Desiring Diversity: The Limits of White Settler Multiculturalism in Queer Organizations

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Abstract

Multiculturalism in Canada is touted as an all-inclusive policy and practice that celebrates difference and welcomes diversity. In 2012, gays and lesbians were included in the *Discover Canada* document amongst various cultural, racial, and ethnic groups, marking such inclusion as foundational in Canada's imagining of itself as tolerant and accepting. Despite these narratives of multicultural diversity, people of colour and Indigenous peoples continue to experience strife, violence, and erasure. This paper looks to the ways Canadian multiculturalism is utilized by queer and trans people as part of their understandings and imaginings of queer politics. In particular, it discusses the queer service sector and the ways queer and trans service providers do diversity and multiculturalism within their work. Findings highlight the complex ways in which queer and trans service providers utilize diversity as a tactic to create further exclusion and direct attention towards wanting, needing, and desiring diversity. The paper highlights the ways diversity is desired within the institutional walls of queer service provision and draws attention to the ways the whiteness and colonialism of the organizations themselves goes unquestioned and unexamined.

Introduction

In February 2012, the Government of Canada updated *Discover Canada: The Rights and Responsibilities of Citizenship*, which is used by newcomers[1] as a study guide for their citizenship test (Canada 2012a). Amongst the vast portrayals of multiracial difference in the 'Who We Are' section, for the first time, (modern) gays and lesbians were included within the nation's imagination of multiculturalism: 'Canada's diversity includes gay and lesbian Canadians, who enjoy the full protection of and equal treatment under the law, including access to civil marriage. Together, these diverse groups, sharing a common Canadian identity, make up

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today's multicultural society' (Canada 2012b; emphasis added). At first glance, this move including gays and lesbians within Canadian multiculturalism can be supported insofar as these groups are now being fully recognized as citizens who can participate equally in Canadian society. Moreover, it acts to normalize gay and lesbian identities, effectively producing Canada (and its people) as progressive and modern. However, in the eyes of the world, along with this inclusion also comes — newly imagined, yet historical — exclusions, making this stride forward problematic in the view of those watching closely lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, and queer (LGBTQ) politics and activism in Canada.

In discussing the inclusion of gays and lesbians in the 'Who We Are' section of *Discover Canada*, Maureen FitzGerald and Scott Rayter (2012:xvi) ask: 'Where are bisexual, transgender, or two-spirited people? And, in this great story in which diversity and multiculturalism are celebrated, what precisely is the "common identity" we all share?'. Here the authors point to the explicit erasure of bisexual, transgender, and 2-Spirit[2] people in Canadian multiculturalism, marking the seeming need for Canadian citizens and newcomers alike to share some kind of 'common identity'. Despite the omission of other queer, trans, and 2-Spirit identities outside of gay and lesbian, FitzGerald and Rayter (2012:xvii) contend, 'most queer people would likely agree that adding a reference to sexual diversity is an important message to the rest of the world. Indeed, many Canadians take pride in this image of ourselves and would see the addition as a commitment to and representation of our core values and freedoms'.

A challenge lies behind the acceptance of such inclusion, as it requires that *queer* recognition and inclusion are rejoiced at through an investment in Canada's violent present. Emphasizing Canada's goodness in this case can obscure the white settler colonial conditions that were and continue to be founded upon the death, disappearance, and assimilation of Indigenous peoples,[3] as well as the integration and torture of people of colour[4] (Cannon and Sunseri 2011; Greensmith, 2016; Kouri and Skott-Myhre, 2016; Razack 2008; Razack, Smith, and Thobani 2011; Schick and McNinch 2009; Thobani 2007). As such, the (white) gays and lesbians included within this new imagining of Canadian multiculturalism are considered nationals who benefit from and contribute to the Canadian economy and political life — and to Canada's image of itself.

The inclusion of gays and lesbians in official multiculturalism acts to shift popular perceptions around desiring and needing diversity, rather than challenging the ways diversity (often coded as multiculturalism, or vice versa) is used to sustain racial difference and settler colonial oppression. The use of diversity within the national order of things — including education and the everyday — can obscure the ways that social service organizations are deeply embedded in and sustain whiteness. To address this oversight, this paper asks: what utility does diversity have in queer communities in Canada? And, in what ways is diversity used and imagined *on the ground* by non-Indigenous[5] LGBTQ people themselves? Moreover, what consequences does diversity hold for Indigenous peoples and people of colour?

To explore these questions of diversity and its ties to larger processes and practices of multiculturalism in Canada, I look to Toronto's queer service sector — educational, health care, and social service organizations that are

committed to serving LGBTQ people and communities — as being comprised of sites where whiteness is normalized and sustained. Queer service organizations are closely tied to the state through their funding structures that dictate how money can be spent and for whom. Funding (private and public) typically propels organizations into relationships with the state, and the queer service sector works within these confines by creating population-specific programming and support for all LGBTQ people in the city.

To examine how the discourse of diversity is used and (re)appropriated by non-Indigenous LGBTQ service providers, I begin by briefly outlining how diversity is shaped by official multicultural discourse in Canada. I discuss my methodological framework, used to explore the ways that queer politics and communities rely on inclusion, recognition, and diversity. Next, I situate the narratives of non-Indigenous LGBTQ service provider research participants within a larger theoretical discussion of the discourse of diversity. Finally, the implications of *desiring diversity* within queer communities and queer service organizations in Toronto are noted. Overall, this paper addresses the ways multiculturalism in Canada is desired and how it plays out within queer communities through the use of diversity as a tactic to create further exclusion.

'Multicultural' Tensions: Diversity, Recognition, or Racism?

Official multiculturalism emerged in Canada in 1971, first as a policy under Prime Minister Pierre Elliot Trudeau, and second, in 1988, as law within the official Multicultural Act under Prime Minister Brian Mulroney, to address linguistic, cultural, and land-based disputes within the nation (Day 2000; Mackey 2002; St. Denis 2011). Official multiculturalism was first implemented as an imagined and very real creation of a cultural mosaic — a strategic move away from the United States' melting pot (Dion 2009; Mackey 2002; Simpson, James, and Mack, 2011). This move created a falsified image of Canada (and its people) that is deeply rooted in notions of innocence, whereby Canada has *only* taken part in peaceful engagements with Indigenous peoples, and has never exercised racism within its immigration practices. While research has documented the realities of racism and settler colonialism in Canada's history and present, the construction of a good and innocent Canadian citizen remains deeply entrenched in the imagery of Canada itself. Multiculturalism, in other words, was meant to enter into the fabric of everyday life, and has become institutionalized and normalized in an attempt to 'design a unified nation' (Chazan et al. 2011:3). As Rinaldo Walcott (2011:136) argued, multiculturalism has indeed become the 'fundamental characteristic of Canadian heritage and identity'.

Multiculturalism allows Canadian citizen-subjects to erase historical and contemporary white supremacist and settler colonial processes and practices. As Sunera Thobani (2007:154) so aptly put it, 'multiculturalism allowed Canadians to resolve the crisis of whiteness through its [Canada's] reorganization as tolerant, pluralist, and racially innocent, uncontaminated by its previous racist history'. The ideological and discursive use of multiculturalism produces a Canada that is inclusive, diverse, and tolerant, and which 'celebrat[es] . . . differences' (Dion 2009:74).

This particular mantra of celebration has become the central pillar for constructing a Canadian national identity. But within this celebration of differences lies an essential homogenization of the population, creating a core Canadian culture, whereby Indigenous peoples and people of colour have been made to become Others within the nation. Multiculturalism has been put in place to manage the country's internal differences by maintaining its core culture — a white settler nation established by two 'founding nations' (the British and French) (Day 2000; Mackey 2002; Thobani 2007; Walcott 2011). In sustaining narratives and imaginations of early conquest, this core culture places the power and control into the hands of whites, while Others — those who are Indigenous and/or of colour — are considered secondary, included within the nation so long as they assimilate and *become* 'Canadian'. Thus, multiculturalism is used to bring difference together under the rubric of diversity, and anyone who exists outside of this narrative is required to assimilate, and is simultaneously constructed as an outsider due to their culture (Bannerji 2000; Razack 2008).

The particular focus on multi*culture* is the mechanism that erases Indigenous peoples' own unique articulations of Indigenous nationhood and sovereignty by requiring an investment in white settler colonial institutions (e.g. The Indian Act) (Cannon and Sunseri 2011; Coulthard 2007; Lawrence and Dua 2005; St. Denis 2011). As Thobani (2007:175) so aptly argued, 'state-sponsored multiculturalism compels [Indigenous peoples] to negotiate and comprehend their identities on very narrow grounds, discouraging and possibly foreclosing the possibility of alliances that might allow a systemic challenge to white dominance, patriarchy, and global corporate capitalism'. Official multiculturalism — and subsequent iterations of multicultural diversity — erases Indigenous peoples' experiences of white settler colonialism to trace them as belonging to a 'special interest group' that is produced as one cultural group amongst many (Cannon and Sunseri 2011; Lawrence and Dua 2005; Porter 1999; St. Denis 2011; Thobani 2007). The sole focus on culture erases the divergent struggles amongst Indigenous communities and communities of colour, while perpetuating the common understanding of communities as distinctly and culturally separate.

The power of multiculturalism sustains cultural difference in Canada. Eva Mackey (2002:20) provided a rich analysis of Canadian 'core identity' as being comprised of 'Canadian-Canadians', a term used by white folks she interviewed to indicate their ordinariness — an 'unmarked, non-ethnic, and usually white . . . identity'. As a result of such conceptualizations, the (presumed) whiteness of nationals becomes normalized, effectively producing Indigenous peoples and people of colour as Others. This has grave consequences for how Canadian identity is regulated and policed. The assimilation *required* of Indigenous peoples and people of colour produces Canada and its imaginings of citizenship to be *only* white. The presence of people of colour and Indigenous peoples within this nation that is 'celebrating of difference' continues to be viewed as compromising the whiteness of the Canadian nation-state (Thobani 2007).

In other words, 'multiculturalism is itself a politics of settlement' (Chazan et al. 2011:1). While evocations of diversity and difference invite Canadian citizen-subjects to desire the allure of multiculturalism, the process of white settlement

through which Canada was founded remains immune from scrutiny. Indeed, the use of diversity — requiring, needing, and wanting diversity — obscures the realities of the structural whiteness embedded within institutions and organizations (Ahmed 2012). Instead of working towards challenging structures of domination that continue to deride and repudiate the well-being of Indigenous peoples and people of colour, diversity is used to bring attention to difference — attention that can emerge as an empty gesture of inclusion, or a problematic politics of recognition, as will be discussed below. It is thus through the discourse of diversity — and the desire for it — that the Canadian nation-state holds whiteness at its centre, by creating cultural/racial groups as Others who are at once celebrated and marginalized due to their differences.

The desire for diversity within multicultural Canada is deeply embedded within a politics of recognition. Nancy Fraser's (2000) theorization of recognition becomes useful in thinking through ways diversity is utilized within queer communities in Toronto. In particular, for Fraser, recognition naturalizes the production of difference, where being recognized is only validated through some sort of naming. Combining recognition with Louis Althusser's (1971:162–163) concept of interpellation — the police officer uttering 'Hey, you there' to call on a citizen with no recognition or naming — allows for the understanding of how the (white) authoritarian is placed in a power-over relationship with the citizen-subject. A politics of naming allows for the subject to be differentiated while simultaneously constituted as *different* through this process (Ahmed 2000).

So, bringing this all back to the concept of diversity, as this comes to mean many things, but typically resides within recognition of culture (e.g. the 3-D approach: dress, dance, and dining [Srivastava 2007]), people of colour and Indigenous peoples come to exist on the colonizers' terms alone. In other words, diversity further normalizes racial and settler colonial hierarchies, which places emphasis on the capacity of white settlers to recognize and know culture (Coulthard 2007; Povinelli 2002) — what I refer to as racial descriptors of non-whiteness.

For Glen Coulthard (2007), the politics of recognition is used to downplay Indigenous peoples as self-determining, further naturalizing the on-going conquest that Indigenous peoples and nations face in Canada. And, while the politics of recognition is entrenched within the discourse of diversity contained in Canada's imaginings of itself and its citizen-subjects, it also plays out and operates differently within different spaces, places, and organizations. Thus, returning back to the object of inquiry — queer communities — they are not immune from the racist and settler colonial underpinnings of the politics of recognition embedded within the desire for diversity. The desire to be recognized and named is an important aspect of discourses of multiculturalism, within which (certain) inclusive queer politics reside.

The Cost of Inclusion

Returning to FitzGerald and Rayter (2012), they indicate that the recognition of gays and lesbians within discourses of multiculturalism can foster a sense of inclusion and belonging. This understanding of inclusion is widely connected to the Civil Marriage Act, which in 2005 legalized same-sex marriage in Canada. Despite the

many enduring oppressions that queer and trans people experience, same-sex marriage is typically evoked as the cornerstone of inclusive queer politics in Canada. However, as David Eng (2010) contended, within mainstream queer politics, racial differences are routinely denied — meaning that race itself becomes erased in the processes and practices that foster individual freedom and merit within the nation-state. This has consequences for those who identify as Indigenous and/or of colour. *Queer liberalism* — the 'contemporary confluence of the political and economic spheres that forms the basis for liberal inclusion of particular gay and lesbian U.S. [and Canadian] citizen-subjects petitioning for rights and recognition before the law' (Eng 2010:3) — has transformed queer movements and politics, causing them to rely heavily on state forms of recognition (e.g. gay and lesbian citizens can adopt children and serve openly in the Canadian military).

These legal forms of queer recognition, deeply tied to the politics of recognition (Ahmed 2000; Coulthard 2007; Fraser 2000; Povinelli 2002), are amplified by white settler multiculturalism, in that this multiculturalism perpetuates and normalizes the neoliberal understanding that each citizen-subject has the same rights, freedoms, and opportunities, and, moreover, should invest in and maintain a commitment to the nation-state (Eng 2010; Reddy 2011). As Chandin Reddy (2011:39) argued, 'to seek full inclusion within the modern state … will do little to change the conditions by which legitimate violence continues to be naturalized'. Consequently, the discursive and material realities of white settler multiculturalism are utilized to erase the powerful structural inequalities used to conflate queerness with whiteness, continuing the phenomenon that 'queer is a white thing' (Muñoz 1999:9).

Contemporary 'queer communities' in Canada are not immune from such processes even as they invest in and desire diversity. Diversity here is used as a way of upholding whiteness: Indigenous peoples and people of colour are always having to prove that they are *queer enough*. The idea of one's queerness needing to be justified fits within Jasbir Puar's (2007:xii) theorization of the politics of recognition, whereby queer politics is based upon the concept of sustaining difference. To be queer must

> entail that certain … homosexual, gay, and queer bodies may be temporary recipients of the 'measures of benevolence' that are afforded by liberal discourses of multicultural tolerance and diversity. This benevolence toward sexual others is contingent upon ever-narrowing parameters of white racial privilege, consumption, capabilities, gender and kinship normativity, and bodily integrity.

The nature of multiculturalism's prerequisite for diversity within such evocations of Canadian queer politics has moved ideological and discursive frameworks towards inclusion — founded upon a 'politics of colorblindness' (Eng 2010:x). Thus, to be included under the queer rubric requires that folks marked with difference rid themselves of their differences or assimilate so that they become legible as queer. This mimics the larger multicultural ideologies that minimize white racism and settler colonialism and create a unified queer community. A look at specific examples within the Canadian queer imaginary helps bring out this point.

Pride Toronto, a large not-for-profit organization, organizes a yearly weekend-long parade with related events that coincide with thematics aimed at unifying often-divergent LGBTQ communities. Despite this intention to create and foster inclusion and acceptance, many queer and trans people of colour, as well as queer, trans, and 2-Spirited Indigenous people, typically find Pride Toronto incredibly isolating and unsafe. Giwa and I (Giwa and Greensmith 2012) have noted that Pride festivals and events attempt to showcase LGBTQ communities in the best possible light, whereby any racism experienced is often downplayed. Moreover, as Giwa and I (Greensmith and Giwa 2013) have articulated, Pride Toronto's festivals and events not only reproduce racism, but also settler colonialism, through the erasure of the 2-Spirited presence and the eroticization of Indigeneity. 2-Spirit peoples' everyday life is impacted by settler homonationalism, since they continue to 'experience a degree of racism that is reminiscent of heteropatriarchal society' (Wolfe 2013:16).

The persistence of settler colonialism within Pride Toronto is exemplified in Raven's (a research participant) story of an underwear contest, whereby the sexy presence of Indigeneity was relocated to a headdress, thereby perpetuating stereotypical representations that work to enable Indigenous dispossession (Greensmith and Giwa, 2013). In the summer of 2016, #BlackLivesMatterToronto stopped the Sunday parade to hold a teach-in to address the overt and covert ways anti-black racism is entrenched within Pride Toronto (e.g. the defunding of Blockorama and the heightened presence of Toronto police at the parade), and in Toronto's queer and trans communities. These examples from Pride festivals and events provide a glimpse into the ways queer movements and politics in Canada are messy and temporally specific, and into how the embedded racial and settler colonial power relations can be exposed.

Articulations and evocations of queer politics and identities are also made possible through investments in the Canadian nation-state that paint queer people and people of colour as risky subjects. For example, as outlined on the Canadian Blood Services (CBS) (2017a; 2017b) website, men who have sex with men (MSMs) and trans people are historically and contemporarily produced as at risk for acquiring HIV/AIDS, due to the presumption that they are having unprotected sex. As a result, these groups are unable to donate blood until they have abstained from oral or anal sex for a minimum of twelve months (CBS 2017a; CBS 2017b). In addition, people coming from HIV endemic countries (such as Togo or Cameroon) are forced to defer their donation of blood, due to their (presumed) greater risk of acquiring different and more rare strains of HIV (CBS 2017c). Thus, MSMs, trans people, and people from HIV endemic countries are perceived to be, and treated as, risky subjects. Omisoore Dryden (2010) has discussed the larger implications of particular groups being marked as respectable blood donation subjects who should thus be donating their blood in Canada.

Dryden (2010:78) contended that '[CBS] positions the blood donor as heroic, generous, selfless, thoughtful and moral' — traits that resemble the larger narratives of Canadian citizen-subjects and their benevolent attachments to white settler goodness. Here, the subject who should be donating blood is one who has not compromised their health status, producing a group of 'risky' subjects — those

who are queer and/or black — who might compromise both the blood of the nation and the respectable politics of blood donation. Dryden illustrates that the association of risk with the queer and/or black body presumes that they have somehow come into contact with the HIV virus (e.g. through having multiple sex partners, or being from an HIV endemic country). This categorization produces the white and/or straight subject as free from risk — even though we know that these categories of identity are socially constructed, permeable, and ever shifting.

In this production of queer and/or black subjects as risky, the potential links between queerness and blackness remain erased. In doing so, those 'just gay' subjects are 'produced through the occlusion of whiteness as a racial category' (Dryden 2010:5). It is through this mechanism that the 'just gay' subject becomes the subject worthy of care and intervention, while the (queer) black subject continues to be constructed as always risky due to their blackness and presumed geographical positioning as an outsider. In order to discuss in depth the ways that queer settler whiteness is maintained within contemporary queer communities, I now move to a brief outline of my methodological framework for this study.

A Note on Method

Situated within the context of downtown Toronto, this paper utilizes in-depth interviews with 41 non-Indigenous LGBTQ service providers (see Appendix A) working (at the time of their interview) in large LGBTQ organizations that claimed to serve *diverse populations*. Toronto is a large multiracial and transnational city, where white people are more of a demographic minority *vis-à-vis* people of colour and Indigenous people than in any other Canadian city. According to Statistics Canada's 2011 National Household Survey (NHS), '49% of those living in Toronto […] identified as a visible minority' and '0.8% of [the] total 2011 Toronto population' self-identified as First Nations, Metis and/or Inuit (City of Toronto 2013:2–3).

Downtown Toronto is a unique site at which to conduct this qualitative research since there are numerous organizations all engaging with queer programming for their target populations. As a white queer cisgender[6] male settler, it would be politically problematic for me to study queer of colour organizations in the city, since I would have limited knowledge of how racism and colonialism truly impact on queer and trans people of colour. Thus, as an ethical intervention, this research addresses how white racism and settler colonialism manifest in normatively white queer organizations. Narratives of diversity and multiculturalism can easily re-inscribe and normalize whiteness within queer communities, and in doing so, re-inscribe white racism and settler colonialism.

I utilize in-depth interviews to place emphasis on the conversation in order to understand how research participants come to know what they know (Legard, Keegan, and Ward 2003). The goal was to elicit conversations about the stakes for queer organizations and the ways they intend to support service users of colour and Indigenous service users, and to ask how their work could be more inclusive. The interviews analyzed in this paper are organized thematically to address the

discourse of diversity and the ways that non-Indigenous LGBTQ service providers utilize and understand diversity within their respective roles and institutions.

I employed purposive and snowball sampling recruitment strategies to gather research participants for the study. Research study information was sent out to colleagues, organizations, and list serves to reach potential participants. Prospective research participants needed to meet the following criteria: 1) distinguish themselves as non-Indigenous; 2) identify as LGBTQ; 3) work or have worked at a queer service organization in downtown Toronto; and 4) be over the age of eighteen. Research participants typically worked or volunteered in larger queer service organizations with a mandate or mission to serve the entire 'queer community' in the city.

In my initial in-person meeting with each research participant, we discussed the research and how I would ensure confidentiality. As a measure to ensure confidentiality, some research participants asked that their name and institutional affiliations remain anonymous. Upon agreeing to the conditions of the research, research participants were asked to physically sign informed consent documents. Once the interviews were completed, I manually transcribed the interviews verbatim and then destroyed all audio recordings. Member checking was utilized to ensure the utmost trustworthiness of the data gathered. All of the research participants were given an opportunity to review their interview transcript and the draft of the research project. Only a few participants chose to do so. In order to provide a sense of how diversity and multiculturalism is utilized within queer service organizations, I now move to an exploration of the research participants' stories and experiences.

The Desire for and Utility of Diversity

I next delve into a deeper examination of how diversity is evoked by non-Indigenous LGBTQ service providers within Toronto's queer service sector. Here, I pay attention to the bodies and images used within the queer service sector to represent diversity by illustrating how these evocations can centre whiteness in organizations' attempts to appear and become inclusive. Filipe, a 46-year-old gay/queer Portuguese cisgender man, discussed how programme advertising campaigns can exclude Indigenous peoples by using the word 'diversity'. As he stated:

> When you look at that poster on your door, it says something about diverse communities. That is code and usually it means multi-ethnicity. A lot of white people feel that [diversity] does not mean them. A lot of ethno-specific people think that means everyone. So what does diversity mean to First Nations people? Because First Nations people do not necessarily see themselves as being ethno-specific, they are First Nations. So to be truly accessible to First Nations people we should be putting First Nations on that poster. 'Diverse' does not cover it and I am very aware of that. (13/03/15, Transcript 27, p. 7, Toronto, ON)

Filipe's story connects to Sara Ahmed's (2012) theorization of the use of 'diversity' within higher education as a way to deflect attention towards inclusivity and

away from the structural apparatuses that continue to reify white supremacy. Diversity, in the case of Filipe's organization's poster, has multiple meanings depending on one's social location and overall knowledge of the organization. As the narratives of many research participants suggest below, this particular organization continues to be white-normed by virtue of both the service users who access it and the service providers who work there — despite the organization's claim to serve the entire 'queer community'.

Discussing a different organization, Lisa, a 46-year-old mixed-race cisgender woman and lesbian, suggested: 'over the years [the organization] gained a reputation as a male gay white space. We have developed into a more inclusive, diverse space for every single population to be able to find a programme or a space to feel recognized, valued, positive and to be engaged' (13/01/15, Transcript 9, p. 6, Toronto, ON). Thus, as Lisa points out, organizations use 'diversity' as a way to showcase their progress and ability to include all populations within their services and programming. However, as Filipe suggested, the inclusion of diversity alone can be a disservice to Indigenous peoples accessing 'inclusive' queer organizations, since they may not necessarily see themselves as being represented. The use of multicultural diversity within a Canadian national imaginary ensures that Indigenous peoples are represented as another cultural group amongst many (Cannon and Sunseri, 2011; Lawrence and Dua 2005; St. Denis 2011). Thus, Filipe's discussion illustrates that diversity is not enough of an inclusionary measure, and that if organizations want to truly support Indigenous peoples, they must include Indigeneity in their programming and in programme advertisements — beyond ways that are tokenistic.

While Lisa acknowledged the progress of queer service organizations in traversing white gay normativity to reach the prospect of inclusion, Koinnapat, a 35-year-old gay/queer East Asian cisgender man, discussed how queer service organizations remain white, despite steps towards diversity and inclusion. In our conversation about racism, Koinnapat opined: 'I think [some organizations] need to do a lot more to address the specific cultural needs of different groups and have some honest conversations about the racism in the [LGBTQ] community' (13/02/02, Transcript 11, p. 3, Toronto, ON). Koinnapat talked about the complete whitewashing of queer service organizations, as seen in their inability to meet the cultural needs of service users of colour, let alone Indigenous service users. Moreover, he discussed how actions used to address white racism seem to be absent within queer service organizations: 'I think the more mainstream organizations should be reaching out but they are not' (13/02/02, Transcript 11, p. 10, Toronto, ON). From Koinnapat's standpoint, mainstream organizations are not addressing racism due to the fact that there are ethno-specific agencies considered specialized enough to speak to and work towards eliminating racism.

Ryan, a 34-year-old gay white cisgender man with Indigenous ancestry, discussed the disproportionate number of 'privileged' service users coming in to access his organization to access HIV and STI testing, versus more marginalized groups. As he stated: 'I think the people that we see are a split of 60/40 — [MSM] and women who have sex with women. That number is so crazily disproportionate if you look at overall representation [of people newly diagnosed with HIV]'

(13/03/09, Transcript 23, p. 6, Toronto, ON). As a service provider involved with Indigenous sexual health initiatives, Ryan remained cognizant of the degree to which Indigenous peoples in Toronto are being newly diagnosed with HIV. However, even with his knowledge surrounding HIV contraction and Indigeneity, Ryan, in his role as a service provider, had little individual control over who actually entered the organization.

Jett, a 49-year-old gay white cisgender man, also discussed the diversity amongst service users accessing his organization when responding to one of my questions:

> Q: Who are the service users at your agency?
> A: We see all kinds of people. The people we never have problems getting in as clients are gay men. Even if we did not advertise or do outreach, we still would have a ton of gay men coming in. So a lot of the groups that we have available at [the organization] are geared to gay guys. That being said we see lots of women. Within both the men's and women's community, we see some diversity. We have quite a lot of Asian clients. We see a fair number of black clients. We see fewer Aboriginal clients. (13/03/19, Transcript 28, p. 5, Toronto, ON)

Jett's narrative points to the ways in which service providers, and indeed queer service organizations, are representing and including the concept of diversity. Jett was able to utilize racial descriptors of non-whiteness to describe the service users accessing addictions services. In his estimation, there were some 'Asian' and 'black' service users, but fewer Indigenous service users accessing services. In using these particular racial markers of non-whiteness without provocation, Jett illustrated how the category 'gay' he evoked remained white, unless specifically delineated to include people of colour and Indigenous peoples — a common trope service providers of colour shared with me and were actively working against in their work.

Brandon, a 53-year-old gay white cisgender man, discussed the diversity of service users within the workshops he facilitated in response to the question: 'Who are the service users at your agency?'. He replied: 'People who are HIV positive gay men. I would say most of those programmes would have maybe Caucasian guys but it is diverse. Within the other programmes that I do it is a wide diversity — all kinds of ethnicities' (13/03/09, Transcript 22, p. 7, Toronto, ON). Brandon spoke of both white male participants and male participants of colour, indicating that he was cognizant of racialized people accessing the programming. Brandon's narrative depicts how the use of diversity as ethnicity can be incomplete when articulating how certain programmes attract white men over men of colour. Narratives of diversity, such as the one Brandon used, fall within larger discourses that Canadians use to demarcate racial difference.

Similarly, Jacob, a 20-year-old gay/queer Portuguese cisgender man, discussed the service users at the organization he worked at:

> [We see] trans guys, HIV positive and HIV negative guys. We also see guys from any and all ethnic backgrounds. Although there is this assumption that

> Aboriginal people will fall under that last category, it is not explicitly stated. I think that explains a lack of presence of Aboriginal participants in the programme. (13/03/13, Transcript 24, p. 4, Toronto, ON)

Jacob's narrative extends the version of 'gay' mobilized by the organization he worked within to account for diversity amongst categories of gender and ethnicity. Simultaneously, Jacob recognized that Indigenous peoples might not necessarily place themselves in the 'ethnicity' category. Interestingly, his evocation of 'any and all ethnic backgrounds' connects to Verna St. Denis' (2011) discussion of 'culture', whereby its iteration can easily erase race in an attempt to gloss over the differences that exist amongst those accessing services. Jacob's narrative illustrates how the use of ethnicity can erase the presence of Indigenous peoples, since Indigenous peoples do not necessarily see themselves as represented within the category of 'ethnicity' used to include racial and cultural difference within these organizations.

Some participant responses connected to larger discourses of Canadian multiculturalism, where the 'diversity' of Indigenous peoples rests within the politics of recognition. Within the queer service sector, organizations want to appear inclusive of difference and diversity, even when the particular services offered may not necessarily be suitable for, or culturally relevant to, Indigenous peoples. Steve, a 38-year-old gay Latino cisgender man, discussed with me the ways in which queer service organizations try to make spaces more inclusive of 2-Spirited service users. As Steve indicated: 'Let me be fair. At this organization there are a lot of posters of 2-Spirit[ed People of the First Nations]. [2-Spirited people] are [as] welcome as any other client. If they want something specifically for them, they are going to be referred [somewhere else]' (13/03/02, Transcript 20, p. 10, Toronto, ON).

Steve's story illustrates how representations of 2-Spirited people alone may not necessarily translate into queer service organizations' programming in culturally relevant ways. While Steve suggested that 2-Spirited people are as welcome 'as any other client', he also said that if they require additional or more focused services, they will be sent somewhere else, thereby illustrating a form of exclusion. Here, the discourse of diversity is manufactured to produce the organization as inclusive, when in actuality Indigenous peoples are removed from the space entirely if they require 'specialized services' — effectively framing the agency as only dealing with and centralizing whiteness. Moreover, this has become a common practice, where Indigenous peoples are removed from mainstream social service organizations through being referred out to Indigenous-led organizations, such as *2-Spirited People of the First Nations* (*2-Spirits*). Consequently, due to the emergence of organizations such as *2-Spirits*, larger organizations, such as the one Steve worked at, can support queer people more generally and might therefore understand their work as disconnected from race and settler colonialism.

Joseph, a 47-year-old queer white genderqueer, echoed Steve's narrative, particularly in their discussion of how Aboriginal/2-Spirit peoples can assimilate into gay-specific programming. As they stated:

Aboriginal folks can also be poz [HIV positive] and queer, [so] they [can] fit into my poz work, which is not limited to gay men. Although, my gay male [workshop] is limited to gay men. Some Aboriginal folks may not identify as gay men, they may identify as 2-Spirit and those may be two distinct things for them. That is their identity and I am okay with that. So [in] our gay men's group they are most welcome but if they are not feeling that they are gay male identified then maybe the programme is not best for them . . . and [then we] think about connecting them to an Aboriginal ASO or an Aboriginal organization to validate the Aboriginal identity experience. (13/02/13, Transcript 15, p. 6, Toronto, ON)

Here, Joseph discussed with me how Indigenous peoples fit into the work that they do. Joseph's narrative defends the existence of gay male programming where 2-Spirit people might not necessarily fit, by understanding them as finding little refuge in gay male programming; as a result, it is thought that they can simply access other ('Aboriginal') programming. Joseph's narrative thus indicates their own investments in maintaining gay male programming and how LGBTQ programming incorporates particular ways of caring for the (different) needs of 2-Spirit people — a difference-making process that requires 2-Spirit people to go elsewhere to access services. The inclusion of 2-Spirited identity in programming is conditional upon static identity categories like 'gay' that can easily constrain who can ever feel that they belong within programming.

Interviews with participants also uncovered gestures of recognition made by organizations that bring with them not only a sense of pointlessness, but also further erasure of the particularities of Indigeneity and 2-Spiritedness. My interaction with Robert, a 32-year-old queer white trans man, demonstrated how the imagery of 2-Spiritedness, using the *2-Spirits* flag, can be included in the form of a poster to signal the organization's claims to diversity, and yet, when examined more closely, how the organization or its representatives can remain disconnected from the bodies in the poster:

Q: I see that there is a [*2-Spirits*] flag on that poster.
A: Interesting.
Q: [Names poster title].
A: Yes — I have actually never noticed that before and it is not like it is above a picture of people who identify as 2-Spirit. I know most of these people personally and none of them identify as 2-Spirit. So what the hell is it doing there? (13/02/07, Transcript 13, p. 28, Toronto, ON)

As Robert pointed out, the recognition of 2-Spirit seems additive, as none of the people in the poster self-identify as 2-Spirit, nor do they have Indigenous ancestry. Although Robert's organization attempted to include Indigeneity in the form of a *2-Spirits* flag, its inclusion showcases how celebrations of diversity in the form of visible Indigenous difference on a poster can disconnect queer service organizations and service providers from engaging with Indigeneity and white settler colonialism within their programming. The imagery of a *2-Spirits* flag becomes an

empty gesture used to signal the celebration of diversity. Here diversity is used to obscure the agency's investments in white queerness, by bringing attention to diversity without addressing the larger structural realities in which queer organizations are embedded.

A focus on diversity itself within these organizations was exemplified by Eric, a 39-year-old gay white cisgender man, who discussed with me the demographics of attendees of a workshop he had organized. As he went on to explain: '[We] had the rainbow. The Asian, the black person, the Latino. However, [we] did not have [an] Aboriginal person' (13/03/29, Transcript 33, p. 5, Toronto, ON). Although 'diversity' was achieved in the form of 'the rainbow', as Eric noted, Indigenous peoples and perspectives were not present.

In connection with larger projects of Canadian multiculturalism, to be truly diverse, the workshop would need to have perspectives from as many racial and cultural groups as possible. Eric's discussion of 'the rainbow' as representative of diversity brings to the forefront how racial diversity can easily end at a checklist, whereby diversity is achieved when (some) bodies of people of colour and Indigenous peoples are present. Moreover, the discourse of diversity can easily inhibit service providers from understanding how the institution in which they work might sustain and normalize white settler colonialism. Directing one's gaze towards diversity, as Sara Ahmed (2012) argued, diverts attention from the structural realities that facilitate the normalization of white supremacy.

Thus, these stories that the research participants shared with me illustrate how the desire for diversity within queer service organizations can obscure the ways racial and settler colonial oppression operates at a structural level. Calling attention to the needing, wanting, and desiring of diversity within the Canadian context opens up spaces to challenge these taken-for-granted forms of recognition and inclusion that are appropriated by individuals and institutions.

Conclusion: Multicultural (Diverse) Inclusivity and the Reproduction of Queer Settler Whiteness

The stories of diversity discussed in this paper showcase how non-Indigenous LGBTQ service providers working within queer service organizations in downtown Toronto are propelled into sustaining projects of Canadian nation-building, which their work indeed supports. After all, the goal of queer service organizations in general is to support, help, and care for as many divergent queer and trans service users as possible. Yet, in making people of colour and Indigenous peoples an exception within the concept of diversity, queer service organizations can easily normalize white settler queerness within the walls of their institutions.

The narratives of these research participants provide an opportunity to consider how diversity is used as a mechanism to sustain difference — naming gay, queer, and trans people as outside of the discourse of diversity, which further sustains whiteness. Here, the assumption is that gay, queer, and trans people do not *require* diversity — they are imagined as part of the very fabric of Canadian identity, as FitzGerald and Rayter (2012) argue. Thus, only people of colour and Indigenous peoples, where diversity is pinned onto their bodies, require such recognition.

People of colour and Indigenous peoples are then perceived as the Other: they are invited to participate in and utilize the offerings of these organizations, but if they require additional support or services, they are encouraged to access those at separate organizations. Sustaining this difference through diversity maintains the *status quo*: the whiteness of queerness is deeply embedded in these organizations and in the service providers' imaginings of queerness and of who is deserving of care.

Ultimately, the goal of this paper is to reconsider the utility of diversity within queer communities and politics, of which queer service organizations are a part. For, if inclusion is the answer, how does the desire for diversity further perpetuate racial and colonial oppression? And, how does the discourse of diversity as a mechanism require investment in the nation-state, particularly insofar as diversity discourse mimics the larger realities of multiculturalism in Canada? Moreover, how might white queer and trans people (and service providers) transcend the discourse of diversity by engaging with the realities in which these queer service organizations are built: on the backs of people of colour and Indigenous peoples. If diversity is the answer, in what ways has queerness (and queer politics) oriented itself towards *queer liberalism*? My hope is that this series of questions on the use and orientation of desiring diversity can spark much-needed conversation and action within mainstream queer organizations (and politics) across Canada (and internationally), so that service providers may facilitate against — in overt and covert ways — the on-going white racism and settler colonialism that their work supports and sustains.

Acknowledgements

Notes

[1] A term used to describe recently settled migrants or refugees, typically within their first three years in Canada. Many social service agencies provide population-specific funding to serve and support newcomers. These services often downplay experiences of displacement and violence, and 'help' by providing opportunities for newcomers to integrate themselves and assimilate seamlessly into the fabric of Canadian life.

[2] An English term used by Indigenous peoples across the world to reflect their gender and sexual differences. As Giwa and I argue, 2-Spirit 'as an individual and collective identity, was created partly as a response to the overwhelming homogeneity of White Queer settler communities and the lack of awareness of Indigenous peoples, cultures, and non-heteronormative gendered and sexual subjectivities in Canada' (Greensmith and Giwa 2013:131).

[3] Indigenous peoples, although contentious and somewhat homogenous terminology, refers to 'the original inhabitants of a particular geographic territory or area, as well as to collective Indigenous peoples internationally' (Madjidi and Restoule 2008:78).

[4] As Vidal-Oritz suggested, '*People of color* is a term most often used outside of traditional academic circles, often infused by activist frameworks, but it is slowly replacing terms such as racial and ethnic minorities' (2008:1037; emphasis in original). The term

'people of colour' hails and includes racial and/or cultural groups. My use of people of colour cannot be politically neutral, and indeed is fraught with tension in regard to conflating differences amongst my research participants, who identified as Chilean, Portuguese, Jamaican, Indo-African, Chinese, East Indian, Venezuelan, Sri Lankan, and Mexican.

[5] Non-Indigenous is the term used to articulate that white settlers, migrants, and arrivants all have different relationships to settlement; yet, despite these differences, they share something in common: they can contribute (often unknowingly) to the on-going dispossession, displacement, and death of Indigenous peoples. Thus, non-Indigenous signals the differences in power between all white settlers, migrants, and arrivants and Indigenous peoples.

[6] A term used to refer to people whose sex as assigned at birth is in unison with their social gender (Johnson 2013).

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Appendix A: Demographic Information

Transcript No.	Date YY/MM/DD	Name	Age	Sexuality	Gender	Race	Ethnicity / Culture
1	12/12/12	Thomas	25	Gay	Cisgender man	White	Canadian
2	12/12/23	Emily	52	Dyke	Cisgender woman	White	Francophone
3	13/01/03	Andrew	57	Gay	Cisgender man	White	Italian
4	13/01/04	Leslie	27	Trisexual	Transgender woman	Mestiza	Chilean
5	13/01/08	Cory	33	Queer	Cisgender man	White	Polish, British
6	13/01/09	Josephine	33	Queer	Cisgender man	White	Canadian
7	13/01/09	Skyler	25	Queer	Genderqueer	Mixed-Race	Portuguese
8	13/01/15	Candy	27	Queer	Genderqueer	South Asian	Indian, Portuguese, Arabic
9	13/01/15	Lisa	46	Lesbian	Cisgender woman	Mixed-Race	Jamaican
10	13/01/22	Rahim	27	Gay, Queer	Cisgender man	South Asian	Indo-African
11	13/02/02	Koinnapat	35	Gay, Queer	Cisgender man	Asian	Chinese
12	13/02/05	Sara	30	Bisexual, Queer	Cisgender woman	White	Canadian, British
13	13/02/05	Robert	32	Queer	Transgender man	White	Canadian
14	13/02/09	Ronald	32	Gay	Cisgender man	White	European
15	13/02/13	Joseph	47	Gay, Queer	Genderqueer	White	

(*Continues*)

Transcript No.	Date YY/MM/DD	Name	Age	Sexuality	Gender	Race	Ethnicity / Culture
16	13/02/13	Luke	68	Queer	Transgender man	White	Canadian, European
17	13/02/25	Josh	53	Queer	Cisgender man	White	British
18	13/02/28	Cassandra	29	Lesbian	Cisgender woman	South Asian	East Indian
19	13/03/01	Kate	25	Bisexual, Queer	Cisgender woman	White	Canadian
20	13/03/02	Steve	38	Gay	Cisgender man	White	Canadian
21	13/03/08	Justin	61	Gay	Cisgender man	Latino	Venezuelan
22	13/03/09	Brandon	53	Gay	Cisgender man	White	Canadian, European
23	13/03/09	Ryan	34	Gay	Cisgender man	White	Canadian, Aboriginal Ancestry
24	13/03/13	Jacob	20	Gay, Queer	Cisgender man	Portuguese	Portuguese
25	13/03/13	Nicole	46	Queer	Cisgender woman	White	British
26	13/03/07	Mark	33	Queer	Cisgender man	South Asian	Sri Lankan, Tamil
27	13/03/15	Filipe	46	Gay, Queer	Cisgender man	Portuguese	Portuguese
28	13/03/19	Jett	49	Gay	Cisgender man	White	British
29	13/03/20	Alex	50	Queer	Cisgender man	White	Scottish, Irish
30	13/03/21	John	54	Gay	Cisgender man	White	European

Transcript No.	Date YY/MM/DD	Name	Age	Sexuality	Gender	Race	Ethnicity / Culture
31	13/03/16	Paul	28	Gay	Cisgender man	White	European
32	13/03/27	Jamie	24	Queer	Cisgender woman	White	American
33	13/03/29	Eric	39	Gay	Cisgender man	White	Canadian
34a	13/03/29	Angel	31	Gay	Cisgender man	Latino	Mexican
34b	13/05/15	Dylan	25	Queer	Transgender man	White	Canadian
35	13/04/23	Amanda	28	Queer, Lesbian	Cisgender woman	White	British, Aboriginal Ancestry
36	13/04/23	Aaron	24	Queer	Cisgender man	White	Canadian
37	13/04/26	Keith	20	Queer	Cisgender man	White Settler	Canadian, Mixed Heritage
38	13/04/30	Brett	31	Queer	Genderqueer	White	European
39	13/05/06	Tara	29	Queer	Cisgender	White	British, Irish
40	13/06/05	April	30	Queer	Genderqueer	White	Canadian