

Envisioning New Praxis for Gender and Sexuality Resource Center: Place-Consciousness in Post- Secondary Education

Alex C. Lange

Abstract

Since 1971, in response to demands from student activists and student organizations, over 200 college and universities dedicated resources to the creation of gender and sexuality resource centers (GSRCs). While the establishment of these units is critical to the success of queer and trans students, the establishment of these offices without intention and attention to overlapping forms of oppression may lead to more harm than good. In this article, I offer ways for GSRCs to understand the ways place can influence educators' work, challenging colonial paradigms of gender and sexuality in education. I first situate GSRCs in the broader history of higher education. I then review the dimensions of a place-conscious education framework. Finally, I discuss the ways GSRCs can take-up a place conscious framework, explicitly examining their definitional work on campus as well as safe space programs. Through this, I argue GSRCs can take up the responsibility of being answerable to the colonial forces that undergird postsecondary education through this approach.

Keywords: LGBTQ Center, Place-Consciousness, Critical Geography, Decolonization

Postsecondary institutions in the United States continue to wrestle with their commitments to students who are marginalized by their racial, gender, sexual, religious, and disability identities, amongst others (Stewart, 2011). As students who are not upper class, able-bodied, neuro-typical, White, cisgender men continue gaining access to postsecondary education, institutions make decisions about how to help these students thrive in these institutions (Levine, 1986; Patton, 2010; Stewart, 2011). Indeed, as these student populations gained greater visibility and presence on campus, questions continue to arise concerning their success: Who is responsible for meeting these groups' needs? Who is responsible for assuring these students succeed at the same levels as other students?

One response to these questions has been the creation and staffing of identity-based offices and centers (Marine, 2011; Patton, 2010; Stewart, 2011). Multicultural, women's, and LGBTQ centers came into existence because of student activists' demands (Marine, 2011; Shuford, 2011; Steele, 1995). For instance, in the presence of institutions that were hostile to their experiences, Black students in the South, and Latinx and Indigenous students in the Southwest, organized to demand organizational support for their particular needs (Shuford, 2011; Steele, 1995). Though lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, and queer (LGBTQ) students existed on historically White campuses since their founding, campus purges of queer students were frequent in the 20th century (Graves, 2018; Wright, 2005), in addition to practices and policies meant to control LGB students (Dilley, 2002). While the specific tactics of campus purges are almost nonexistent today, LGTBQ students still report inhospitable campus environments (Rankin, Weber, Blumenfeld, & Frazier,

2010), though researchers note an improvement in campus climates over time (Garvey, Flint, & Sanders, 2017).

Reports of campus inhospitality vary by institutional type. For instance, students at predominantly/historically White religiously-affiliated institutions, which emphasize individualist religious traditions, most commonly Christian-based colleges and universities, still face several barriers (Bailey & Strunk, 2018; Coley, 2018a). At the same time, LGBTQ students at these institutions continue to organize and agitate for change, often finding significant meaning in their activism while enrolled (Coley, 2018b). Additionally, scholars note the (sexual) conservatism of historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) despite their founding missions based on the inclusion of those excluded at predominantly/historically White institutions (Harper & Gasman, 2008; Mobley & Johnson, 2015). Like student and faculty cultures at Christian colleges, this narrative of HBCU conservatism may be less ironclad than once thought (Mobley, 2015; Nguyen, Castro Samayoa, Gasman, & Mobley, 2018).

Following the energy from the Stonewall Riots in 1969, the first known campus space dedicated to LGBTQ students opened at the University of Michigan in 1971 (Marine, 2011; Schlager, 1998). Since then, campus spaces dedicated to LGBTQ students ballooned, with over 200 currently in existence and another 100+ campuses having a staff member charged with supporting queer and trans students without a dedicated space (Consortium of Higher Education LGBT Professionals, n.d.). Fine (2012) found that being a prestigious, public institution in a more liberal political context more often led to the establishment of formalized LGBT resource centers. In the absence of a formalized center, student affairs professionals play a role in supporting and advocating for these students (Martin, Broadhurst, Hoffshire, & Takewell, 2018). More recently, some women's and gender centers began undertaking gender-expansive practices, including cisgender men and transgender people of all genders in their services (Marine, Helfrich, & Randhawa, 2017). While it is less clear whether particular configurations of these services matter more than others, researchers continually demonstrate that LGBTQ students greatly benefit from the existence of centers and staff members dedicated to supporting their experiences (Pitcher, Camacho, Renn, & Woodford, 2018; Tillapaugh, 2015).

However, the establishment of a resource center alone is not an automatic positive development for a campus community. Rather, the development of campus services mirrored the broader gay rights movement: they prioritized homonormative whiteness, a rendering of gayness "which constitutes the dominant 'gay' body as white, middle-class, cisgender, and male complete with static and binary conceptions of whiteness and masculinity" (Self, 2015, pp. 11-12). This prioritization also led many gender and sexuality resource centers (GSRCs) to pay less attention to the needs of transgender students (Marine & Nicolazzo, 2014; Spencer & Patterson, 2017). While centering homonormative whiteness, centers can also be complicit in the settler colonial project, with its roots in defining land and knowledge as property to be consumed. LGBTQ centers, in their effort to spread knowledge and awareness about gender and sexuality, can still treat these knowledges as a form of property (Patel, 2015) to be banked into one's mind (Freire, 1970). In addition to *what* knowledge is rendered as intelligible by centers, the pedagogies employed can also be grounded in Eurocentric banking notions of education (Freire, 1970) that serve to foreclose what gender and sexuality are and what they are not.

In this article, I offer ways for GSRCs to become more place-conscious, or understand the ways places influences our work as educators. At the same time, I challenge GSRCs to wrestle with their simultaneous role as normalizing agents of sexuality and gender, and disruptive nature as a counterspace for students minoritized by their sexuality and gender. Specifically, I want to

disrupt the potential complicity of GSRCs in relying on colonial logics in the name of greater inclusion and equity work (Shahjahan, 2014). To accomplish this aim, I split this article up into three parts. First, I situate GSRCs within the broader history of the development of campus centers based on identity and geography. Second, I discuss the dimensions of Gruenewald's (2003) place-conscious education framework. Inspired by components of phenomenology, critical geography studies, and ecofeminism, I connect the dimensions of the framework to higher education and calls for spatial justice (Soja, 1996). Third, I discuss the ways GSRCs, among other postsecondary student support structures, can take up this place-conscious framework. As examples, I discuss both the spreading of knowledge of gender and sexuality as well as safe space programs. As authorities on what constitutes gender and sexual diversity, GSRCs can take a wider lens on the conceptions of gender and sexuality they share with campus groups. Additionally, I interrogate safe space programs as a site to question GSRCs' role as both a normalizing and disruptive agent, questioning one of the practices many have taken to be standard parts of LGBTQ center work (Marine, 2011). Ultimately, I argue GSRCs can take up the responsibility of being answerable to colonial and neoliberal forces which undergird postsecondary education (Patel, 2016; Spencer & Patterson, 2017) by adopting a more place-conscious approach.

Situating GSRCs in Greater Campus Center Development

Like many other cultural centers and area studies programs developed in the 1960s, GSRCs arose from student activism and unrest (Marine, 2011; Reuben, 1998). Like their cultural center and area studies counterparts, GSRCs developed intending to elevate marginalized scholarship and students (Reuben, 1998; Szanton, 2004). However, after World War II, international studies centers began appearing on college campuses, primarily funded by the U.S. Department of Defense to study other cultures (Riddle, 1989). At the same time institutions begrudgingly compromised with student activists for greater representation in the curriculum and in area studies (D'Emilio, 1992; Horowitz, 1987; Reuben, 1998), the U.S. Department of Defense continued to establish centers to study the Other and further the U.S. imperial project (Said, 1994).

This simultaneous development of different types of campus centers is essential to understand. On the one hand, student activists demanded spaces that could be their own on campuses. Simultaneously, other centers developed because of the desire to study the Other. This concurrent tension exists in modern-day GSRCs. Though not set up or funded by the federal government, these centers exist to simultaneously support marginalized students while also spreading knowledge about what constitutes and defines sexuality and gender (Marine, 2011; Shuford, 2011; Woodford et al., 2014). In other words, while making room for LGBTQ students to exist on college campuses, GSRCs also define what constitutes and what does not constitute gender and sexuality. For example, many faculty and staff members ask GSRC staff to provide exhaustive terminology lists of different terms and identity labels. Given the expansive nature of gender and sexuality (see Jourian, 2015; Rankin, Garvey, & Duran, 2019), it becomes impossible for any terminology or definition list to be complete. And yet, given GSRCs' role as consultants and experts on LGBTQ experiences (Sanlo, Rankin, & Schoenberg, 2002), these lists often render certain genders and sexualities as valid and others as invalid. I elaborate more on this definitional duty, and how GSRCs can envision more expansive, place-conscious practices later in this article.

In a similar vein, GSRCs become a center of knowledge so that cisgender and heterosexual persons can better understand those with minoritized genders and sexualities. While appearing to be good on its face, conservative opportunists can use this knowledge against these very same

students (Jaschik, 2015). Efforts to educate cisgender and heterosexual persons have not always been met with goodwill or positive transformation. For instance, in 2015, the University of Tennessee at Knoxville's Office for Diversity and Inclusion released a graphic guide to pronouns to help educate faculty and staff about ways different groups of people may refer to themselves. Conservative groups and commentators pounced on the graphic, falsely claiming the University of Tennessee at Knoxville made up these pronouns and required institutional agents to use this language (Jaschik, 2015). This simple graphic, combined with the backlash to the institution's Sex Week, prompted such outrage that the Tennessee legislature zero-funded the Office for Diversity and Inclusion in a unique bill targeting the unit's budget specifically (Culligan, 2016). In this way, Tennessee lawmakers and conservative bloggers turned an education effort against the communities for which that education was meant to assist. Centers must become more place-conscious from their position on the margins to model the possibilities for higher education (Gruenewald, 2003).

Place-Consciousness

Place-conscious education aims to both “work against the isolation of schooling’s discourses and practices from the living world outside the increasingly placeless institution of schooling” and “enlist teachers and students in the firsthand experience of local life and in the political process of understanding and shaping what happens there” (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 620). In other words, becoming place-conscious is about understanding what places can teach us and how places shape us. Becoming place-conscious is to become cognizant of the ways humans experience place everywhere and yet also realize how because place is everywhere, humans become less aware of it in their daily routines. Gruenewald (2003) outlined five dimensions of place: the perceptual; the sociological; the ideological; the political, and; the ecological. I briefly summarize the perceptual and ecological dimensions first. Then, I discuss the sociological, ideological, and political dimensions more in-depth, given their more direct relation to postsecondary praxis.

First, drawing primarily from the work of phenomenologists like Husserl, Merleau-Ponty, and Abram, the perceptual dimension locates place as “the ground of direct human experience” (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 623). The perceptual dimension concerns one’s sensory experiences with places. Said otherwise, this dimension concerns how humans understand “places that are alive in the human and more-than-human world” (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 625). K-12 schooling practices often keep learners separated (via regulation of their geographic experience) from a unique sense of place and ecosystems, dulling one’s sense to perceive a place. Postsecondary education provides an opportunity for learners to be more attuned to their surroundings. While dense campus layouts and designs can cut students off to the surrounding environment via buildings, artificial boundaries, and paved parking lots (Kenney, Dumont, & Kenney, 2005), college students can exercise their freedom to come and go from different parts of campus and the surrounding locale. However, due to many students’ experiences in K-12 schooling, their ability to make sense and perceive their environments eroded over time (Gruenewald, 2003). To both honor the places in which institutions are located (Kenney, Dumont, & Kenney, 2005), as well as helping students find their way through campuses (Strange & Banning, 2015), institutional architects and designers’ plans include intentional efforts to assist members of campus to connect with a place.

The ecological dimension draws attention to the ways that “modern economies function to damage and destroy the ecological systems that support human and nonhuman communities” (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 633) despite the widespread prevalence of environmental education. In this

way, the ecological dimension forefronts the connections between the exploitation of peoples and lands (Warren, 2000). It is within this dimension that global thinking about ecology becomes troubled. While activists emphasize the importance of global thinking (e.g., Davis, 2016), it can obscure ecological issues through abstract statistics (Berry, 1992). By paying more considerable attention to the ways humans dominate the land through manipulation, neglect, and domination, one can better understand the ways the powerful marginalize the powerless. In the context of postsecondary education, for instance, the ecological dimension brings to light the ways colleges promote their efforts to curb climate change through research and decades-long plans (Harvard University, n.d.), yet harm the environment actively through investments in economies which exacerbate the issues at hand (LeMoult, 2019). Additionally, through the ecological dimension, institutions' commitments to diversity would not be limited to identities and demographic characteristics; instead, this promise to honor and protect diversity expands to biological diversity.

The sociological dimension concerns how a place is a container of culture and identity (Casey, 1996). While one's experience of place is "mediated by culture, education, and personal experience" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 626), the places themselves have, in turn, been shaped by culture. Places become imbued with meaning by people and culture. In other words, the meaning one makes of and assigns to a given place is socially constructed and reinforced. For instance, the idea of what constitutes wilderness is itself social formed by laws and geographers (Gruenewald, 2003; Nash, 1982). One can think of campuses as cultural products, historically and contemporarily built for those most privileged in society (Smith, Yosso, & Solórzano, 2006). It stands to reason that students who do not hold these privileged identities may experience campus places differently, as seen with students who are minoritized by their race, gender, sexuality, class, ability, and religion. For GSRCs, this means being conscious of the ways the staff members of these offices both construct center space and how they seek to construct temporary and permanent spaces on other parts of campus.

The ideological dimension has its foundations in critical geography studies (Soja, 1996). In this dimension, a place is analyzed as "expressive of ideologies and relationships to power" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 628). Like other critical theories, the ideological dimension concerns itself with the ways spaces and places reproduce social relationships organized by power and dominance. For instance, private property is a function of this dimension. The purpose of private property is to either grant access or exclude others from one's property (Harris, 1993). The displacing and barring of others reflects ideologies embedded in the construction of property, private or public. Even in public spaces, historically and contemporarily, the desire to remove Black men from a coffee shop (Gathright & Sullivan, 2018), Native men from a campus tour (Chappell, 2018), or Black women from a golf course (Caron, 2018) reflect the ways power operates through places. It is essential to understand how meaning becomes built into a place and how one must contend with power embedded in those meanings in postsecondary education (Wilder, 2013). For GSRCs, practitioners must be conscious of the ways ideologies of safety operate in the name of inclusion (Leonardo & Porter, 2010). How do markers of inclusion, like safe zone stickers, signal a particular ideology while (potentially) not shifting the underlying ideology of a place?

The political dimension of place concerns "examining the many ways in which politics and place are entangled" that can "inform educators with ideas about how people, places, and cultures take shape" (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 631). The political dimension differs from the ideological dimension in that the former takes up the ways place can inform resistance and struggle while the latter seeks to examine existing power relationships (hooks, 1990; Soja, 1996). Here, Gruenewald (2003) invoked hooks's (1990) discussion of the margin as "both a metaphorical and material

space from which relationships of oppression might be reimagined and reshaped” (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 632). In this way, the political dimension of understanding place helps one to conceptualize possibilities for the ways space can be oriented that does not require moves for everyone to move to the political center. For postsecondary educators, this means thinking about the ways those on the margins organizationally on campus, like GSRCs and multicultural centers, can help conceptualize different ways of facilitating education on campuses. Those within those centers can use their unique lens of being on the margins to “think and act in ways that counter social domination” (Gruenewald, 2003, p. 633). By attending to the sociological, ideological, and political dimensions of place on college campuses, GSRCs can begin to understand their role in being responsive to space and the ways forces like neoliberalism and colonization inform the operation of postsecondary education.

Towards a Place-Conscious Praxis

Patel (2016) challenged educational researchers and research to be answerable to dismantle the very structures which validated us and our forms of knowledge. In that vein, I offer two ways for GSRCs to be better stewards of ideas, learning, and education broadly through a place-conscious praxis. Rather than providing answers and definitive means of becoming answerable to the forces above, I challenge GSRCs to think more broadly about their practices and resist neoliberal, colonial logics, echoing Shahjahan’s (2014) call for a transformative resistance that creates new ways of being in higher education. I also do not issue these challenges lightly, understanding the various levels of funding and staffing these functions receive currently. Indeed, the current work of GSRC staff members is fraught with politics and uneven staffing (e.g., Tillapaugh & Catalano, 2019). Below, I first discuss LGBTQ centers as authorities on gender and sexuality. Second, I consider the ways safe space discourse can reify the very structures of domination and oppression these education programs seek to disrupt.

Inscribing Definitions of Gender and Sexuality

Conceptions of gender and sexuality, like cultural identities (Hall, 1990; Subedi & Daza, 2008), are much less stable and straightforward than as presented through a Western lens. Lugones (2008) drew connections between colonization’s need to both racialize and gender peoples based on Eurocentric notions of race and gender. The coloniality of gender imposes anatomic views of people based on ideas of dominance and submission, justifying men as a category of inherently stronger people and women as justifiably dominated given their supposed natural weakness. Traits of each of these sex/gender categories become automatically associated with masculinity and femininity to keep men and women respectively in their gendered boxes. Lugones (2008) presented several ways that non-Western and Indigenous peoples conceptualized gender beyond the binary categorization the U.S. and other Western cultures cling to today. These peoples did not necessarily buy into the idea of a man-dominated society as the automatic norm of their culture.

In contemporary contexts, one can look to conceptions of Two-Spirit identities by tribal nations in North America and the *hijras* in India to understand non-binary conceptualizations of gender (Lorber, 1994; McCarthy, 2014). GSRCs, in their promotion of educational programs, become repositories of knowledge about gender and sexuality (Woodford et al., 2014). Campus centers make particular knowledge about sexuality and gender intelligible while rendering other conceptions unintelligible. In this process, many centers’ curriculum forward Western formations that

see identities and oppression through non-interconnected lenses (Self, 2015; Subedi & Daza, 2008).

Often, these Western formations come from textually written or empirically proven studies of gender and sexuality, despite the ways those methods delegitimize Indigenous, marginal, and Third World epistemologies (hooks, 1984; Patel, 2016; Smith, 2012). For instance, many GSRC staff members discuss gender and sexuality as socially constructed but still do not contextualize those constructions to societal organizing forces, like colonialism. Additionally, though these campus centers have moved away from describing both sexuality and gender as binaries, they again forward conceptions based on spectrums and continuums that are understood through a Western, Eurocentric frame of reference. Rather than providing single visions of gender and sexuality, GSRCs can help provide expansive notions of these identities and the consequences of different understandings of these markers of difference.

One of the opportunities GSRCs have towards thinking through anti-coloniality and place-consciousness is by conceptualizing gender and sexuality through multiple, marginal epistemologies. Often, as practitioners who get limited time with faculty and staff, the goal is to cram what many would consider *the most critical information* into a training program all at once. However, this reduction process often leaves out nuance and complexity. The ideals of global citizenship education offer centers the means to think expansively about gender and sexuality education (Pashby, 2012). By adopting a critical understanding of globalization and engaging with intercultural perspectives, centers can challenge their current curricular offerings to be more mobile and question stable ideas of identities. If U.S. institutions of higher education continue to attract students from across the globe and seek to cultivate global citizens (Pashby, 2012), how centers and institutions conceive of and teach about gender and sexuality remain critical.

Simultaneously, centers have the opportunity to challenge cisheteronormative conceptions of citizenship within global citizenship education paradigms (Manalansan, 2006; Subedi & Daza, 2008). Oftentimes, because of one's positioning in the U.S. or other Western societies, the West weaponizes its sexual modernization (e.g., exercising a base-level tolerance for gender and sexual Others) against supposed backward countries, particularly those in the Middle East, in an effort to further justify the war on terror (Puar, 2005). At the same time, queer people within sexually modern (Western) cultures must abide by normative forces. Through this configuration, citizenship becomes marked by "racialized, classed, sexualized, and gendered images of specific" (Subedi & Daza, 2008, p. 244) groups of people. These markings of citizenship allow some people to participate in the modernization of Western cultures, while those labeled as terrorist or culturally backward become excluded from these benefits (Puar, 2005). GSRCs can intervene in these binary understandings of Western/progressive-Middle Eastern/backward and help push against purely Western configurations of gender, sexuality, and citizenship. Through this reconceptualization and expansion of concepts, centers can also re-think their safe zone and other educational program offerings.

Safe Zone Programs

"Safe zone" or "safe space" programs are standard in GSRC educational program efforts (Marine, 2011; Sanlo, Rankin, & Schoenberg, 2002; Woodford et al., 2014). These programs train faculty and staff on how to be a safe, affirming place for students on campus—spaces where students can be assured they will not be targeted or harassed based on their identities (Evans, 2002). These are spaces conceived to be free of physical violence (Fox, 2007). These training programs

are often one-time, range from one to three hours, and implicitly confer approval to be a safe space indefinitely, no matter how much time has passed (Fox, 2007; Woodford et al., 2014). Completion of these programs often comes with a sticker or marker that one is now a safe space or zone for students on campus. One only needs to look through campus buildings to see worn safe zone stickers on faculty members' office doors and windows. A paucity of evidence shows these programs' effectiveness at improving campus climate at the macro-level and building ally coalitions in pockets of campus (Evans, 2002; Finkel, Storaasli, Bandele, & Schaefer, 2003; Gacita et al., 2017; Poynter & Tubbs, 2008).

However, safe space discourse narrowly benefits white lesbian, gay, bisexual, and, to a lesser extent, transgender students (Fox, 2007; Kumashiro, 2001; McConnell, Todd, Odahl-Ruan, & Shattell, 2016). Safe Zone curriculum often reifies White, able-bodied, and middle-class formations of gender and sexuality by not paying attention to the ways racism, compulsory able-bodiedness, and social class are all linked to heterosexism and cisnormativity. Writing about this dynamic concerning the connections between racism and heterosexism, Kumashiro (2001) shared,

Yet in our commitment to change oppression and embrace differences, we often fail to account for the intersections of racism and heterosexism, and of racial and sexual identities. Ironically, our efforts to challenge one form of oppression often unintentionally contribute to other forms of oppression, and our efforts to embrace one form of difference often exclude and silence others. (p. 1)

Here, Kumashiro draws attention to the ways Safe Zone curricula, among other education initiatives, does not locate itself within intersections of oppression. Said otherwise, much of the curriculum often focuses on only sexuality and gender without attention to other dimensions of identity and oppression. Rather than credentialing faculty and staff members with stickers that will be affirming of all identities, LGBTQ centers offer these individuals ways to signal their inclusion around gender and sexuality only. Consequently, those marginalized by their sexuality and gender but experiencing privilege/dominance through their other identities are the primary beneficiaries of places marked as safe for LGBTQ students (Fox, 2007; Fox & Ore, 2010). While the signifier of a safe zone may be a rainbow sticker, the signified, in reality, is more of a safe space for white LGB(T)Q students. By not requiring safe zone trainees to undergo initial or further training on the intersections of heterosexism and cisnormativity with other forms of oppression, safe zones become less safe for those marginalized by other aspects of their identity like race, social class, and ability. Said otherwise, so long as the primary goal of safe zone programs is the management and elimination of heterosexism and cisnormativity exclusively, *safety* becomes reduced and simplified to single positions of power and privilege (e.g., primarily White gay cisgender masculinity), ignoring the ways multiple identities relate to one another and position one differently in relation to multiple forms of oppression (Crenshaw, 1989; Collins, 1991; Fox & Ore, 2010).

Additionally, as centers become more place-conscious, what does it mean to label a place as inclusive? What do safe zone stickers *do*? Who are these stickers and markers *for*? Do individuals perceive their posting a sticker in their office space as *doing* the work of inclusion rather than taking the necessary steps for equity work beyond displaying a sticker (Ahmed, 2012; Alvarez & Schneider, 2008)? Is the person who currently occupies the marked office or space the one who sat through the training to earn the inclusion marker? How does this practice further colonial logics of creating and marking property? Does having a sticker suggest one can advocate for all identities within the LGBTQ umbrella (Fox, 2007)? Some scholars (e.g., Ahmed, 2012; Fox, 2007; Patel,

2015) complicated the idea of signaling inclusion through non-performatives without accompanying action to change places to be more inclusive and equitable in ideological and political dimensions. These non-performatives allow individuals to point to something to appear inclusive and to evade claims of one working against equity efforts on campus. How can practitioners think through the margin to re-conceptualize this practice in a way that has more comprehensive benefits for all the students it intends to benefit (i.e., all queer and trans students)?

Conclusion

Over the past decade, a small number of institutions majorly shifted the functions of GSRCs or closed them altogether (Marine, 2011). Most recently, the Tennessee state legislature, reacting to an annual campus Sex Week and an e-mail sent to instructors regarding using students' gender pronouns and preferred names, defunded the Office of Diversity and Inclusion at the University of Tennessee at Knoxville (Brown, 2016; Locker, 2016). Though student activists continued the work of the Pride Center (Urquhart, 2016), alumni rallied to fundraise for the unit (Compton, 2018), and administrators later re-funded the Pride Center (Ohm, 2017), these incidents make me anxious and worried as a former professional staff member of a GSRC. The critical and necessary work of these centers requires their continued existence into the 21st century, particularly given the inequitable college outcomes of queer and trans people when compared to their heterosexual and cisgender counterparts (Greathouse et al., 2018). GSRCs play a critical role in intervening in and advocating for change in the college processes, policies, and systems that help produce these inequitable outcomes (Marine, 2011; Pitcher et al., 2018; Sanlo, Rankin, & Schoenberg, 2002).

Simultaneously, there is a need to reflect on the ways the loss of our office spaces, the physical land on which they rest, make us believe the work of these centers cannot continue and re-think how we must be answerable to the colonial epistemology that allows us to take up such place. Rather than thinking of doing LGBTQ inclusion work absent a formalized office, the concerns for maintaining center space may reflect roots in the idea of preserving queer and trans property rights in postsecondary education (Harris, 1993; Patel, 2015). If rationales for the maintenance of campus LGBTQ centers rely on property rights, these centers are (further) complicit in the settler colonial project (Pashby, 2012; Tuck & Yang, 2012). However, preserving the services these centers provide can be inherently transformational and be more answerable to the coloniality inherent in education (Patel, 2016; Shahjahan, 2014).

Student affairs educators continue to tout their commitment to the aims of diversity, inclusion, and equity in postsecondary education (ACPA & NASPA, 2015; Reason & Broido, 2017; Young, 1993). Simultaneously, a greater number of educators challenge the field to shift from a diversity and inclusion paradigm to one of equity and justice (e.g., Poon, 2018; Stewart, 2017). More recently, ACPA—College Student Educators, International, one of the most significant professional associations for student affairs educators, announced a new Strategic Imperative for Racial Justice and Decolonization (SIRJD; ACPA, 2019). Through an “intersectional, intentional, and directed” lens, the SIRJD established six operational truths and continues to develop educational and practice-based resources for educators to use on their respective campuses. These calls for more explicit attention on equity and justice did not occur in a vacuum; they arose as responses to continued racial and colonial realities in which we all live and work as educators. In line with these calls, this article provides particular educators, those who work in GSRCs, with a place-conscious framework to conceptualize and actualize their work in postsecondary education. Just

as it will take a critical mass of connections to engage in transformational social change (brown, 2017), we as educators require a critical mass of frameworks and ways of thinking about justice and equity to move our work further toward those goals. My hope that this article offers educators time to pause and think about their practice in ways that are transformative and life-giving.

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