

AN ABSTRACT OF THE THESIS OF

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Persistence, the ability for institutions to help students matriculate from their first year to completion, has been a major concern for underrepresented racial minorities (URMs). Among URMs, Black and Hispanic students are the least likely to be retained, graduating at 38 percent and 45.8 percent respectively (Shapiro et al., 2017). As URMs at predominantly white campuses are often marginalized, they need a space where they can socialize amongst each other and create a sense of community at the university. Created as a result of Black, Latinx, and Native American student group demands, Oregon State University created cultural resource centers for its campus with the intention of serving students of color at its institution and promoting cross-racial interactions. Using interviews, documents, and artifacts, this qualitative study explores the success of the cultural resource centers upholding its purpose and objectives outlined in the 1974 agreement between the cultural resource center student groups and the university and how this can be improved using Tinto (1973) Theory of Integration. The findings, led by interviews with patrons and professional staff of the Lonnie B. Harris Black Cultural Resource Center and the Cesar Chavez Cultural Resource Center provide an outline for the types of events held at the cultural resource center, the amount of institutional support given, and ways to improve support for these populations. This study closes with policy recommendations to improve the works of the cultural resource centers.

\*Throughout this paper, the terms “Hispanic, Latinx, Chicano Mestizx” will fluctuate based on the language used within respective references cited. However, when I refer to this population in present day language, the term Latinx will be used.

A Program Evaluation of the BCC and CCCC at Oregon State University

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I understand that my thesis will become part of the permanent collection of Oregon State University libraries. My signature below authorizes release of my thesis to any reader upon request.

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Regine Yaites, Author

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## Introduction

During the rise of Black protests across the country in the 1960s, Black students that were enrolled in predominantly white colleges mobilized in outrage against racism at their undergraduate institutions. This outrage was attributed to the perceived lack of support that came from their respective colleges, which led to student walkouts across the country. At Oregon State University (OSU), Black students participated in this demonstration as well. Black students at OSU threatened to leave the university as a result of discriminatory acts and boycotted their classes and sporting events (Diversity and Cultural Engagement, n.d.). One of the demands of these protests was that safe spaces be created for Black, Latinx\*, and Native American students and for a designated location where they could socialize, share information, and participate in ethnically-relevant cultural events at the university. In the 1970s, Native American, Latinx, and Black students had individual cultural resource centers to call home. In the 1980s, the Asian & Pacific Cultural Resource Center was created and in 2012 the Ettihad Cultural Resource center was established. Today, these five ethnically-based resource centers continue to serve students through their missions, which work to create inclusive communities and work toward social justice.

In the fall of 2018, Oregon State University reported that there were 433 Black students and 2,908 Hispanic students enrolled at the university, respectively. These figures translate to 1.4% of the student population identifying themselves as Black and 9.38% of students identifying themselves as Hispanic. These two racial and ethnic minorities are highly underrepresented as their white counterparts make up 60.93% of the student population. As reported by OSU in 2018, students that identified as “Black” had a 56.3% retention rate and students that identified “Hispanic” had a 60.8% retention rate, both of which are below the

67.8% retention rate of students that identified themselves as “White” (institutionalresearch.oregonstate.edu).

Given the history of racism against the Black community and the exponentially growing Latinx community in Oregon, the importance of supporting these groups is immeasurable. In addition to academics, students of color are advocating for their rights outside of the classroom. The stresses of their world outside of academics include financial obligations, mental health, and safety affect students of color in ways that their white counterparts are not impacted. Smedley, Myers, & Harrell (1993) claim that stressors experienced by students of color reflect the limited university support their success and experience. Without proper support from the university the immense amount of pressure put on students of color is often too much, leading them to leave the university (Xu & Webber, 2018).

As higher education institutions have historically marginalized students of color, the dismantling of the oppressive system is a slow-moving process. Cultural centers provide an environment of mutual understanding and allocation of institutional knowledge of how to navigate a predominantly white campus as a person of color. To reduce the number of minority students that leave the university without a degree from continuing their education, cultural centers were created to help address some of these issues (Hefner, 2002).

Using Tinto’s Theory of Integration (1994) as an evaluation framework this essay provides an overview of a program evaluation of two cultural resource centers at OSU, which involves interviews with undergraduate students that regularly visit the facilities. The information collected from this research was compared to the formal agreement between Oregon State University and student groups that outlines the purpose and objectives of the cultural

resource centers. This research aims to provide a blueprint for cultural resource centers and OSU to better support students that the CRCs were created for.

This study begins with a statement of the problem that outlines issues related to campus racial climate, student success, and its impact on students of color. The framework, Tinto's Theory of Integration follows the statement of the problem which helps explain the lens this study used in developing research questions and addressing the problem. A literature review follows the problem statement to address persistence of students of color and more specifically Black and Latinx students, the population used in the interview portion of this research. The literature also addresses the role of institutional support, which is used within the bounds of this case study research. The methods are outlined which is subsequently followed by findings, validity and reliability concerns, limitations, policy recommendations, and conclusions.

### **Statement of the Problem**

Students of color in higher education often find difficulty in retention (going from their first year to the second year) and persistence (completing their degree). For students of color, one of the largest obstacles is campus racial climate. Campus racial climate – the overall racial climate that exists on college campuses – provide insight into college access, student persistence, graduation rates, and transfer rates (Solozano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000). When the campus racial climate is positive, the aforementioned areas increase. When negative, the inverse becomes true. The creation of a positive racial climate includes: (a) diversity amongst students, faculty and administration, (b) inclusive curriculums, (c), support systems for people of color, and (d) a university mission that reinforces its commitment to diversity (Solozano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000).

As campus racial climate is essential to student success, an element that affects student experience is sense of belonging. Students that feel isolated on their college campus are less

likely to matriculate from year to year in comparison to students that feel welcomed on their college campuses. Students may express concern of an unwelcoming campus racial climate, one that does not exemplify the mission of university inclusiveness, contradicting the goal of the university. This leads to students not feeling supported and support only coming at face value, without significant depth (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Without appropriate support for students of color, students do not feel their presence is meaningful to the university. Thus, their dismissal from their university would not matter either.

The long term impact of retaining students of color is not only their potential impact at the university but for future generations of citizens. By having students of color on campus and validating their existence on campus, conversations become richer by providing a multifaceted view on the world and the realities that people of color experience on a daily basis. To enhance cultural competency for future leaders, institutions must address campus racial climate and increase cross-racial interactions (Gurin, Nagda, & Lopez, 2004). Diverse environments can support innovative ideas, which further enhance the university's mission of "promot[ing] economic, social, cultural and environmental progress for the people of Oregon, the nation and the world" (Oregon State University, n.d.). Likewise, students of color provide culturally enriching activities and events that further educate their peers, professors, and administrators in ways that are unable to be understood by reading books or watching movies.

The impact of having graduates of color provides an enormous impact for their communities. For example, the numbers of Black women dying during birth or having difficulties during birth is on the rise due to disbelief of their pain. By graduating more Black women in the medical field, it can be assumed that there is an increased chance that their declarations of pain will be understood, heard, and validated. Additionally, the number of

students of color that graduate with the hopes of becoming teachers provides children with a more diverse education. This includes diverse syllabi that are inclusive of the works of people of color. Lastly, having people of color that look like the people they are serving is encouraging when establishing rapport including parent-teacher, doctor-patient, and therapist-client relationships. Therefore, understanding of the obstacles presented to people of color are significantly impacted by the number of students of color that graduate from college campuses every year.

Previous research designed to understand the impact of cultural resource centers has explored the role of cultural resource centers for students of color at predominantly white institutions. Among this work is Patton's (2006) "Culture Centers in Higher Education: Perspectives on Identity, Theory, and Practice" that describes the history and importance of cultural resource centers on college campuses. These studies have not utilized the agreements between student organizations and the university as a framework for their research and measure of effectiveness. This research explores the current state of the cultural resource centers and includes the new, emerging issues pertinent to current cultural resource center success and the importance of institutional action.

### **Overview of Cultural Resource Centers**

Following the *Brown v. Board of Education* (1954) ruling declaring separate but equal schools unconstitutional, colleges and universities began to integrate their institutions. It was assumed that Black students would seamlessly immerse into the dominant culture (Patton, 2010). Despite efforts to integrate students, racism was prevalent against Black students and other students of color. Black students at predominantly white universities desired cultural recognition and integration into all aspects of their college experience (Patton, 2006). Once Black students

did not receive what they desired, they participated in the nationwide Black student walkouts that was happening across the United States. The methods of protesting included in the demonstration were “sit-ins, protests, [and] list of demands created to be conducive to their own survival, learning, and development” (Patton, 2010). Included in the demands of Black students were Black studies courses, increased financial aid, support of cultural activities, and the establishment of Black cultural centers (Patton, 2006).

The initial establishment of the cultural resource centers originated at southern predominantly white institutions (Strayhorn, 2010). The purpose of these cultural resource centers was to provide a space where “attitudes, values, knowledge, and skills could be compared, debated, and shared” among Black students (Patton, 2006). Introduced in the 1960s, cultural centers were created to provide a safe space, specifically for Black students to network, create community, and find support. In the 1980s, with the growth of multiculturalism in the United States, other cultural centers were created (Hefner, 2002). Cultural centers are often a selling point for universities that aspire to increase their racial diversity on campus (Patton, 2006). The cultural centers have been regarded as a space where students can increase their sense of identity and have a “home away from home” (Patton, 2006; Landry, 2002).

Also created during the peak of social justice activism in the 1960s and 1970s, Chicano cultural resource centers were created as a result of student demands similar to that of Black students. However, the demands between the two groups had some differences. Included in the list of demands made by Chicano students were bilingual staff, Latinx study programs, support services, and the creation of cultural centers (Patton, 2006). Specifically Latinx cultural centers have been at the forefront of “immigration issues, voting rights, labor issues, educational access, the prison system, and media representation” (Patton, 2010). The overall role of all cultural

centers on college campuses is to promote community research, social justice, and provide academic support to students (Patton, 2006).

The creation of cultural resource centers on predominantly white campuses aid to the overall campus racial environment by promoting college access, persistence, graduation, and transfer rates (Solorzano, Ceja, & Yosso, 2000; Strayhorn, 2010; Patton 2006; Princes, 1994). Currently totaling around 400, cultural centers provide community for students of color but for all patrons of the university (Hefner, 2002). For students of color, cultural resource centers provide a sense of identity in an environment that is associated with alienation, loneliness, and isolation (Princes, 1994). More prevalent in literature, cultural centers are a safe haven, a place for students to rid themselves of the stigmas that are associated with their racial/ethnic group (Princes, 1994; Strayhorn, 2010; Patton, 2010). For Black students, Black cultural centers promote, protect, and affirm Black/African American culture and provide a space for multicultural interactions (Strayhorn, 2010; Princes, 1994). These spaces offer a holistic learning experience targeting student sense of belonging, student leadership, and increased academic self-confidence (Patton, 2006). Lastly, the cultural resource centers emphasize the relationship between its staff and students, similar to that of their family (Strayhorn, 2010).

### **Cultural Resource Centers at Oregon State University**

Emerging from the national movement demanding Black visibility and equality, the Black students at OSU proposed similar requests. In March of 1969, the Black Student Union (BSU) at OSU outwardly declared their desire to leave the university and began to boycott events and sporting events following OSU's association with Brigham Young University, an openly racist university that was racist toward Black people. BSU's demonstrations were modeled after the Black Panther Party (Geoffrey Brooks Oral History Interview, 2014). By the

winter term of 1969, 25 Black students obtained withdrawal slips with the intention of leaving the university (Diversity and Cultural Engagement, n.d.). Three years following this display of student dissatisfaction, cultural resource centers were instituted near campus as a result of the works of the Black and Chicano cultural center student committees (Geoffrey Brooks Oral History Interview, 2014).

The cultural resource centers at OSU are currently under Diversity & Cultural Engagement, an entity that seeks to create an inclusive community that support under-served students and promote inclusivity and educational initiatives that support this population (Diversity & Cultural Engagement, n.d.). Once student led and housed in residential-style homes in the 1970s, the CRCs have since moved from their original location. As of 2014 and 2015 CRCs are in formal buildings equip with an office, meeting rooms, a kitchen, gathering hall, living room (oregondigital.org, 2015). Located on the North and South sides of campus, the BCC and CCCC have a 0.6 mile distance between them. The organizational structure of the CRCs consists of an assistant director and four student positions that include communication representative, a graphic designer, student leadership liaisons, and peer facilitators.

The objectives of the Black and Latinx cultural resource centers is to provide academic, cultural, recreational, and social events related to each group's specific culture while promoting cross racial interaction as a means of promoting cultural education (OSU Black Cultural Center Historical Records, 1984). As of 2019, the mission statement of the Lonnie B. Harris Black Cultural Resource Center supports Black student retention, support, leadership development, safe space, amongst other events that serve in educating the OSU body on culturally diverse activities. The purpose of the Cesar Chavez Cultural Resource Center is to support educational goals and retention of Chicanx/Latinx/Mestizx students while encouraging a sense of purpose

and unity at Oregon State University (Diversity and Cultural Engagement, n.d.). Oregon has a lesser known but extensive battle with racism as the state advocated for removal of Black people in the 1800s to form the state to become a white only state including the Exclusion Law (1848), which prevented Black or mixed-race people from residing in the Oregon territory (Oregon Department of Education, n.d.). The law was later repealed in 1926. With the tumultuous history of Blacks in Oregon, this population represents a small percentage of Oregonians as 2.1% of people identify as Black or African American (U.S. Census, 2017). Conversely, the Oregon Hispanic/Latinx population is currently growing faster than the national rate, noting a 72% increase from the year 2000 to 2016, making this population 13.1% of Oregonians (The Oregonian, 2016; U.S. Census, 2017). As many public universities often primarily serve their state's citizens, Black and Latinx students are not well represented in higher education and have experiences that are unique to their racial and/or cultural identity on campus.

### **Purpose Statement and Research Question**

The purpose of this research is to identify whether the cultural resource centers at Oregon State University are working to uphold its purpose and objectives and examine the university's role in supporting these entities. This case study will focus specifically on two of the five cultural centers that focus on racial/ethnic backgrounds: Lonnie B. Harris Black Cultural Center (BCC) and Centro Cultural Cesar Chavez (CCCC). By gathering information about the cultural resource centers, targeted areas of improvement can be identified for further action to be taken. Specifically, by conducting interviews with the students the cultural resource centers were created to serve and the directors responsible for upholding the mission of these centers, this study will provide a cohesive evaluation intended for further support of these centers. Better understanding of the perceptions related to cultural resource centers and institutional support

while comparing this information to the agreement signed by student groups and the university provides a snapshot of cultural resource center's programmatic efforts at OSU.

The following research questions guide this study:

1. How are the CRC's working to uphold its mission and objectives?
2. How well are cultural resource centers supported?
  - a. In what ways could this support be improved?
3. In what ways can the cultural resource centers work to better represent its purpose and objectives?

Research question number one explores the sense of belonging and support between the university and students of color. Without effective support from the university in promoting events and visible support from university representatives by attending cultural resource centers activities, students may not feel that their existence matters to the university. If students perceive the cultural resource centers are well respected and a stakeholder at the university that informs institutional policy change regarding issues related to race, they will believe that the centers are well supported. However, if students believe that their respective cultural resource center is not included in or considered when making institutional change that impacts all students, they will not believe their center is well supported.

Research question number two draws on the call to action for the university and the cultural centers as a whole. This question explores the drawbacks within the center and areas for institutional improvement. While cultural centers are designed to celebrate racial and/or ethnic identity, representation may not be present for subgroups within this population. The integration of events and discussions that address racial/ethnic disparities regarding representation is often

laid upon cultural centers. This may put a lot of worry and stress on cultural centers to provide a service to all students with limited resources compared to the institution as a whole (Hefner, 2002). Should the bulk of conversations surrounding race be limited to the cultural resource center, the responsibility of the university in supporting these students is limited. Therefore, more effort would need to be made on behalf of the institution to be inclusive of issues related to race.

Research question number three assesses the use of the cultural resource centers as described by the participants while comparing this to the purpose of the facilities. Should there be an overwhelming call for representation regarding academic, cultural, recreational, or social events, it can be assumed that the cultural resource centers are not effectively supporting its purpose and objectives. Thus, the responsibility for improving the functionality of the cultural resource centers will rely on the staff within the centers.

This study will provide recommendations for improvement and identification of drawbacks by using an assessment and/or call-for-action for both the cultural centers and OSU. A call-for-action and student assessment of Oregon State University will be used in this study as the students will grade the university on its responses and process of addressing issues related to the current campus racial climate based on their experiences during their time as a student. Students will be given the opportunity to define the areas of improvement for the university as they continue to work on their diversity development plans. They will have the ability to discuss the drawbacks of cultural centers on campus.

### **Theoretical Framework**

To best identify areas of significance within student experiences, I will use Tinto's Theory of Integration (1973 & 1994) as a framework for this study. Tinto's framework identifies two areas of student integration necessary for student success: academic and social. Without proper assimilation into both social and academic arenas, students often suffer in their college experience. Moreover, the absence of social integration produces low commitment to the student's studies and increases the probability of dropout (Tinto, 1973). Student dropout is either forced or voluntary. While forced dropout is due to poor grade performance, voluntary dropout is the student's decision to leave the institution (Tinto, 1973). While students may struggle academically, social integration is a more precise indicator of the likelihood of student persistence. Students voluntarily withdraw from the university as a response to the perceived strain and lack of "person-role" fit within their institution (Tinto, 1973).

Tinto further identifies peer group composition as an important item in cost-benefit analysis related to student dropout (Tinto, 1973). Friendship support directly correlates to student persistence and their opinions of social interaction (Tinto, 1973). Borrowing from Schneider & Ingram's Theory of Social Construction (1993) that introduces the idea of social deviants and the way society treats them, Tinto (1973) suggests that deviants are most likely to persist when they have established friendships and the lack of these friendships results in voluntary withdrawal. For Black and Hispanic students, often labeled as deviants, entering predominantly white institutions, the need for these relationships is vital for student success. With longstanding positive relationships, students increase their sense of belonging leading to continued educational persistence. While peer interactions are vital for student success, interacting with faculty helps students integrate socially and increase their intellectual development (Tinto, 1973). In

collaboration with individual effort, institutional action and support provides a look into reasons for student dropout.

Tinto identifies student persistence as a reflection of the institution's commitment to student persistence and turnover (Tinto, 1973). The presence of facilities, resources, and composition limit the ways students develop and integrate socially and academically (Tinto, 1973). As universities are a social system, dropout is correlated with congruence between the individual and social climate. For students of color, a large part of social climate is campus racial climate. With these ideals taken into consideration, many universities have created the cultural resource centers in hopes of combatting the issues related to student persistence and further support the persistence of students of color.

While scholars (Hurtado, 1997; Rendon, Jalomo, & Nora, 2000) have critiqued Tinto's initial theory for a lack of race, gender, and class in his assessments, Tinto has since revised his theory to better account for these factors. Social and academic integration are pertinent to the success of students of color. Students of color do not persist at the same rate as their white counterparts. White students have shown to be almost twice as likely to complete their four year degree program when compared to Black and Hispanic students (Tinto, 1994). Identified within this problem is testing ability and socioeconomic background, however Tinto further relays the responsibility of student persistence on institutions as they should collaborate to ensure a campus wide approach and commitment to student persistence (Tinto, 1994).

### **Literature Review**

**Persistence of Students of Color:**

Students of color, specifically Black and Hispanic/Latinx students have been tasked with overcoming issues related to marginalization in higher education that leads to reduced student persistence. One area of concern for Black and Hispanic students is financing their education as they are sensitive to price changes (Hu & St. John, 2001). For students of color, their perceptions of prejudice within the classroom is that it is separate but interrelated while their white counterparts see race and prejudice in the classroom as one dimension as they are more aware of overt prejudice and racism than covert prejudice and racism (Ancis, Sadlacek, & Mohr, 2000). Students of color often perceive they must change themselves to be accepted at their institution (Ancis, Sadlacek, & Mohr, 2000). This is demonstrated by assimilation, a practices that forces people of color to strip themselves of their culture to persist in white dominant spaces. Upon arrival, students understand the expectations needed to be successful and become influenced by those expectations, searching for actions that legitimize their existence at their institution (Tinto, 2012).

Comparatively, white students often feel more comfortable at their institutions than students of color, citing overall satisfaction, greater faculty and student respect, and fairer treatment by all members of the institution than student of color (Ancis, Sadlacek, & Mohr, 2000). For students of color, their sense of marginalization on their campuses may lead to emotional drainage as they desire to best navigate their university's campus racial climate (Tinto, 2012). Black students have experienced the most pronounced stresses compared to any other group and Latinx students are more likely to have difficulty adjusting if there is a misguided assumption that they were allowed into the university due to their racial/ethnic status (Harper & Hurtado, 2007). Not only must students of color navigate predominantly white institutions, they

may be the only person of color in their classes. Therefore, they must navigate their institutions that were not created to be inclusive of people of color. While students of color have similar experiences, there are differences within each group as they navigate higher education.

### **Latinx Student Persistence**

Latinx students are marginalized in terms of student success in higher education. More specifically, in 1986, Hispanic students were least likely to earn their bachelor's degree compared to other racial and ethnic groups (Tinto, 1994). More recently, Patton (2006) reported 11 percent of Latinx people over 25 had successfully attained their bachelor's degree. Despite attending postsecondary institutions at higher rates than other groups, their attainment suffers as they have intersecting identities as students of color first generation status, both of which are underserved on college campuses. The issues related to being a Latinx student are not solely academic, but inclusive of environmental and social issues that impact student success. This includes immigration backlash which leads to the need for institutional personnel that understand these problems and thus creating safe spaces for this population (Patton, 2006).

The four dimensions of campus racial climate for student success that increase Latinx student belonging are: (a) the university's history of inclusion or exclusion of Latinx people, (b) structural diversity, (c) psychological dimensions, and (d) behavioral dimensions (Hurtado & Carter, 1997). Latinx students encounter stresses including working toward social justice and combatting marginalization as they seek cultural nourishment that is important in combatting off feelings of marginalization and alienation (Gonzalez, 2002). While Latinx people have a greater comfort with their cultural background compared to other groups of people, they experience prejudice, stereotyping, and pressure to conform to the predominantly white society at their institutions (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000).

### **Black Student Persistence**

Much of research conducted on students of color at predominantly white institutions are studies that examine the Black experience. The number of Black students that attend predominantly white institutions totals about 75 percent (Strayhorn, 2010). Compared to other racial and ethnic groups, Black students experience more racial conflict and racial-ethnic separation (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000). Additionally, they experience more interracial tension in their dorms when compared to their white counterparts. Compared to Latinx students, Black students expressed experiences of racism from faculty (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000). Overall, Black students had a higher rate of negative experiences, greater hostility, pressures to conform, and less equitable treatment than any other groups (Ancis, Sedlacek, & Mohr, 2000).

Black students identify themselves as feeling marginalized, culturally isolated, and socially alienated at predominantly white institutions (Strayhorn, 2010). Further, they experience psychological stress related to being the spokesperson of their race (Strayhorn, 2010). Historically, Black students enrolled at predominantly white institutions have demanded support from the institution to best support their cultural identity in an effort to overcome their obstacles to success (Strayhorn, 2010).

### **Institutional Support**

While it is a necessity for students to play a part in their persistence, institutions create an environment that either enables or suppresses their experiences on campus. Without proper support for students of color, students perceive their place at the university as insignificant. To best support student success, institutions must evaluate their performance and solicit feedback that allows for students, staff, and faculty to adjust their behaviors (Tinto, 2012). The principles of effective student retention is that institutions are (a) committed to student welfare, (b)

education of all students, and (c) development of social and educational communities (Tinto, 1994). Without the proper support for students of color, there a major component missing from the university's foundation. To increase persistence, institutions must identify ways it can best promote their desired outcomes. Effective retention programs, which cultural resource centers are included in, work both top down and bottom up in hopes of supporting students on all fronts (Tinto, 1994). More importantly, these systems must take into consideration the individual needs required for student success (Tinto, 1994).

Programs that are successful in supporting students are backed by the institution and integrated into the academic, social, and administrative areas as well (Tinto, 1994). Without proper support and integration that is inclusive of all students, segregation is promoted which stigmatizes both the programs and the students (Tinto, 1994). As it takes actions to create change, the role of the institution becomes one of dispersing the information related to these events and showing up in physical support to learn and improve university involvement.

To best support students, institutions must acknowledge that proper academic, social, and, financial support is the most effective way of supporting students, specifically those that are underserved and marginalized (Tinto, 2012). Additionally, when students believe that their voices are heard by the administration in giving feedback regarding student support it increases students success (Tinto, 2012). A measure of success is an institution's ability to overcome systematic barriers that prohibit students from being retained, persist, and graduate (Tinto, 2012).

### **Methodology**

### **Qualitative Methods and Case Study Research**

Qualitative research interprets occurrences as told by people that experience them (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). Using interview data and fieldwork, qualitative research produces narratives that describes patterns and themes within phenomena (Patton, 2005). Qualitative research explores the quality of things that are not generally quantified (quantity, amount, intensity, frequency) within social constructs and upon analysis, try to ascribe meaning to social experiences (Denzin & Lincoln, 2011). As this study analyzes experiences held by people that regularly visit the cultural resource centers, the use of qualitative methods is appropriate for analysis.

Case study research is a form of research that gains in-depth knowledge about a small group, or other individual entity over time through collecting multiple sources of information, such as interviews, artifacts, and documents (Creswell & Poth, 2018). These multiple sources triangulate the information to provide a multifaceted assessment of the case at hand. At the conclusion of the study, a case study provides a case description and theme (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Case studies look at cases with bounded systems, bounded by location and time (Stake, 2003). Case study research has been advocated by Merriam and Tisdell (2015) to understand education issues.

In studying cultural resource center effectiveness at OSU, this research uses a single instrumental case study as the qualitative approach. Instrumental case studies allow for insight into a specific issue or redirect generalizations (Stake, 2003). These types of studies provide an in-depth look at a case and, within public policy, can reflect the human experience (Stake, 2003). To define each case, bounds are created that identify the time, population, and location of the event. The current day operations of the Black and Latinx cultural resource centers at Oregon

State University will serve as the focus along with Black and Latinx undergraduate students as they represent two of the lowest racial/ethnic group retention rates.<sup>1</sup>

This study will investigate two areas: the ways the cultural resource centers at OSU are working to uphold its purpose and objectives and how well the university supports the works of these entities. This study will explore four areas of cultural resource center/university involvement:

1. Goals of students in using the cultural resource centers
2. Benefits and/or drawbacks of the cultural resource centers
3. Level of institutional support for the cultural resource centers
4. Actions for improved effectiveness of the cultural resource centers

### **Data Collection**

This study uses three forms of data, which serve as a method of triangulation: interviews, historical archives, and Google news search of racially targeted events in Corvallis within the last five years. Interviews illuminated interconnectedness between the cultural resource centers and the institution. The collective perspectives of students and staff provide a more holistic view regarding the functionality of the cultural resource centers. Including the historical archives and Google search explored issues of campus racial climate.

#### **Individual interviews with students and directors.**

Semi-structured interviews serve as the primary source of data collection. The purpose of the semi-structured interviews in the study is to allow for fluctuation open and closed-ended questions with the opportunity to include follow-up questions (Adams, 2015). The interview

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<sup>1</sup> American Indian/Alaskan Native students have persisted at the same rate of Black students.

questions were taken directly from the objectives previously stated. This is to ensure the questions are purposeful and can be connected to the objectives for analysis. The interview questions were cross-checked for bias by the members of my committee.

The sampling used in this study is purposive, which allows for participants to be chosen based on their usefulness and representation of the target population (Babbie, 2009). First, the inclusion of Black and Hispanic/Latinx undergraduate students was purposive as this population often use the cultural resource centers more than Black and Latinx graduate students, faculty, and staff, who often have other obligations that limits their ability and desires to regularly visit the cultural resource centers. The selection of undergraduate participants also meant that they had to meet two criteria: 1) undergraduate Black and Latinx students that regularly visit—that is, three or more times—the cultural resource centers at OSU, 2) at least a full year of schooling so they could speak to experiences on campus. Second, the inclusion of the assistant directors of the cultural resource centers allowed for a more in-depth understanding regarding the functionality of the cultural resource centers including extensive knowledge of university involvement specifically concerning financial support that allows for the cultural resource centers to continue in their work. Their grasp on the collective efforts needed to keep the cultural resource centers running is greater than that of the students as the assistant directors are in direct connection with the students that visit the CRCs, Diversity and Cultural Engagement (DCE) entity that is there to support the works of the CRCs, and the university. Collectively, these types of participants enable for perspectives at an institutional level and local level specific to the CRCs.

A total of 11 participants that participated in the interview portion of this project. The 11 participants consisted of 9 students and 2 assistant directors. The racial/ethnic makeup of the participants consists of five people that identify as Latinx (4 Mexican/1 Guatemalan) and four

that identify as Black/African American. Nine out of the 11 participants are current employees of the CRCs, while the other two participants included a former staff member and a patron. The participants were recruited through two methods: snowball sampling and a doodle poll that was sent to multiple listservs including that of the Black Cultural Resource Center, Cesar Chavez Cultural Resource Center, Black Student Union, Educational Opportunity Program, and the Association of Latin American Students. All but one of the interviews took place in the quiet spaces in the cultural resource centers. The exception was an interview with a participant that asked if we could meet outside of the CRCs as a convenience to them.

In qualitative research, ethics can be challenging for the researcher as they are invested in all areas of the research which may lead to bias (Sanjari, Bahramnezhad, Fomani, Shughi, & Cheraghi, 2014). The ethical considerations associated with this study is informed consent and privacy. This study does not ask for personal identifiers and has been approved by IRB as non-human subjects research. The participants gave informed consent prior to the interviews and agreed to have the interviews recorded. Prior to the conducting interviews, the participants were told of the general purpose of the study and the population the information would be presented to. Additionally, the participants were invited to share as much information as they were comfortable with sharing. Participants were also asked clarification questions based on their responses to gain a better understanding of their position on the issue. In reporting the information, personal identifiers were not included in the study nor collected or recorded during the interviews. Following the interviews, participants were invited to attend the defense and further learn about the findings of the study.

### **Documents and Artifacts**

The inclusion of historical artifacts found in the OSU archives were used as anecdotal evidence to explore the works of the cultural resource centers and events held in them. This information was coded and compared to the current works of the cultural resource centers described by the participants. Negative influences on campus racial climate, such as hate crimes, were included and used as historical context to better understand the university's history with campus racial climate and responses to these events. Any events that have been held as a retaliation to the cultural centers or minority students were analyzed, coded, and ascribed a theme. Using the Barometer, the OSU on campus newspaper as a guideline and a basic Google search of hate crimes that have happened at OSU were used to explore this phenomenon. For example, when the Lonnie B. Harris Black Cultural Center experienced crimes that were identified as a hate crime, the event was coded as such.

### **Data Analysis**

Data analysis is needed to better understand the raw data and further explain the phenomena explored. In qualitative data analysis for policy research, the researcher defines, categorizes, theorizes, explains, explores, and maps out their information, which leads to seeking explanations and developing ideas, theories, and strategies (Huberman & Miles, 2002). To accomplish this, the interviews were recorded, transcribed by Trint, an automatic transcription service, double checked by the researcher, and coded for prominent themes. Central to qualitative research, coding allows for better understanding of interviews, documents, and observations, two of which are central to this project (Creswell & Poth, 2018). Each of the topical areas that were addressed in the interviews were synthesized to avoid redundancy.

Inductive coding was used in this study, which clearly connects the objectives and findings to the raw data and allows for the data to be condensed (Thomas, 2006).

Using my experience as a Black student that has completed my bachelor's degree at a predominantly white university, I used my positionality to encourage the direction of my research and interview questions. I used Maxwell (2013) as a guide for exploring my positionality and internalized biases. My positionality as a person of color at a predominantly white university has guided me to a biased sense of beliefs that assume universities outwardly support diversity while having discriminatory practices interwoven into its daily activities. With this knowledge, I consulted with my committee before asking biased questions that would result in skewed responses. As someone that has undergone similar experiences to my participants, I have the ability to translate their experiences by asking follow-up questions that probes the root of the issue.

### **Validity and Reliability Issues**

As with any form of research, there are questions of validity and reliability. As reliability refers to internal consistency and accurate representation of a population that should exist in any period of time, and validity the ability to reflect what is measured, it is important to acknowledge these areas in establishing credibility of the completed study (Joppe, 2000; Golafshani, 2003; Babbie, 2009). This study has used triangulation as a method of addressing issues of validity and reliability by shedding light on this topic from multiple perspectives including interviews, archival data, and news articles (Creswell & Poth, 2018; Maxwell, 2013). This study acknowledges my role as a researcher that has encountered similar experiences to that detailed by the participants, my positionality, method of selecting participants, and description of the

case. As this case evaluates the current state of the cultural resource centers and university, as times change, the experiences of evaluators may vary.

### **Findings**

The findings address how well the CRCs are upholding its purpose and objectives. Further, this section explores the level of institutional involvement in support of the cultural resource centers. The findings have been broken into three areas: 1) program areas of the Cultural Resource Centers; 2) institutional involvement and support; and 3) methods to increase the capacity of the cultural resource centers.

#### **Program Areas of the Cultural Resource Centers**

The mission and objectives of the CRC are to provide programming for social, cultural, academic, and recreational events that support their respective minority group, which can be understood through Tinto (1994) framework in addressing social and academic integration.

#### **Social and Cultural Support.**

The cultural resource centers serve their communities by providing a hub that allows students to find community and feel safe. This is especially important given the campus racial climate of the institution for students of color. In the last five years, there have been three events where students of color have been targeted on the campus of OSU. These events include the intentional writings of “TRUMP 2016” in chalk on areas that target undocumented student groups and the BCC (Mudd, 2016). The following year, a confederate flag was hung in a private co-op living space directly across from the BCC (Baro Staff, 2017). These actions were followed year later when the same person placed stickers on cars that belonged to members of an activist group that read “racism is a horrible disease, you can catch it from niggers” (Schrock, 2018). The

university's response to these major events have been an overwhelming discouragement of actions like these on campus.

In such a campus climate, the CRCs provide social support through a variety of activities and events. The types of events held at the cultural resource centers highlight the past and present accomplishments including Black Excellence gala, Black History Month activities and culturally relevant activities like the monthly dances at the Cesar Chavez Cultural Resource Center that highlights the music of Latinx musicians. While there are many perceptions about the CRCs uses, the more common view student participants have for the CRCs is that they are a space for social support and validation of their cultural identities, which have been marginalized on campus:

“A lot of people feel like they're being suffocated...not being like exposed to like diversity and so coming to these spaces allows people to kind of just like feel at home and feel welcomed here and kind of like remind them that they belong here as much as anyone else on this campus” (Participant #11, personal communication, April 23, 2019).

“It provides a safe space for students that identify with the centers. They can come here and they can feel like they have somewhere where they are welcome where they can kind of view themselves and relax a little bit and not have to deal with the tensions of campus and attention of the world” (Participant #2, personal communication, March 15, 2019).

The cultural resource centers have been highly regarded as a safe space that encourages social interactions amongst students of color. Many of the events held by the CRCs are sociocultural as they support the successes of the students they serve and promote a greater sense of cultural identity by demonstrating the collective achievements of Black and Latinx people that

often goes unseen. As Oregon State University has undergone situations that involve racial targeting and hate crimes, the cultural resource centers allow for socialization that allows for students to feel free to share their experiences and perspectives of the situation. By providing social support for Black and Latinx students, the CRCs create a community that supports a greater sense of belonging that helps promote the social interactions addressed by Tinto (1994).

### **Academic Support.**

As the cultural resource centers were also created to support students in all areas, including academically, the current programmatic efforts of the CRCs can be improved. Four of the participants cited printing as a resource used by students that were used to support them academically. While this may be of concern as the CRCs are tasked with providing academic support, historically, the cultural resources have marketed themselves as more of a space for providing social resources rather than academic resources citing free printing as an academic service they provide. While one of the four mentioned areas of purpose and objectives of the CRCs includes academic support, there is not an employee that has been assigned to assist in this area.

### **Cultural Competency and Cross-racial Interactions.**

A form of increasing knowledge about one's culture is learning about works created by people of color. The archival information found shows that the CRCs have a library of Black and Latinx literature ([oregondigital.org](http://oregondigital.org), 2001/2003; [oregondigital.org](http://oregondigital.org), 1998). However, the interview participants did not cite this as a resource of the cultural resource centers or a reason why students visit them, which may suggest a lack of use. In 2002, the BCC hosted an event that brought awareness to HIV/AIDS, an issue not specific to the Black community but created to further educate all students on the importance of sex education ([oregondigital.org](http://oregondigital.org), 2002).

Most recently, the BCC has hosted events surrounding mental health in the Black community that were titled “Black Mental Health” in 2018 and “Don’t Suffer in Silence” in 2016 that sought to destigmatize the concept of discussing mental health in the Black community which was led by employees of the BCC (Sullivan, 2018; Haney, 2016). While these events are important for educating people of the contributions of people of color, they were not specifically discussed by the participants that regularly visit the cultural resource centers. However, participants did discuss that the CRCs are a place where people can come to learn about communities of color more generally. For example, one participant explained that in addition to being a space where students of color can retreat to, the CRCs offer culturally relevant education to the benefit of Oregonians generally:

“And it also is a space where [the OSU community] can come and be educated. I think it's important that [patrons] come to learn about black history throughout the nation, black history on our campus, and be able to have access those things to a lot of potentially already a lot of people in Oregon don't have access to things about black people. So they're not able to learn because they're not able to learn then they can't improve relations between people” (Participant #2, personal communication, March 15, 2019).

Referring to the contractual agreement signed by the Black, Latinx, and Native American student groups outlined the expectations of the events held by the of the cultural resource centers, the contract asserted that the cultural resource centers would promote cross-racial interactions at the university and in the Corvallis community (OSU Black Cultural Center Historical Records, 1974). The efforts of the cultural resource centers have not been as effective in achieving this and there remains a perception that only people of the represented cultural identity are allowed to visit the CRCs. The lack of non-Black or Latinx patrons in the BCC/CCCC may be attributed to

the lack of interactions with regular CRC patrons that can teach them that the space is for all students and can be reserved by any member of the OSU community.

“There's a huge stigma with the culture centers the idea that like oh you only you can only identify as Mexican to be at the 4Cs or you can only be black to go to the BCC which is definitely not true like that. We are of open space where all the students...” (Participant #8, personal communication, April 11, 2019).

“Even though we are so proud of our brand as a Black Culture Center the people who are not black, especially white people, think like, oh only black people can go in there...Oh I thought that was only for black people. I didn't know about there I didn't want to disturb whatever it may be” (Participant #2, personal communication, March 15, 2019).

The CRCs have been spaces where students can increase their knowledge about their identified racial and/or ethnic culture but these spaces are generally occupied by students of color. The events held by the CRCs have addressed issues important to their population and all students. While the CRCs are spaces open to the campus community, the perception that these spaces are only for students of color limit their full potential to be sites of cross-racial interaction on campus. Specifically, white students may perceive the CRCs to be a space that is not for them as they cannot identify with the experiences of students of color.

Employees of the CRCs also are given the opportunity to travel to culturally rich communities of color outside of Oregon. This travel experiences increases cultural awareness and promotes an increased sense of pride for one's culture. A key takeaway from these trips is that the staff will have taken valuable information that can be used to further advance the work

of the cultural resource centers and their interactions with patrons regardless of their racial or ethnic background while promoting a stronger sense of self and their identity.

The only internal disparity found within the cultural resource centers was of inclusivity of all Latinx identified people. More specifically, the participants revealed that the CCCC is perceived as not equally inclusive of all Latin American cultures outside of Mexico and Central America. This is an issue that hinders the student support for all students that identify as Latinx. According to one participant, this is a downfall for students that would like to receive support but do not feel that it is a safe space (Participant #5, personal communication, April 8, 2019). From the naming of the center to the picture of Cesar Chavez on the outside of the building, the CRC predominantly represents Mexican culture, which can isolate other Latinx identified visitors.

This overall atmosphere of Mexican culture preexisted well before the creation of the CCCC as it now stands. The CCCC has undergone three name changes: Chicano Cultural Center to Hispanic Cultural Center, to the Cesar Chavez Cultural Resource Center where two out of three of the CRC names are central to Mexican identified persons (oregondigital.org, 2015). The events held by the CCCC have been Mexican centered including the major 1998 Cesar Chavez tribute event, Cinco de Mayo celebrations, and the El Dia del Amor y Amistad, a Mexican Valentine's day celebration (oregondigital.org). As the CCCC was created due to the works of the Chicano Student Union, the purpose of the CCCC has been to uplift Latinx students while being led by students that have Mexican ancestry and is the most represented group within the Latinx population at OSU.

### **Institutional Support**

As the work of supporting the CRCs is not limited to the CRCs, the importance of institutional action is vital to its success. The perceived level of institutional support of the

cultural resource centers was mixed. Institutional support was largely discussed in terms of the engagement of key institutional leaders, administrative leadership/guidance, and recruitment and retention funding.

### **Visibility and Engagement of Institutional leaders, faculty and staff.**

In regards to key institutional leaders, some participants specifically mentioned the university president while other talked about faculty. Specifically, while there were spotlight events where the president of the university was present, the regular check-ins and support throughout the year has been an issue.

“We are pretty heavily supported. They accommodate our needs. And what we want to do and what kind of events we're going to do. Yeah I don't really see them saying no to us...unless it's like a big event like our black excellence. But I feel like the only reason that they were there was because they were partly funding it. So but I don't really see them not like our pre Kwanzaa or Juneteenth celebration and like just regular faculty wouldn't come through unless they are like of color” (Participant #4, personal communication, April 8<sup>th</sup>, 2019)

“[OSU administrators] don't show up often. Often many times the few contacts we've had is because [leadership was] forcing them I remember. After the after the elections in 2016...there were protests where Ed Ray you know make an commitment to undocumented students like or to other students of color...Yeah you know like us we don't know what was gonna happen. So we're like okay like you had to make commitment to undocumented students and others” (Participant #5, personal communication, April 8, 2019).

Some participants viewed the amount of support from the administration as present but not genuine. OSU administration's presence at events is perceived as performative and reactionary. It is primarily faculty of color that attend events held by the CRCs, which is not surprising as faculty of color also need cultural nourishment in ways similar to students of color. However, there is not a mutual feeling of support that comes from all OSU faculty and administrators. For example, while there were OSU administrators present during the Black Excellence event, it was assumed administrators were only present because of their financial contribution to the event. This was also perceived to be the case during the Latinx demonstration in 2016, where students had voiced their opinions and remained vigilant in their demands for OSU support. The desired interaction between administrators and students is where the administrators ask questions, listen to students, and break the barrier of formalities and pleasantries.

While the DCE has been highlighted throughout the interviews as a method of institutional support specifically regarding university visibility and funding support, the recognition by OSU representatives outside of DCE is also important. This recognition includes attending events held by the CRCs, transparency when discussing issues important to students of color, and regular communication between the CRCs and the university as check-ins that reinforce the support stated from the university. Whereas there is an increased need for visibility and communication, participants understand that the university believes in the mission and works of the cultural resource centers because if they did not support them, they would not be in existence (Participant #10, personal communication, April 16, 2019).

“It would be helpful to have [someone]...come to us and say ‘hey just checking in...Everybody wants to have some check and make sure that they know they are cared about you know.’” (Participant #2, personal communication, March 15, 2019).

When supporting events held by the cultural resource centers, assisting in fundraising is important in showing solidarity of these entities, which is important if the mission of the university is to increase the level of diversity shown on OSU's campus which is where the CRCs have a significant impact on students of color (Participant #1, personal communication, March 15, 2019). Exploring the issues that are important to the Black and Latinx student experience and having the desire to better understand student experiences and perspectives while being the most authentic version of themselves is necessary; to do this, there must be open and honest conversation between the students and administrators (Participant #1, personal communication, March 15, 2019). These conversations should arise in times where there are both positive and negative campus racial climates.

#### **Diversity and Cultural Engagement Staff.**

Many of the participants were aware of budget cuts that limited the resources to cultural resource centers. Understanding the financial obstacles surrounding budget that could limit the capacity for programs the CRCs affected participants' perceived level of support from OSU as an institution. A prominent area of support that participants identified came from the support from Diversity and Cultural Engagement (DCE) staff, who have worked to solidify the importance of the CRCs at OSU. This is not surprising as DCE is the overarching entity that was created to support the work of the cultural resource centers. DCE's involvement in addressing budget cuts, increasing funding, and presence at CRC events have been noted as being supportive but not enough to effectively advance the work of the cultural resource centers (Participant #1, personal communication, March 15, 2019). DCE's role is acknowledged and supported by students.

“DCE's leadership [does] a good job of supporting groups and the cultural resource centers in general in our efforts to support marginalized students on campus” (Participants #3, personal communication, March 26<sup>th</sup>, 2019).

“DCE which is like that institutional part of people who is in charge of like overseeing all the cultural resource centers. They've done like a really good job in finding support for as many resource centers and especially as last term where we were meeting our budget for next year” (Participant #9, personal communication, April 11<sup>th</sup>, 2019).

In a time of budget cuts, which were discussed in eight out of the 11 interviews, the intervention of DCE in increasing funding has been seen as part of the university's support of cultural resource centers. There is still a call for further support outside of DCE.

### **Recruitment and Retention Funding.**

While budget and funding are a significant theme found in the interview participants' beliefs on ways of increasing support of the cultural resource centers, these facilities require funding to support students in all four areas outlined by the purpose and objectives of the CRCs. There is a perception that white people at OSU believe the CRCs are a waste of funding rather than a necessary resource for supporting students of color (Participant #9, personal communication, April 11, 2019). The participants have emphasized that the area of funding is significant in demonstrating institutional support for these entities as funding helps the programming that continues to support the purpose and objectives of the CRCs.

The cultural nourishment component that is required for students of color is unlike that of their white counterparts due to the marginalization that is common on predominantly white campuses. Promoting a sense of belonging can lead to student success unique to their culture.

More specifically, the cultural resource centers provide an outlet for diverse cultures to be celebrated, thus increasing the cultural competency of the students of color that visit the facilities and their white counterparts. The CRCs have been able to fund student travel in the past and most recently have been able to take Latinx students to New York, New York and Black students to Houston, Texas where they have been able to expose students to culturally thriving communities of color that are not found in Oregon (Participant #3, personal communication, March 26, 2019). Additionally, the racial and ethnic centered graduations hosted by the BCC and CCCC called Black Grad and ¡Si Se Pudo! celebrates the persistence while acknowledging the unique experiences of students of color has been perceived as losing funding which lowers the student perspective that the institution supports acknowledges their success (Participant 11, personal communication, April 23, 2019).

The importance of acknowledging that OSU is a predominantly white university in a state that has a racist history is necessary. With the low numbers of Black and Latinx students and faculty at OSU, there is an importance for bringing these communities to campus and retaining them. Further, supporting students of color in times of stress, including in times of a negative campus racial climate reveal the importance of supporting students of color. This support further increases sense of belonging for these students and solidifies their place at the university.

“In order to recruit students of a different group, you have to have representation of that and not be afraid to call that blackness like we need black students. We need black faculty and staff to be present unapologetically black...as the higher up you know have a message leading that and maybe identifying naming that needs to be addressed. Naming the fact that we need support in this area we need to have this as the budget line of support too.” (Interviewee #1, Personal Communication, March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2019).

As articulated by this participant, support means finances and resources along with dedicated personnel that desire to learn more about the experiences of students of color and advance the works they do. As faculty of color have a tremendous impact on students, their solidarity and willingness to identify areas of support pertinent to student success is pivotal in advancing the level of support given to students. Additionally, in advocating for people of color on campus, they are advocating for themselves. By calling out areas that name specific problems that need improvement for students of color across campus by administrators of color, there is a level of accountability that is given as identifying areas for improvement can be supplemented by creating a plan of action to help resolve the problem.

#### **Lesser Mentioned Methods of Possible Support.**

While the aforementioned methods of supporting the works of the CRC were more prominent, other ways of supporting the CRCs were also mentioned and hold merit in addressing sense of belonging. This includes taking into account the demographic diversity represented in the OSU population, specifically with University Housing and Dining Services (UHDS). By further understanding the demographic diversity in student populations, the cultural resource centers, which house a portion of the cultural and demographic university on campus, can be a space to address the westernized meals and allow for the meals prepared by UHDS to become more adaptable to the student population (Participant #10, personal communication, April 16, 2019).

Acknowledging that university officials hold many of their events across campus, including the cultural resource centers as a hub for their meetings builds relationships with the CRCs and encourages a more diverse group of people to visit the centers (Interviewee #11, personal communication, April 23, 2019). One of the most radical methods of supporting the cultural

resource centers is to deinstitutionalize them which allows for the students to become more radical in the events they are likely to hold and avoids the bureaucracy of being a university funded entity (Participant #5, personal communication, April 8, 2019).

### **Limitations**

As with most master's level graduate research involving qualitative methods such as interviews, there are time constraint limitations that prohibit the possibility for conducting long-term, ethnographic research that would have allowed for me to become an active participant and gain a full understanding of student experiences on OSU's campus. Furthermore, the use of qualitative research does not allow for a large number of participants to be interviewed represented by quantitative research. This research is not a study of human subjects, which would have allowed for more anecdotal experiences that tell the story of the students that the cultural resource centers support. While the study is a program evaluation, the information collected has not been inclusive of the people that are not regular visitors of the cultural resource centers.

Including Black and Latinx people that are not regular visitors of the CRCs would have highlighted areas of outreach that need improvement, stigmas associated with the CRCs, and potentially negative experiences held by students that do not believe they are effective or needed. Regarding the participant population, this group was overrepresented by the employees of the cultural resource centers, which was due to convenience and accessibility. By including CRC employees, these people had a little more knowledge about the connections to the university as presumably they have meetings that discuss budget and university changes. It is unlikely that regular patrons would have much input about the inner workings of the CRCs.

As this study is centered on one university in Oregon, the ability to generalize the findings to be used regionally, nationally, or internationally is limited. The inclusion of other Oregon universities and their experiences related to this topic would have been beneficial but is limited due to limited access into these communities. Collection of this information is useful in making policy recommendations for the Oregon public universities, based on the history of its three largest public universities: Oregon State University, University of Oregon, and Portland State University. Cultural resource centers on predominantly white campuses is a unique experience and is important as universities strive to have more students of color retained at their university. This study can provide a basis for change and reassessment for both universities and cultural resource centers.

### **Policy Recommendations**

To best support the work of the cultural resource centers and maintain internal accountability within the CRCs and external accountability from the university, the following policy recommendations draw attention to the CRCs and the Institution at large. Where relevant recommendations are discussed in relationship to academic and social integration.

#### **Recommendations for Cultural Resource Centers**

Academic support within the cultural resource centers needs to be improved to allow for the BCC and CCCC to achieve its purpose and objectives outlined in the agreement between OSU and student groups. While the CRCs have been noted as a more social space, academic support is important as higher education institutions are an academic spaces. By designating funding that supports an employee that has working knowledge of some of the required classes that all students take, students would have support that encourages retention from the first to second year of their education.

Work must be done by the CRCs and OSU to help improve social integration. While the CRCs allow for a safe space for students of color to interact with each other, the CRCs are stigmatized as a space only for students of color. Many of the events held by the CRC employees are held at the CRCs as this is what the spaces have been created for. However, there are additional spaces across campus that would allow for all OSU patrons to witness the great events organized by the CRC staff where patrons can ask questions and learn about Black and Latinx culture. By showcasing events on the university campus for all to see, CRC staff can converse with students that are unaware of the cultural resource centers and invite them to learn more about them by visiting the facilities on campus. As people learn by experiencing events rather than solely learning about different cultures in a classroom setting, these interactions further increase the cultural awareness of students that do not know much about Black and Latinx culture and the importance of recognizing the experiences and contributions of people of color on OSU's campus.

To promote cross-racial interactions within the CRCs, the student employees must continue outreach that destigmatizes the idea that the CRCs are limited to students of color. To do this, employees must leave the CRCs to interact with irregular patrons and students that have not visited the CRCs. This provides a method of accountability for CRCs to reach students outside of regular visitors by tracking the number of interactions made by the employees. In promoting the cultural resource centers and teaching non-patrons about the spaces, the staff would have the ability to address why the spaces are important, not solely for students of color but all people. After being notified by one of the participants that the Winter term is notorious for the CRCs to have less visitors, increasing the outreach and networking efforts on behalf of the centers to bring more people inside would help to promote cross-racial interactions. By targeting

areas in need of significant improvement, the cultural resource centers can serve more students and continue to solidify their importance at OSU.

To increase the representation of student nationalities at the CCCC where students that identify as Latinx but not Mexican can be served, there is a need for broader representation of Latinx's intradiversity. Importantly, CCCC staff have already begun this work. Following the interviews, I was notified that the CCCC has been working to make its center more inclusive of all Latinx backgrounds as they understand the importance of being inclusive of all Latinx identified groups and the implications of being a Mexican centered space.

When organizing events that support the works of the CRCs, the staff should have a method of tying the event back to the mission and outline how it specifically is catering to the mission and objectives of CRCs. By organizing events into these categories, identifying areas that are not being addressed allows for the cultural resource centers to redirect their focus in ensuring all of their objectives areas have been addressed.

### **Recommendations for Oregon State University**

Regarding institutional involvement and support, there was an outstanding demand for more funding and visibility from university personnel. To address the issue of funding, creating and maintaining a floor of the types of funding allocation that should not be touched as it would be detrimental to the community should be outlined by both representatives from the CRCs and the university. Such events would include the race and ethnicity centered graduations that celebrate the accomplishments of minority students, hiring a base number of student employees as these centers allow for them to provide for themselves, and computer and printing capabilities as these have been noted as significant to the students that regularly visit the CRCs.

When addressing visibility, inviting administrators to monthly or quarterly visits from university personnel that are not associated with DCE would benefit both the institution and the CRCs in gaining a further understanding of the Black and Latinx experience. These meetings would allow for updates to be given between both the university and the centers as the CRCs can discuss upcoming events where the university can increase their level of support by identifying donors and ensuring at least one university personnel is present at the event. During times of emotional distress due to a negative campus racial climate, such as a hate crime, beyond sending mass emails, at least one representative from the university should visit the CRC as outlined in their job description. This allows for students that have been targeted by the racially derived hate crime to see that the university's message is reinforced by its actions that they are there to support all students. When planning for a meeting of this magnitude, the CRCs have the ability to send a flyer to their listserv inviting them to have a conversation with the university representative, encouraging accountability and visibility.

Interactions with faculty are also an important feature of academic integration (Tinto, 1994). The presence of faculty of color at CRC events has been acknowledged and appreciated. However, white faculty have not been present at events that also promote cross-racial interactions that encourage cultural competency. As faculty of color are often overworked in university commitments and events that support students of color, there is a need for white faculty to learn about the contributions and experiences of students of color on OSUs campus. As a part of faculty orientations, faculty should be taken to the cultural resource centers similar to a campus tour. While having a slide in a PowerPoint that describes the cultural resource centers may be helpful to some faculty, physically bringing them into these spaces where they can learn and ask questions leads to increased knowledge about these spaces. Following the visits,

debriefing the faculty on how they can continue to support the works of the centers and carrying the conversations into their classrooms further increases academic support. By increasing faculty awareness and visibility as a result of visiting the CRCs, this can lead to more opportunities that support more meaningful interactions among faculty and students of color.

### **Conclusion**

This study explored the level of support for the CRCS, how this can be improved, and how to better improve the works within the cultural resource centers using Tinto's Theory of Integration. This evaluation explored how well the cultural resource centers are working to support its mission and objectives of creating social, cultural, recreational, and academic support for students while supporting cross-racial interactions at the university. The uniqueness of the study is that it discusses institutional support and the role of the university in supporting the works done by the cultural resource centers.

Using interviews, archival data, and news articles, this study uses triangulation to gain a cohesive view of issues related to events held by the cultural resource centers. Findings show that the CRCs are working to support the cultural, social, and recreational areas of their mission but could improve in supporting the academic support which is consistent with the works of the CRCs. The CRCs allow for student isolation that limits the ability for cross-racial interactions.

The institution has been doing some work to support the CRCs but should improve in their efforts. The cultural resource centers at maintain invaluable role to students of color at predominantly white institutions. This included providing a space during times of negative campus racial climate for students of color in a social aspect and mitigate a sense of belonging

on campus. If the university values the work of the cultural resource centers, they must acknowledge that it takes collective work to achieve true diversity and inclusion.

To further university support of these entities, OSU can improve in two ways: increasing funding that increases recruitment and retention of students of color efforts and increased university engagement and transparency with CRCs year round. Policy recommendations encourage a level of accountability from the CRCs that encourages them to provide resources that address all areas of support and employee outreach to gain more foot traffic and dismantle preconceived notions concerning the types of visitors that are allowed to enter the CRCs. As with any program, addressing funding issues is important but more specifically, outlining the areas of support that have the most impact on students of color and ensuring that those events and practices remain. Therefore, a mutual consensus made between the university, DCE, and CRCs of which areas are pertinent to student success is important. Addressing these issues of institutional support reinforces the belief that the works of diversity are not limited to the cultural resource centers but an important goal for the university and allows for more effective work to be done from all parties.

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