified as Native American, and 0.1% identified as Hawaiian. Another 5.5% identified as multiethnic while 5.3% are unknown.

According to Lipsitz (2006), "white Americans are encouraged to invest in whiteness, to remain true to an identity that provides them with resources, power, and opportunity" (p. vii). Whiteness is invested in, like property (Harris, 1993), by white people, keeping it from others. Activists and minoritized student communities have tried to get administrators to see problems with institutional racism. However, like other HWIs, University of Michigan administrators have not been able to overcome entrenched racial disparities. In describing the historically white University of Michigan for the purposes of my research, I offer a depiction of the university's context through the perspective of whiteness as property (Harris, 1993), as described in Chapter Two.

In his book *Ebony & Ivy* (2014), Wilder revealed how early higher education leaders laid the groundwork for oppressive racial institutions by, for example, converting Native Americans to Christianity, profiting from the enslavement of Africans, and asserting theories of racial

superiority. The University of Michigan is the oldest public research institution in the State of Michigan and a globalizing higher education institution (University of Michigan, 2021a). In this chapter, I offer examples of how University of Michigan leaders built the campus and supported an oppressive racial history.

The Treaty of Fort Meigs

The historical origins and present locations of the University of Michigan were made possible by cessions of lands by Anishinaabe and Wyandot peoples under coercive treaties all too common in the colonization and expansion of the United States. United States federal government officials and several Native American tribes, including the Potawatomi, Chippewa, and Ottawa, signed the Treaty of Fort Meigs in 1817 (Shaw & Robbins, 1941). White settlers believed surviving Native Americans benefited from the colonization of their land because the monetary value of their land increased substantially (Wilder, 2014). Meanwhile, many Native Americans resisted colonization to maintain sovereignty. The Treaty of Fort Meigs included a specific grant gifted by the Native American tribes of six sections of land to be divided equally between the Catholic church of St. Anne of Detroit and the "college at Detroit" or the "Catholepistemiad, or University of Michigania" known today as the University of Michigan (Trowbridge, 1823-1840). The Treaty of Fort Meigs was no standalone agreement. It was part of a larger effort by the federal government to forcibly remove Native Americans from the Great Lakes through strategic maneuvers that were masked as choice and to relocate them across the Mississippi River (Grafton, 2017).

A passage in the Treaty of Fort Meigs indicates that these Native American tribes believed that they may wish some of their children to be educated through the "college at Detroit" with its connection to the Catholic church of St. Anne of Detroit (Steeh, 2002). White

settlers, at the time, believed surviving Native Americans benefited from white settlers' type of

education. In Detroit, there is no record of any Native people attending the school (University of

Michigan Vice President for Communications, 2002). None of the tribes who signed the Treaty

of Fort Meigs directly experienced its benefits, as records show that none attended the University

for the next 130 years (Sourine, 2018). The original land was eventually sold and became part of

the University's endowment when the institution relocated to Ann Arbor in Washtenaw County

from Detroit in 1837.

Among the options of two parcels of land in 1837, the University's regents selected a 40-

acre plot alongside State Street in Ann Arbor (Mayer, 2015). Site B (see Figure 3.1) is the core

of today's Central Campus. The chosen plot was originally farmland and peach orchards.
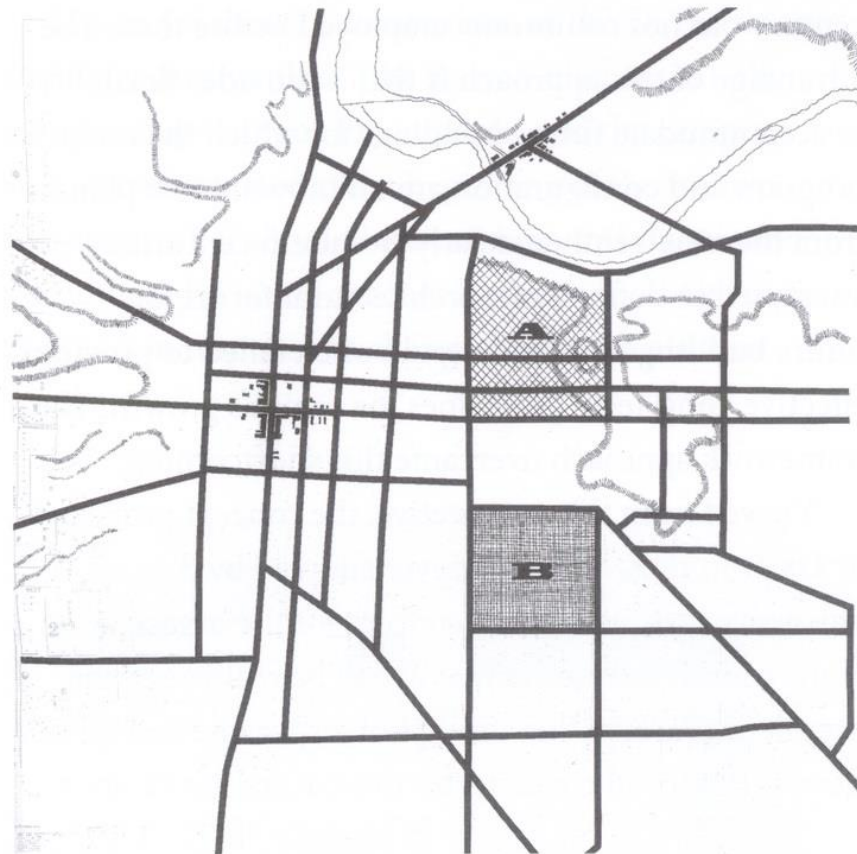
Figure 3.1. Land parcels for the University of Michigan, Ann Arbor (Mayer, 2015, p. 45).

By 1840, the plan for the University of Michigan showed a collegiate row of buildings along State Street. Today, the Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center are located on State Street. In Figure 3.2, the 1840 plan for the University of Michigan campus is visible (Pettibone, 1870). Though several maps during this period bear the named "Michigan State University," the University of Michigan never went by this name.
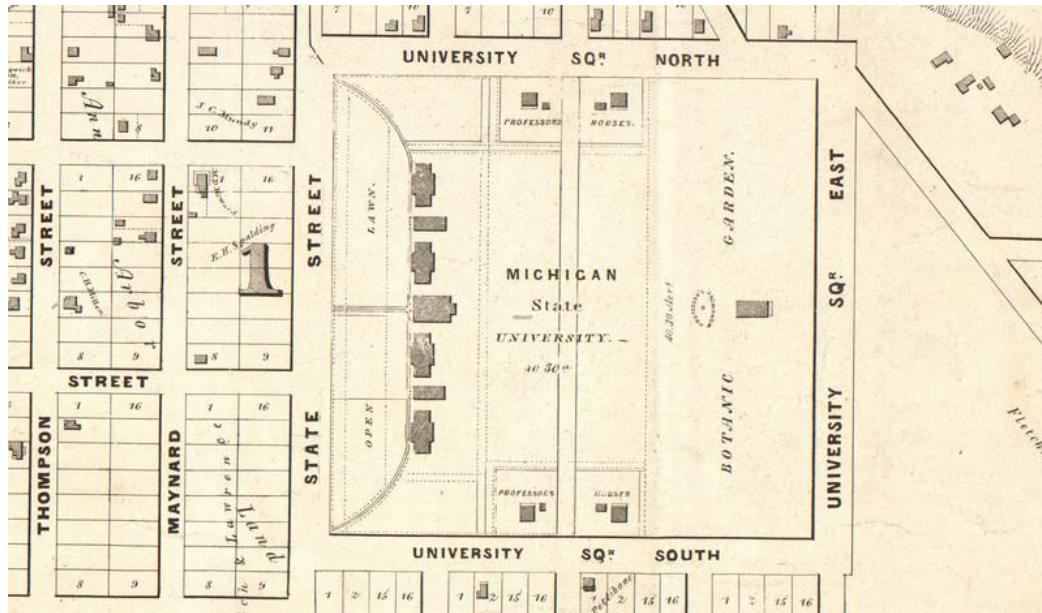
Figure 3.2. 1840 plan from City of Ann Arbor, Washtenaw County, Michigan (Pettibone, 1870).

Campus growth continued for future decades. It took until 1932 for the University of Michigan Regents to develop five scholarships for Native students (Shaw & Robbins, 1941). These scholarships encouraged a gradual enrollment increase of Native students. University of Michigan records suggest it was not until the social upheaval of the late 1960s and early 1970s that Native American students began to assert their identity and demand some recognition of their status (University of Michigan Vice President for Communications, 2002). However, we know Native American tribes resisted white superiority long before the 1960s (Wilder, 2014). Today, a small number of Native students are enrolled at the University of Michigan (University of Michigan, 2021c). There has been a longstanding disagreement, including lawsuits filed by

tribes, between the University and the Native American community concerning the University's designated responsibility to educate Native Americans as the Treaty of Fort Meigs describes. There is also a longstanding belief that the University of Michigan has failed to curtail offenses and oppressive acts toward Native students (Kishore, 1999).

In 1999, more than 180 years after the University of Michigan was established, the Native American community met with the Executive Officers of the University requesting recognition of the land by Native Americans to the University of Michigan in 1817 (Kishore, 1999). It took 180 years before the University considered a formal acknowledgment. The Native American community proposed a sculpture by an Anishnaabe artist and recognition in official publications that reference the University's founding. Instead, the Executive Officers decided to create a plaque on campus to acknowledge the land gift from the Native community. The Executive Officers wanted to include phrasing from the Treaty of Fort Meigs that included an attachment to the Catholic religion. Native students, employees, and members of Native communities opposed the generalization in the plaque that all Native people had converted to Christianity, which was "utterly untrue," as one Native member said (Adams, 2001). University leaders could do more to acknowledge its role in Native Indian Removal and the harm inflicted on these communities as the result of the Treaty of Fort Meigs. Even acknowledgment does not go far enough to demonstrate measurable, concrete change for Indigenous sovereignty. Indigenous communities want a sincere commitment to Indigenous sovereignty. This land came at a price, a broken human relationship with the land and place perhaps being the highest price, that was much different than a gift.

Colonization of the Philippines

The white settler occupation of land for the University of Michigan extended beyond the State of Michigan and the United States. Michigan Historical Collections detail the extensive involvement of the University of Michigan in the Philippine Islands (Barritt, 1982). It started as scientific but later broadened to political involvement. University of Michigan zoologists Worcester and Steere first visited the Philippines in 1887. After the Philippine Islands became an American colony in 1899 with the ratification of the Treaty of Paris, United States President McKinley appointed Worcester to the First Philippine Commission. McKinley wanted a progressive American colonial administration. "The Philippines are ours...to civilize, to educate," he stated (Barritt, 1982, p. 2). Worcester and Steere were colonial administrators and played major military and educational roles (Kirkwood, 2014). Other University of Michigan faculty and administrators participated in the occupation during this time. The University of Michigan colonizers worked in partnership with many other U.S. higher education institutions that relished the idea of investing in a colonial empire in the Pacific.

President McKinley's approach was not without opposition. The Philippine-American War of 1899-1902 was an attempt by Filipino leader Emilio Aguinaldo to gain independence of the Philippines and thwart U.S. intentions to retain the Islands (Barritt, 1982). Many Michigan men (Kirkwood, 2014) joined as soldiers to keep U.S. governance in the Philippines. Meanwhile, at home in the U.S., the Anti-Imperialist League was actively vocal against involvement in the Philippines.

It turns out the U.S. model of Philippine society was not ultimately successful. After nearly a half-century of colonial rule, Filipinos fought and gradually regained their commonwealth status in 1935 and independence in 1946 (Barritt, 1982). As an independent

nation, the Philippines maintained its close relationship with the University of Michigan. A few future presidents of the Philippines were educated by University of Michigan alumni and leaders.

Michigan Union

In 1904, the Michigan Union organization was formed to be all-inclusive in providing unity among men at the University of Michigan (Rowe, 2005). The first meeting was held in the Waterman Gymnasium on the central campus, which is no longer standing today. From the beginning, the Michigan Union founders were adamant about connecting the community for students and their interests through a physical home for the organization. In 1907, they purchased the former house of Judge Thomas M. Cooley on State Street. As the growth of the student body and increasing importance of the Union occurred, the building proved inadequate for their needs. In 1910, the members sought to construct a more suitable building. In 1916, the Thomas Cooley house was demolished, and construction of the Michigan Union began on that property and two adjacent lots. One of the adjacent lots was owned by the architects of the new Union, Allen and Irving Pond (Donnelly, Shaw & Gjelsness, 1958). Funds for the completion of the interior of the building were secured in yearly membership dues and campaign fundraising (Rowe, 2005). Due to the war in the spring of 1917, the money proved difficult to collect. While in its unfinished state, the building was used as a barracks and mess hall by the Student Army Training Corps. After World War I ended, the Union's interior was completed. The Michigan Union officially opened in 1919, a four-story building, located at 530 South State Street, Ann Arbor, Michigan (University Unions, 2021).

Allen B. Pond and Irvin K. Pond, known as the Pond brothers, served as the architects of the 250,000-square-foot Michigan Union today (Swan & Tatum, 2009). They also designed the college unions at Purdue University, Michigan State University, and the University of Kansas.

Pond and Pond were Ann Arbor natives and alumni of the University of Michigan. They also formed their own architectural firm in Chicago. Through conversation with the Michigan Union organization members, the brothers' vision for the Michigan Union included large student gathering spaces, including meeting rooms, dining halls, assembly rooms, and hotel rooms. Pond and Pond gave architectural nods to the academic mission with ornamental motifs, portraits, relief sculptures, and color patterns to represent students' development (Swan & Tatum, 2009). On the front façade of the Michigan Union, an athlete and an academic are prominent as relief sculptures. Figure 3.3 shows these sculptures when students were hanging a sign over the Michigan Union main entrance in 1979.

Figure 3.3. Students hanging Michigras sign over the main entrance to Michigan Union, January 1979 (University of Michigan News and Information Services, 1979).

From room to room inside the Michigan Union, as depicted in Figure 3.4, decorative ornaments appear in wood, stone, and metal, with and without color to illustrate the architects' idea of men gaining poise, strength, and perfect character throughout the building (Swan & Tatum, 2009).
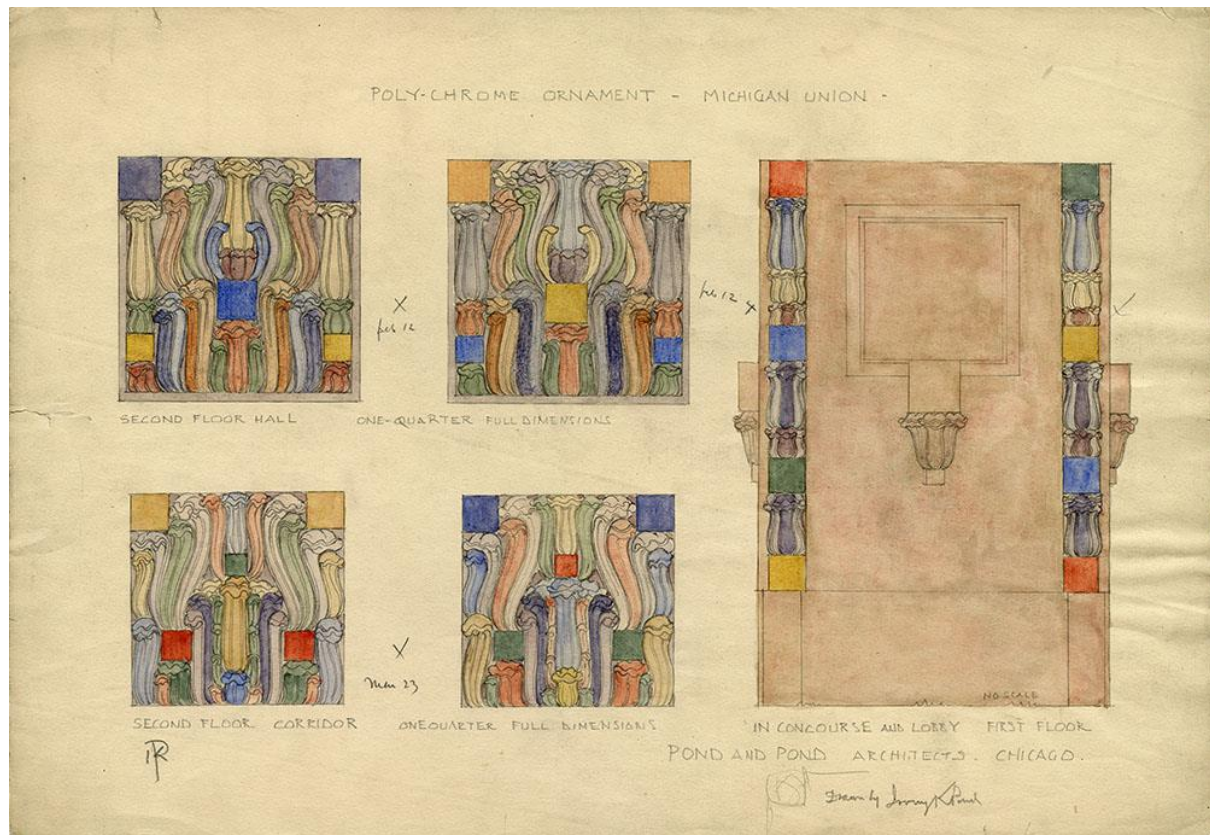
Figure 3.4. Polychrome Ornament - Michigan Union (Pond, 1917).

The need for a women's space became evident when the Michigan Union opened in 1919, where women could not enter unless escorted in by a man and had to use the side door (Michigan in the World, 2021). The Women's League at the University of Michigan coordinated a campaign to build a women's building with many similar activities and amenities to a college union. Alumnae and students thrived in raising hundreds of thousands of dollars for the building and its endowment. The Michigan League building, also designed by the Pond brothers (Swan & Tatum, 2009), opened to the public in 1929, just 10 years after the opening of the Michigan Union.

University of Michigan President James B. Angell endorsed the students' initiative to build a Michigan Union (Hao, 2017). Students valued President Angell's support. The students' senior honor society, called Michigamua, received a permanent lease space in the Michigan Union tower in the mid-1900s. After protests by the Students of Color Coalition in 2000, Michigamua was removed from the Michigan Union because of its controversial past of appropriating Native American spiritual relics (Rowe, 2005).

While University of Michigan archivists have not found any outright bans on Black students from the Michigan Union, the mid-1900s was an especially difficult time for the small population of Black students on campus (B. Williams, personal communication, May 21, 2001). Black students were oftentimes denied service in local restaurants and barred from living in university housing (Williams, 2017). Michigan Union fundraising cards suggest that the intent was not to deny Black students access to the building (B. Williams, personal communication, May 21, 2001). Fundraising cards for life membership subscriptions for the Union Building Fund include examples, such as one from the 1919 card for Dewey Roscoe Jones, a Black student in the class of 1922. Jones was a World War I veteran and a founding member of the UM Psi chapter of Omega Psi Phi, one of the historic African American fraternities. Also, *The Michigan Daily* includes anecdotal evidence that the Union hosted events involving African Americans (B. Williams, personal communication, May 21, 2001). One example is a meeting of the Round Table Club on February 26, 1925, in the Michigan Union, where a Black guest speaker spoke about the controversy around racial differences and intelligence. This evidence does not mean Black students were able to equally access programs and services. While there is no evidence indicating different access for Black students in the Michigan Union, there was likely a feeling that Black students were questioned if they went there (Crawford, 2019).

Over the years, architects and administrators added two southern wings to the Michigan Union in 1936 and 1938 and a north wing in 1954 (Rowe, 2005). These additional spaces served as locations for the University Club restaurant, additional rooms for guests, and offices. Throughout the rest of the 20th century, various services and spaces inside the Union were updated to meet current needs. In 2016, the University's Board of Regents approved plans for an extensive renovation of the Michigan Union (*University Unions History*, n.d.). The project designs were informed by hundreds of students and championed by the *Building A Better Michigan* student organization. The Union closed for renovation in 2018. Following the 20-month project, which aimed to restore and reactivate the building while maintaining its historic fabric, the Union reopened to the public in 2020 (see Figure 3.5). Today, the new spaces include a 12,000 square foot IdeaHub, which is a collaborative co-working space open to all 1600 registered student organizations at the University of Michigan, a year-round enclosed courtyard, and expanded student engagement spaces and lounges. This renovation inspires future generations of Michigan students to challenge the present and enrich the future.

Figure 3.5. Michigan Union ([Untitled photograph of the Michigan Union], n.d.).

The Michigan Union's mission is to serve as a catalyst for connection and learning that cultivates community and belonging at the University of Michigan and beyond (University Unions, 2022, Our Mission). The Union is open to all students, faculty, staff, and community guests. The building also houses the Office of Multi-Ethnic Student Affairs, a Student Life unit promoting student development through the lens of race and ethnicity, and the Spectrum Center, the oldest queer and trans advocacy office in the United States. The Union is a space striving to bring the community together to connect, learn and thrive.

Undermining Racial Justice

Johnson (2020) described strategies University of Michigan administrators developed and implemented from the 1960s onward that tried to control the outcomes of Black activism. University of Michigan administrators were unwilling to invest in racial justice because it was incompatible with a premier public institution. Administrators believed the demands of Black

student activists were threats to the status of the university, one of the premier public institutions in the United States. Administrators incorporated the goals of Black activists only so far as they did not threaten what administrators believed was necessary to maintain institutional prestige.

The university's status has long been tied to the student body's status, a historically white population. Status measures, including, but not limited to, high SAT scores, National Merit Scholars, and Advanced Placement courses, privilege racial groups who have been afforded opportunities to excel. One of the key tactics that administrators used to manipulate what racial inclusion looked like at the university was controlling the knowledge about Black students that was released to the public (Johnson, 2020). University of Michigan administrators in the 1960s and 1970s asked for internal research on Black students. When the internal studies supported administrators' policy positions (Johnson, 2020), studies were distributed to the public and pushed out on public relations campaigns. For example, university administrators pointed to the higher-than-average attrition rates of students from places like Detroit and other urban cities in Michigan. Administrators claimed these students could not cut it academically, which damaged the university's relationship with inner-city schools and communities. However, internal studies concluded that most Black students who left the university were in good academic standing. This led researchers to conclude that the poor racial climate had more to do with Black students leaving, with those attrition rates, than academic struggles. Johnson (2020) described reports to the university president with internal studies about the academic success of inner-city Black students, despite administrators' claims these students could not cut it academically due to attrition rates. Administrators at the institution's highest level allowed and participated in the attacks on Black Detroit students' academic capabilities.

Administrators also hired Black institutional leaders charged with changing the campus culture, but they had no power to make real change. Johnson (2020) told the story of Niara Sudarkasa. As a new faculty member, Sudarkasa helped Black students organize the Black Action Movement (BAM) in 1970. By the 1980s, Sudarkasa gained the position of Associate Vice President for Academic Affairs, seemingly with a lot of power to deal with the declining Black enrollment in the 1980s. Sudarkasa began working toward a recruitment plan for Black students in Detroit. The admission director, at the time, did not want that to happen. In public settings, he spoke poorly about Detroit schools and never took measures to explore possibilities. Sudarkasa challenged the admissions director in ways he had never experienced by upper-level administrators. However, he did not change his practices, and Sudarkasa could not change his mind because he did not report to her. Sudarkasa only had the power of advice. Her advice even fell flat on the vice president and president. They never made the admissions director change his plans. In fact, it is documented that other administrators supported the admissions director's stance behind Sudarkasa's back (Johnson, 2020). Sudarkasa had optimism about change as a positional leader on campus, but she realized she could not do anything because she did not have institutional support (Johnson, 2020).

Michigan Civil Rights Initiative

As a public university, the University of Michigan has been beholden to state laws that uphold whiteness as property (Harris, 1993). One case in 2006 prohibited the use of affirmative action by public institutions in the State of Michigan (Mich Const. art. I § 26, 2006). Specifically, the University of Michigan was named in the article. The Michigan Civil Rights Initiative, as it was called, was a misnomer that effectively banned programs that give preferential treatment to groups or individuals based on race, ethnicity, gender, or national

origin. The ballot language of "preferential treatment" and "civil rights initiative" was designed to make voters believe that they were creating a more equitable environment by voting for the amendment. In fact, this law did the opposite of helping members of minoritized groups. At the University of Michigan, this law prohibited services, programs, or spaces that gave preferential treatment based on race, ethnicity, gender, or national origin (*2006 Proposal 2: University of Michigan*, n.d.). It did not mean that diversity at the University of Michigan was no longer a permissible and compelling interest. University administrators had to adopt race-neutral approaches, such as focusing on economic and geographic diversity, to attract and increase student diversity. Despite the efforts, enrollment among BIPOC students declined significantly. University administrators have also been unable to designate community-specific spaces based on race, which students have requested over the years. Since the passing of this state law, University leaders have had to work hard to grow minority student enrollment and provide resources to support BIPOC students.

Trotter Multicultural Center

By February 1970, the number of Black students at the University of Michigan was only two or three percent of the total student population (Tobin, 2013). This prompted student activists to organize demonstrations, which became part of what was called the Black Action Movement (or BAM). Student activists wanted the administrators to improve the educational and campus experiences of Black students. Activists submitted to administrators a list of demands including, but not limited to, increasing Black student enrollment to 10 percent and establishing a Black Student Center (University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library, 2014a). Administrators worked on the students' demands. The Trotter Multicultural Center at the

University of Michigan was originally founded as a Black culture center, originally called the Trotter House, in 1971.

Selected by University of Michigan students, the namesake of the house, William Monroe Trotter, was a Black journalist, civil rights activist and real-estate businessman in Boston (Shakespeare, 2023). During the early 20th century, Trotter helped W.E.B. Du Bois and other civil rights activists organize a group to achieve racial equality: the Niagara Movement. That led to the creation of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People. Trotter was a fearless activist, challenging the pragmatic views of Booker T. Washington.

The first Trotter House, a shabby Victorian edifice, was located on Central Campus at 1020 South University Avenue (Tobin, 2013). It was blocks away from the Union. In 1972, the Trotter House was destroyed when a defective gas water heater started a fire. University administrators selected to purchase a building for Trotter at 1445 Washtenaw Avenue (see Figure 3.6). The new 11,300 square-foot facility was the former Phi Kappa Sigma fraternity house.

The Ann Arbor News, Monday, August 28, 1972   3

The New Trotter House   1972

The former Zeta Psi fraternity house at 1443 Washtenaw will be the new home of the Trotter House, the University's center for black student services and activities. The University purchased the property for $110,000 and an addition-al $40,000 is being spent for renovation of the 8,500-square-foot building. The house will replace the former black services center at the corner of S. University and E. University which was badly damaged by fire last May.

Figure 3.6. The New Trotter House (Ann Arbor News, 8/28/1972).

The new Trotter House building was built in 1924. It was located on the outskirts of campus, beyond the boundaries of the Central Campus. The University of Michigan Board of Regents noted additional culture centers for other groups may be needed at the university in the future (University of Michigan Board of Regents, 1970). The goals of the Trotter House were to assist Black students in successfully pursuing an academic career with the least possible amount of social and psychological trauma, encourage academic achievement at a reachable goal, provide a forum for Black students to discuss shared experiences, and provide a facility supporting the cultural norms and needs of Black students (Cianciola, 1972-1998). University records also indicate that the Trotter House was an opportunity to focus on a positive image of Black student activity on campus (Cianciola, 1972-1998). Administrators hoped the BAM would be played down when the center opened because BAM was dominating public relations about Black students at the University of Michigan (Cianciola, 1972-1998).

According to archival records, institutional resources for and the prioritization of the center ebbed and flowed over the years, mostly in response to continued student activism and campus climate issues (Cianciola, 1972-1998). Campus leaders evolved Trotter to be a multicultural center in 1981 to meet the needs of all minoritized student communities at the time, a change from a focus on race to diverse students. Since this change, students have challenged this one-size-fits-all, multicultural approach (Shotton et al., 2010) because it has done little to best serve unique student communities. There is documentation from the 1980s about the need for Trotter building repair, but personnel budget cutbacks in plant operations left the building with routine maintenance only. The center's operating budget was also cut for a time. For decades, the center struggled for regular, sustainable repair. The cash flow came in temporarily when the center reported to University Housing, known to have healthy resources from student

housing fees, but that reporting relationship was short-lived. The Trotter Multicultural Center, as an administrative unit, has changed reporting structures over the years.

In 2015, the new University of Michigan President Schlissel worked with the campus community to develop a Diversity, Equity & Inclusion Strategic Plan that included a new multicultural center building. Student activism by the Black Student Union through a #BBUM campaign–a Twitter hashtag that stood for "Being Black at the University of Michigan"– included a demand for a new Trotter located on Central Campus (Trotter Multicultural Center, 2021). Figure 3.7 represents the distance between 1443 Washtenaw Avenue (Trotter) and 530 South State Street (Union). It took students 10-15 minutes to stroll from Central Campus to the Trotter Multicultural Center.
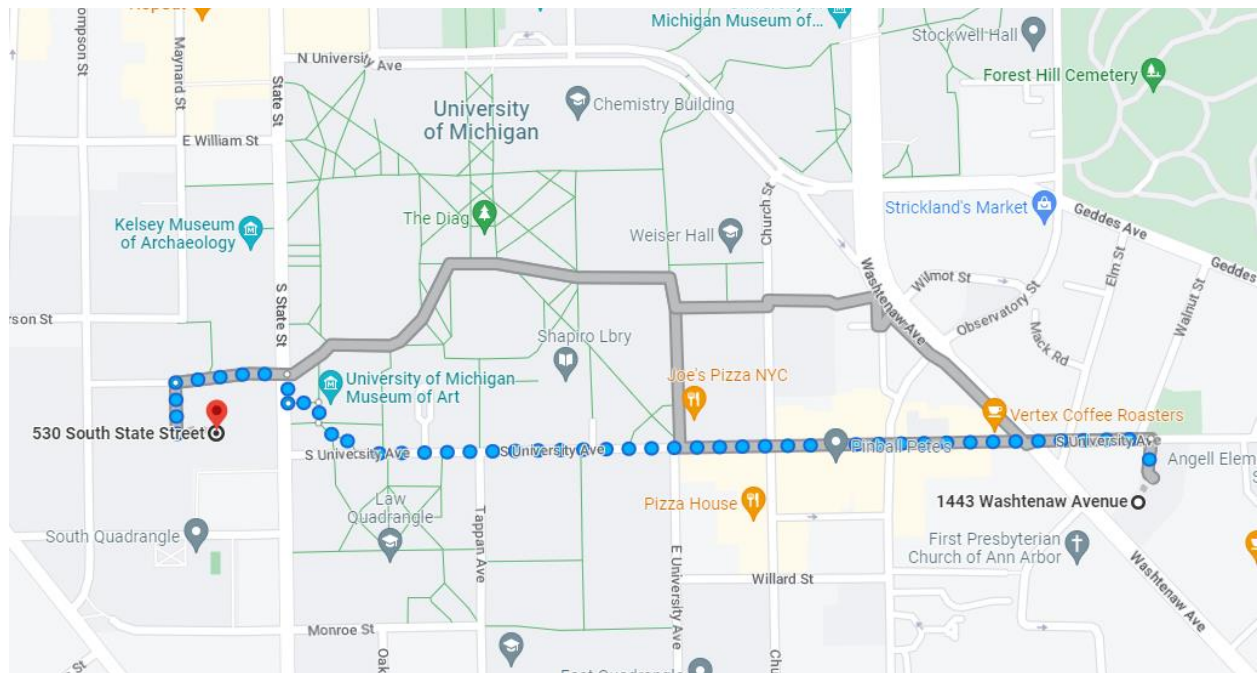
Figure 3.7. Directions from 1443 Washtenaw Avenue, Ann Arbor, Michigan, to 530 South State Street, Ann Arbor, Michigan (Google Maps, n.d.).

The #BBUM campaign included Black students describing their lived experiences on campus through the social networking service. The campaign demonstrated how little had

changed for Black students at the university. This was the fourth protest movement between 1970 and 2014 primarily led by Black student organizations that challenged the university's policies and experiences of minoritized students (Trotter Multicultural Center, 2021). These movements were influential in shaping change.

Beginning in 2015, the Black Student Union and University of Michigan administrators partnered together as the core team to develop A New Trotter (*Trotter Multicultural Center on State Street - A Timeline of Events*, n.d). The partnership was designed to oversee the development of a new location for the Trotter Multicultural Center. I was a part of this process when I worked at Trotter. The core team conducted a comparative analysis of other facilities, traveling to different higher education campuses. University architects identified four possible site selections on Central Campus for the new Trotter. University researchers collected site preferences from students, faculty, staff, and community members. Most respondents preferred a State Street location for the new Trotter Multicultural Center. By the end of 2015, University of Michigan Regents approved the proposal for a new 20,000-square-foot multicultural center building to be located on State Street.
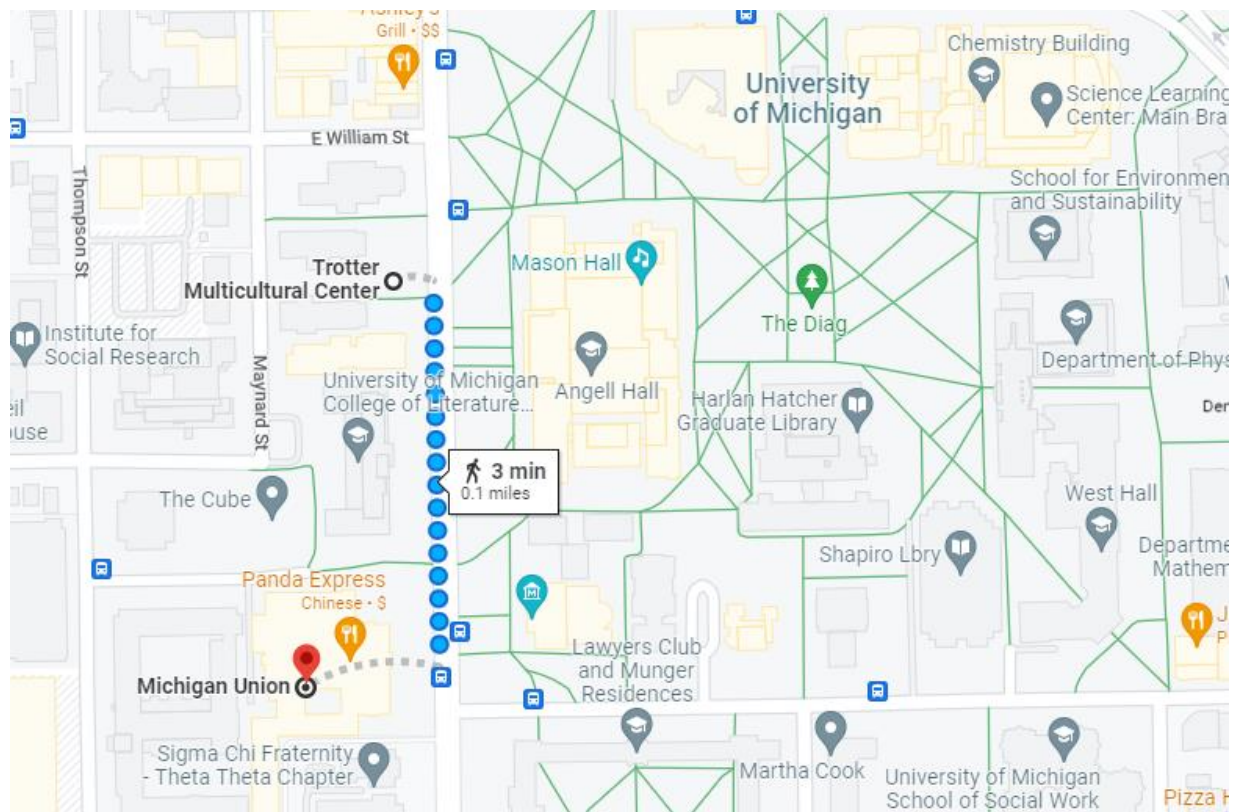
Figure 3.8. Directions from 428 South State Street, Ann Arbor, Michigan, to 530 South State Street, Ann Arbor, Michigan (Google Maps, n.d.).

Figure 3.8 shows the Trotter Multicultural Center's new location on Central Campus. The strolling distance from the Michigan Union to the Trotter Multicultural Center became 2-3 minutes. Moving the Trotter Multicultural Center to Central Campus and on the State Street corridor improved the social and spatial educational equity for minoritized students. As I state in the following chapter, geography impacts social relations (Annamma, 2017). In 2017, the University of Michigan broke ground to build the new building.

Figure 3.9. Trotter Multicultural Center ([Untitled photograph of the Trotter Multicultural Center], n.d.).

The Trotter Multicultural Center opened in its new location in the center of campus in 2019 (see Figure 3.9). The new building featured a variety of rooms, including academic, meeting and performance spaces, student organization storage, a full kitchen, an outdoor roof-top garden, office space, a prayer/meditation room, and the first foot bathing station on the University of Michigan Ann Arbor's campus (Love, 2019). Figure 3.10 displays a wall of photos in the main lobby that feature University of Michigan students, reflecting the diversity of the student body.

Figure 3.10. Visitors to the Trotter Multicultural Center are greeted by a wall of photos that feature current University of Michigan students, reflecting the diversity of the student body (Marshke, 2019).

White Students Colonizing Trotter

In February 2022, the Deputy Policy Advisor for the Anti-Racism Commission through the Central Student Government (CSG) wrote a letter to the University of Michigan Regents advising the administration to focus on building and preserving designated safe spaces on campus for students of color (Patel, 2022). The CSG student leader reminded the Regents of the Trotter Multicultural Center's origin as the Black culture center on campus. With Trotter's expansion and relocation to Central Campus, the CSG leader shared that Trotter's inception has been overcome with the white power and privilege embedded within the university. The CSG leader went on to describe the building as "being white-washed where white students have no regard for the sacredness or purpose of the space" (Patel, 2022, para. 2). The CSG leader suggested that the room reservation process being open to all student organizations was creating

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an unsafe space. Without safe spaces for BIPOC on the historically white campus, the university environment can be detrimental to students' mental health. *The Michigan Daily* student editors published the letter in their weekly student newspaper to campus.

Consequently, according to research participants in this study, the Black Student Union started an #OccupyTrotter movement in the spring of 2022. The Black student community came together to have a regularly occurring presence inside the Trotter Multicultural Center as much as possible. Particularly, the Sankofa Lounge in the Trotter Multicultural Center played a meaningful role for Black students to gather in the #OccupyTrotter movement. Sankofa is an African symbol of a bird that signifies an acknowledgment of history and the efforts of the past while pursuing initiative for the future (Temple, 2010). For the Black student participants in this study, the Sankofa Lounge is a remembrance of Trotter's origin as a house for Black students. The Black Student Union organized a committee to cultivate engagement opportunities, such as open mic nights, Telfar Tuesdays, study nights, and other interactive games and food, for Black students. The students also initiated conversations with the administration about opportunities to adjust the Trotter room reservation process, so it is not the same and as open as the Michigan Union room reservation process.

In response to the CSG leader's letter to the University of Michigan Regents, the Editor-in-Chief of *The Michigan Review* and Chairman of Young Americans for Freedom at the University of Michigan published an editorial saying that the CSG leader is upholding segregation (Hilu, 2022). *The Michigan Review* editor said that if a white student leader said there were too many Black people in a space, that student would be deemed unfit for office. *The Michigan Review* editor suggested that further racial segregation is not the answer. Rather, more integration was needed "to bring people together so that they can see each other not as whites or

blacks, but as humans" (Hilu, 2022, para. 17). *The Michigan Review* editor concluded the editorial with an antagonistic comment directed at the CSG leader that they wrote this article while sitting inside Trotter.

BIPOC students posted on Instagram about the absurdity of bringing more white students into a space for students of color to remedy centuries of injustice and form social cohesion (Michigan in Color, 2022). BIPOC students reminded readers that our university is far from rectifying white violence and oppression which resulted in the need for the Trotter Multicultural Center. They would not contemplate giving attention to the victimhood of white students. As I highlighted in Chapter Two, Patton (2011) stated the criticism of culture centers being segregationist is problematic because it situates majority students as deprived by non-majority students. The BIPOC students went on to say, "that close-minded and misled individuals who subscribe to the myth of racism's apparent disappearance tend to hold the congruent perspective that reverse racism is a real concept" (Michigan in Color, 2022, para. 3). The students illuminated the failing in the educational system for the widespread myth that racism has been resolved.

Chapter Summary

Using a lens of whiteness as property (Harris, 1993), I offered a depiction of the context of the University of Michigan. The lens is particularly useful considering my research purpose to present an understanding of students' knowledge, skills, and attitudes to engage with difference and across cultures that are learned in the college union and multicultural center at this HWI. The examples that I provided depict a campus steeped in asset accumulation and the creation and re-creation of whiteness. From the centuries of pain toward Native communities to the colonization of the Philippines and the development of the Michigan Union by and for the predominantly

white student body, University of Michigan administrators over time have ensured institutional prestige at the expense of minoritized communities and students. There are documented efforts by administrators to take performative approaches to racial justice through admissions processes, naming institutional diversity leaders without the power to systematically change the institution, and a struggle for decades of the Trotter Multicultural Center to have resources to meet BIPOC students' needs. Students have had to activate for critical campus changes. In 2006, due to a state ban on the use of affirmative action at state-funded institutions, the University of Michigan no longer considered race in its holistic review process (Garces & Cogburn, 2015). The impact of this change has also reverberated in challenging ways for the institution. It has made campus even more difficult for underrepresented students of color and the collective community, sending spoken and unspoken messages about who belongs and who does not and fueling a lack of equity and societal understanding of affirmative action benefits.

This chapter provided examples to situate the University of Michigan as an HWI. This institutional context is helpful in understanding students' learning experiences. This institutional analysis assisted in my reflexivity throughout the research process about my multiple identities, positionality, and status as a University of Michigan administrator. In the following chapter, I describe how I conducted this dissertation research study.

CHAPTER 4: METHODOLOGY

The purpose of this research study was to understand what students say they learn about engaging with difference and across cultures in the co-curricular campus spaces of a college union and multicultural center at a historically white institution. Three main research questions guided this study:

1. What do students say they learn about engaging with difference and across cultures in co-curricular campus spaces at a historically white institution?

   a. What do students say they learn about engaging with difference and across cultures in a college union?

   b. What do students say they learn about engaging with difference and across cultures in a multicultural center?

This chapter presents the methodological approach and research design. I detail my participant recruitment and selection process. I describe the data collection process, including semi-structured interviews and an education journey mapping exercise, for this multiple case study. I discuss how I analyzed data from and with participants as well as my own reflections. I explain how I ensured the trustworthiness of the data and outline the ethical considerations that I employed during this study. Lastly, I describe how I captured study limitations.

Research Methodology

Through qualitative ontological constructivism, this study took into account the cultural and historical interpretations of the participants' experiences as well as the social reality in making meaning of the environment (Bhattacharya, 2017). Ontology refers to how researchers view the world and what motivates researchers for topics of scholarly inquiry. Ontological

constructivism asserts the individual or the knower's perspective makes the world real. As described by Bhattacharya (2017), there are four elements of research: (1) epistemology (how we know what we know in the world), (2) theoretical perspectives (the lens through which researchers understand their studies), methodology (the blueprint of the research study), and (4) methods (how data collection occurs in research).

As a qualitative researcher, my epistemology situates truth, reality, and meaning within the perceptions of the observer. The construction of meaning is based on people's own understanding of their worlds, experiences, interactions with events, and circumstances in their lives. Bhattacharya (2017) defined qualitative research as working "within the context of human experiences and the ways in which meaning is made out of those experiences" (p. 6). Conducting qualitative research is nonlinear and iterative, with the researcher going back and forth between data collection and analysis (Bhattacharya, 2017). Notably, the participants' voices and the voice of the researcher(s) are co-constructed in this type of research.

By applying multicultural competence (Pope et al., 2004, 2019) to Strange and Banning's (2001, 2015) campus ecology framework, I used this lens to demonstrate the breadth and importance of potential cultural experiences within co-curricular campus environments. I used the four components of the environment—physical, human aggregate, organizational, and socially constructed (Strange & Banning, 2001, 2015)—combined with the multicultural competence model—multicultural awareness, multicultural knowledge, multicultural skills, and multicultural action (Pope et al., 2004, 2019)—to examine multicultural student learning that happens in co-curricular physical environments. I also used the combination of these models, as I described in Chapter Two, to understand how inclusive and exclusive practices in co-curricular campus spaces contribute to student learning across difference.

Research Design

Rooted in a social constructivist notion of reality, I sought to understand students'
experiences in co-curricular campus spaces, how and why students act in certain ways, and
explored the meanings they generate (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017). Using multiple case study
methodology (Stake, 2006; Yin, 2018) within a constructivist stance, I sought to understand what
students say they learn about engaging with difference and across cultures in the stand-alone
buildings of the Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center at the University of Michigan.

As Stake (2006) described, "an important reason for doing the multicase study is to
examine how the program or phenomenon performs in different environments" (p. 23). I found
out firsthand what each individual case does—its activity and its functioning. Both Stake (2006)
and Yin (2018) emphasized the need to do deep learning about each case and provide thick
descriptions. Bartlett and Vavrus (2017) added to Stake's and Yin's approaches by emphasizing
a case comparison across three axes: (1) a horizontal look that contrasts one case with another
and traces connections across the cases, (2) a vertical comparison of influences at different levels
(e.g., campus leaders, funding decision-makers), and (3) a transversal comparison to how the
cases have evolved over time in the social and cultural context. I provided thick descriptions and
a cross-case analysis in this study. By conducting a multiple case study, the findings may be
transferable to similar situations or individuals beyond the bounds of this study. I explain the
research process in further detail in the following sections.

Participants

The participants were selected based on information-rich maximum variation sampling
(Patton, 1990), intentionally selecting individuals that meet the criteria to understand the
experiences and learning environments of the Trotter Multicultural Center and the Michigan

Union. There are no rules for sample size in qualitative inquiry (Patton, 1990). Sample size depends on the purpose of my inquiry, what will be useful, and what can be done with available time and resources. In-depth information from a small number of people can be very valuable, especially if the cases are information-rich (Patton, 1990). The case study approach typically involves intense analyses of a small number of subjects rather than gathering data from a large number of eligible candidates.

I recruited participants in several ways. I contacted the directors of the Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center to assist in identifying potential participants who are a part of their organizations (see Appendix B). These nominators suggested 60 highly involved students across the two spaces. I emailed student organization leaders who have reserved meeting space in the Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center at least three times within the past academic year and student leaders who have student organization storage space in the building(s) (see Appendix C). I sought regular users of the spaces. I partnered with my University Unions colleagues who ran a report of these student users. The meeting space listserv contained 451 unique identifiers. Additionally, I included 92 students who had student organization storage units–17 in the Trotter Multicultural Center and 75 in the Michigan Union. I also emailed all recognized student organization leaders through an email listserv coordinated by the Center for Campus Involvement in University Unions at the University of Michigan. This listserv contained approximately 4,800 unique identifiers. As the Director of the Center for Campus Involvement, I had insider access to this listserv. Lastly, I put up posters in student organization open workspaces and lounge areas of the Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center recruiting student participants for this study. The participant recruitment poster included the title of my research study, compensation for participation, researcher contact information, and a QR Code

for students to complete the screening questionnaire (see Appendix D). I had support from my supervisor and Student Life leaders to conduct this study as it aligns with our diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives.

For planning purposes, I sought to enroll 6-10 total participants who meet screening criteria in order to reach data saturation (Yin, 2018). Interested students were invited to complete an online research participant screening questionnaire in Google forms (see Appendix E). Participant criteria included: (1) Students have attended classes as an undergraduate student on campus during the 2021-2022 academic year; (2) Students should be able to describe the social identities that inform how they experience and see the world; and (3) Students should either be highly involved in the Michigan Union and/or Trotter Multicultural Center as student employees, student advisory board members, or student organization leaders advised by unit staff; or, general users of the Michigan Union and/or Trotter Multicultural Center who have reserved meeting rooms in at least one of the two buildings no less than three times within the past year, student leaders who have student organization storage space in the building(s), or students who regularly use student organization open workspaces or lounges. I sought to enroll 3-4 highly involved students and 4-6 general student users, balancing involvement with each respective building. The balance of enrolling highly involved students and general users resulted in multiple ways in which students learn in these co-curricular environments. As I describe in Chapter Five, I was flexible in my final participant pool based on the qualified participants that expressed interest in this study.

I mentioned in the recruitment questionnaire that I would select students for this study based on the widest range of perspectives possible about this research topic. In particular, I balanced students' experiences visiting each case site, the indication of their learning experiences

across the two case sites, and their privileged and minoritized social identities. For the confidentiality of their real identity (American Psychological Association, 2020), I asked participants if they would like to select a pseudonym. I immediately disposed of data collected from subjects who were not selected from the screening process.

Data Collection

The multiple case study design provided a rigorous approach to collecting and analyzing data. The cases in this study were defined as the Michigan Union and the Trotter Multicultural Center. I collected data from seven student participants based on the widest range of perspectives possible who met the screening criteria. Because the research questions were framed in what students say they learn about engaging in these co-curricular spaces, students' voices helped me answer my inquiry. Yin (2018) noted that the researcher should focus on getting information on the various aspects of the case, which I did through the data collection procedures. The data collection procedures included participant interviews and an educational journey mapping exercise. I identified compensation of a $30.00 Amazon gift card upon each participant's completion of the interview process. I did not prorate compensation if participants only completed a portion of the study. Two of the seven participants completed only a portion of the study. The two students shared that they were unable to complete the education journey mapping exercise due to their internship and summer job schedules.

Interviews

Semi-structured interviews are often used in case study research (Bartlett & Vavrus, 2017). I prepared interview questions in advance with flexibility in the ordering and the actual wording of the questions during the interview, allowing for some spontaneous back-and-forth between the researcher and the interviewee. Based on their availability, I interviewed each

participant three times (Seidman, 2006) remotely on Zoom. The COVID-19 pandemic influenced rapid change in higher education, including the use of online video communication software such as Zoom that allows for ease of connectivity. In this study, I was able to use Zoom for all data collection. Each interview was up to 60 minutes. I used sound recording technology through Zoom to fully capture the interview content for data analysis.

The initial interview was a general rapport interview, learning about each participant, asking questions about their specific experiences related to the research questions, and introducing the next exercise. The second interview included an education journey mapping exercise (Annamaa, 2017) to explore their spatial learning within the cases while situating themselves in the larger socio-historical reality. I describe this exercise in more detail in the next section. The final interview was for students to reflect on the meaning of their experience. The interview protocols are located in Appendix F.

Education Journey Mapping

Annamma (2017) suggested that education inequities are often social and spatial phenomena. The notion of "sociospatial dialectic," (p. 35) where geography impacts social relations while social processes shape spatiality, is an essential dimension to understanding systemic injustices. Through this lens, Annamma created education journey mapping as a qualitative methodology for equity-focused education. She situated her work within the concepts of critical race theory (CRT) and disability critical race theory (DisCrit). This intersectional framework of CRT and DisCrit offers an understanding of how bodies at the intersections of race and disability are susceptible to both racism and ableism and how those bodies are targeted for removal from public spaces. I used education journey mapping with participants to get a sense of

the physical spaces in the study that they experienced and interrogate the spaces between

individuals and social structures of the environment (Annamma, 2017).

Education journey maps are meant to capture visual trajectories throughout the student

learning experience (Annamma, 2017). Maps can be topographical, representing high and low

points in their education journey and their relationships with education. Maps can be physical,

representing features of the environment within spaces. Physical maps may include the

identification of visible or invisible power dynamics. Maps can also be political, reflecting

current socio-political boundaries. Political maps may include reimagined boundaries. Annamma

(2017) recommended providing students with a prompt to allow for shifts in time and space. I

provided the participants with an educational journey prompt (see Appendix F) at the conclusion

of their first interview for sharing their stories during the second interview. I created and shared

my own education journey map with each participant. Sharing my education journey map was a

part of my reflexivity in addition to rapport-building with research participants. Annamma

(2017) recommended that qualitative researchers inform students that they also have a narrative

to share, which is not meant to be interpreted by someone else but to be discussed and considered

alongside participants to orient themselves in the spaces they are researching. Together,

participants and I had conversations about our maps and asked clarifying questions. Through the

education journey mapping exercise, this dialogic moment built trust (Annamma, 2017).

Storing the Data

I saved data from the interviews in DOCX files and in a Google Drive folder only

accessible to me as the researcher. I labeled the folder with the research project title. I labeled

sub-folders with unique identifiers, or pseudonyms, of research participants. I saved research

participant data with the interview date and the specific activity. I included researcher memos in

each sub-folder. The Google Drive folder included the files and memos that I needed to synthesize codes and develop categories from the data. I will retain research data for at least three years; during this time, data will remain in the secured online data system.

<div align="center">**Data Analysis**</div>

I simultaneously collected, analyzed, and documented reflections and findings to make sense of the data (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Saldaña, 2016). I transcribed and coded data collected from participants' interviews as they occurred to create a heuristic, a method of discovery (Saldaña, 2016). Coding is an interpretive act by the researcher, requiring an analytical lens based on how the researcher views the phenomenon. I kept a copy of the research questions, conceptual frameworks, and other major issues such as the historical context of the spaces and campus near me as I coded to keep me focused on the research concerns. I coded one participant's data at a time so other participants' data did not affect my coding. I open-coded using keywords or phrases, prompting further written reflection on the deeper and more complex meaning it evoked (Saldaña, 2016). I used the Dedoose coding software to deconstruct interview transcripts. After I coded each interview, before any subsequent interviews, I consulted with research participants as a way to assess the accuracy of the findings (Saldaña, 2016). Feedback from the participants informed changes to the coding process, which required flexibility in my analysis (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016; Weiss, 1994). After I coded the data at each interview stage, I constructed initial categories from the data that were expressed by participants (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005).

During the education journey mapping, I situated students as experts in the knowledge generation process from the exercise. As I outlined in Appendix F, the participants and I engaged in a discussion about our maps. Both the participants and I talked about patterns between our

journeys. This analysis provided an opportunity for the students and me to make connections within the larger narratives around the learning that happens in the Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center.

It was helpful for me as the researcher to keep analytic memos, as described by Saldaña (2016), to reflect on the interview and education journey mapping process, the coding and category choices, and how the research was taking shape. These memos served as side conversations with me about the data, including how my lived experiences shaped and informed my worldview. As a part of the memo process, I explored the power dynamics at play in the research process with my multiple social identities and administrative position at the University of Michigan.

My insider/outsider research status with the research participants was fluid (Pelzang & Hutchinson, 2018). I disclosed my insider status with participants, yet remained open and reflective to understand their unique experiences and perspectives. Chavez (2018) recommended reflecting on what researchers know as insiders from what they see through the data collection and analysis process. As I memoed and open-coded in Dedoose, I had countless codes to synthesize into categories.

It was helpful to use a replication strategy, looking for similar or contrasting points, to identify and narrow down patterns in the data (Yin, 2018). This iterative data collection, analysis, comparison, and revision process helped me compile findings for each case in this study to answer my research questions about the Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center. Along with each code, I included a marker to distinguish if the codes were applicable to the Michigan Union and/or the Trotter Multicultural Center. This approach helped me to sort the data for each case. After completing each case-based analysis, I conducted a cross-case synthesis to identify

patterns to answer my research question about co-curricular campus spaces at the University of Michigan. During the data analysis, I thought conceptually and considered how the individual cases were sufficiently comparable along important dimensions (Yin, 2018), such as the built layout or collective characteristics of the individuals and groups who inhabit the spaces. The Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center cases were also bound to have dissimilarities. I addressed the data categories for each case, commonalities, and patterns across participants in Chapter Five.

<center>**Trustworthiness**</center>

I met trustworthiness standards by co-creating the interview experience with participants, doing member checks, involving participants in thematic analysis, and using triangulation. Before starting the interview process, I shared with participants that I wanted to center their needs throughout this experience (Galvez & Muñoz, 2020). I asked participants what a humane research process looked and felt like for them. Additionally, as I indicated in the previous Data Analysis section, I invited participants to review interview transcripts and provide feedback on my coding. Member checks ensured that I was appropriate, honest, and accurate in the research (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Participants co-created patterns during the education journey mapping exercise based on observations. I triangulated data from each interview from the other interviews for the purposes of corroboration. Triangulation is the process of using multiple perceptions to clarify meaning, and it can be achieved through the redundancy of data gathering and the development of interpretations (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). Lastly, I shared the findings chapter with study participants with an invitation for feedback.

Ethical Considerations

Before starting the interview process, I gained informed consent from students to participate (see Appendix G) as required by the Institutional Review Board (IRB) at Colorado State University. I did not need to receive IRB approval from the University of Michigan, where my study occurred, because this project is a part of my dissertation study at Colorado State University. I interrogated myself as the researcher throughout the research process by asking why I did this study, its significance, and what I wanted to do with the findings. I reflected on my relationships with the students and the spaces that I studied. Galvez & Muñoz (2020) recommended that reciprocity should exist between the researcher and all participants. I began participant interviews by co-creating expectations to ensure a humane research process, centering on the needs of student participants. I joined in the activity and discussion during the education journey mapping exercise to strengthen rapport, trust, and learning together. This led to the co-creation of knowledge with participants. As I previously mentioned, I stored and secured all data with access only by me, the researcher/principal investigator.

Chapter Summary

I entered this research with much reflection about how I engage on my campus as an out queer white person having maximized my white privileges at work and simultaneously disrupting the status quo through my queer vulnerability. My work experiences in the physical environments of University Unions and the Trotter Multicultural Center at the University of Michigan exposed me to different organizational cultures, both in service to the co-curricular student experience and shaping their environments differently with and for students. This reflection about my social and work identities provided me with deep ecological questioning about how humans, or college students in this research study, interact with difference and learn

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across cultures and how the environment shapes that learning. I enacted a methodological approach to this research study that was ethical and trustworthy with care for the spaces and student participants who engaged in them. As an employee and positional leader within the Michigan Union and Student Life at the University of Michigan, I considered the advantages and complications of my insider positionality (Bhattacharya, 2017; Chavez, 2008). One advantage was my understanding of the cultures of both the Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center. One disadvantage was the positional power I hold on campus. It was important for me to co-create knowledge with the participants in this study and engage in self-reflection as I was a passionate participant (Lincoln & Guba, 2013) throughout this study.

CHAPTER 5: FINDINGS

In this dissertation, I investigated students' awareness, knowledge, and skills to engage with difference and across cultures that they learn in co-curricular campus spaces. The research questions under investigation asked what students say they learn about engaging with difference and across cultures in the co-curricular campus spaces of a college union and a multicultural center at a historically white institution, the University of Michigan. I delimited this study to two research cases, the Michigan Union and the Trotter Multicultural Center. This research is potentially significant because it could provide rich descriptions of how co-curricular higher education leaders can work with and for students to create equitable, humanizing environments to educate students to work in a multicultural and currently polarized society. Higher education leaders are charged with preparing students to lead and advance society. This chapter presents the final participant demographic information and my findings, or principal outcomes, from this research project.

I designed a constructivist, triangulated multiple case study (Bhattacharya, 2017) using information-rich maximum variation sampling (Patton, 1990) to inform my participant recruitment. By applying multicultural competence (Pope et al., 2004, 2019) to Strange and Banning's (2001, 2015) four component model of campus environments, I sought to explain students' breadth and importance of cultural experiences within co-curricular campus environments. For planning purposes, I desired to enroll 6-10 total participants who met the screening criteria in order to reach data saturation (Yin, 2018).

To answer the research questions, I collected and analyzed data from semi-structured interviews with University of Michigan students. Student participants and I co-created some

patterns during the education journey map discussion exercise in the second interview phase. I then used a values coding process (Saldaña, 2016) to develop categories. Values coding is the application of codes to qualitative data that reflect a participant's values, attitudes, and beliefs, representing their perspectives or worldview (Saldaña, 2016). Values coding is useful for research exploring cultural experiences and actions. I grouped the coded data into categories to search for patterns. After additional reflection during my analysis, I reorganized and refined categories. I considered student participants' voices as I constructed categories. I did member checks with participants throughout the interview and analysis process to ensure trustworthiness.

The principal outcomes are included in the following sections of this chapter. In the analysis of the Michigan Union, I describe the three categories of (1) Core to the University; (2) Connecting with Others; and (3) Learning with Others. In the analysis of the Trotter Multicultural Center, I describe the three categories of (1) A Central Meeting Place; (2) A Space Where You Can Be Yourself; and (3) Interactions with Difference. The categories are ideas that were directly expressed by participants in the interview data (Hsieh & Shannon, 2005). Further, I share four commonalities across the Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center: (1) The Spaces were Birthed for Different Reasons, But They are Both Unionizing Spaces; (2) The Dominant Features Represent the People Who Inhabit Them; (3) Both Centrally Located, But Not Equitable in Size; and (4) Students' Range of Emotions About Both Buildings. Finally, I explain four patterns across the student participants in this study: (1) BIPOC Participants Saw Themselves in the Trotter Multicultural Center; (2) White Participants Connected Effortlessly in the Michigan Union; (3) Multicultural Competence is A Work in Progress for Everyone; and (4) All Participants Wanted to Disrupt Campus Structures That Do Not Work for Everybody.

Participant Demographic Information

I interviewed a total of seven participants for this investigation of what students say they learn about engaging with difference and across cultures in the co-curricular campus spaces of the Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center at the University of Michigan. As shown in the snapshot of participant demographic information in Table 5.1, the seven participants encompassed three seniors and four juniors within the 2021-2022 academic year. The participants described the social identities that most inform how they see the world (see Table 5.1). Based on students that completed the recruitment questionnaire, I selected participants based on the widest range of perspectives possible. All the participants indicated that they visited the Michigan Union 10 or more times during the 2021-2022 academic year. Visits to the Trotter Multicultural Center in the same academic year ranged from none to 10 or more. Each participant was involved in at least one student organization at the University of Michigan, and typically served as president or held another executive board member position. Two of the participants were also student employees in the Michigan Union. I incorporated these key demographic characteristics in the table that follows.

Table 5.1. *Demographic Information about Participants*

Pseudonym (Pronouns)	Salient Social Identities	Class Standing	# of Times Visited Union	# of Times Visited Trotter	Involvement
Ava (she/her)	White, Straight, Woman, Christian, Lower middle-class	Junior	10 or more	None	University Blood Initiative at U-M
Alicia (she/her)	Black, Woman, Christian	Junior	10 or more	10 or more	Black Student Union; Michigan Union student employee
Jasmine (she/her)	First-Gen, Puerto Rican, Woman	Senior	10 or more	7-9	Michigan Union student employee; Lambda Theta Alpha Latin Sorority, Inc.; Multicultural Greek Council
John (he/him)	Catholicism, Conservatism	Junior	10 or more	4-6	Young Americans for Freedom; *The Michigan Review*
Madison (she/her)	Armenian, Woman, First-Gen, American, Overweight	Junior	10 or more	4-6	Armenian Students' Cultural Association; Changing Health, Attitudes, and Actions to Recreate Girls (CHAARG)
Marcia (she/her)	Arab, Woman, Egyptian, Muslim	Senior	10 or more	10 or more	North African Students Association; Egyptian Student Association
Tanya (she/her)	Black, Woman	Senior	10 or more	10 or more	Black Student Union; Curl Talk @ UMich

Analysis of the Michigan Union

I used participants' words and descriptions of their accounts to demonstrate three categories about the Michigan Union that emerged from my data analysis. The categories include, in no particular order, Core to the University, Connecting with Others, and Learning with Others. I conclude this analysis with a short summary and reflection.

Category 1. Core to the University

The central category of the Michigan Union as core of the university often showed up during interviews through students' accounts of historical events and the convenient resources provided by the college union. Below, I provide excerpts from four participants. The physical elements and how participants make meaning of the building are particularly compelling.

Without the resources from the Michigan Union, particularly the central campus location and free meeting rooms, Ava may not have been able to actualize the student organization she founded.

> The Union is in the center of campus and we needed a location that would be close to people's classes, not far out…I think the policies [of the Michigan Union] having the free meeting rooms, like the Kuenzel Room are good, and also the meeting spaces in the IdeaHub. Those are helpful. That's why we chose to have our last [event] there, because of the location and the Kuenzel room is just a big space and it's nice.

Like several of the participants in this study, Ava reflected on how the Michigan Union rooms provided different resources to students during the height of the COVID-19 pandemic compared to today. Ava shared that the IdeaHub, a collaborative co-working space designed to support the University of Michigan's over 1500 student organizations, served as a helpful study space for students when classes were primarily remote during the pandemic.

Jasmine reflected on the knowledge she gained about the Michigan Union through her student employee position:

> I feel like the Union is the core of the university. But at the same time, there's been buildings that have opened up in response to the Union. It almost makes me feel as though the Union's a little bit problematic within itself. Like I mentioned, I feel like every college campus has a Union because the purpose of it is to get food, to have space for events, for students to be students and study, meet up together, have a space for themselves.

Jasmine's portrayal of the Michigan Union as problematic reflects the founding of the Michigan League by women students in response to the Union's men-only origin (Michigan in the World, 2021). Also, Jasmine problematizes the Michigan Union as upholding whiteness in serving a predominantly white student body and operating within an institutional system of hegemonic whiteness. BIPOC students, then, have to find other community spaces to be seen and empowered, like the Trotter Multicultural Center. For Jasmine, problematization was a way to be authentic about opportunities for improvement. Additionally, Jasmine's portrayal affirms the resources provided in the Michigan Union that every student needs, such as meeting rooms and events, food, banks, technology services, lounges, and a bookstore.

John shared that the Michigan Union is core to his student organization because of the student organization storage.

> I connected with the Union staff about any storage and they said, 'The president before you applied for storage, so you have storage.' That was awesome! This year, we had bigger storage. It was good to have, especially for our tabling materials like our buttons, our stickers, the table itself. That was really good to have. When we're scheduling

tabling, we just go to the Union, carry the stuff to the Diag and we're all good. That was a

huge blessing.

In addition to the student organization storage, John liked to spend time in the renovated

Michigan Union Courtyard. He liked how the renovation included a blend of the original

architecture and modern design elements. He spent time in the Courtyard just to look at the

architecture.

Tanya visited the Michigan Union to attend cultural events in the meeting rooms, get

takeout food at one of the eateries, and enjoy the massage chairs.

I feel like my best self in the Union where the massage chairs are for CAPS [Counseling

and Psychological Services] because I mean who doesn't love a good massage? But

honestly, I'll keep my answer to that. I think definitely the massage room in CAPS

because when you're having a rough day, you're like, 'You know what? I need to have a

little relaxing moment. Let me go sit in the massage chair.'"

Tanya had a strategy, an action plan, for engaging with the resources that she needed in the

Michigan Union. She described the need to "get in and get out" of the Union as quickly as

possible. Tanya did not find a sense of belonging in the Michigan Union because she did not

easily see people that looked like her.

I feel like I stay out of the Union for the most part. I mean, I think even if you just look at

who's in the Union, I think that shows you a lot, too, of who feels comfortable being in

the Union, who wants to be in the Union. It's usually not a bunch of students of color.

White students and Asian students are the two biggest demographics racially at

Michigan, so those are the two largest demographics you'll see in the Union actually

using the space.

During the interview, it appeared that Tanya excluded Asian Pacific Islander Desi American (APIDA) students as students of color. For Tanya to feel a sense of belonging, she had to see other Black students in the Michigan Union. Much of what Tanya learned about the Michigan Union's history was from Black Student Union alumni when they described the Students of Color Coalition occupying the Michigan Union tower. As I discussed in Chapter Two, the Students of Color Coalition forced a secret honor society out of the Michigan Union Tower because of their racist practices.

Ava, Jasmine, John, and Tanya shared various descriptions getting at the central category of the Michigan Union as core of the university. I found the students expressed various emotions in telling me their stories, including joy, gratitude, disappointment, and curiosity. As Strange and Banning (2001, 2015) described, the relationship between students and their environment is a complex one. Existing within an HWI, the Michigan Union, in its service to the entire campus community, is shaped by dominant campus characteristics and culture. At the same time, the Michigan Union contributes to students' needs by offering convenient resources. Next, I explain the category of Connecting with Others through the Michigan Union.

Category 2. Connecting with Others

The central category of connecting with others in the Michigan Union appeared during students' stories of where they felt belonging. While the student participants experienced connection, feelings of disconnection also occurred if students did not see themselves in the building. I imagine the pressure to fit in is real and unrelenting in the campus environment, but the power of connection can be a protector as students navigate belonging. Below, I provide excerpts from four participants.

Madison reflected on "the power of networking" as she considered how she can be who she is and be present with other students in the campus community.

I take the term networking loosely. It doesn't mean, necessarily, professional networking, trying to find a job, but literally meeting with people (mutual friends, people I have been in orgs with) in more casual settings and using these spaces to do them. I feel like savoring the last two semesters of school and having so many people that are between my age range in one square mile. I think it'll be really cool to use the Union to learn more about people and see how things are going with them.

The Michigan Union Courtyard is particularly "nostalgic" for Madison. Madison was a first-year student when the Michigan Union reopened in 2020 after renovation. She went to the Courtyard between 9:00pm-10:00pm with a few close friends to connect, study, or do other work. "I really like sitting in the Courtyard because it's very pretty. And it's just nice, the sound of Sweetwater's Coffee…" The Courtyard was the last stop before she went to sleep. Madison also thought the UMix Late Night event offerings were "always really cool." Madison plans to make more happy memories in the Michigan Union in her senior year.

For Alicia, the staff team that she worked with at the Campus Information desk at the Michigan Union contributed to her feeling connected and safe. "People are very helpful when there are conflicts" with guests. Alicia found a safe space for herself at the Campus Information desk when she felt unwelcome in her academic school. Additionally, Alicia's job contributed to her connections with classmates when classes were primarily on Zoom throughout the pandemic.

We see each other in Zoom class and then they end up being at the Union. It was kind of a full circle moment really. Or, I'd be at the Union and we see each other but not know

each other, and then in class during break-outs they'd be like 'Oh wow, you work at the

Union!' It was enjoyable at a time when you were so disconnected from people.

Additionally, the Multi-Ethnic Student Affairs (MESA) office in the Michigan Union was an

important resource for Alicia to connect with staff, get advice, and other administrative needs.

> It's a more resource-based version of Trotter. I go there if I need advice from anyone. It's
>
> more administrative with staff connecting with students that you don't necessarily get
>
> from the Trotter space.

Alicia felt more of a connection with staff in the MESA office than with staff in the Trotter

Multicultural Center. She shared that MESA staff directly advised the Black Student Union, her

student organization, so it felt more like a resource space than a hang-out space like Trotter did.

> Most of Tanya's connections in the Union happen when she also goes to MESA rather

than other spaces in the building. "If spaces in Trotter weren't available, I used the MESA space.

I will also go to MESA-sponsored events in the building." Tanya's boundaries for connection

through MESA speak to the belonging uncertainty she felt elsewhere in the Michigan Union

building. As I mentioned in Category 1, Tanya did not see herself in the Union. She also

reflected on too many people being in the Union, an inability to focus, and the siloed nature of

the building, given its large size.

> Marcia also felt like the Michigan Union was large, yet the availability of meeting rooms

shaped her student organization's ability to connect with each other.

> Because the Union is large, it's harder to navigate and figure out where you're going.
>
> However, for our meetings, we met every week, and we really used the Union for every
>
> single meeting. At the Union, if you have an event with 20 people, you have the choice of

10 rooms, and that's even counting the bigger and smaller rooms. There's just more space

in the Union [compared to Trotter].

Marcia went on to offer that connections among those in her communities happen in the Union

because "it's just huge":

There aren't many Egyptians on campus, but I would run into maybe one or two. And

even if I didn't, I would run into North Africans. Or, even if there weren't North

Africans, I would run into Arabs. So every, I guess, concentric circle of my identity, there

would be someone fitting in those circles at the Union.

Marcia, Tanya, Alicia, and Madison highlighted the importance of connection in the

Michigan Union. They each wanted to be somewhere where they wanted to be and where they

felt others wanted them to be. The meeting rooms for small group connection, the MESA Office

for connecting with staff and identity representation, colleagues and peers at the Campus

Information desk at the Michigan Union, and the Michigan Union Courtyard offered students

opportunities to feel seen, heard, and valued. At the same time, the inability of the racially

minoritized student participants in this study to be their authentic selves everywhere in the

Michigan Union limited their sense of belonging. Instead, BIPOC student participants in the

Michigan Union sought out pockets of connection within the physical space to be seen. Next, I

cover the category of Learning with Others.

Category 3. Learning with Others

As I indicated in Figure 2.1 in Chapter Two, the physical, organizational, human

aggregate, and socially constructed environments can facilitate students' development of

multicultural competence. Learning multicultural competence is a journey of becoming with

others rather than a destination or end point, given the changing environments that people pass

through (Pope et al., 2019). As a part of the interview process, explained in Chapter Four, I used education journey mapping (Annamma, 2017) with participants to understand students' sense of place in the physical space and their learning experiences in either or both the Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center. Student participants created very different types of maps based on the stories that they wanted to share. I share a few examples of students' maps throughout this chapter to demonstrate the findings. Education journey mapping is a purposeful, rigorous, and humanizing methodological tool that centers on the interactions, voices, and knowledge of the participants (Annamma, 2017). I discovered that this exercise shed light on how students encountered and constructed racial, faith, gendered, and political boundaries in the Michigan Union. I also discovered the encounters that students had in the Union contributed to the students' development of multicultural competence.

Ava reflected on a memory she shared with peers and others in the Michigan Union as she explored her religious identity.

> Standing on the front steps of the Union, I was invited to a Bible study. I met up with one of the members of that group at Sweetwater's on the first floor. I shared some of my history, who I was as a person, where my family was from, what my religious background was with them and started a friendship that did not last a long time. In the following months, I did a bunch of Bible studies with that group in the IdeaHub, Pendleton Room, and the little booths outside of the Reflection Room on the fourth floor. They ended up trying to convert me to fundamentalist Christian ideology. I felt hurt during the process. I was trying to figure out who I was and where I stood on issues like religion and where my place was. I left the group because it wasn't for me, even though I was baptized Christian. A lot of those really big turning points for me…connection,

confusion, meeting people whose ideas conflicted with mine a lot…took place in the

Michigan Union.

Figure 5.1. Education Journey Map of the Michigan Union. Copyright 2022 by Ava.

This education journey map design (see Figure 5.1), created by Ava, depicted key

moments and feelings as she experienced the Michigan Union space from 2020-2022. In Ava's

memory that I shared above, also included as an "Important Point" in Figure 5.1, multicultural

awareness (Pope et al., 2019) was evident in Ava's self-evaluation of her worldview, how she

understood herself, and how she interacted across difference in the environment. Ava also gained

multicultural knowledge (Pope et al., 2019) when she realized her Christian beliefs were

different from Christian fundamentalism, causing conflict and confusion. Ava was not

immobilized by the conflict, though. She developed multicultural skills by rebounding and

learning how much she did not know (Pope et al., 2019). Additionally, Ava spoke about a time

when she was sitting in a booth outside of the Michigan Union reflection room and someone

from a different faith gave her tea and talked about their faith. Ava shared that she is always

learning about new cultures, striving to use new information to inform how she engages with

others. During our interview, Ava reflected on learning moments–she called them "really big

turning points"–in the Michigan Union where she gained abilities to identify and discuss cultural

differences and issues, as well as assess the impact of how cultural differences impact

communication.

Jasmine brought up developing patience with microaggressions as a key strength she

gained from working at the Campus Information desk in the Michigan Union. Microaggressions

are brief, everyday exchanges that send denigrating messages to people of color because they

belong to a racially minoritized group (Sue et al., 2007). Jasmine felt a sense of belonging with

the Campus Information staff team, despite experiences with racial prejudice from University of

Michigan parents.

> I've had experiences of racist comments said towards me. I've had angry patrons tell me,
> 'How are you even able to afford to be at the University of Michigan? Isn't that so
> expensive for your family?' Or, I've had someone tell me before that I'm an ignorant
> Mexican. First of all, I'm not Mexican. Second of all, what does you being upset about
> something have to do with who I am as a person and how I identify? I think it's definitely
> given me a lot of patience.

Jasmine used the word "patience" in her description of what she gained from explicit racial

derogation by customers at work. However, Jasmine's "patience" was likely a coping mechanism

as she experienced anger, frustration, and dealt with a loss of integrity.

Educational journey: Michigan Union

2019

2020 — Prejudice interaction with parents while at the Union

2021

CIC doesn't have a manager, so I started studying more at the Union to complete CIC tasks

2022

Started school and the union was closed

Union opens and I start working there for CIC

Spending the majority of my shifts at the Union

Became a SM overseeing the Union specifically

Spent the majority of my senior year there for events, work, to eat, and study

Figure 5.2. Education Journey Map of the Michigan Union. Copyright 2022 by Jasmine.

Jasmine's education journey map of the Michigan Union (see Figure 5.2) highlighted the prejudiced interactions that she had with other students' parents while working there. These interactions started in her first year. She went on to say more.

The first few interactions I've had like that brought me to tears. These are the things you see all over social media, television, everywhere. But I've never experienced it to this degree until I got to the University of Michigan. I'm first generation. My parents never told me that these experiences are common for students of color. It's unfortunate. I felt like the Michigan Union was as welcoming of a space as it's supposed to be. Having

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those interactions reminds me that people are going to say what they want, and how you

choose to respond is important. At the end of the day, if people choose to respond like

this, then I also have a choice for how I respond. I can either respond with the same

amount of ignorance; it doesn't get us anywhere. Or, I can respond in a way with more

elegance and grace. To me, it's not worth my time arguing with somebody over these

ignorant comments, but at the same time, not letting it slide.

Jasmine rationalized that it would not do any good to argue with customers about their racist

comments. Although this approach had validity for Jasmine, she felt invisible and in shock. In

addition to Jasmine's description of developing patience with microaggressions, Jasmine may

have experienced a dissociative state from the trauma through avoidant coping to help manage

the effects of racist prejudice. Dissociative states are momentary gaps when someone

disconnects their internal experience from the external environment in an attempt to manage

distressing situations (Carlson, et al., 2012). Despite the effects of racial prejudice, Jasmine was

able to assess the impact of cultural differences on communication and navigate across those

differences with the customers, which is a multicultural skill (Pope et al., 2019).

Jasmine's experiences also speak to Hurtado and Carter's (1997) finding that Latinx

students view college unions as part of the dominant culture. Whiteness in the dominant

university culture excludes BIPOC, privileging white people, and results in the physical and

psychological need to navigate oppressive environments. While this deficit narrative involves

what BIPOC students do not have in a historically white institution, Jasmine demonstrated

multicultural competence skills through her storytelling (Pope et al., 2019). Jasmine eventually

became a student manager with Campus Information. Inside the Michigan Union, Jasmine spent

much of her college career examining her life experiences, family background, and cultural

influences related to individuals who were different from her. Through her experiences, she fully understood prejudice, power, and oppression and how the perpetuation of these systems works to create barriers to access and success. Jasmine's multicultural skills in assessing the impact of cultural differences on communication and navigating across differences with customers came out of the necessity to connect with people through her job who were culturally different.

Coming to the University of Michigan, Jasmine thought everybody had similar mindsets to her. She expected others to be curious and respectful. Despite the unhappy and disrespectful moments while working in the Michigan Union, Jasmine shared she is thankful for them. She felt more prepared to engage in the world. She also believed the Michigan Union can do more for students to feel welcome.

There are other areas where the category of Learning with Others occurs. During her new student orientation tour through the Michigan Union, Alicia got lost in the building and was surprised and caught off guard by the large number of white people in that space. During this tour, Alicia also met her best friend, another Black woman. They realized BIPOC students needed supportive spaces on campus without white people, such as the Trotter Multicultural Center. For Madison, the Michigan Union IdeaHub was a critical place for her and her student organization peers to get to know each other, become knowledgeable about their multiple identities, and learn how to work together. Figure 5.3 depicts the IdeaHub in Madison's education journey in the Michigan Union. Ava reflected that attending Winterfest, a student organization fair, in the Michigan Union was helpful in meeting students with identities different than her own. Tanya shared that the heritage month events in the Michigan Union are conducive to the knowledge-building of diverse cultures.
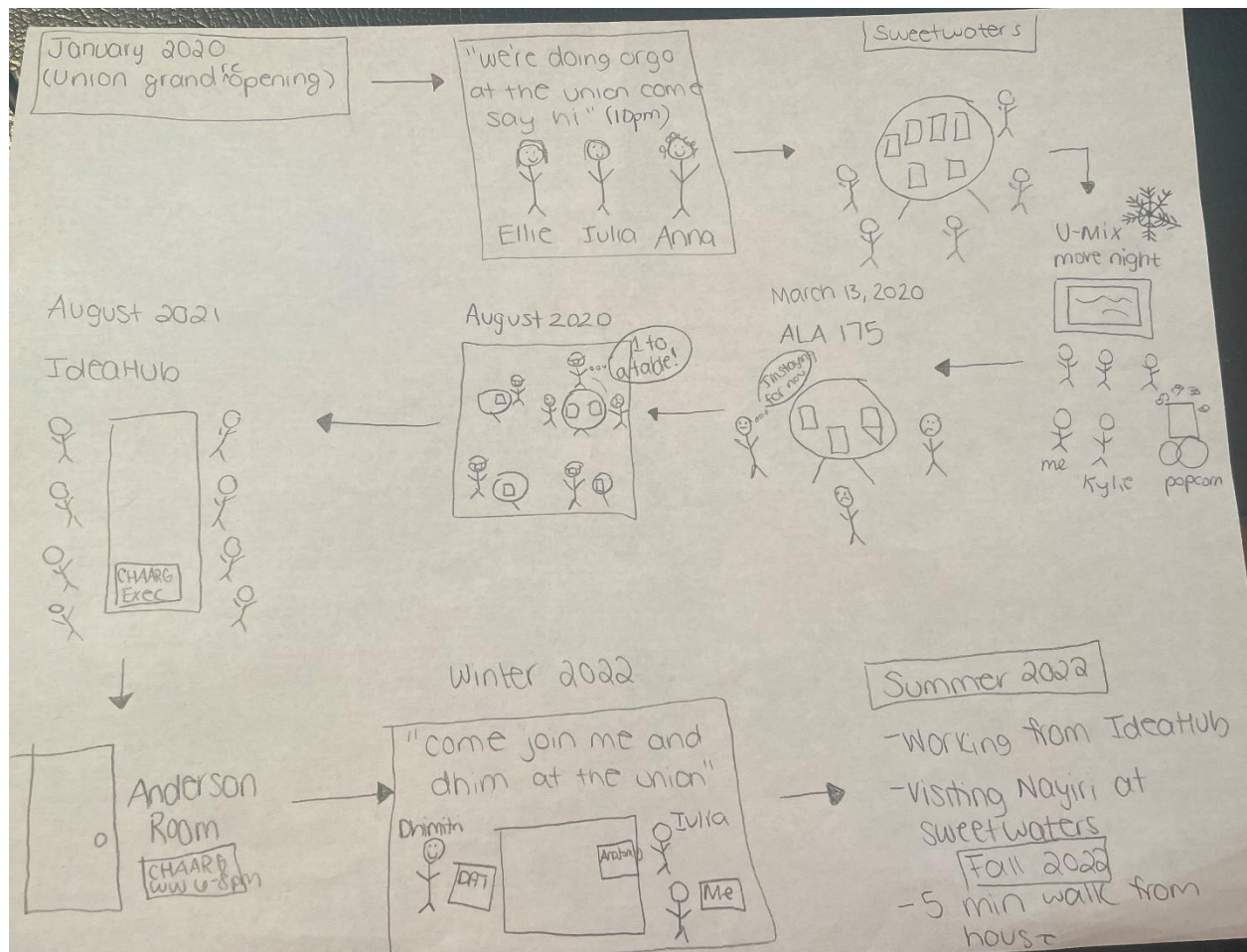
Figure 5.3. Education Journey Map of the Michigan Union. Copyright 2022 by Madison.

These rich descriptions from student participants suggest that learning with others across difference can happen through the Michigan Union. For these students, learning happened through work experience as well as student organization involvement, participating in a building tour, and attending a meeting or event. There may be many avenues through which learning occurred, but these are what were voiced by participants.

Summary and Reflection

The students in this study experienced the Michigan Union in different ways. The Michigan Union is a living space with people that create life within it. The students' narratives humanized the environment. The environment is historically and currently imperfect.

Administrators and students need to continue to disrupt systems of power and oppression on campus for current and future students to thrive. Yet, in the Michigan Union, student participants made lasting connections and learned alongside others in ways that made a difference for them. Connection–a sense of belonging–is important for learning across difference to occur. As an administrator in the Michigan Union, I was heartened by the vulnerability of the participants in sharing stories. I have a responsibility to continue to work alongside students and colleagues to shape the Michigan Union in being more equitable and welcoming for students, particularly the most marginalized students, and disrupt the damaging aspects of our white supremacy culture that were made for people that look like me. Next, I provide an analysis of the Trotter Multicultural Center.

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Analysis of the Trotter Multicultural Center

</div>

I used participants' words and descriptions of their accounts to demonstrate three categories that emerged about the Trotter Multicultural Center from my data analysis. The categories include, in no particular order, A Central Meeting Place, A Space Where You Can Be Yourself, and Interactions with Difference. I conclude this analysis with a short summary and reflection.

Category 1. A Central Meeting Place

The category of the Trotter Multicultural Center as a central meeting place appeared during students' descriptions of the convenient location of the building, the history of the place, and where students made meaningful connections. As I discussed in Chapter Two, the notion of place centers on the BIPOC community's collective life rather than the individual human experience (Tuck & McKenzie, 2015). Below, I provide excerpts from three participants. The

significance of the location and history of the Trotter Multicultural Center are particularly evident.

The visible presence and accessibility of the stand-alone building on the Central Campus at the University of Michigan carried significance for BIPOC student participants as a refuge from racism. In particular, Jasmine and Tanya found it helpful as they navigated the campus environment. Jasmine reflected on the Trotter location.

> I appreciate the new Trotter for being on campus and being so close. To me as a student, it's right around the area where I'm going to be mainly on campus. I was a triple major, so the majority of all my classes were on Central. So it was perfectly in the middle. I could go there and just run over to class in five minutes and be fine. I think Michigan is a little bit different in the sense that we actually have a building for the Multicultural Center.

Tanya spoke about the #BBUM campaign by the Black Student Union (BSU) that resulted in the new multicultural center building. The #BBUM campaign was a Twitter hashtag that stood for "Being Black at the University of Michigan" where Black students described their lived experiences on campus through the social networking service.

> The big demand that came out of that was making Trotter a more centralized building on campus, which is why it's now 428 South State Street. From a BSU standpoint, as soon as Trotter is opened, we have never had a mass meeting outside of Trotter. I think that speaks volumes of how much just us, as an organization, utilizes the new Trotter on State Street. I think it's also helpful for just students of color, Black students specifically, from my experience, that there's a building that's just right there.

Tanya went on to describe how BSU executive board members strive to make connections with incoming and new Black students through Trotter.

If BSU e-board members see Black students who are on tours at Michigan or high school students walking in Trotter to see what's happening, we say, 'Let me show you a little tour of the place and give you a little historical breakdown of what Sankofa is and what Trotter is.' Sankofa is an Adinkra symbol, which are African symbols that mean different things. Sankofa specifically, it's a bird. It's the Sankofa bird and the head is looking back and there's an egg on its tail. That symbolizes looking back at the past to guide your future, whether it be specifically the U of M Black Student Union, looking back at maybe the past activism we've done and what people who went here did in the '70s, '80s, and '90s for us to be here now and using that as a guide to move forward and navigate the BSU.

Other student participants made meaningful connections at Trotter because of their regular student organization meetings in the multipurpose room on the lower level of the building. John talked about the Maize Rage student organization's meetings in the Trotter multipurpose room. Madison spoke about how she met up with their peers there. Madison especially felt happy there.

I really liked the multipurpose room because it's such a large space and that was where I started my journey with the student org CHAARG [Changing Health, Attitudes, and Actions to Recreate Girls] when we were all in-person freshman year. That room was where we had all of our events. And that was when the org was at its biggest membership too. I just felt really happy to be there. I would walk there with my freshman year roommate and our other friends in our hallway in South Quad. I felt really balanced in that space because we would go there and have socials during the week or do our weekly workout. That space also made me feel like my best self.

However, after students published *The Michigan Daily* and *The Michigan Review* articles in

2022 (see Chapter Three), Madison decided to change the meeting location of CHAARG to

another building. Given the student organization's predominantly white membership, "it's not

the best idea to keep meeting in here." Madison also moved the meetings for the Armenian

Students Club out of the Trotter Multicultural Center during the #OccupyTrotter movement.

> With the Armenian Students Club, for our last meeting of the year, we were renting out
>
> the Sankofa Lounge and we had it reserved, but this was right after all the publications
>
> came out–the Daily article and then the counter article to that about Trotter. I got there
>
> early to set things up; we were having food and other things for the last day. A few more
>
> members showed up. Then, we realized at some point we have to tell people in our
>
> organization to leave the lounge and go elsewhere to meet.

The Sankofa Lounge in the Trotter Multicultural Center carried much significance for Black

students (Channey & Barlow, 2019). Sankofa is an African symbol of a bird that signifies an

acknowledgment of history and the efforts of the past while pursuing initiative for the future. For

the Black student participants in this study, the Sankofa Lounge is a remembrance of Trotter's

origin as a house for Black students. The Sankofa Lounge played a meaningful role for Black

students in the #OccupyTrotter movement to be affirmed and seen in the Trotter Multicultural

Center.

> In her story, Madison displayed multicultural awareness (Pope et al., 2019) with her

openness and willingness to change. She recognized her white-passing identity and the impact on

others in Trotter, even though she is a member of an oppressed minority group. Additionally,

Madison exhibited multicultural skills (Pope et al., 2019) in making interventions to prioritize

the Black community using the Sankofa Lounge during #OccupyTrotter while relocating the

Armenian Students Club meeting. Figure 5.4 illustrates April 2022 when Madison moved the Armenian Students Club from the Sankofa Lounge.
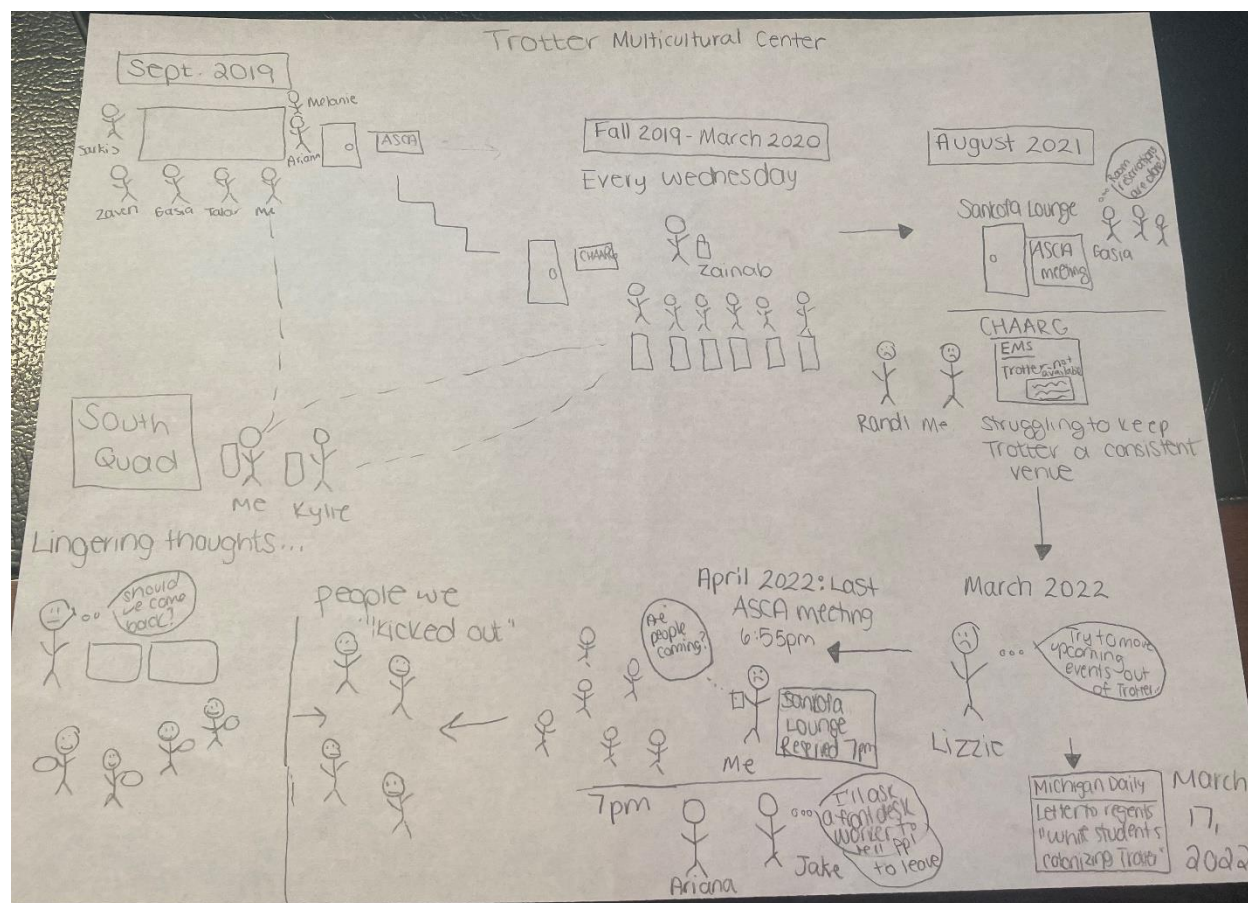
Figure 5.4. Education Journey Map of the Trotter Multicultural Center. Copyright 2022 by Madison.

As a result of the #OccupyTrotter movement and related *The Michigan Daily* and *The Michigan Review* articles in spring 2022, Tanya talked about the importance of sharing with the campus community why the Trotter Multicultural Center exists.

We're working on creating a more official, standardized tour of Trotter that the employees of Trotter have to know the history of, what is Sankofa? What are these movements on the wall? Why is Trotter here? So that when people come to Trotter, they have those answers. Honestly, after the article came out and then we responded with our

statements and things, we did see a little bit more traffic from people in Trotter, whether

it was alumni or more white students asking, 'Hmm, what actually is Trotter?' Because of

these questions, we need to have a standardized tour to get Trotter's history.

Jasmine, Madison, and Tanya shared examples getting at the category of the Trotter

Multicultural Center as a central meeting place. I found the students expressed feelings of

satisfaction, ease, belonging, happiness, confusion, vulnerability, and pride. As I described in

Chapter Four, Black student organization leaders through the #BBUM campaign led the charge

for university leaders to fund the construction of a new Trotter Multicultural Center on Central

Campus.

Black students have a home in Trotter, unlike any other place on campus. The

#OccupyTrotter movement was not a protest or sit-in, according to Alicia and Tanya, but rather

an invitation for Black students to use the space in as many ways as they can to be seen there.

Administrators and students must be willing to make multicultural interventions that challenge

institutions (Pope et al., 2019). As previously mentioned, higher education institutions have,

knowingly or unknowingly, disproportionately supported white people (Holeton, 2020).

Understanding students' lived experiences in relation to the physical space of the Trotter

Multicultural Center helps to understand how administrators and students can continue to evolve

the space to be culturally responsive.

Category 2. A Space Where You Can Be Yourself

The category of a space where you can be yourself in the Trotter Multicultural Center

showed up during BIPOC students' stories of similar experiences and empathy. Marcia reflected

on Trotter as a space where a lot of people with shared identities went and made it their own

space. Trotter was meant to serve BIPOC students.

Trotter is a great place to interact with people on a personal level, see people like you, be

with people who understand you, and interact with your community. U of M isn't a super

cultured school. It's mostly predominantly white. That can be kind of tough sometimes,

especially if you're used to being in a community where it's not predominantly white.

Alicia offered similar reflections to Marcia. Alicia "feels the original purpose" of the Trotter

Multicultural Center when she was there through the interactions that she had and seeing the

visual displays on the walls in the Sankofa Lounge. There are pictures of protests on the walls,

student voices, and student advocacy. Trotter was a space where she could be herself. Alicia

envisioned a future where she can comfortably express herself everywhere on campus.

Trotter symbolizes somewhere where you can come together. It is a space where you can

be yourself. You don't have to be like everybody else. You can just express yourself the

way you want. I think that Trotter symbolizes unity. Of course, in the grand scheme of

things, you want everyone to feel equal and be the same and not have to have like

multiple different spaces. You should want to feel comfortable everywhere. That's not

the current reality. Comfortability looks like me expressing myself the way I do in Trotter

anywhere, whether that's the Union or anywhere else on campus. That's the future that I

envision.

Figure 5.5. Education Journey Map of the Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center.
Copyright 2022 by Alicia.

Alicia's education journey map (see Figure 5.3) depicts her passage through the
Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center throughout her college experience. As a
reminder, I used education journey mapping (Annamma, 2017) with participants to understand
students' sense of place and their learning experiences in the physical space. The Trotter
Multicultural Center is the large-looking building at the bottom of the map. Alicia drew Trotter
to stand out on the map because "the space is just too small." She drew the Sankofa bird on the
side of Trotter as a remembrance of Trotter's origin. This is a space where she can be herself. In

the above section on her map, Alicia drew the Black community together versus white people as the Black community navigated the majority population.

> The #OccupyTrotter movement was created out of Black joy. Trotter was a space where we studied, we ate, we partied, and we had game nights. It was a one-stop shop for us. We didn't have to protest or do a sit-in or things like that. We just had to show why Trotter is important, being able to display that to other people and have other groups be in solidarity with us based on, 'We need a space where we can be ourselves and not worry about people judging us.'

Tanya shared the goal of #OccupyTrotter.

> It was literally to be in Trotter as much as you could. Being that Black students and our predecessors put so much into us having the space, the least we can do is make sure that we're in there as much as possible, utilizing it as much as possible.

Marcia thought "it was interesting to see that it [Trotter] was a space to be defended, that it couldn't just exist for multicultural people. It needed justification and a fight to keep it." Jasmine also spoke about the purpose of Trotter.

> Trotter was created because students of color on campus felt that they didn't have a space for themselves. Whereas other students have the privilege of walking into any space and that space is already made for them. Their presence doesn't have to be known to an extent because it's already there. It's already established. Whereas I feel like students of color consistently have to try to find a way to create a space for themselves without feeling bad about it. A perfect example is that back-and-forth controversy that was in The Daily and I don't know what the other newspaper was, but talking about Trotter as racist because it's only for students who are multicultural; what about everybody else; you're limiting the

audience of Trotter. Then, Trotter took a big step trying to educate students on the history of it and why it has the name that it has.

Jasmine went on to say that Trotter is a helpful way for students of color to get the space that they need. She loves the "open lighting, big windows, and sunlight, especially being in Michigan." She feels like Trotter is "student-led, made for students." Because the Michigan Union is open to students, departments, and guests from outside of campus, she feels like the Union is where the majority population gathers.

Revisiting Alicia's point stated previously about Trotter being too small, she described what happens when there are too many students in the building.

Within Trotter, there is not enough space for everyone. If every multicultural person was in that space, there's not enough. Sometimes people are fighting each other in Trotter because there isn't enough space. There's not enough space for the Black community; there's not enough space for the Latinx community. I've heard nasty things said from other people of color. It creates divides just because it's too small. It's one of the smallest buildings on campus. So, then you question, 'Well, how much am I really valued?' 'How much is my specific identity really being highlighted or shined within the space?' There aren't that many other spaces on campus that provide that sense of belonging. So I think that's a long term question that a lot of people have as we build a bigger community, where do we go. Space definitely plays a big role.

Alicia reflected on the anti-Blackness that is in a lot of non-Black POC communities that used Trotter, and even within her community. Anti-Blackness allows people consciously or unconsciously to maintain structural racism, she described. While #OccupyTrotter helped to highlight the needs and joy of the Black community, Alicia went on to say that Trotter was a

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"boiling point" for anti-Blackness. Alicia offered that the #OccupyTrotter movement "also opened up a lot of holes to what multiculturalism is and how it plays a role in Trotter, whether it's for the good or bad."

Alicia questioned the term multiculturalism because of the term's commonly understood focus on supporting all cultures, rather than explicitly addressing racial equity in the Trotter Multicultural Center. Pope et al. (2019) defined multicultural as many aspects of difference, including, but not limited to, race, ethnicity, gender identity, sex, age, sexual orientation, disability, and nationality. Alicia's inquiry supports Shotton et al.'s (2010) critique that multicultural centers as a one-size-fits-all approach may not meet the needs of all communities. Alicia went on to offer those places exercising white norms, such as the University of Michigan, often use "multiculturalism" as a code word for race without acknowledging the reality of racial differences on campus. Sue et al. (1982) was specific in referring to "multiculturalism" in their paper about cross-cultural counseling competencies as focused on Asian, Black/African American, Latinx/Hispanic, and Native American groups. Both Pope et al. (2019) and Sue et al. (1982) argued that social justice, including equity and removing institutional barriers, should be a part of a multicultural environment. Alicia wanted to join with her peers to work with administrators to redefine and clarify Trotter's purpose and goals, being explicit about what multiculturalism means at the University of Michigan. She believed racial equity and centering Black students should be a priority in Trotter because of her experiences with anti-Blackness in the space.

John opined that the purpose of the Trotter Multicultural Center was to celebrate different cultures, which he said was "a very appropriate role for the Center." John shared that the celebration of diversity "is very present in the design of the space, especially in the decorations

there." He went on to question why administrators and students selected the decorations and who they represent.

> If you look at the main lounge in Trotter, you see pictures of activism and the protests that has happened. All of them are for left wing causes. There are no protests for issues like the March for Life if you don't have Black women at the March for Life or something like that. There are no conservative causes that are being celebrated there.

While John recognized Trotter's role in celebrating different cultures, he did not see himself there. His reflections spoke to the uncertainty that he felt in the purpose of Trotter.

The historical narrative surrounding historically minoritized communities on higher education campuses often informs administrators about how to develop their multicultural center (Malone, 2020). There is no standard model. Based on the student participants' reflections, a one-size-fits-all approach in the Trotter Multicultural Center to meet the needs of all students for support and learning has not been effective at the University of Michigan, perhaps because of it being an HWI. As Alicia, Marcia, Jasmine, and Tanya inferred, the "safe haven" model (Young, 1991) was needed. This model positions the multicultural center as a space of shelter and protection for students of color who feel excluded on campus. It is evident in the student participants' narrative that the Black Student Union has been working with administrators to clarify and communicate the purpose of Trotter to the university community. This clarity helps situate John's and many others' expectations and understanding of the building.

Category 3. Interactions with Difference

In the previous section, I described the conflict that Alicia experienced across communities of color in the Trotter Multicultural Center because of anti-Blackness and space limitations for minoritized communities on campus. I shared earlier that Marcia went to Trotter

to be with other BIPOC students, away from white spaces. I also shared John's questioning about not seeing conservative causes represented inside Trotter, while also appreciating Trotter's demonstration of various cultures. These interactions with difference in Trotter strengthened students' knowledge about different cultures. Students became more multiculturally competent (Pope et al., 2019). This section provides more examples of interactions with difference.

Marcia shared that "you learn how to engage with people within your culture, maybe on the periphery of your culture and people not even related to your culture" at the Trotter Multicultural Center. She went on to share an example of how she and a few peers intervened during a cultural conflict.

> There are two Syrian flags. One of them is for the rebellion and one of them is for the government. Different people, from Syria especially, support different flags, which is a bit uncomfortable, and so usually both flags are shown. People were arguing about it, who weren't Syrian or part of that community in any way. They were arguing and getting pretty passionate about it. People who were actually Syrian, who were the minority and didn't feel as comfortable in the room, were getting upset, offended, or uncomfortable. So, me and a few other people tried to step in and try and make it less of a point of contention. We de-escalated the situation.

Marcia demonstrated multicultural skills and action through her intervention (Pope et al., 2019). Whether or not Marcia was taught how to intervene through the Trotter Multicultural Center, I surmise Marcia practicing her multicultural skills and action inside Trotter helped to strengthen her competency.

Jasmine believed that Trotter staff did a good job promoting cultural events and opportunities for students to learn.

Trotter does a good job in just the programming that they have. When it was Asian

Pacific Islander Month, Black History Month, or Hispanic Heritage Month, they cater to

those communities, whether it's through interactive programs or having infographics up.

Even through the small efforts, I think they're important because with the foot traffic that

Trotter has, you see these things. Personally for me, I didn't know when the Asian Pacific

Islander Heritage Month was, up until Trotter shared information about it. I went to it.

The same thing with Black History Month. I feel like it's always a space for learning,

which is important.

In addition to cultural events, Alicia reflected on how she has been cultivating opportunities to

learn through conversations and coalition building with other identity-based student

organizations.

We're having conversations with other identity-based orgs. It stems from all of us being

at Trotter and running into each other. I was like, alright, let's build a collaborative effort

where we have this relationship and we can do things together. I'm seeing it as, 'How can

we help each other?' 'How can we work with each other?' 'What do we have in

common?' 'What do we have that's different?' 'How can we be in this tiny little space

together and effectively help both of our communities?' I'm thinking about it deeper than

surface conversations about issues.

In this story, Alicia implied that she had the capability to empathize and genuinely connect and

communicate with individuals and communities who were culturally different from hers. This is

a multicultural skill and action where she was being an accomplice to others (Pope et al., 2019).

This is another example of how being inside the Trotter Multicultural Center with others

facilitated students' development of multicultural competence.

Additionally, Alicia described how she gained understanding as she communicated with many different people in the Trotter Multicultural Center.

I've learned a lot about any race, nationality, ethnicity, religion. I've ran into so many people, and I've learned the most about the intersections within them. I've learned different things that you wouldn't see just by looking at a person. Yes, I might be visibly Black but I'm also a practicing Muslim, or not a native of Michigan or the US at all. Having these deeper conversations and realizing how everyone's backgrounds truly affect how you interact.

Madison believed having the tools to engage with difference is important. This is something that she wanted to continue to strengthen, as a result of an experience in Trotter.

When we had to relocate the Armenian Club meeting out of the Sankofa Lounge, I knew that I wanted to do it [because of #OccupyTrotter], but I didn't know how to handle having a deeper identity [a white-passing BIPOC person] that could give me a commonality with the people of color in the space. I didn't want to appear like the enemy. 'Do we confront the issue in the future or do we avoid it?' I don't really know. I personally am not a very confrontational person. Even though we are a cultural org, we don't appear that way, at face value. That's a little stressful for us.

Unlike Madison, John directly confronted the CSG student leader's letter about *White Students Colonizing Trotter* that I described in Chapter Three. John wrote *The Michigan Review* editorial in response. "With the Trotter article that I wrote in *The Michigan Review*, there were a lot of different emotions that I was feeling."

Figure 5.6. Education Journey Map of the Trotter Multicultural Center. Copyright 2022 by John.

In John's education journey map (see Figure 5.4), he rendered the range of emotions that he had as he considered, wrote, and reflected on the aftereffects of the article that he published. As I described in Chapter Three, John wrote a counter article in *The Michigan Review*, a conservative campus newspaper, after a Central Student Government (CSG) student wrote a letter to the University of Michigan Regents about white students colonizing Trotter that *The Michigan Daily* student editors published. The CSG student suggested white students were in Trotter without regard for the history of the space and how much space they took up there. In John's response, he wrote about the CSG student upholding racial segregation through Trotter. John believed that more integration was needed to bring people together as humans, not as Black people and white people. BIPOC students at the University of Michigan erupted in anger at John. He received direct messages and in-person confrontations from students. BIPOC students reminded readers on social media that the campus had a long way to go to rectify white violence and oppression. The Trotter Multicultural Center served as a safe haven for BIPOC students.

John drew peaks and valleys of emotion over seven months, from January through July 2022.

> I have it going all crazy because there were times I was feeling terrible. There were times I was feeling great. I never responded publicly to the hate mail. I experienced the whole spectrum of responses. There were people who were saying mean things about me publicly. There were people who were directly messaging me and saying some mean things about me in private. There were people saying nice things about me in private. There were people who were not on campus who were saying nice things about me in public. But, there was also this middle plain where people actually offered some good-hearted critiques, personally, about the article. Those were probably the most, I guess I'd say, the most edifying. I was less bothered about the things that people were saying about me than my parents were; they were very upset about it. And so having them very upset about it was not... that was probably the worst part of the experience and that's where these little valleys in the emotional scale really occur is because they were pretty upset about it. I haven't had any interactions private, public or otherwise with the people who were denouncing me.

During our interview, John went on to describe Trotter as a "very politically charged space" and "the first time I'd gotten true targeted backlash from the left on campus." When BIPOC students talked directly about their racial perspectives, it challenged John's worldview and resulted in a defensive move to write the editorial in response to the CSG student leader's letter about *White Students Colonizing Trotter*. This type of defensive move can be characterized as white fragility (DiAngelo, 2011). White people have not had to build the cognitive or affective skills or develop

the stamina that would allow for constructive engagement across racial divides. John shared what shapes his reasons for writing "controversial articles," as he described, such as this one.

> There are a lot of campus conservatives, not just in Michigan but across the country, where there is a tendency where you're going to 'trigger the snowflakes' for whatever reason, whether you want to go viral or whether you want to help your career. If you're doing that for righteous purposes and using righteous tactics, that's totally fine. What we are doing as campus conservatives is making our institution better. We love Michigan. We love being Michigan Wolverines. I think our critiques should always come from a place of love. It is the most effective to always frame what we do as making the institution better. Better for everybody.

John's righteous purposes and tactics reminded me of D'Souza's (2005) perspective that humans are inherently driven by self-interest and their perfectibility. In his book *Letters to a Young Conservative*, D'Souza (2005) offered inflammatory statements about why liberals are wrong, and conservatives are right, simplifying complex social and political issues. Okun (n.d.) described that the norms of individualism, perfectionism, and either/or thinking, such as right and wrong, show up in white supremacy culture (Okun, n.d) by white people and also BIPOC. Even though John offered that campus conservatives' approaches came from a place of love, the practice of "triggering the snowflakes" seemed contradictory to the notion of love. Antidotes to white supremacy culture include, but are not limited to, recognizing that everybody has a worldview and that everybody's worldview affects the way they understand the world (Okun, n.d.). It was evident that John perceived the University of Michigan as a liberal institution where campus conservatives were not as seen by the community, and they should be for the greater good of the community.

John's objectives included inspiring and invigorating conservative students who felt confined to the predominantly liberal campus. To John, righteousness meant "fighting for what's right." He explained there are times when, even though you have good intentions, "you're going to engage in unrighteous tactics. If I were to engage in an unrighteous tactic, then I would be ashamed." John did not believe that he engaged in unrighteous tactics. However, upon reflection, John shared the following statement.

> The one thing that I will say about my own piece that I might do differently is that it was a little more antagonistic. It was a bit more antagonistic than I would do if I could do it over again. If I were to do it over again, I would make it a little less antagonistic. I think my principles…again, we're talking about righteous causes where my principles are correct, but on righteous tactics…I probably could have expressed them in a better way. I would like to see more civil conversations as a way of expressing different beliefs on these types of spaces.

As John reflected on the letter that he wrote and published, he shared a slight change in perspective about his *The Michigan Review* article. He said that he could have expressed himself in a better way. John recognized some harm to the members of the Black community because of his article. I hope John's reflections on this pivotal moment in his life fuel further multicultural awareness, learning, and the development of constructive relationships with individuals who are culturally different than him.

These rich descriptions from student participants suggest that interactions with difference can result in learning experiences through the Trotter Multicultural Center. Marcia practiced multicultural skills and action when she intervened in a student conflict. Alicia also practiced multicultural skills and action in her coalition-building work. Jasmine gained multicultural

knowledge by learning about and attending cultural events in Trotter. John developed more

multicultural awareness. And Madison wanted to strengthen her multicultural competence.

Summary and Reflection

The students in this study experienced the Trotter Multicultural Center differently. The

Trotter Multicultural Center has been an evolving space. However, it holds true to unchanging

principles of a counterspace (Yosso & Lopez, 2010) and "safe haven" (Young, 1991) for and

with BIPOC students. It was not a space designed for everyone. The students' stories depicted

the environment that they experienced.

The history of Trotter is rooted in student activism, change, affirmation, joy, and a

struggle to counter the HWI. BIPOC students see themselves there as a place they can be

themselves. It is easy to access on Central Campus. Yet, the central location of the building made

it more vulnerable to the dominant student population. Black students had to labor in educating

the community about why Trotter exists. I noticed that BIPOC student participants, in particular,

exhibited a range of multicultural awareness, knowledge, skills, and actions. Multicultural

competence may likely be stronger for BIPOC students out of the need to develop skills and

stamina to engage in a predominantly white environment. Next, I illustrate commonalities across

the Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center.

Commonalities Across the Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center

In this section, I cover four common features or attributes across the two cases in my

study. This section raises awareness about how common features and attributes happen. I found

the commonalities aligned with Strange and Banning's (2001, 2015) four component model of

campus environments as I analyzed the data. In Chapter Two, I provided an overview of Strange

and Banning's campus ecology framework: (1) physical environments; (2) aggregate

environments; (3) organizational environments; and (4) constructed environments. Thus, I organize the commonalities across the Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center within these four components that I found through participants' descriptions. I provide examples of how the commonalities showed up in the data.

Commonality 1. The Spaces were Birthed for Different Reasons, But They are Both Unionizing Spaces

Alicia reflected on the fact that the Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center physical "spaces were birthed for different reasons, but they are both unionizing spaces." Alicia shared that she is very present in the Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center, but for different reasons. In her opinion, both of these buildings were created to build a sense of belonging for students on campus.

While the Michigan Union is open to everyone today as core to the university, the history of the building and origins of college unions, in general, have been historically exclusionary by race, sex, and gender (Meyer & Love, 2012). It was originally a unionizing space for white men. As I mentioned in Chapter Two, the right to exclude as a characteristic of whiteness as property (Harris, 1993) is evident in establishing college unions by white people on historically white campuses. Harris (1993) used whiteness as property to understand how white people use their racial identity to create a system of oppression. My findings in this study suggested that white student participants felt more connected throughout the Michigan Union than BIPOC student participants.

As I mentioned in Chapters Two and Three, many BIPOC sought cultural or multicultural centers other than college unions for representation and cultural capital. The Trotter Multicultural Center was originally founded as a Black Student Center because Black students

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needed affirming educational and campus experiences to thrive in a predominantly white environment (University of Michigan Bentley Historical Library, 2014a). Trotter became a unionizing space for Black students and other racially minoritized students over time.

The history of the spaces and places was directly connected to how student participants made meaning of their experiences. According to Strange and Banning (2001, 2015), physical environments should be: (1) *functional* to enable students to focus on work tasks; (2) *sociopetal* to encourage serendipitous interactions; (3) *flexible* so individuals can adjust personal needs; (4) *aesthetic* to inspire creativity; (5) *reflective* to promote quiet time for meaning making; and (6) *regenerative* to restore energy. My findings suggest that different student communities created meaning making differently, not just through quiet time. For BIPOC students in this study, meaning making did not happen during quiet times. Alicia and Tanya thrived in the Trotter Multicultural Center through their work with the Black Student Union. Occupying and filling the space of the Sankofa Lounge with Black bodies in community with each other was meaningful in juxtaposition to the students meeting down the street in the Michigan Union. Ava, Madison, and Jasmine found meaningful study spots and meeting locations in the Michigan Union Courtyard, IdeaHub, and behind the Campus Information desk.

The participants talked about both buildings having physical spaces to meet their needs. The Union and Trotter have various gathering areas, from lounges and meeting rooms to accommodate different types of activities. Jasmine, John, and Madison also spoke about the open, bright spaces of the Trotter Lobby, Trotter Sankofa Lounge, and Michigan Union Courtyard, respectively. Participants agreed that it is important to dialogue across differences in both spaces. These dialogues happen in meeting rooms and private areas of the Michigan Union. Dialogues across difference happen openly in the Trotter Multicultural Center lounges.

Participants experienced serendipitous interactions in both buildings. Jasmine learned about cultural heritage months, different from hers, through advertisements and events in the Trotter Multicultural Center. Madison found the Michigan Union Courtyard a space where she met up with friends. Alicia saw classmates in the Michigan Union whom she never met in person because her classes were online during the pandemic.

Commonality 2. The Dominant Features Represent the People Who Inhabit Them

Human aggregate environments are partially a function of the collective characteristics of the individuals and groups who inhabit them (Strange and Banning, 2001, 2015). Both buildings have the opportunity for students to see themselves there. All the student participants spoke about feeling like an insider and outsider at times within the Michigan Union and the Trotter Multicultural Center.

Tanya reflected on seeing mostly white and Asian students in the Michigan Union because those groups "are the two biggest demographics racially at Michigan." She did not see herself in the Union. Jasmine reflected on the origins of the Michigan Union and the Trotter Multicultural Center. She described the Union as problematic because women students and students of color had to construct other buildings on campus to meet their needs; the Union was built for white men. She shared those characteristics were still at play, given the historically white institution, even though there have been advancements over time. Alicia, Jasmine, Madison, Marcia, and Tanya talked about Trotter as a culturally-affirming space for BIPOC students. The images of Black student activism in the Trotter Sankofa Lounge were particularly significant for these students. While Madison talked about how being white-passing made her reconsider the community that she felt in Trotter, she also found community through her student organizations in the Michigan Union IdeaHub. John remarked about the left-leaning environment

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of Trotter. Ava felt at home in the Michigan Union because she could see and participate in her Christian faith identity. Before participating in this study, Ava never considered going to the Trotter Multicultural Center; she questioned what and who it was for. These are several examples of where the commonality of "The Dominant Features Represent the People Who Inhabit Them" showed up.

Commonality 3. Both Centrally Located, But Not Equitable in Size

According to Strange and Banning (2001, 2015), the organizational environment is about how administrators make decisions and communicate the purpose, goals, and distribution of resources. Participants spoke about the Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural as located in the center of campus. Jasmine shared that "the Union and Trotter are literally, they're two, three minutes away" from each other. Likewise, Tanya stated, "three minutes." Both buildings serve as easily accessible physical spaces for students. As an administrator at the University of Michigan, I can confirm the decision to make these two buildings centrally located was intentional by university leaders.

Student participants spoke about the large size of the Michigan Union and the comparatively much smaller size of the Trotter Multicultural Center. Alicia shared that she got lost in the Union during a new student orientation tour, given its size. Conversely, Alicia spoke about the conflicts that occur between communities of color for physical space in Trotter. Marcia and Tanya shared that the Michigan Union is difficult to navigate with many siloed places. Marcia also felt like she could find other students in her different communities in the Michigan Union because there are so many spaces for students to gather. Tanya found community through the MESA Office but very limited connections outside of that office in the Michigan Union. Consequently, she shared that students may not know who else is in the building. Marcia and

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Jasmine remarked how easy it is to connect with other BIPOC students in Trotter because of the cozy space. Alicia wondered how university leaders will address the growing space needs of BIPOC students as the student population continues to grow and become more diverse. Ava and Alicia recommended that administrators do more to be present with students and assist in their learning across different cultures. It is important for university leaders to consider how students make meaning of campus spaces.

Commonality 4. Students' Range of Emotions About Both Buildings

Students' perceptions of and how they socially construct their environments influence their engagement in spaces (Strange and Banning, 2001, 2015). Perceptions are measured and meaning-making occurs through the social climate and campus culture. As I previously stated, I found the students expressed various emotions in telling me their stories about the Michigan Union, including joy, boundaries, excitement, gratitude, disappointment, and curiosity. I also found that the students expressed satisfaction, ease, belonging, happiness, confusion, and vulnerability through their stories about the Trotter Multicultural Center.

John reflected on his disappointment about the Michigan Union being closed for renovation during his first year as a University of Michigan student. At the same time, he was also excited for it to open in 2020. He knew from his family that the Michigan Union was integral to the college experience.

> I guess there were two parts of it. One is, you know that it's coming. I knew going in that it was going to be open in the winter 2020 semester. Part of whenever you can't do something, but you know you will in the future, you want it more and more. Also, I was really excited because my aunts both spend time at the university. They were telling me

how much they loved the Union and how beautiful it was. I'd never been in there. So, I wanted to see what all the hype was about.

While Tanya did not feel like she belonged in the Michigan Union, she reflected on her sense of belonging in the Trotter Multicultural Center.

It's helpful for students of color, Black students, specifically, from my experience, that there's a building that's just right there. If you want to know, 'Where do I go find other Black students?' I'm going to go to Trotter. Guaranteed, you're going to see them there. Anywhere else on campus, maybe, maybe not, because we are such a small percentage of the population here at Michigan.

In her education journey map, Alicia "put Trotter equals Union." She thought the word "union" is a place where people come together. Alicia felt at ease knowing she can come together with people that look like her. "You don't have to be generically like everybody else," like in the Michigan Union. Alicia spoke about feelings of disappointment in not fully being able to express herself there. Through Jasmine's descriptions of racist interactions in the Michigan Union and being with her multicultural sorority in the Trotter Multicultural Center, she offered similar emotions.

Ava and Madison described joyful experiences in the Michigan Union. They both made memorable connections in Sweetwater's, the Michigan Union Courtyard, and the IdeaHub. Along with Marcia, they were grateful for the variety and size of the meeting rooms. Ava and Madison learned a lot about their other students' backgrounds and experiences through events and group gatherings in the Michigan Union. Jasmine was grateful for the knowledge she gained about cultures other than her own by attending heritage month events in the Trotter Multicultural Center.

Summary and Reflection

I discovered four commonalities across the Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center: (1) The Spaces were Birthed for Different Reasons, But They are Both Unionizing Spaces; (2) The Dominant Features Represent the People Who Inhabit Them; (3) Both Centrally Located, But Not Equitable in Size; and (4) Students' Range of Emotions About Both Buildings. The commonalities aligned with Strange and Banning's (2001, 2015) four component model of campus environments. As Strange and Banning suggest through their model, campus environments shape and influence student behavior and learning. By analyzing students' descriptions, I uncovered disproportionate ways students perceive and experience the two cases in this study. Many of the student participants' perceptions and experiences are affected by systemic power, privilege, and marginality in the campus environment. In the final section of this chapter, I expose patterns across participants in this study.

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Patterns Across Participants

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I selected student participants for this study based on the widest range of perspectives possible. In this section, I describe four patterns across student participants that I uncovered through data analysis. It is important to remember that these students' experiences were subjective and uniquely their own. As I stated in Chapter Two, I wanted to consider how the student participants identify and see the world. Braun (2011) pointed to the fact that students' different social identities within the institution affect how students experience diverse, engaging learning environments created by administrators. In Table 5.1, at the beginning of this chapter, I outlined the demographic information about participants.

Pattern 1. BIPOC Participants Saw Themselves in the Trotter Multicultural Center

Most of the student participants in my study were non-white. Alicia, Jasmine, Marcia, and Tanya spoke of Trotter as culturally affirming, a place where they can go and see people that look like them. Trotter was also a safe environment to channel the energy to navigate a predominantly white campus culture. The #OccupyTrotter movement was a visible way BIPOC students demonstrated their passion and sense of belonging in the building. Jasmine and Marcia both connected with people who understood them in Trotter. Even though Madison wrestled with the privilege of being a white-passing BIPOC, she felt a sense of belonging as an Armenian in Trotter. The origins of the Trotter Multicultural Center are rooted in student activism to improve the educational and campus experiences of Black students (Tobin, 2013). Over the years, the mission expanded to meet the needs of a growing culturally diverse student community. This legacy was present for the BIPOC students in this study. They valued their role in shaping the present and enriching the future for those that will come after them.

Pattern 2. White Participants Connected Effortlessly in the Michigan Union

Unlike BIPOC student participants, Ava, Madison, and John felt a sense of connection effortlessly through the Michigan Union. This was unlike Alicia, Jasmine, and Tanya, who sought our pockets of connection in the building. Ava spoke about the Kuenzel Room and Pendleton Room being integral to her student organization involvement. She found comfort in the various other places that she went, including Sweetwater's and the booths outside of the Michigan Union Reflection Room. Madison and John spoke of the openness and connections made in the Michigan Union Courtyard. John described a particular connection to the student organization storage units in the Michigan Union Basement because they are essential for the functioning of his student organization. The origins of the Michigan Union are rooted in unity

among men, predominantly white men (Rowe, 2005). The mission has expanded, and the building is now open to everyone. However, through the participants' descriptions, the characteristics of white supremacy culture at the University of Michigan unconsciously carried over as norms and standards throughout the building. Ava, Madison, and John did not fully recognize the predominantly white population in the building.

Pattern 3. Multicultural Competence is A Work in Progress for Everyone

Multicultural competence is about developing individual awareness, knowledge, skills, and actions to engage with difference and across cultures within power structures (Pope et al., 2004, 2019). The student research participants all agreed they need to have grace for similarities and differences, but it is a work in progress. Both Jasmine and Tanya talked about participating in cultural events at the Trotter Multicultural Center and Michigan Union, respectively, to strengthen their multicultural knowledge. Ava, Alicia, Jasmine, Madison, Marcia, and Tanya expressed the value and significance of their own cultural heritage and worldview, not only about race and ethnicity, as a starting place for understanding others who are culturally different.

Ava gained multicultural knowledge and skills as she navigated her Christian beliefs with others who had different Christian beliefs in the Michigan Union. Jasmine demonstrated multicultural skills through her work interactions with guests at the Michigan Union. Madison displayed multicultural awareness and skills as she navigated her identities when the #OccupyTrotter movement occurred in the Trotter Multicultural Center. Marcia used multicultural skills and action when intervening during a student conflict about Syrian flags in the Trotter Multicultural Center. Alicia gained multicultural knowledge and skills as she navigated coming to the University of Michigan from a predominantly Black community. BIPOC student participants recognized how dominant white culture shaped the Michigan Union

and how BIPOC students felt belonging in community at the Trotter Multicultural Center. This recognition by BIPOC students speaks to their multicultural awareness.

Madison shared with me that she used the interview process to self-reflect on her unconscious biases and how she navigated the world. During the interview process, Alicia shared that there needs to be more BIPOC representation in the Michigan Union to fully engage the diverse student population; she wants to engage more in the Unions to model engagement by BIPOC students. It was evident to me that the interview process contributed to John's multicultural awareness learning process as he reflected on the articles about the Trotter Multicultural Center. The interview process provided a space for deep reflection and meaning-making about multicultural competence through the Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center.

Pattern 4. All Participants Wanted to Disrupt Campus Structures That Do Not Work for Everybody

I admired all the participants for wanting to improve the campus. The conversations we had ignited further ideas for action by the student participants. Alicia and Madison displayed multicultural action by wanting to engage more with people in the Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center because the human connection helps understand and identify needed improvements. Alicia pointed out that "not all Black people are the same, and it's important to have deep conversations" to get to know students' experiences. Ava plans to carve out more time in her student organizations for community building and getting to know each other more deeply, which did not come naturally to her. Jasmine wanted to call administrators to action on dismantling systems of power rather than relying on the standard message of "this is how things are done here." Jasmine believed that administrators could shape multiculturally competent

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environments. Alicia and Tanya strived to create more healing and well-being spaces for BIPOC students. These students named the changes in norms and standards that they wanted to see as a step in their progress toward institutional change. The student participants hoped their contributions to this study would contribute to the advancement of the University of Michigan.

Summary and Reflection

I discovered four patterns across the student participants in this study: (1) BIPOC Participants Saw Themselves in the Trotter Multicultural Center; (2) White Participants Connected Effortlessly in the Michigan Union; (3) Multicultural Competence is A Work in Progress for Everyone; and (4) All Participants Wanted to Disrupt Campus Structures That Do Not Work for Everybody. The student participants' patterns affirmed the fact that students' social identities are the basis for how students experienced and understood the Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center. In particular, the data highlighted the different experiences of BIPOC and white students. Student participants exhibited a continuum of engagement with the two buildings, though, that suggested a distinct binary between the two buildings does not always exist. The student participants all shared a deep passion for the University of Michigan, with a championing for change to further improve the student experience in the co-curricular spaces.

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Chapter Summary

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I felt a sense of awe as I reflected on the student participants' stories. The seven student participants' commitment to the research process, their vulnerability in sharing their stories, and their efforts to share their experiences for institutional change were encouraging for the future. They demonstrated a wide range of perspectives in helping me to answer my research questions about what students say they learn about engaging with difference and across cultures in co-

curricular campus spaces, namely the Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center at the University of Michigan. Their rich descriptions helped me to surface the findings, or principal outcomes, of this research study. If HWIs are going to educate all students, higher education leaders have to talk about our histories, how spaces were formed, for whom they were developed, and what higher education leaders are working towards in the process of being in service to the most marginalized and minoritized student communities.

Considering the Michigan Union data, I found three categories: (1) Core to the University; (2) Connecting with Others; and (3) Learning with Others. The Michigan Union was a place where student participants went for convenient resources and a variety of reasons, such as meeting, eating, and attending events. While the environment has been imperfect in its disruption of systems of power and oppression, student participants made lasting connections and learned alongside others. More work is needed to ensure all students can thrive in the building.

Reviewing the Trotter Multicultural Center data, I formed three categories: (1) A Central Meeting Place; (2) A Space Where You Can Be Yourself; and (3) Interactions with Difference. The origins of Trotter were known and valued, particularly by BIPOC student participants who continue to uphold its legacy and critical importance. The location of the building is especially helpful for students to easily access. The central location has also encouraged white people to occupy the space, which has not been helpful to BIPOC students. More work is needed to ensure the most vulnerable student communities can thrive in the building.

As I considered the commonalities across the Michigan Union and the Trotter Multicultural Center, I found four commonalities: (1) The Spaces were Birthed for Different Reasons, But They are Both Unionizing Spaces; (2) The Dominant Features Represent the People Who Inhabit Them; (3) Both Centrally Located, But Not Equitable in Size; and (4)

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Students' Range of Emotions About Both Buildings. I aligned the commonalities with Strange and Banning's (2001, 2015) four component model of campus environments. Through the student participants' data, I uncovered how students' identities, and their perceptions of the buildings are affected by systemic power, privilege, and oppression.

Finally, I described four patterns across the student participants in this study: (1) BIPOC Participants Saw Themselves in the Trotter Multicultural Center; (2) White Participants Connected Effortlessly in the Michigan Union; (3) Multicultural Competence is A Work in Progress for Everyone; and (4) All Participants Wanted to Disrupt Campus Structures That Do Not Work for Everybody. I found that the patterns affirmed the relationship between students' identities and their experiences and perceptions of the two cases. I admired the participants' desire to share their stories for this research study to create lasting institutional change.

After sharing and analyzing these findings, I answer my research questions in the final chapter of this dissertation. I discuss the findings considering current literature, share limitations of this study, and provide implications for theory and practice. I then offer recommendations for future study.

CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION, IMPLICATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

Historically white higher education institutions should be learning environments where students can effectively explore differences to prepare them for life during and after college (Labaree, 1997). Many historically white institutions (HWIs) offer co-curricular spaces, such as college unions and multicultural centers, where the student community comes together and has the opportunity to learn across cultures. It is important to understand how these environments outside the classroom shape and influence student learning across cultures, which is not well documented in research. To examine this underresearched area, I interviewed students with the widest perspectives possible on the topic.

This chapter presents a discussion of the findings of my constructivist, triangulated multiple case study (Bhattacharya, 2017) using information-rich maximum variation sampling (Patton, 1990) in response to the research questions of: 1) What do students say they learn about engaging with difference and across cultures in co-curricular campus spaces at a historically white institution? 1a) What do students say they learn about engaging with difference and across cultures in a college union? and 1b) What do students say they learn about engaging with difference and across cultures in a multicultural center? An analysis of the student participants' interviews revealed key findings about the Michigan Union at the University of Michigan, the Trotter Multicultural Center at the University of Michigan, commonalities across the two cases, and patterns across participants.

The Michigan Union categories were: (1) Core to the University; (2) Connecting with Others; and (3) Learning with Others. The categories from the Trotter Multicultural Center were (1) A Central Meeting Place; (2) A Space Where You Can Be Yourself; and (3) Interactions with

Difference. The four commonalities across the two cases were: (1) The Spaces were Birthed for Different Reasons, But They are Both Unionizing Spaces; (2) The Dominant Features Represent the People Who Inhabit Them; (3) Both Centrally Located, But Not Equitable in Size; and (4) Students' Range of Emotions About Both Buildings. Lastly, the four patterns across participants were: (1) BIPOC Participants Saw Themselves in the Trotter Multicultural Center; (2) White Participants Connected Effortlessly in the Michigan Union; (3) Multicultural Competence is A Work in Progress for Everyone; and (4) All Participants Wanted to Disrupt Campus Structures That Do Not Work for Everybody.

Through this research, I aimed to present an understanding of students' awareness, knowledge, skills, and then actions to engage with difference and across cultures that they learn in the co-curricular learning environments of the college union and multicultural center. To answer the research questions in this chapter, I use Strange and Banning's (2001, 2015) four component model of campus environments and Pope et al.'s (2004, 2019) multicultural competence model to analyze student participants' learning in the campus spaces.

Strange and Banning's (2001, 2015) four component model of campus environments includes the physical, human aggregate, organizational, and socially constructed environments. Physical environments are the built layout and designs of the space, offering many human response possibilities. Physical environments would be functional, flexible, inspire creativity, reflective, and regenerative. Human aggregate environments are a function of the collective characteristics of the individuals and groups who inhabit them. Organizational environments include the purpose, goals, and distribution of resources. The complex connections between humans in the environment, the degree of flexibility in organizational operations, and the environment's size affect organizational performance. Socially constructed environments are

students' perceptions of the history and culture of spaces. Meaning making about spaces happens through the environmental press, social climate, and campus culture.

Pope et al.'s (2004, 2019) multicultural competence model includes the development of multicultural awareness, knowledge, skills, and actions. Multicultural awareness is about a person understanding their values, beliefs, attitudes, and assumptions and how they interact in the world. Multicultural knowledge includes understanding various cultures and cultural constructs that exist in society, such as privilege, oppression, microaggressions, and white supremacy. Multicultural skills are the behavioral dimension of multicultural competence where people understand how cultural differences influence communication beyond language differences. Multicultural skills also include people's ability to recover after making cultural errors and learning from these situations. Lastly, multicultural action is where people operationalize their awareness, knowledge, and skills through advocacy, challenging harmful structures, and addressing inequities. Researchers should consider the factors influencing students' multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills toward action, such as students' exposure to racially diverse peers (Pope et. al, 2019).

In this chapter, I answer my research questions and share the limitations of the research study. I also discuss the findings considering current literature. I present implications for theory and practice. I offer recommendations for future study. Finally, I provide a conclusion to this dissertation study.

Discussion

This discussion details responses to my research questions using the conceptual frameworks I described previously. I then offer limitations that inhibit the transferability of the findings to other contexts. I conclude this discussion with a review of my findings in light of the literature I reviewed in Chapter Two.

Research Question 1. Student Learning in Co-Curricular Campus Spaces

The environment informed what student participants said they learned about engaging with difference and across cultures in co-curricular campus spaces at the University of Michigan, an HWI. This study affirmed the reality that the University of Michigan has not been able to overcome entrenched racial disparities, as I suggested in Chapter Three. Particularly, BIPOC student participants spoke to the whiteness at play in the Michigan Union, modeling dominant campus norms, and the Trotter Multicultural Center as the campus counterspace (Yosso & Lopez, 2010) for BIPOC students. White student participants saw themselves more easily in the Michigan Union, with one white student participant not knowing the purpose of Trotter. Most participants came to their own understanding and appreciation of the purpose of the Union and Trotter at the University of Michigan.

The student participants in this study had different experiences as they navigated the co-curricular campus spaces in this study. This finding supports McNair et al.'s (2020) account that an equitable lens on the campus environment recognizes that students do not all start from and have the same experiences as they navigate higher education campuses with other students. A sense of belonging (Hurtado & Carter, 1997; Strayhorn, 2016) or connection for student participants had to occur in order for these students to engage with others in these spaces. This

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study revealed a range of student learning about engaging with difference and across cultures in the co-curricular campus spaces.

Through the Lens of the Four Component Model of the Campus Environment

Student participants in my study engaged in storytelling with me about their experiences and learning moments in the Michigan Union and the Trotter Multicultural Center. Students spoke about unstructured and structured learning moments, from attending events to managing conflicts. Strange and Banning's (2001, 2015) four component model of the campus environment–physical, human aggregate, organizational, and socially constructed–provides a useful lens through which students shared how the environment shaped their learning with difference and across cultures.

Physical Environment. The physical elements of the Michigan Union contributed to students' ability to learn about engaging with difference and across cultures. The central campus location, free meeting rooms, and flexible spaces, such as the IdeaHub, a collaborative coworking space open to all University of Michigan student organizations, enabled students to do their work. The food operations, event space, open gathering areas for students to meet up, individual study spaces, and other amenities such as, but not limited to, banks and student organization storage, all have the potential to contribute to students' engagement and learning. Students spoke about serendipitous interactions with students, classmates or friends, in the Michigan Union. Events, such as the Winterfest student organization fair and heritage month events in the Michigan Union, created an opportunity for students to connect with each other across difference and learn about cultures other than their own. The Michigan Union demonstrated notable flexibility during the COVID-19 pandemic when the meeting and event

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spaces became individual study spaces for students when they were taking online classes and still living near or on campus.

The Trotter Multicultural Center was especially regenerative for BIPOC students as they navigated the historically white campus. It was also functional and flexible to meet students' needs. Students remarked on the importance of open and bright spaces and big windows. The multipurpose room on the lower level of the building enabled students to have events and connect across cultures. Even if the events did not connect students across cultures, the multipurpose room served as a helpful space for many students to gather in their organizations. As a result, students were then exposed to the Trotter Multicultural Center and gained an understanding of the building's purpose on campus.

Human Aggregate Environment. The Michigan Union was where student participants could run into and connect with many people across a variety of their personal and social identities. The Michigan Union Courtyard and IdeaHub were specifically named as larger spaces for students to connect, hang out, talk with each other, become knowledgeable about their multiple identities, and create memories. Participants also spoke of smaller spaces where they felt connected, such as at work with the staff team at the Campus Information desk and the small booths outside the Reflection Room on the fourth floor. Participants engaged with others across difference in these spaces. The availability of Michigan Union meeting and event rooms also resulted in students connecting with each other.

While students believed the Michigan Union to be a core part of the university, BIPOC students recognized the Michigan Union as a space that services the predominantly white student body. BIPOC students were less likely to see other people that looked like them in the Michigan Union. Many BIPOC student participants in the study used the Michigan Union as a destination

point to attend cultural events in the meeting rooms, visit the Multi-Ethnic Student Affairs Office, use the massage chairs in the Counseling and Psychological Services office suite, or get takeout food at one of the eateries. Most BIPOC student participants had a transactional relationship with the Michigan Union where the students went for essential services only.

The student participants in the Black Student Union felt a particular connection in the Trotter Multicultural Center because of Trotter's origin as a space for Black students to thrive together. As a remembrance of its origin, the Trotter Multicultural Center named its largest lounge the Sankofa Lounge. Sankofa, originating from the Twi language of Ghana, is stylized by a bird with its head turned backward while its feet face forward, acknowledging history while pursuing the future (Channey & Barlow, 2019). The walls of the Sankofa Lounge are adorned with large images of Black student activism over the decades that have ignited campus transformations. Other student participants spoke about how they learned about historical activism from the images on the Sankofa Lounge walls.

Organizational Environment. There were limited culturally affirming spaces with a focus on racial equity in the Michigan Union. Student participants indicated that the Michigan Union has been shaped by dominant campus characteristics and white supremacy culture. For example, the Michigan Union has many meeting and gathering spaces compared to the Trotter Multicultural Center. Quantifying spaces with large numbers of people in the building at once stood out more from student participants than the quality of the interactions, relationships, and managing conflict. It was evident from students' stories about the Michigan Union that white students felt comfortable navigating the building, but BIPOC students experienced discomfort. Instead, most of the BIPOC student participants found pockets of space in the Michigan Union to feel lifted up. However, one BIPOC student participant experienced racist interactions in their

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workplace where they typically felt supported. She developed coping mechanisms while experiencing microaggressions, conflict management skills, and emotional intelligence. Student participants believed the Michigan Union administrators can do more for students to feel welcome and connect across difference.

After students published the 2022 articles in *The Michigan Daily* and *The Michigan Review*, student leaders that led predominantly white organizations relocated their meetings and events from the Trotter Multicultural Center to the Michigan Union or elsewhere on campus. These students exhibited multicultural awareness and skills through their recognition and making interventions to prioritize the BIPOC community. *The Michigan Daily* and *The Michigan Review* articles written by students debated back and forth the idea that there were too many white students occupying Trotter spaces. Subsequently, the Black Student Union started a #OccupyTrotter movement for BIPOC students to be highly visible users of the Trotter Multicultural Center. BIPOC students highlighted the purpose of the Trotter Multicultural Center through their visibility there and future storytelling initiatives.

Socially Constructed Environment. Most of the BIPOC participants in this study came to the University of Michigan from BIPOC neighborhoods, recalling a sense of shock being with so many white people in the Michigan Union. These experiences prompted some BIPOC students to realize they needed more supportive campus spaces. The BIPOC student members of the Black Student Union learned about the Michigan Union's origins from oral history. A key historical point occurred more than 20 years ago when the Students of Color Coalition forced a secret honor society out of the Michigan Union tower because of its racist practices. This oppressive historical experience of the BIPOC student community informs the meaning-making of the social climate in the Michigan Union. Even if the Michigan Union administrators have

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taken some corrective action, BIPOC students' perceptions remain, which can limit the extent of students' engagement with others in the building.

White student participants came to understand others and engage with difference in the Michigan Union through other interactions. One student participant explored religious identity and worldview with faith groups there, gaining abilities to identify and communicate about cultural differences and issues. Another student was excited to experience the Michigan Union because of stories from family members who were University of Michigan alumni.

Students formed the identity and meaning of the Trotter Multicultural Center by the history and culture of the space. The stand-alone building in the center of campus carried significance for BIPOC students at an HWI. The Trotter Multicultural Center was a refuge from racism from white people. While the Trotter Multicultural Center was a significant space for BIPOC students, some student participants in my study shared that the building was not big enough to meet the current and growing needs of the diverse student population. Students questioned the importance of Trotter to administrators because of its limited square footage. Some students are also constructing the meaning of the space as a result of cultural conflicts that happen there.

Several student participants felt like the Trotter Multicultural Center had to be regularly defended and justified by BIPOC to white people. The space could not just exist for its purpose on campus without critique. One white student participant critiqued Trotter as a liberal space. This student believed that displaying student activist movements on the walls of Trotter suggested alignment with liberal values rather than its purpose of community action and equity to improve the institution. Another white-passing student changed her perspectives of Trotter

after the #OccupyTrotter movement, questioning the role of Trotter and wanting to understand

who should be present there.

Research Question 1a. Student Learning in a College Union

I found the encounters that students had in the Michigan Union contributed to the

students' development of multicultural competence. Particularly, Ava, a white woman, spoke of

the Michigan Union as the place where she had the most significant learning moments with

difference and across cultures. Student participants learned about engaging with difference and

across cultures in different ways, based on their experiences coupled with their salient social

identities in relation to other students. Student learning experiences resulted from positive or

challenging moments engaging across cultures. This study revealed the following multicultural

awareness, knowledge, skills, and actions from participants.

Multicultural Awareness

Multicultural awareness was evident in Ava's self-evaluation of her faith identity, how

she understood herself, and how she interacted with difference in the environment. As a result of

her experiences in the campus environment, including in the Michigan Union, Jasmine examined

her familial background and cultural influences to inform how she interacted with individuals

who were different from her. Madison spent time in the Michigan Union reflecting on her

identities and what she cared about, helping her identify student organizations to join.

Multicultural Knowledge

Ava gained multicultural knowledge when she learned about Christian fundamentalism

through participation in a student organization and then realized her Christian beliefs were

different. Additionally, Ava described a time when she was sitting in a booth outside of the

Michigan Union reflection room and someone from a different faith gave her tea and informed

her of their faith identity. Ava also learned about students with identities different than her own by attending the Winterfest student organization fair in the Michigan Union. Ava planned to create more time in her student organization meetings for students to get to know each other more deeply.

The IdeaHub, a coworking space open to all University of Michigan student organizations in the Michigan Union, was a critical place for Madison to get to know her peers and learn about their multiple identities. Jasmine learned about white supremacy culture, and racial prejudice, in the Michigan Union. During her new student orientation tour through the Michigan Union, Alicia recognized the white dominant culture in the environment when she was surprised and caught off guard by a large number of white people in that space. Alicia recognized the need for other supportive spaces on campus without white people. Tanya learned with others by attending heritage month events in the Michigan Union.

Multicultural Skills

Having been raised in a family with one Christian belief, Ava exhibited multicultural skills by rebounding from the confusion and conflict that she felt in the Michigan Union after learning how much she did not know about other Christian beliefs. Despite experiencing racial prejudice at work in the Michigan Union, Jasmine assessed the impact of cultural differences on communication during interactions with racist customers and navigated those differences to manage the situations, which is a multicultural skill. Jasmine shared that she developed "patience" as a skill, but I believe it may have been a coping mechanism rather than a skill.

Multicultural Action

Alicia wanted to engage more in the Michigan Union to model engagement by BIPOC students. She believed there needed to be more BIPOC representation in the Michigan Union.

The increased visibility would help racially minoritized students understand what they can do there and why it is a space for BIPOC students, not just majority white students. Madison wanted to spend more time in the Michigan Union having deeper conversations with her peers and identifying ways they can create more equitable environments together. Jasmine wanted to call administrators to action by dismantling systems of power in the Michigan Union, rather than administrators relying on the status quo. Jasmine was hopeful that administrators could shape multiculturally competent environments.

Research Question 1b. Student Learning in a Multicultural Center

Interactions with difference in Trotter strengthened students' multicultural competence (Pope et al., 2019). Particularly, Alicia and Tanya felt a strong connection to the Trotter Multicultural Center because of its origins to build community and support among Black students. Most student participants spoke to the importance of equity at play in the space. Trotter was a space for racially minoritized students to be their most authentic selves. Trotter was also a space for students' engagement with difference, whether among BIPOC communities or between the white-Black binary that existed on campus. This study revealed the following multicultural awareness, knowledge, skills, and actions from participants. It is worth noting that the same examples from participants' narratives reflected more than one component of multicultural competence. For example, as I described in the following sections, Madison exhibited both multicultural awareness and multicultural skills in her decision-making process as a result of the #OccupyTrotter movement.

Multicultural Awareness

Multicultural awareness was evident in Alicia and Tanya's description of and meaning-making about the Sankofa Lounge in the Trotter Multicultural Center. Specifically, they spoke

about educating prospective students about Trotter and its history within the context of the University of Michigan. Madison also demonstrated multicultural awareness with her openness and willingness to relocate her student organization meetings during the #OccupyTrotter movement. John appreciated the different cultures represented in the design and decorations of the Trotter Multicultural Center, but he questioned why conservative causes were missing from the decorations. As a white-passing person, Madison was willing to self-examine and change their assumptions about who should be using Trotter during the #OccupyTrotter movement to prioritize Black students.

Multicultural Knowledge

Alicia learned about past student protests fueled by the oppressive environment on the walls of the Sankofa Lounge in the Trotter Multicultural Center. Alicia also learned about students' visible and invisible identities by having deep conversations about how students' backgrounds affect how they interact. Additionally, Alicia gained information in Trotter about the conflicts at play between communities of color because the Trotter Multicultural Center building is too small for everybody. These space conflicts between student communities surfaced issues of anti-Blackness, devaluing the full participation of Black people in Trotter. Alicia spoke about "nasty things said from other people of color," such as the Latinx community, toward Black students likely out of frustration about who belongs in Trotter and where different racial communities can go. During the back-and-forth controversy about the Trotter Multicultural Center in *The Michigan Daily* and *The Michigan Review* newspapers, Marcia learned that the purpose of Trotter had to be defended from the majority white population in its service to racially minoritized students. Jasmine learned about other cultures by attending heritage month events in Trotter.

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Multicultural Skills

Madison exhibited multicultural skills in making interventions to prioritize Black students using Trotter spaces during the #OccupyTrotter movement while relocating her student organizations' meetings. Alicia had the ability to recognize uncertainty in the environment about what "multicultural" meant in Trotter. She wanted to participate in a multicultural intervention to redefine Trotter's purpose and goals, being explicit about what multiculturalism means at Michigan. Marcia had the ability to intervene during a cultural conflict among students about Syrian flags. Alicia implied that she had the ability to empathize and differentiate among cultural differences and similarities in her coalition-building work with other identity-based student organizations in Trotter. While Madison was able to self-examine during the #OccupyTrotter movement, she also expressed a desire to strengthen her ability to openly discuss issues regarding colorism.

Multicultural Action

Multicultural action was evident through Tanya's description of Black student leaders sharing with the campus community about the history and origin of the Trotter Multicultural Center. The students' advocacy through storytelling challenged inequities at play in the building. Marcia's intervention to support Syrian students who watched a Syrian flag conflict between students who were not Syrian demonstrated her recognition of problematic power dynamics; she took the responsibility to address the issue. Alicia partnered with other identity-based student organization leaders in Trotter to address the space conflicts and better support the collective communities. Through Trotter, Alicia and Tanya strived to advocate for more healing and well-being spaces for BIPOC students.

Limitations

In this dissertation, limitations included aspects that were not qualitative research design decisions that might limit transferability to other contexts. Although I did not target a specific class standing, all participants were juniors or seniors with student organization involvement and leadership roles. The topic of this study may have attracted students who were juniors or seniors because the students would have had the most experiences in the Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center before and after the COVID-19 pandemic. During the height of the pandemic, the Union and Trotter were closed or were open with limited use of space.

Noticeably, there was an absence of Asian Pacific Islander Desi American (APIDA) student voices in this research study. As I mentioned in Chapter Three, APIDA students at the University of Michigan are the second-largest racial group. In Chapter Five, I described how one of the student participants in my study excluded APIDA students as students of color. APIDA students are underrepresented and under-studied in the literature examining students of color and their assets and challenges are largely ignored (Hsieh & Kim, 2020). Yi (2020) highlighted the importance of participatory structures in research as a mechanism to include the perspectives of Asian students. This dissertation's findings and implications may have been different with APIDA student voices.

While I used information-rich maximum variation sampling (Patton, 1990), most student participants in this study revealed during the interview process that they participated because they had something to say on the topic coming off the recent #OccupyTrotter movement. Participants' interests and learning may have differed during another time. The experiences of these students were unique to the Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center at the

University of Michigan, which inhibit the transferability of the findings to other higher education contexts.

A Discussion of the Findings Considering Current Literature

After interviewing students to understand what students say they learn about engaging with difference and across cultures in the co-curricular campus spaces of a college union and multicultural center at a historically white institution, it is crucial to evaluate my findings to contextualize my results within the current literature. I described the current literature in Chapter Two of this dissertation. Previous researchers have discussed the history and purpose of college unions (Camputaro, 2018; Lang, 2020) and multicultural centers (Patton, 2006; Reid & Ebede, 2018), how specific populations make meaning of the spaces (Rodriguez, 2019), and students' sense of belonging and community in the spaces (Oliveira, 2017). However, researchers have not documented what students learn about engaging with difference and across cultures in college unions and multicultural centers.

Student participants in this study affirmed the need for co-curricular environments where students saw others like themselves and felt connected. This finding extends Mojtahedi and Schermer's (2013) case study findings of the University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee Student Union and Library. Participants in their study preferred places where they could connect with similar groups rather than different ones. Those participants also desired places with clear institutional character displayed in their physical features. In my study, students not only preferred connecting across similarities, but they also demonstrated multicultural learning with difference and across cultures through those homophilic connections. Students in my study learned across cultures in meaningful spaces to them, whether in open lounge spaces or in reservable event and meeting rooms available in the environment.

My findings extend Vaccaro and Newman's (2016) model of belonging for privileged and minoritized students showing that involvement enhances belonging for privileged and minoritized students in different ways. To develop a sense of belonging, minoritized students had to locate involvement opportunities where they could be authentic. Conversely, having fun and mattering was relevant for privileged students. In my study, BIPOC participants felt like they could be their authentic selves the most in the Trotter Multicultural Center while in community with each other. White participants in my study connected effortlessly in various ways in the Michigan Union, without considering the social constructs of privilege and oppression.

All participants in my study were involved and led student organizations or were leaders at work. These organizations and work teams were supportive and learning spaces for many students, which aligned with previous research findings (Cheng & Zhao, 2006; Griffin & McIntosh, 2015; Holzweiss et al., 2007; Kwon et al., 2020). Student organizations mostly served as spaces for students with shared identities– cultural, ethnic, faith, and political groups–as the students learned how to interact across other cultures and differences. Interracial interaction is associated with leadership ability (antonio, 2021). In my study, Jasmine experienced racial prejudice from customers at work, with which she learned to cope and manage through communication across cultures. Jasmine thrived on her work team throughout her undergraduate years. She was promoted to student manager at work in her senior year. While dealing with racial prejudice was arduous and unacceptable, Jasmine shared that she was grateful for the learning moments and growth opportunities dealing with people different from her.

My study extends Lang's (2020) mixed-methods study of a college union at a large, public, historically white, four-year institution similar to the University of Michigan. While she also found that white students perceived a greater sense of belonging in a college union, I

furthered the finding by understanding student learning with difference and across cultures in a college union. While Rodriguez (2019) found that Latinx students would go elsewhere if they do not experience cultural validation in college unions, I found a supportive workplace in the college union made a difference even if Latinx cultural identity is not present. Unlike Godrey's (2018) study highlighting barriers in college union policies for Black students, my study did not reveal direct policy barriers such as limitations for using existing spaces. However, student participants in my study suggested the need for more multicultural spaces to meet BIPOC communities' needs.

Through the BIPOC student participants' accounts of activism contributing to the evolution and change of the Trotter Multicultural Center, my findings support Hurtado's (1992) assertion that race-based student activism resulted from a negative campus racial climate. At institutions where campus leaders were ineffective at advancing racial equity, such as the University of Michigan according to my student participants, students assumed the labor and roles of change-maker to bring attention to and contribute to remedying unfavorable situations. Student participants in my study critiqued Trotter as a one-size-fits-all building to meet the needs of all minoritized student communities, which did not provide the best service to everyone (Shotton, 2010). Scholars agreed that adequate, visible spaces should be provided for culture centers (Jenkins, 2010; Lozano, 2010; Young, 1991), which could change over time. I found that Trotter did not facilitate multicultural education to the majority community, unlike Malone's (2020) finding, because of the guiding mission of Trotter.

There is no single model of cultural centers on higher education campuses. At the University of Michigan, several student participants in my study suggested that Trotter strived to be a "fortress" model (Patton, 2011) for students, a space of shelter and protection for BIPOC

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who feel excluded elsewhere on campus. Trotter was also a social space where students learned across ethnic cultures besides their own as also demonstrated by Liu, Vuyjet, and Lee (2010).

According to scholars, while it should be the responsibility of every department and office on campus to advocate for students from minoritized populations, provide cross-cultural learning opportunities to students in the majority, and foster equitable environments for all students, these tasks are often left to the multicultural center (Patton, 2011; Patton & Hannon, 2008; Young, 1991). My findings reveal that students gained cross-cultural learning opportunities in both the multicultural center and college union, whether intentionally structured or not. Findings from participants suggested that both Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center administrators needed to continue advocating for students from minoritized populations, highlighted by the #OccupyTrotter movement and prejudiced interactions in the Union. Administrators also needed to create equitable environments, highlighted by the need to examine how space can be used to support minoritized students.

Implications for Theory

In this section, I review what I learned from conducting this research that speaks back to the theoretical frameworks that I used. I address Harris' (1993) whiteness as property because of how I situated the University of Michigan, particularly the college union, within this context. I then discuss the four component model of campus environments (Strange & Banning, 2001, 2015) and situate this model in the concepts of space and place. I further describe one of my research methods, education journey mapping (Annamma, 2017), as a recommended approach to center student participants in educational places. Lastly, I review multicultural competence (Pope et al., 2004, 2019) and reflect on conscientização (Freire, 1970) or critical consciousness within this theory.

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Whiteness as Property

I framed this research study within a historically white institutional context. I used Harris' (1993) whiteness as property concept to understand how white people over time at the University of Michigan, used their racial identity to create a system of oppression. Specifically, I highlighted the right to use and enjoyment and the right to exclude.

Historically and presently affirmed by the participants in my study, college union leaders have affirmed whiteness as a normative practice in the space. Even though college union leaders worked towards diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives, the right to use and enjoyment by white students persisted. Whiteness served as a barrier to transformative change. College unions, such as the Michigan Union, are often byproducts of white hegemony at the institutional level. Thus, college unions have been an avenue through which universities carry out exclusionary practices.

The right to exclude appeared in the student participants' narratives about who feels welcome in the Michigan Union and who does not. BIPOC students in my study emphasized the need for a separate space—the Trotter Multicultural Center—to feel included, seen, supported, and affirmed as they navigate the predominantly white campus. The multicultural center served as a counterspace (Yosso & Lopez, 2010) that enabled minoritized student communities to disrupt the embedded white culture at the University of Michigan. Multicultural centers helped address the unresolved societal issue of providing equity to victims of exclusion and injustice as noted by Young (1991). However, multicultural center administrators have historically struggled for sustainable funding from the university. This lack of sustainable funding suggests whiteness at play in the environment. Even if BIPOC student participants found pockets of the Union for connection in addition to Trotter, the exclusionary history of the Michigan Union was present,

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unspoken and spoken, for students. BIPOC student participants noticed the characteristics of whiteness as property, even without calling attention to Harris' (1993) concept, which speaks to their multicultural awareness (Pope et al., 2004, 2019).

Compared to other college union research, my study offered patterns across participants, focusing on their salient social identities and how students interacted in the Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center. I sought the widest range of perspectives possible to answer my research questions about what students learn about engaging with difference and across cultures in co-curricular campus spaces. I described the experiences of BIPOC students, which is missing but starting to increase in most college union research. In Chapter Two, I suggested that more college union researchers must focus on the specific experiences of BIPOC to help ensure equity in theory and practice at historically white institutions. Lang (2020), Rodriguez (2019), and Godfrey (2018) paved the way for more equitable research on BIPOC students' experiences in college unions.

Four Component Model of Campus Environments

Strange and Banning (2001, 2015) were the first to articulate how the relationship between students and the campus is a complex transactional one. As I described in this chapter's introduction, Strange and Banning's framework includes the physical, human aggregate, organizational, and socially constructed environments. This study affirmed the symbiotic systems of students, the built spaces, the organizational operations of the spaces, and the students' perceptions of the spaces. In answering my first research question earlier in this chapter, I wrote about how my research spoke to the four component model of campus environments (Strange & Banning, 2001, 2015). The four components of the environments contributed to or hindered students' sense of belonging and connection in the Michigan Union

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and Trotter Multicultural Center. Student participants' sense of belonging was critical for their

willingness to participate fully in the two spaces. Stewart (2018) affirmed that higher education

leaders can and should provide a sense of belonging considering the four aspects of the

environment outlined by Strange and Banning (2001, 2015). Once students felt connected there,

whether planned or serendipitously, the co-curricular campus environments in this study

facilitated students' development of multicultural competence as I discuss later.

Strange and Banning's (2001, 2015) framework is rooted in the concept of place.

Material spaces, or environments, transform into places for students when imbued with

emotional or physical meaning (Creswell, 2004). Tuck and McKenzie (2015) discussed a need to

interrogate westernized notions of place, which Strange and Banning (2001, 2015) perpetuate.

Tuck and McKenzie (2015) drew upon Indigenous worldviews to center the community's

collective life rather than the ontology of place that centers individual human experience, which

Okun (n.d.) would describe as white supremacy culture. Tuck and McKenzie (2015)

recommended research methods of Indigenous methodologies, such as the use of education

journey mapping, where participants provide visual representations of their community

engagement places.

I was grateful for the student participants' truth in telling their stories during the

education journey mapping activity that we carried out. We used Annamma's (2017) education

journey mapping exercise as a qualitative approach for equity-focused education. All these

student participants told me that they had something to say through their stories within the co-

curricular spaces at the University of Michigan. I shared a few examples of student participants'

education journey maps in Chapter Five. Student participants seemed committed to participating

in small and large, active change efforts meaningful to them within their communities on

campus. As I consider this, I reflected on sharing with the student participants about my experiences through the campus environments of the Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center. I wondered if sharing openly about my experiences contributed to student participants' willingness to be open about their experiences in the environment.

Figure 6.1. Education Journey Map of the Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center. Copyright 2022 by N. Smith (researcher).

In my education journey map (see Figure 6.1), I illustrated an imperfect ongoing journey of learning, unlearning, and understanding the Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center that began with me getting a job at the University of Michigan over 15 years ago. I felt incredible joy and optimism about working in the Michigan Union. I was exposed to various incredible opportunities, people, events, and experiences. Feelings of joy and optimism were met with feelings of curiosity and uncertainty at times as I experienced and contributed to established norms and standards. The norms and standards felt comfortable to me as a white person, but I

was also challenged by them. As a queer person, I have operated outside the bounds of dominant norms most of my life. When I took on a temporary role with the Trotter Multicultural Center, I felt a different type of joy and optimism. Trotter staff and students outwardly challenged the status quo. Through many reflective discussions, I strengthened my skills in engaging with people who were different from me on campus. I was challenged to examine my privileges in different ways that I had not done at the University of Michigan.

Those experiences and others led me to my dissertation study. I was a passionate participant (Lincoln & Guba, 2013) with lived experiences related to this study's topic. Yet, the use of a researcher's analytic memo (Yin, 2018), establishing reciprocity between me as the researcher and student participants by co-creating expectations to ensure a humane research process (Galvez & Muñoz, 2020), and member checking (Merriam & Tisdell, 2016), all served to co-construct the knowledge and interpretations gained from participants.

Multicultural Competence

In answering the two research questions focused on student learning with difference and across cultures that happened in the Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center, I found both spaces have the opportunity to facilitate students' development of multicultural competence. As I described in this chapter's introduction, multicultural awareness, knowledge, skills, and actions inform people how to understand multicultural competence's relevance and meaning (Pope et al., 2004, 2019). I found from the participants in this study that multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills build on one another. However, multicultural competence is a non-linear dynamic process that is never-ending and ever-expanding. For example, a person needs multicultural knowledge before gaining multicultural skills. Multicultural action is where people operationalize or put into action to change the awareness, knowledge, and skills that they gain. A

person can transition between the dimensions of multicultural competence based on the interactions and relationships with other cultures over time. For example, a person may need to gain new multicultural knowledge to inform multicultural skills and appropriate action. Figure 6.2 depicts the interactive process of the multicultural competence dimensions.
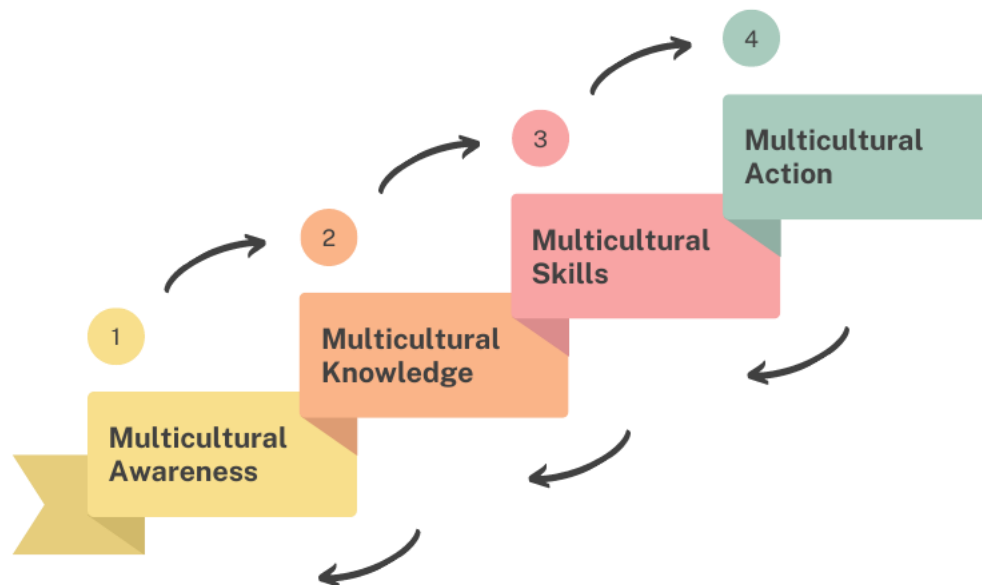
Figure 6.2. Interactive Process of Multicultural Competence Dimensions. Copyright 2022 by N. Smith (researcher).

While Pope et al. (2004, 2019) designed the multicultural competence framework for student affairs educators, this framework's domains were a useful lens to apply to student participants in this study to describe their experiences. I found that students gained multicultural competence through planned and serendipitous interactions in the Union and Trotter. The two buildings taught students how to engage with difference and across cultures through their built and designed spaces for connection, the people who inhabited them, how students came to

understand the history and current context of the spaces (mostly from friends/peers and family), and their own perceptions of the spaces based on their individual and community's experiences.

Pope et al. (2004, 2019) explained the importance of conscientização (Freire, 1970) or critical consciousness. Conscientização focuses on achieving an in-depth understanding of the world, reflecting on underlying assumptions and perceptions, and taking action against oppression. The students in this study were committed to taking action steps for increased learning with difference and across cultures. However, my study did not fully examine the students' critical consciousness as they engaged with others across cultures. By engaging in critical consciousness, students can understand how context, power, and shifting identities influence how they experience campus environments (Linder & Cooper, 2016). Importantly, student participants' salient identities in this study can change over time. Students' salient identities are not always stagnant but rather complex as they further become and understand who they are throughout their lives. Linder (2018) suggested the need for power-conscious educational spaces to critically recognize ways people in dominant groups benefit from systems of domination and how marginalization and oppression play out on campuses.

While there is no conversation in the multicultural competence model about creating and maintaining environmental space, physical spaces have an impact on student learning (Astin, 1993; Renn & Patton, 2011; Rullman & Harrington, 2014; Strange & Banning, 2001). As I found in my research, students' lived experiences in these two physical spaces contributed to their learning with difference and across cultures there. In Chapter Two, I offered a conceptual framework diagram (see Figure 2.1) that visually depicted an alignment where the four components of Strange and Banning's (2001, 2015) model came together to cultivate the growth development of multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills (Pope et al., 2004). In Figure 2.1,

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I suggested that multicultural awareness, knowledge, and skills had the same weight in the learning process. As I mentioned in my description about Figure 6.2, there was a process of multicultural awareness, knowledge, skills, and action building on one another through student participants' learning process. Figure 6.3 depicts how students are centered in their experiences of the environment's four components, which can lead to the interactive process of developing multicultural competence among the four dimensions. Multicultural action is where people operationalize their awareness, knowledge, and skills actively and directly (Pope et al., 2019).
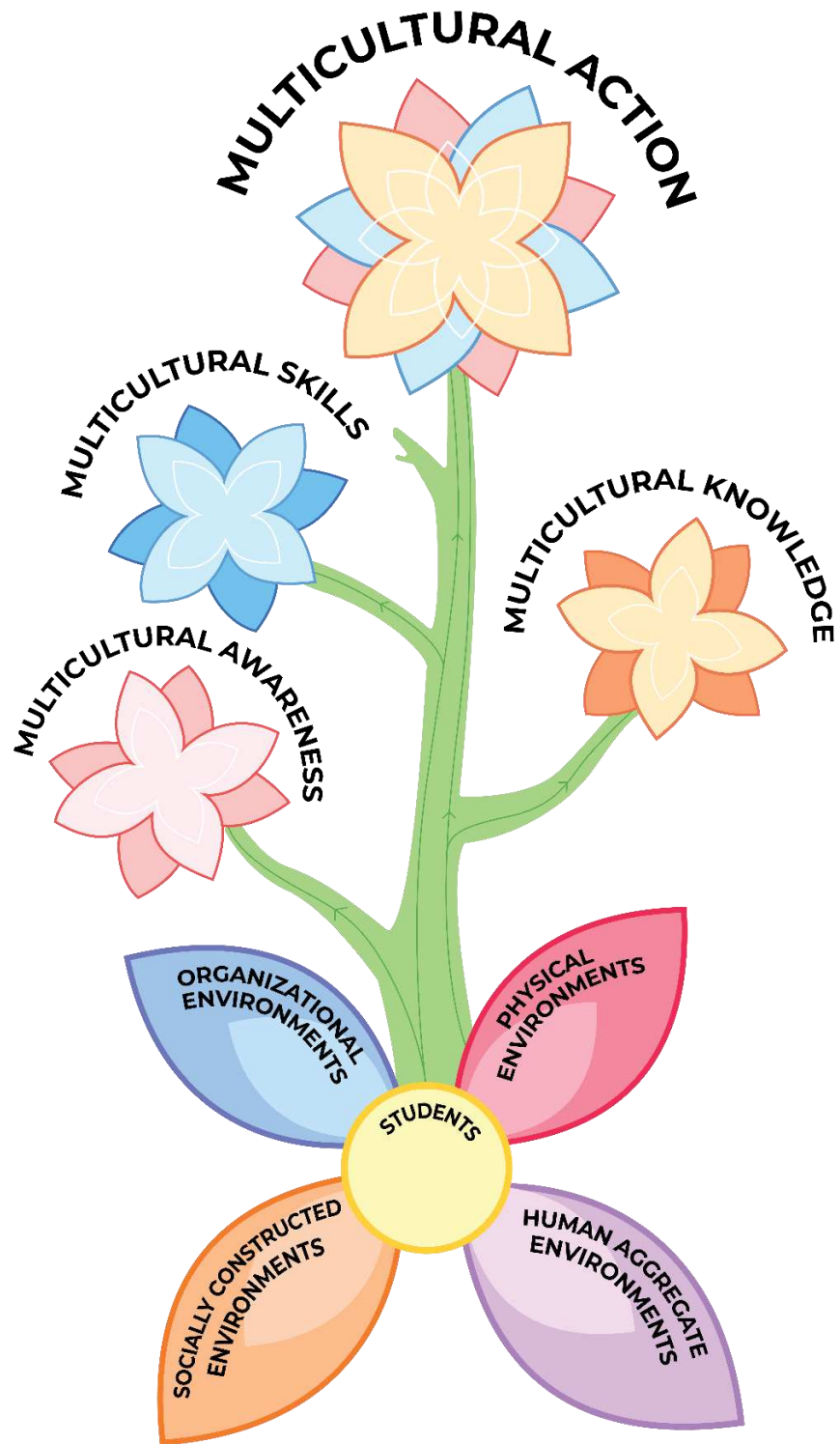
Figure 6.3. Interactive Process of Multicultural Learning through Campus Environments.

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Implications for Practice

This section includes what I recommend to readers and others to do if they take my findings seriously. This section speaks to multicultural action (Pope et al., 2019) to change the environment and act in an advocacy role. Actions include advocating with regularly underserved others, challenging dualistic thinking, becoming accomplices with others, decolonizing practices, and disrupting harmful structures.

Accountability for student learning with difference and across cultures must be a high priority. Higher education administrators, faculty, and staff must also focus on racial equity. Higher education leaders have opportunities to engage with students outside of the classroom that addresses factors to support a positive racial campus climate (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). As I shared in Chapter Two, Harper and Hurtado (2007) asserted, "If accountability for student learning is a high priority, dialogue and strategic efforts must be directed toward addressing undercurrents of racial segregation that inhibit the rich learning that occurs in cross-racial engagement." Historically white institutions (HWIs) were not originally designed to be decolonized spaces where campus leaders created equitable, humanizing environments that challenged dominant power structures. Yet, higher education leaders train students to live and work in a multicultural and currently polarized society. If HWIs are going to educate all students, higher education leaders have to talk about their institutional histories, how spaces were formed, for whom they were developed, and how higher education leaders are working towards being in service to the most marginalized and minoritized student communities.

It is important for higher education leaders to recognize that students come to understand the history of co-curricular spaces either explicitly by selected organizational narratives for them or through stories passed down by communities over time. Higher education leaders must be

explicit about the histories of co-curricular spaces, including what has gone well, where they missed the mark, challenges they have experienced, and what they are working towards. White supremacy culture (Okun, n.d.) includes, but is not limited to, concepts of defensiveness, power hoarding, fear of open conflict, and right to comfort. For higher education leaders to engage in multicultural action, they must embrace discomfort to disrupt harmful structures.

Higher education leaders must recognize that increasing the BIPOC student population at the University of Michigan does not automatically result in a change to entrenched whiteness practices. Higher education leaders should use the antidotes described by Okun (n.d.) to challenge white supremacy culture. Antidotes include, but are not limited to, naming defensiveness as a problem when it is one, accepting that there are many ways to get to the same goal, and understanding that change is inevitable. Changes in leadership style can be healthy and productive and support people who raise hard issues. The Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center allowed student participants in this study to see themselves there. Still, the planning and intentionality behind physical building design for BIPOC students, using an equity lens on the environment, needs to be much greater with sustainable resources for continuous assessment. As leaders of co-curricular community spaces that unify students, I recommend that the college union director and multicultural center director form a student learning partnership focused on students' multicultural learning experiences across the two buildings (see Figure 6.4). As described by Strange & Banning (2001, 2015), the four components of the environment could serve as a useful lens for directors to examine their buildings. This partnership would also help strengthen the University of Michigan Student Life's student learning outcome of *Collaboration Across Differences* across the two buildings where students can work with and learn from others,

whose identities may differ from their own, to accomplish goals and solve problems (Student Life at the University of Michigan, 2020).
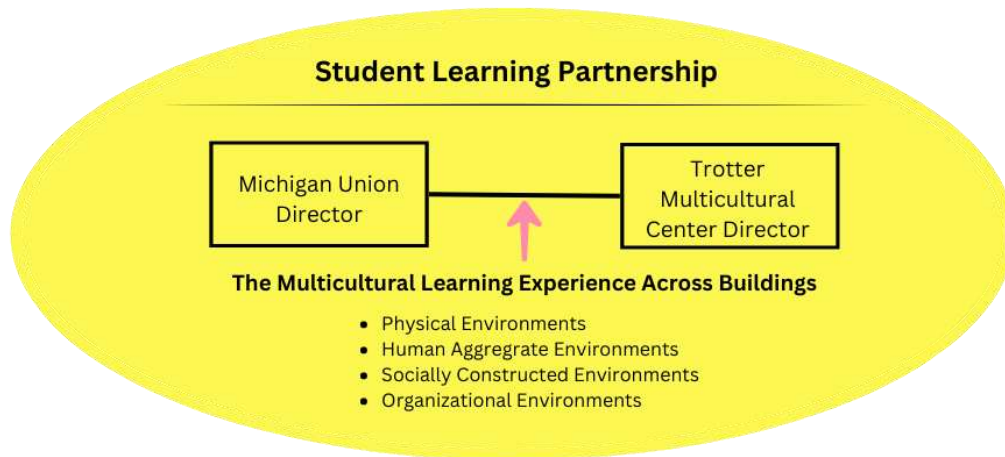
Figure 6.4. Student Learning Partnership. Copyright 2022 by N. Smith (researcher).

For example, staff could conduct focus groups to understand students' learning from the physical designs and how students are interacting with other students. Student Life units could annually assess their students' lived experiences with co-curricular physical spaces to help ensure inclusive and equitable design considerations (Doshi et al., 2014). Student advisory boards of each building could focus on the purpose and goals of the spaces and discuss how the organizational operation meets the purpose and goals. Staff, student boards, and other student stakeholders could work together to communicate or program about the histories, what has gone well, where the mark was missed and the learning occurred over time, and what is in the works. The Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center directors could meet regularly to take stock of the data, what they are noticing and learning, and strategize about students' learning across the spaces.

Given this recommendation, I acknowledge that some student participants in my dissertation expressed frustration interacting with campus administrators. The students'

frustration was especially elevated when working with administrators on institutional change efforts. It has been my experience that students want change to occur fast and administrators oftentimes work slower than students want. I recommend that administrators take students' feedback and findings seriously, identifying and communicating near-term and longer-term steps to remedy issues. In my study, Alicia also recommended that administrators do more to be present with students and assist students in their learning. Administrators' presence with and getting to know students in co-curricular campus spaces could help lessen students' frustration interacting with campus administrators on institutional change efforts.

Students, faculty, and administrators can be in learning partnership together. Grounded in a constructivist approach, Baxter Magolda and King (2004) developed the Learning Partnerships Model as a framework for promoting self-authorship. Self-authorship is the internal capacity to define one's beliefs, identity, and relations with others in the environment. In Baxter Magolda and King's (2004) research, they found that environments that promoted self-authorship consistently operated on three key assumptions and three key principles.

The assumptions included *knowledge is complex and socially constructed*, *self is central to knowledge construction*, and *authority and expertise are shared in the mutual construction of knowledge among peers*. The three assumptions challenge learners to journey toward self-authorship, while the principles bridge the gap between the learners' current developmental place and authoring their own beliefs, identities, and relationships. The principles included *validating learners' capacity to know*, *situating learning in learners' experience*, and *mutually constructing meaning* between educators and students.

The Learning Partnerships Model (Baxter Magolda and King, 2004) could be extended for use between administrators and students in co-curricular campus spaces. As it relates to

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multicultural education, Hornak and Ortiz (2004) discussed the development of self-authored multicultural perspectives. The researchers noted that learners must recognize and deconstruct the power of whiteness in society, such as childhood messages from caregivers and communities that negatively positioned themselves from others, as learners take responsibility for engaging across cultures. Ashlee et al. (2018) emphasized the critical need to foreground culturally relevant pedagogy in the implementation of the Learning Partnerships Model to be racially and culturally inclusive, such as centering students' cultural contexts in their learning. King and Baxter Magolda (2004) outlined a starting point to implement the Learning Partnerships Model, asserting that educators as well as students learn in the environment.

The time is right for my research study and future research studies that include the use of the Learning Partnerships Model (Baxter Magolda and King, 2004) to inform University of Michigan stakeholders about student learning through the Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center and influence policy decisions for additional resources needed to invest in co-curricular campus spaces. The University of Michigan recently concluded their first Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) Strategic Plan in the 2021-22 academic year. Campus leaders, including those in Student Life, are in an evaluation year with the second strategic plan, called "DEI 2.0," to launch in fall of 2023. Funding and other institutional resources were allocated to Student Life units to support initiatives in the first DEI Strategic Plan.

While State of Michigan law currently prohibits services, programs, or spaces that give preferential treatment based on race, ethnicity, gender, or national origin (*2006 Proposal 2: University of Michigan*, n.d.), higher education leaders can create more multicultural spaces for students on campus and create reservation policies that align with the purpose of these spaces. As such, higher education leaders must work from the perspective of how power shows up or not in

educational, co-curricular spaces. If higher education leaders are explicit about their focus on equity (justice) rather than equality (the same for all), they can make informed, justifiable decisions to decenter dominant white supremacist notions and challenge harmful structures. For my fellow white people, focusing on racial equity would not discount the lived experiences of white people but rather uplift everyone for the collective community to thrive and learn together. Additionally, higher education leaders must take a visible stance against hate and oppression and advocate or lobby for affirmative action. Affirmative action increases opportunities for BIPOC students.

Recognizably today, there is an increasingly aggressive political attack on diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) initiatives by conservatives across the country (Knox, 2023) that higher education leaders must consider. Florida's Governor DeSantis announced plans to defund all DEI offices across the state's higher education system (Moody, 2023). Texas lawmakers proposed legislation to ban DEI work in public higher education (Knox, 2023). Oklahoma's new Republican superintendent of public instruction requires the state's public colleges to account for every DEI dollar spent in an effort to curb that spending (Knox, 2023). Given the current socio-political landscape, higher education leaders must talk about the need for equity in education without sending up red flags. One suggestion for doing this work in our politically charged environment is to use concepts and language agreeable across difference. These include approaches such as health, safety, and wellbeing. Everyone wants to make our society a better place to live, work, and learn. At the University of Michigan, we have a Well-being Collective (*Supporting the Well-Being of Our People, Places and Planet: U-M Well-Being Collective*, n.d.) of students, staff, and faculty who have been brought together from across campus to support and implement our commitment to improving the well-being of our people, places and planet. The

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continuum of care at the University includes examining and advancing policies, education, identity support, peer-to-peer programs, research, and recovery support, among other things.

Understanding students' lived experiences with physical space on campus is a critical component of designing better places for students to live, work, and learn. The more higher education leaders can create open, vulnerable active learning spaces with students to understand their experiences, the more they will be informed and be able to center their work on students' needs rather than only what they think they need. Based on what I learned from student participants in this study, I offer implications for college unions. Then, I offer implications for multicultural centers.

Implications for College Unions

College union leaders must continue to ensure various essential services, such as student organization storage options, food eateries, and free meeting and open lounge spaces for students to gather and learn from each other. College union leaders must provide various well-being spaces for students to relax and do what they must do for themselves. College union leaders must also offer a variety of social and cultural programming, ensuring that the cultural programming planned in the Union is particularly highlighted through event promotions.

This study raised attention to students' multicultural learning that happens in the Michigan Union, which is often not documented or known to college union leaders. How are college union leaders developing students, those who pass through the Union and those who work in the Union, about multicultural awareness, knowledge, skills, and actions? I suggest it cannot only happen through serendipity. As community builders on campus, I suggest that college union leaders must prioritize students' multicultural learning experiences through artwork in the building, student leadership training, student employee development, and

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amplifying communications about cultural programming happening in the building, for example, to contribute to the institution's educational mission and train students to live and work in a diverse community.

Strong (1986) shared that Association of College Unions' International (ACUI) leaders charged college unions with embracing multicultural education. Because of institutional funding challenges in the following decades, many college unions strengthened their focus on business enterprises. Former ACUI Executive Director, Marsha Herman-Betzen, warned that many college unions were perceived on campus as an auxiliary enterprise rather than a part of the educational mission (Butts et al., 2012). Strengthening the focus on students learning with difference and across cultures is a way to course correct in service to present and future generations. This course correction may require college union leaders in auxiliary enterprises to reimagine the infrastructure and funding of their work. From personal experience, the outcomes of the COVID-19 pandemic have included a re-examination of how college unions deliver on their mission. The timing for a course correction could be a good one.

Implications for Multicultural Centers

My study also adds to the understanding of student engagement and learning that happens through multicultural centers at HWIs. Multicultural center leaders must continue to promote heritage month programming and well-being initiatives for BIPOC students in the space. Multicultural center leaders must ensure a counterspace (Yosso & Lopez, 2010) for BIPOC students. It was evident in students' stories the importance of the central campus location for ease of access. However, the BIPOC students in my study warned multicultural center leaders that the central location can be inviting to the dominant student population there. At the University of Michigan, the Trotter Multicultural Center is open to all students to foster a

diversity of experiences and ideas and serve as a space for cultural learning. Multicultural center leaders must practice intentionality in creating the spaces to ensure the purpose of Trotter is communicated, centering the needs of BIPOC students while involving white students in what Trotter offers the campus community. It was clear that Black students, in particular, felt significant ownership of the space because of its origins as a Black culture center. Their ownership was authentic and deserving. As long as the University of Michigan maintains a multicultural center, it will need to be open to anyone, not just Black students. Student Life leaders could explore options for identity-specific themed lounge spaces in other buildings, such as the college union and recreation buildings, which could affirm specific cultural communities and increase the number of available multicultural spaces on campus.

While the University of Michigan is not legally permitted to establish another Black culture center due to current law (*2006 Proposal 2: University of Michigan*, n.d.), BIPOC students in this study appreciated the cultural artifacts and designs depicting student activism on the walls of Trotter. Minoritized student communities felt seen in the space by the built design, people there, and policies prioritizing BIPOC students. It is permissible for higher education leaders to create identity-explicit spaces, such as planning regular community gatherings for Queer, Transgender, Black, Indigenous, and Students of Color (QTBIPOC). Student participants liked the various open lounge and multipurpose meeting spaces for various activities. Multicultural center leaders must ensure explicit communication about the purpose of the multicultural center and who can use the space. A couple of white students in my study questioned whether or not they should be there. I believe there could be opportunities to intentionally involve white students in understanding the purpose and history of Trotter and engage white students in being accomplices with BIPOC students and challenging the oppressive

campus system. A partnership with the college union director to educate white students could be worthwhile.

The Trotter Multicultural Center is too small to meet the current needs of BIPOC student communities. Multicultural center leaders must partner with conflict resolution staff to educate student users of the space about how to navigate conflict in a peaceful, socially just, and self-reflexive manner. Student participants in this study all agreed they needed to have grace for similarities and differences, but it was easier said than done. In particular, Black student participants raised concerns about the perpetuation of anti-Blackness in Trotter by non-Black People of Color. Multicultural center leaders must explicitly address anti-Blackness in non-Black communities of color to operate a multicultural center open to the BIPOC community effectively. Student participants were also concerned about the limited amount of space in Trotter with the increasingly diverse student body over time. Multicultural center leaders must partner with Student Life colleagues to build multicultural lounge capacity in other co-curricular campus buildings, such as college unions and recreational centers, to increase the number of counterspaces (Yosso & Lopez, 2010) for BIPOC students. These changes will help increase students' sense of belonging and connection and lead to greater opportunities for students to learn about engaging with difference and across cultures.

Recommendations for Future Study

This study examined what students say they learn about engaging with difference and across cultures in co-curricular campus spaces at a historically white institution. The Learning Partnerships Model (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004; Hornak & Ortiz, 2004) could be extended for use between administrative supervisors and student employees in co-curricular campus spaces. By partnering with student employees and helping them create their own goals and paths,

administrative supervisors would allow students to author their own experiences and develop their own values. Additionally, administrators in co-curricular campus spaces could provide the same type of support for student organization leaders that they advise, assisting student leaders in developing their visions and action plans. At the same time, administrators could learn with the students about how to strengthen their work to support students. Further research could examine satellite community gathering spaces, modeling co-curricular campus spaces such as college unions and multicultural centers, on college campuses that have been showing up in academic schools and colleges. This research about satellite community gathering spaces could inform academic unit leaders what they should be thinking about within their areas. Further research could focus on understanding the effects of white supremacy characteristics on institutional culture and how white supremacy characteristics show up in organizational operations, such as in college unions and multicultural centers. Identifying white supremacy characteristics in organizations is helpful to point out how organizations, unconsciously or consciously, use these characteristics as their norms and standards, making it difficult to open the door to other cultural norms and standards (Okun, n.d.). As a result, organizations may want to be multicultural, but they adapt or conform to already existing cultural norms.

One white student participant expressed that the Trotter Multicultural Center espouses a liberal agenda, which he did not define. From an equity perspective, I do not agree that Trotter espouses a liberal agenda. The space provides a humanizing environment for racially minoritized student communities rather than forcing political beliefs on others. However, further research could examine what students say they learn about conservative and liberal ideologies at a historically white institution, which may be useful to know in the current socio-political landscape in the United States.

Additionally, researchers could study the effects of racial prejudice or anti-Blackness on BIPOC students or student employees in the college union or multicultural center. Research about the effects of racial prejudice or anti-Blackness in co-curricular campus spaces could call attention to racial prejudice issues in the environment and then identify implications for improved practice, working to dismantling entrenched socially-constructed hierarchies in spaces and within communities. Researchers could study APIDA students' learning experiences in co-curricular campus spaces. As I described earlier in this chapter, APIDA students are under-studied in the literature examining students of color and their assets and challenges are largely ignored (Hsieh & Kim, 2020). More research is needed on APIDA students. Researchers could also construct a longitudinal study to examine how students who demonstrate multicultural action at historically white institutions contribute to societal change after college. A longitudinal study could identify changes over time, provide insight into cause-and-effect relationships, and ultimately demonstrate how students' multicultural learning on campus contributed to students' community engagement after college.

Conclusion

Through my dissertation research, I examined students' awareness, knowledge, skills, and actions to engage with difference and across cultures that they learned in the co-curricular spaces of the college union and multicultural center at a historically white institution, the University of Michigan. My research questions for this dissertation study happened out of curiosity as I experienced the Union and Trotter and considered my interconnected queer, white identities. This moment of curiosity was where my research began. I designed a constructivist, triangulated multiple case study (Bhattacharya, 2017) using information-rich maximum variation sampling (Patton, 1990) to inform my participant recruitment to answer my research questions. I

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delimited this study to interview University of Michigan students on the Ann Arbor campus. I selected seven students for this study based on the widest range of perspectives possible about the research topic. An analysis of the student participants' interviews revealed key findings about the Michigan Union at the University of Michigan, the Trotter Multicultural Center at the University of Michigan, commonalities across the two cases, and patterns across participants.

Many HWIs offer co-curricular spaces, such as college unions and multicultural centers, where the student community comes together. This study highlighted the importance of understanding how these environments share and influence student learning. College unions and multicultural centers should be learning environments where students can effectively explore differences to prepare them for life during and after college. Higher education leaders, including college union and multicultural center administrators, are responsible for educating students to live and work in a multicultural and currently polarized society. Co-curricular administrators must support students' learning with difference and across cultures. This study described numerous differences among what students said they learn in a college union and multicultural center, often informed or enhanced by social constructs associated with a historically white institution. Students' multicultural learning directly reflected their perceptions of the physical, human aggregate, socially constructed, and organizational environments. To support students' learning with difference, co-curricular administrators have to talk about institutional histories, how and for whom campus spaces were formed, and what they are working towards to be in equitable service to minoritized student communities.

As a scholar-leader and University of Michigan administrator, this study opened my eyes to student participants' unique experiences with the Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center. The Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center categories found through the data

affirmed what I assumed and offered complexities based on participants' experiences, identities, and roles. It made me consider the relevance of both structured and unstructured learning experiences that administrators have the responsibility to understand and help shape. I was particularly struck by the commonality of *The Spaces Were Birthed for Different Reasons, But They Are Both Unionizing Spaces*. The history and utilization of the spaces were directly connected to how student participants made meaning of their experiences. As the student population at the University of Michigan expands and changes, it will be useful to understand how students make meaning of the Union and Trotter. Despite conflicts across difference and critical learning moments with different cultures, the student participants all agreed they needed to have grace for similarities and differences. Still, it is a work in progress that will never end. This focus on progress, or learning and unlearning, is where administrators can shape students' multicultural educational experiences through the Union and Trotter. This study affirmed that students wanted to be a part of ongoing progress toward positive change.

I have been immensely grateful for the learning opportunities through my work and research study at the University of Michigan. I plan to contribute through this research to advance the campus environment by sharing findings with campus colleagues, publishing the research, and presenting on this dissertation study. I have great hope for the future and evolution of the Union and Trotter as critical co-curricular learning environments for University of Michigan students. I believe the University of Michigan has the potential to be a learning organization that continuously transforms itself.

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APPENDIX A: THE ROLE OF THE COLLEGE UNION

The college union advances a sense of community, unifying the institution by embracing the diversity of students, faculty, administrators, alumni, and guests. We bolster the educational mission of the institution and the development of students as lifelong learners by delivering an array of cultural, educational, social, and recreational programs, services, and facilities.

By any form or name, we serve as the heart of the campus community and create a welcoming environment by:

- Operating as a student-centered organization that engages in shared decision making and holistic development through employment and involvement.

- Advocating for inclusivity and equity, fostering respect, and affirming the identities of all individuals.

- Educating students in leadership and social responsibility and offering firsthand experiences in global citizenship.

- Providing gathering spaces to encourage formal and informal community interactions that build meaningful relationships.

Traditionally considered the living room, the college union enhances the student experience and cultivates an enduring connection to the institution (ACUI 2020a).

APPENDIX B: NOMINATOR RECRUITMENT EMAIL

From: Nicholas A. Smith
Sent: XXXX
To: XXXX
Subject: Student Learning Across Cultures and Difference in Co-Curricular Campus Spaces Study

Greetings! My name is Nicholas A. Smith and I am a doctoral candidate in Higher Education Leadership at Colorado State University. I am seeking student participants to join this dissertation study. For this research, I am interested in what students say they learn about engaging with difference and across cultures in the Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center.

In addition to being a doctoral candidate at Colorado State University, as you know, I am the Director of the Center for Campus Involvement and Associate Director of University University at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. This study will take place during summer 2022 between July and September. I am interested in interviewing 6-10 enrolled University of Michigan students. Participant criteria includes:
- Students have attended classes as an undergraduate, graduate, or professional student on the Ann Arbor campus within the past academic year.
- Students should be able to describe the social identities that inform how they experience and see the world.
- Students should either be: (1) highly involved in the Michigan Union and/or Trotter Multicultural Center as student employees, student advisory board members, or student organization leaders advised by unit staff; or, (2) general student users of the Michigan Union and/or Trotter Multicultural Center, or moderately involved students, who have reserved meeting rooms in at least one of these buildings no less than three times within the past year, student leaders who have student organization storage space in the buildings, or students who regularly use student organization open work spaces or lounges.
- Students should be able to describe what they did in the Michigan Union and/or Trotter Multicultural Center.

To get to my total number of participants, I will seek to enroll 3-4 highly involved students and 4-6 general student users, balancing involvement with each respective building. **I hope you can share with me students who you know meet the above criteria as highly involved students in the Michigan Union and/or Trotter Multicultural Center.** I will recruit moderately involved students through direct email and signage. If you are able to nominate highly involved students, I will email them with a similar message about this study. Also, feel free to forward this message to students for their consideration and follow-up.

During the research process, students will participate in three in-person or remote interviews. The initial interview will be a general rapport interview, learning about each participant, asking

questions about their specific experiences in the building(s). The second interview will include an education journey mapping exercise to explore their spatial learning within the buildings while situating themselves in the larger socio-historical reality. The final interview will be for students to reflect on the meaning of their experience. Each student will spend up to a total of 180 minutes, or 3 hours, in the research process.

For additional context, privacy and confidentiality are of the utmost importance. If they would like, I will ask each participant to identify a pseudonym for the study. The information provided by students will be stored in a secure online data system. The audio recordings of interviews will also be stored on a secure online system that is only accessible by the researcher/principal investigator. Each participant will be compensated with a $30.00 Amazon gift card at the conclusion of the three interviews. Participation in this study is completely voluntary before and during the process.

If students are interested in being considered for this study, please ask them to complete this Online Research Participant Screening Questionnaire.

If you have any questions about this research, please contact me at nickas@colostate.edu or my doctoral advisor, Dr. D-L Stewart, at darin.stewart@du.edu.

With gratitude,

Nicholas A. Smith

APPENDIX C: RESEARCH PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT EMAIL

From: Nicholas A. Smith
Sent: XXXX
To: XXXX
Subject: Student Learning Across Cultures and Difference in Co-Curricular Campus Spaces

Greetings! My name is Nicholas A. Smith and I am a doctoral candidate in Higher Education Leadership at Colorado State University. **I am seeking student participants to join this dissertation study.** I am interested in what students say they learn about engaging with difference and across cultures in the Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center.

In addition to being a doctoral candidate at Colorado State University, I am the Director of the Center for Campus Involvement and Associate Director of University University at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. I identify as an out queer white person with work and personal experiences in the physical environments of Michigan Union and the Trotter Multicultural Center. **This study will take place during summer 2022 between July and September. I am interested in recruiting 4-6 enrolled University of Michigan-Ann Arbor student organization leaders that have reserved event or meeting space in the Michigan Union or the Trotter Multicultural Center at least three times within the past academic year or have student organization storage space in one of these buildings.** I am seeking regular users of the buildings. Students should be able to describe what they did in the Michigan Union or Trotter Multicultural Center. Students should also be able to describe the social identities that inform how they experience and see the world.

During the research process, students will participate in three in-person or remote interviews. The initial interview will be a general rapport interview, learning about each participant, asking questions about their specific experiences in the building(s). The second interview will include an education journey mapping exercise to explore their spatial learning within the buildings while situating themselves in the larger socio-historical reality. The final interview will be for students to reflect on the meaning of their experience. Each student will spend up to a total of 180 minutes, or 3 hours, in the research process.

Privacy and confidentiality are of the utmost importance. If they would like, I will ask each participant to identify a pseudonym for the study. The information you provide will be stored in a secure online data system. The audio recordings of interviews will also be stored on a secure online system that is only accessible by the researcher/principal investigator. **Each participant will be compensated with a $30.00 Amazon gift card at the conclusion of the three interviews.** Participation in this study is completely voluntary before and during the process. If you are interested in being considered for this study, please complete this Online Research Participant Screening Questionnaire.

Thank you for your consideration! I look forward to hearing from you.
Nicholas A. Smith

APPENDIX D: PARTICIPANT RECRUITMENT POSTER

APPENDIX E: ONLINE RESEARCH PARTICIPANT SCREENING QUESTIONNAIRE

From: Nicholas A. Smith
Sent: XXXX
To: XXXX
Subject: Student Learning Across Cultures and Difference in Co-Curricular Campus Spaces
Study

Thank you for expressing your initial interest in this dissertation study! My name is Nicholas A.
Smith and I am a doctoral candidate in the Higher Education Leadership program at Colorado
State University. I am interested in studying what students say they learn about engaging with
difference and across cultures in the co-curricular campus spaces of the Michigan Union and
Trotter Multicultural Center at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor. This form is a research
participant screening questionnaire to assess student eligibility and suitability for this study. I
will pose questions to you for your feedback. Please note that all questions are voluntary. The
questionnaire should take you approximately 5-10 minutes to complete. In the interest of
confidentiality, I will ask for only your first name and email address for follow-up
communication with you.

Q1: First Name
    (Text box)
Q2: E-mail address
    (Text box)
Q3: I have been enrolled as a University of Michigan student and have attended classes on the
Ann Arbor campus within the past academic year.
    Yes or No
Q4: Please select your type of enrollment.
    Undergraduate student, Graduate student, Professional student, Non-Degree
    Seeking Student
Q5: How do you describe the social identities that inform how you experience and see the world?
For reference in your response, social identity categories include, but are not limited to,
(dis)ability status, socio-economic class, race, ethnicity, gender identity, size, sex, faith meaning,
national origin.
    (Open paragraph text box)
Q6: Within the past academic year, approximately how many times have you visited the
Michigan Union?
    None, 1-3, 4-6, 7-9, 10 or more
Q7: How would you rate your level of involvement in the Michigan Union? (1=not at all
involved, 5=very involved)
    1, 2, 3, 4, 5
Q8: If and when you visited the Michigan Union, what did you do there? If you can, also share
the rooms in the building that you visited.
    (Open paragraph text box)

Q9: Within the past academic year, approximately how many times have you visited the Trotter Multicultural Center?

None, 1-3, 4-6, 7-9, 10 or more

Q10: How would you rate your level of involvement in the Trotter Multicultural Center? (1=not at all involved, 5=very involved)

1, 2, 3, 4, 5

Q11: If and when you visited the Trotter Multicultural Center, what did you do there? If you can, also share the rooms in the building that you visited.

(Open paragraph text box)

Q12: Please share if you have a position or role with the Michigan Union and/or Trotter Multicultural Center, and describe the position or role (i.e., student employee, advisory board member, student organization leader advised by the unit).

(Open paragraph text box)

Q13: I plan to collect data for this research study between July-September 2022. Research participants will be interviewed three times, once each month for up to 60 minutes. Could you be available either in-person or remotely for these three interviews in July, August, and early September?

Yes or No

Thank you for completing this research participant screening questionnaire! I am interested in selecting 6-10 students for this study. By May 27, 2022, I will select students based on the widest range of perspectives possible about the research topic. I will ask selected students to identify a pseudonym for anonymity during the research process. If you would like to discuss this research study in more detail, please contact me at nickas@colostate.edu.

Interview 1: Learning about the Participants

1. Thank you for participating in this study. I have outlined an interview process, but I want to center your needs throughout this experience. Before we begin, what can I do to ensure I fully support you throughout the research study?
2. What are your perceptions of the Michigan Union and/or Trotter Multicultural Center at the University of Michigan?
3. Are there spaces in the building(s) where you feel like your best self? If so, what helps contribute to that feeling?
4. How is/are the building(s) conducive or not to your learning outside of the classroom? You might think about the space design, people in the spaces, services, events, and policies.
5. What, if anything, have you learned about engaging with difference and across cultures in the Michigan Union?
    a. How has engagement in this physical space helped you to further understand your own cultures and the cultures of others?
    b. Has engagement in this physical space provided you with knowledge about social constructs, such as privilege and oppression, identity development, and social justice?
    c. Has engagement in this physical space provided you with skills to navigate difference, such as how cultural differences influence behaviors and deconstructing your own assumptions and biases?
6. What, if anything, have you learned about engaging with difference and across cultures in the Trotter Multicultural Center?
    a. How has engagement in this physical space helped you to further understand your own cultures and the cultures of others?
    b. Has engagement in this physical space provided you with knowledge about social constructs, such as privilege and oppression, identity development, and social justice?
    c. Has engagement in this physical space provided you with skills to navigate difference, such as how cultural differences influence behaviors and deconstructing your own assumptions and biases?
7. What else would you like to share with me?
8. To conclude, I want to introduce an education journey mapping exercise that I will ask you to do and send to me before our next interview.
    a. I am going to give you a prompt to respond to in a map format. Education journey maps are meant to capture visual trajectories throughout the student learning experience. Maps can be topographical, representing high and low points in their education journey and their relationships with education. Or, maps can be physical, representing features of the environment within spaces. Physical maps may include the identification of visible or invisible power dynamics. Maps can also be political, reflecting current socio-political boundaries. Political maps may include reimagined boundaries. Feel free to design your map in any way you like,

with these examples in mind. You will need to be able to email your map to me. I will also create my education journey map and share it with you.

Interview 2: Education Journey Mapping Exercise and Discussion (Annamma, 2017)

Here is the prompt: Map your education journey from when you first entered the Michigan Union and/or Trotter Multicultural Center to now. Include people, rooms and spaces, obstacles, and opportunities on the way. Draw your relationship with the building. You can include what works for you and/or what doesn't. You can use different colors to show different feelings, use symbols like lines and arrows or words. These are just suggestions. Be as creative as you like and, if you don't want to draw, you can make more of a flowchart. Afterward, you will get a chance to explain it to me.

Discussion: The participant and researcher will both share with the other person as they would like to share. The speaker will become the listener and the listener will become the speaker, sharing in the dialogic process. The person sharing will describe as much as they would like. The recipient will listen intently to the other person's story. Both participants will have an opportunity to ask questions about particular components of the maps and request clarification about phrases and statements.
- Possible discussion questions upon completion of both sharing: What are the similarities and differences you see between the two maps? What do you love? What questions do you have? What does it make you think about your own life? What would you like to be on the map by the time you graduate? What part of these maps would benefit others?

Interview 3: Meaning-Making of the Interview Experience
1. What have you learned by being a part of this interview process?
2. How would you like to engage with difference and across cultures moving forward?
3. What could administrators in the Michigan Union and/or Trotter Multicultural Center do to support your learning in these spaces?
4. What can you do to shape the learning environment across difference and cultures in these spaces?
5. What else would you like to share with me as we conclude the interview process?

APPENDIX G: CONSENT FORM

Colorado State University
Consent to Participate in Research

Student Learning Across Cultures and Difference in Co-Curricular Campus Spaces Study

Introduction and Purpose
My name is Nicholas A. Smith. I am a graduate student at Colorado State University working with my faculty advisor, Professor Stewart, in the School of Education in the College of Health and Human Services. I would like to invite you to take part in this research study, which looks at what students say they learn about engaging with difference and across cultures in co-curricular campus spaces, specifically the college union and multicultural center, at a historically white institution.

Procedures
If you agree to participate in this research, I will conduct a series of three interviews with you at times and locations of your choice. The first interview will involve questions about your perceptions of the Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center at the University of Michigan, how these physical spaces are conducive to your learning outside of the classroom, and what you have learned about engaging with difference and across cultures in the Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center. The second interview will include an education journey mapping exercise where you will draw or make a flowchart of your education journey from when you first entered the Michigan Union and/or Trotter Multicultural Center to now. The final interview will involve questions about what you have learned being a part of the interview process, what administrators could do to support your learning in the Michigan Union and Trotter Multicultural Center, and what you could do to help shape the learning environment across difference and cultures in these spaces.

Each interview will last 60 minutes with a total of 180 minutes, or three hours. With your permission, I will audiotape and take notes during the interview. The recording is to accurately record the information you provide, and will be used for transcription purposes only. If you choose not to be audiotaped, I will take notes instead. If you agree to being audiotaped but feel uncomfortable or change your mind for any reason during the interview, I can turn off the recorder at your request. Or if you don't wish to continue, you can stop the interview at any time.

Benefits
There is no direct benefit to you from taking part in this study. It is hoped that the research will offer a description of positive aspects of the learning environment and barriers to student engagement and learning for administrators and educators to consider in their work. This matters because higher education institutions should be learning environments where differences can be effectively explored by students to prepare them for life with each other during and after college.

Risks/Discomforts

I recognize the potential for some of the research questions may make you uncomfortable or upset. You are free to decline to answer questions you don't wish to, or to stop the interview at any time.

As with all research, there is a chance that confidentiality could be compromised; however, I am taking precautions to minimize this risk.

Confidentiality

Your study data will be handled as confidentially as possible. If results of this study are published or presented, individual names and other personally identifiable information will not be used.

To minimize the risks to confidentiality, I will ask each participant to identify a pseudonym for the study. The information students provide will be stored in a secure online data system. The audio recordings of interviews will also be stored on a secure online system that is only accessible by the researcher/principal investigator.

I will transcribe the audio recordings as soon as possible after the interview, and then destroy the recordings. When the research is completed, I will save the transcriptions and other study data for possible use in future research. I will retain these records for up to one year after the study is over. The same measures described above will be taken to protect confidentiality of this study data. I may be asked to share the research files with the CSU Institutional Review Board ethics committee for auditing purposes. Your identity/record of receiving compensation (NOT your data) may be made available to CSU officials for financial audits.

Compensation

To thank you for participating in this study, you will be compensated with a $30.00 Amazon gift card immediately after you complete the full interview process.

Rights

Participation in research is completely voluntary. You are free to decline to take part in the project. You can decline to answer any questions and are free to stop taking part in the project at any time. Whether or not you choose to participate in the research and whether or not you choose to answer any questions or continue participating in the project, there will be no penalty to you or loss of benefits to which you are otherwise entitled.

Questions

If you have any questions about this research, please feel free to contact me at 215-527-6030 or nickas@colostate.edu. You may also contact my doctoral advisor, Dr. D-L Stewart, at darin.stewart@du.edu.

If you have any questions about your rights or treatment as a research participant in this study, please contact the Colorado State University Institutional Review Board (IRB) at: 970-491-1381, or e-mail RICRO_IRB@mail.colostate.edu .

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CONSENT

Do you consent for your interview to be audiotaped?
___Yes
___No

If you wish to participate in this study, please sign and date below. You will be given a copy of this consent form to keep for your own records.

_____
Participant's Name (please print)

_____ _____
Participant's Signature   Date

If you agree to allow your name or other identifying information to be included in all final reports, publications, and/or presentations resulting from this research, please sign and date below.

_____   _____
Participant's Signature   Date