

**Space Matters:  
Race, Equity, and the PCC Landscape  
COMMUNITY FORUM  
March 16, 2018**



# Space Matters



- a five-week **student engagement and inquiry project** to explore the **relationship between space and race** at PCC.
- with **Critical Race Theory** and **Spatial Race Theory**, students discuss in 3 daylong workshops and conducting mini research, including survey and spatial field notes.

# Space Matters



- also part of a dissertation study to increase leaders and campus planners knowledge to align facilities **planning and design** with institutional values for **equity and inclusion**.

# Reflections on Lived Experience

- Knowledge-building is a collaborative effort.
- When conceptualizing campus spaces there are opportunities to create platforms where dominant narratives--that perpetuate historical injustices--can be addressed through design.
- White supremacy prevails in society through norms, traditions, and beliefs that manifest in built environments, dissolving the integrity of humanity.
- There is a lack of education about CRT among PCC community members.
- A colorful space does not necessarily communicate an inclusive environment to people of color.
- The perceptions of people of color regarding race and space, while valid, are often not considered.
- People of color are more complex than just our racial and ethnic identities.
- People of color are under-represented in PCC spaces, curriculum, artwork, faculty, administration, and other dimensions of educational environments.
- Normative built environments reinforce and conceal “the white gaze,” which alienates some students of color from PCC spaces, and inhibits the confidence to engage fully, in learning experiences without self-censorship.

# Reflections on Lived Experience

## Questions to consider...

- How have stakeholders studied and practiced critical race theory?
- How does the diversity of stakeholders reflect the PCC student body?
- How will the environments you create condition the people that inhabit and travel the PCC landscape?
- How might your design maintain or disrupt the status quo?
- How do the interests and experiences of stakeholders inform design decisions?
- How will you amplify the voices of people most affected by inequity so their concerns are implemented in campus design?

# Spatial Theory

- Acknowledges space is not neutral (Soja, 2010)
- Emphasizes built environments, material objects, and spatial arrangements as cultural artifacts (Tuhiwai Smith, 2013)
- Recognizes space as a mechanism of socialization (Costello, 2001)
- Draws attention to ways socializing messages are often invisible, concealed, unacknowledged (Costello, 2001)
- Acknowledges people *read* space differently shaped by identity, positionality, lived experience

# Spatial Theory

- ❖ Physical campus ecology research indicates that positive environments and spaces are those that help people form strong relationships and feel comfortable. (*Stern, 1970; Walsh, 1978; Witt & Handal, 1984*)
- ❖ Studies have shown that students centered campus spaces positively affect retention, student success and involvement. (*Temple, 2007*)
- ❖ Architectural design of campus spaces affect students academic performances and behavior. (*Eartman & Lemasters, 2011*)
- ❖ Beyond of the physical makeup, these spaces nurture person's feelings of belongingness. (*Temple & Batchelor, 2008*)

**Multicultural Center, PCC Sylvania,  
Portland,Or.**



**Multicultural Center - Wee-lock,  
Boston, Mass.**



# Image 1 for Spatial Analysis



# Image 2 for Spatial Analysis



# Image 3 for Spatial Analysis





# Reflections from Spatial Field Notes

- Space evokes feelings according to lived experience, which shapes our approach to social interactions; this illuminates a major concern for design, especially in educational settings.
- Planning can frequently follow a linear trajectory and emphasize binary thinking; CRT re-directs this focus towards non-linear narratives and life-stories, which can lead to a more organic design process.
- Challenging the status quo and disrupting dominant narratives in service to equity and inclusion requires innovation.
- There are places with resources for “marginalized” people but they are out of the way and inconvenient; personal adherence to internalized narratives can cause negative feelings about asking for help and discourages some students of color from seeking out resources.
- Spaces that promote a common sense of belonging and empathy may support engagement in uncomfortable but necessary conversations to understand our differences and further cooperative learning.
- If the point of design is to facilitate human life and human life is centered around connection, then good design ought to provide channels for humans to connect.
- Students of color are eager to be part of the planning process, but lack the institutional power and tools to improve the conditions we critique.
- Students of color should participate in all stages of the design process for PCC spaces.

# Reflections from Spatial Field Notes

Questions to consider...

- How might rationales for spatial arrangements, such as efficiency and safety, reproduce racial inequities?
- How do built environments provide points of connection and access to resources for community college students who spend limited time on campus beyond classes?
- How will the spatial arrangements of material objects within built environments that you plan invite holistic human relationships and subvert systemic barriers to equity over time?

# What is Critical Race Theory?

- A theoretical framework that provides a critical analysis of race and racism. It identifies the ways in which racism is embedded in American society and uses an analytical lens to examine power structures within the dominant culture.
- It offers us ways to explore systems/structures of inequality and domination, imagine alternative options, and ultimately, take action.

# A Brief History of CRT



- Foundational articles were introduced by Derrick Bell, an NYU law professor and life-long civil rights lawyer.
- Critical race theory (CRT) began in the mid-1970s by lawyers, activists, and legal scholars who realized that the efforts of the civil rights movement were halted and even dialed back.
- Has since evolved into an inquiry tool, is now taught in over 20 American Law schools and is integrated into women's studies, political science, cultural studies, and other educational fields.

(Delgado and Stefancic, 2001)

# A Brief History of CRT

- CRT has been integrated into women's studies, political science, cultural studies, and other educational fields.
- Other movements have evolved as a result including Latino critical race studies, critical race feminism (CRF), Asian-American critical race studies, South Asian-American Studies, and American Indian critical race studies.

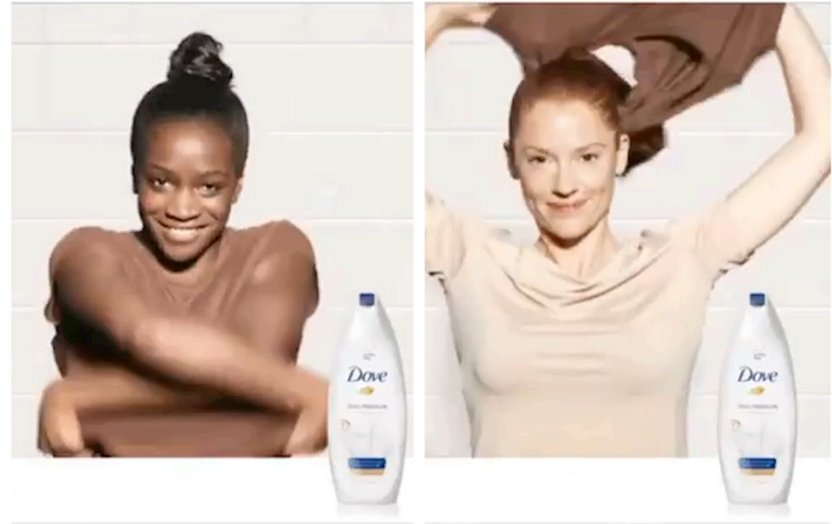
# Key Tenets

## 1. Racism/white supremacy is engrained & embedded

(Delgado & Stefancic, 2017)

- Racism is an endemic and permanent aspect in the lives of people of color, regardless of whether or not they are being actively discriminated against.
- Characteristics of a white supremacist culture are normalized and often difficult to name

## Standards of beauty and behavior:



-Exotification and cultural appropriation

## 2. Dominant narratives mask racism/white supremacy

(Delgado & Stefancic, 2017)

- CRT states that dominant ideologies are often used to justify certain forms of oppression.
- The *myth of meritocracy*--or the notion that hard work automatically yields wealth and power--is a dominant narrative that fails to acknowledge the barriers that exist for people of color and other marginalized groups.
- It is important to understand the various ways in which we internalize these dominant narratives in order to question them.

### 3. Recognizes the multidimensionality of oppression.

(Delgado & Stefancic, 2017)

- CRT acknowledges the fact that people of color have complex, intersectional identities and that those identities may create varying degrees of oppression.
- “Ignoring difference *within* groups contributes to tension *among* groups (Crenshaw, 1993)”.

to tackle

-It is necessary to consider all possible intersections of race, class, age, gender identity, ability, sexual orientation, etc. when seeking oppression.

#### 4. Voice, storytelling, counter-narratives, and experiential knowledge. (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017)

- Counter-narratives challenge the dominant narrative and help to preserve the histories of marginalized groups that are often dismissed by the dominant culture (Dixson, 2006)
- For institutional change to be effective, solutions must come from the people who are experiencing oppression.
  - Students of color are the *most* qualified to articulate the specific adversities they face on college campuses because they are directly affected by these experiences.

Inviting-Space?

Relaxing-Space?

White-Space?

# Reflections from Student Surveys

Out of 138 students of color surveyed, the following observations were made...

- 36% said they did not feel that spaces in the PCC environment represented them.
- Student suggestions indicated three potential contributions to spaces that would feel more inclusive: artwork and visual representation, forums that allow students to talk about concerns and issues, and spaces which encourage connection and collaboration.
- Three potentially significant reasons students provided for avoiding spaces include: a lack of representation, crowdedness, and access to/distance from spaces.

# Reflections

The following findings emerge from survey questions that probed into perceptions of PCC spaces. Much of the findings are inconclusive and point to the difficulty in understanding students' perceptions of space, particularly through a survey.

For example, while spaces may come to mind when categories are named, we do not know what factors influence that perception—people? activities? experiences? events? rumors? built environments?

Nonetheless, we believe the raw data furthers the discovery phase and draws attention to possibilities for further investigation.

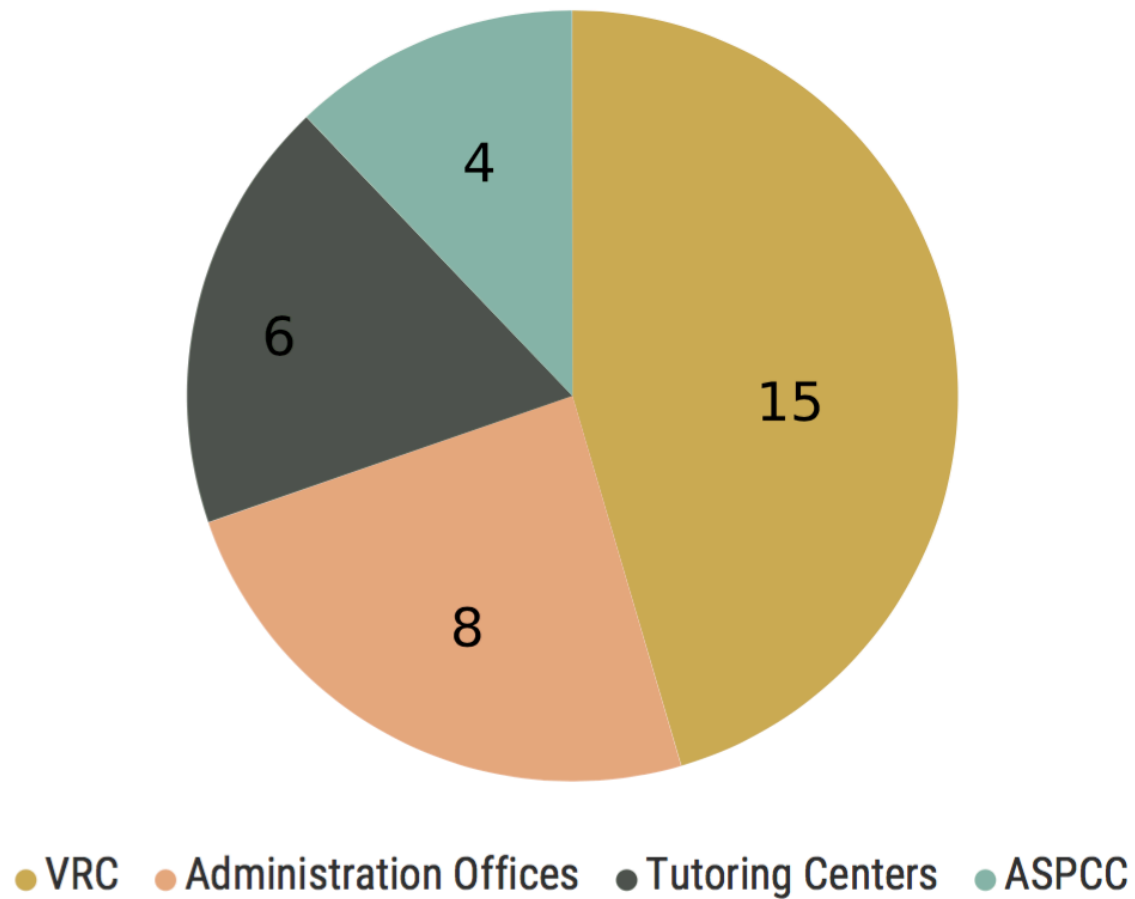
# Reflections

44% of student responses claimed resource centers came to mind as “intersectional-space”

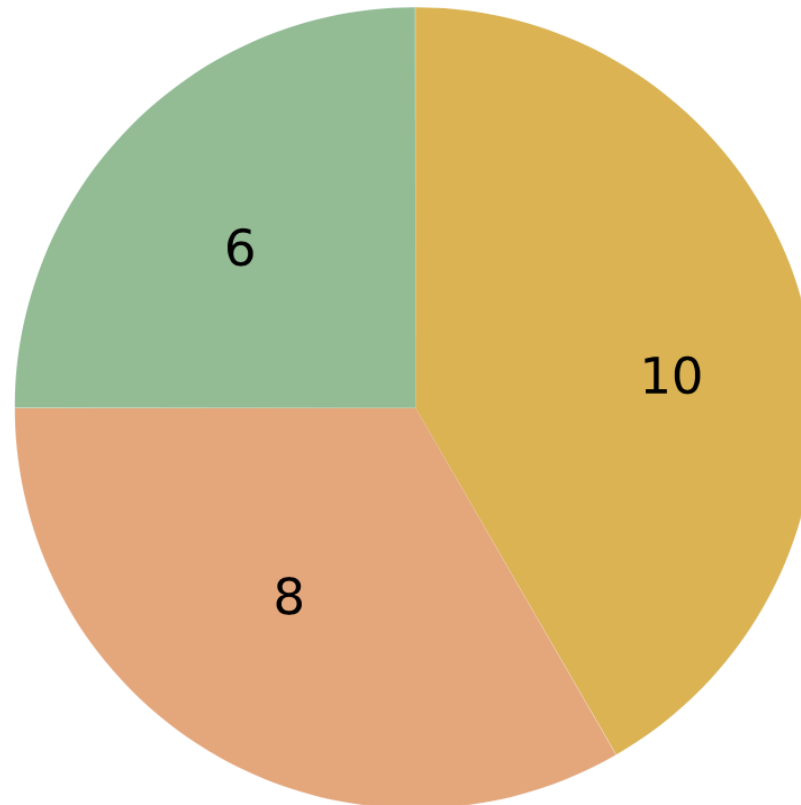
72% of student responses claimed resource centers came to mind as “underresourced-space”

# Reflections from Student Surveys

## "INTIMIDATING-SPACE"

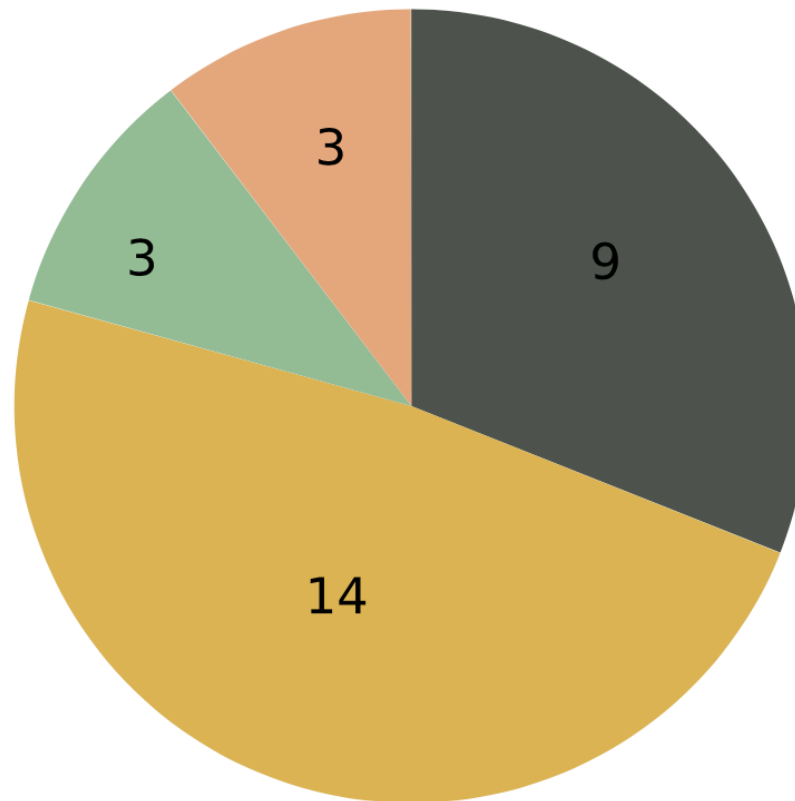


## "WHITE-SPACE"



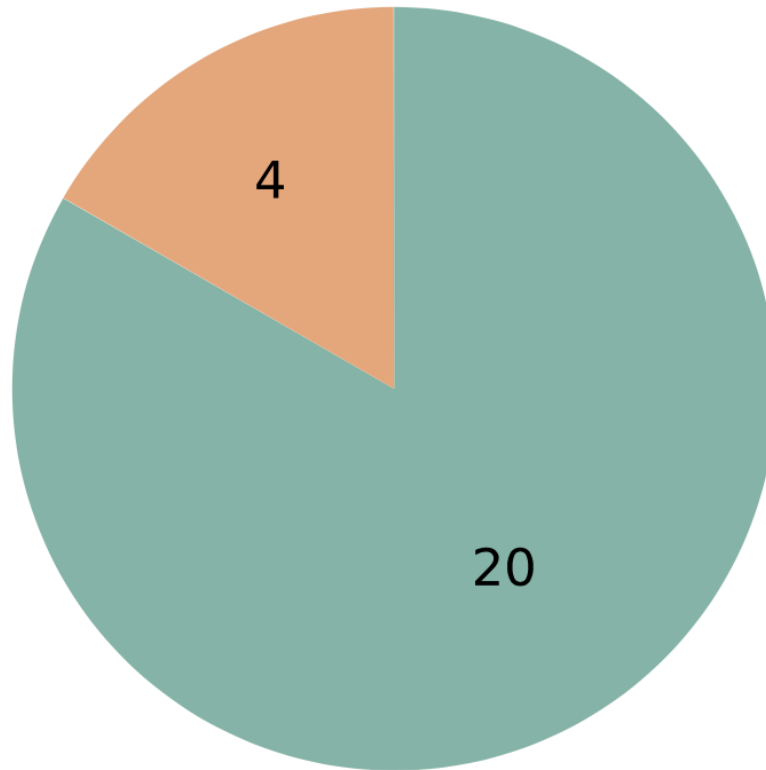
● VRC ● Administration ● ASPCC

## "HETERONORMATIVE-SPACE"



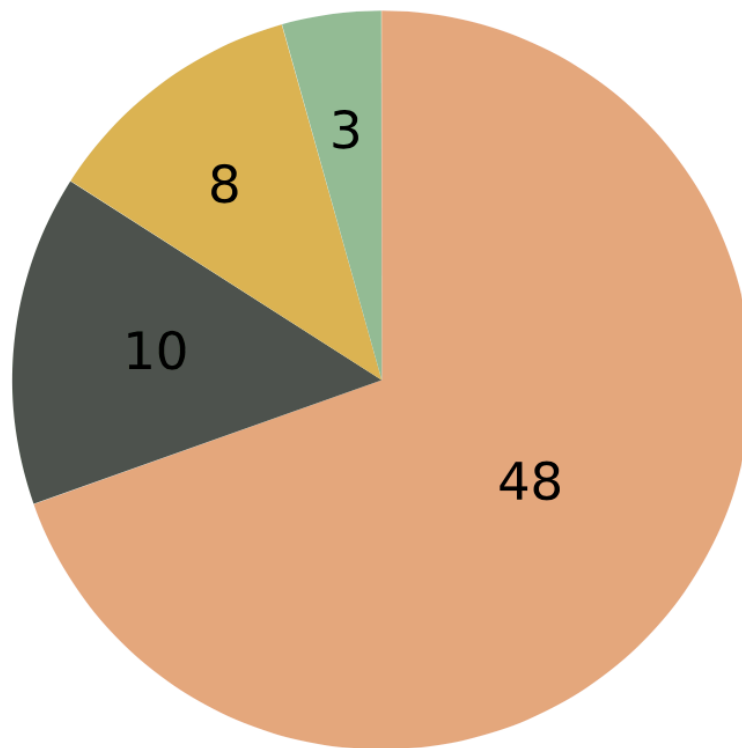
● All of PCC ● VRC ● ASPCC ● Administration Offices

## "HIDDEN-SPACE"



● Resource Centers ● Prayer Rooms

## "RELAXING-SPACE"



● Library ● Multi-Cultural Center ● Women's Resource Center  
● Prayer Room

# Reflections on Surveys

On conducting surveys on space:

- While some patterns emerged, students of color were not homogenous in their responses to questions regarding space.
- We found the survey difficult to plan, design, and execute comprehensively due to time and resource constraints.
- As an informal inquiry project much of what we learned is inconclusive.
- Participant awareness of terminology regarding spatial categories was a barrier to responses.
- Findings help illuminate direction for more formal research in the future.

Q & A