

Crafting Identity, Building Community, and Imagining Brighter Futures

Advised by Dr. Jordan Biro Walters; Department of Women's Gender, and Sexuality Studies; 2026

"In a society and political moment that claims we as Queer people do not deserve to exist, our own happiness, connection, and creation are radical acts."

-Sequoia (Author); first line of Abstract

As a Queer creative, I relied on my own experiences and those of my co-collaborators to understand the diverse ways Queer individuals use and experience creativity. Focusing on experience as a form of knowledge, this project blends academic and feminist formats. The project is made of two separate but interwoven components: a traditional written element offers background and theoretical insights alongside my personal experience; the creative element presents common themes of the interviews through my personal art form.

"There is a **joy** to creating in and of itself, right? And there's the **pride** of when I create something that I think is **beautiful**. And beyond that, I don't know how to explain anything other than the, like, **innate human instincts towards creativity**."

-Wallace



Painting by Julia

Narrative Themes

- **Identity**
 - Creative, Queer, Ethnic, Racial, and Religious identities
 - Outward Presentation
- **Community**
 - Friends, Family, Social Media, and Wooster community
- **Education**
 - IS connections
 - school time constraints
- **Mental Health + Coping Mechanisms**
 - Movement
 - Coping with Stress
 - Processing/Naming Emotions
 - Perfectionism
 - Redirection + Positive Activity
 - Confidence + Accomplishment
 - Self-Expression
- **Place in Time**
 - Past
 - Present
 - Future
- **Expansion + Growth**
 - Definitions and general conceptions of Queerness and creativity

Feminist Theory

- Intersectionality
- Interdisciplinary Ethic of Care
- Reflexivity

Queer Theory

- Disidentification
- Queer Utopia
- Queer Futurity/Imagined Futures
- Queer Worldmaking

"Humanity and Queerness feel like they go such hand in hand because Queerness is **vibrant** and different and it's such a human thing. It's **messy** and **emotional** and **expressive** and **creative**."

-Mary

Redefining Terms

Together through our experiences and interviews, my co-collaborators and I conceptualized broad, collaborative definitions and understandings of Queerness and Creativity.

Queerness

- Identification with otherness
 - including race, ethnicity, ability, ect.
- As a label: broad, fluid, and non-specific

Creativity

- Creative thinking and problem solving
- Craft, hobby, and fine art
- Both artistic and practical
- Everyone is creative in some way

This photo is a look into my workspace and process as I developed the creative element of this project.

Methodology

Population

- Queer individuals at College of Wooster who actively engage at least one creative outlet

Co-Collaborator Selection Process

- Focused on selecting a diverse population of co-collaborators based on:
 - Year in college
 - Gender and sexual identities
 - Forms of creativity
 - Identification with minority population

Oral History Interviews

- 6 individual interviews
- 2 focus groups (5 people each)
- 1-2 hour recorded interviews
- Question Concepts:
 - creative expression, Queer identity, coping with + experiencing current anti-Queer climate

Interview Analysis + Theme Creation

- Analyzed interview transcriptions to find patterns and commonalities between narratives
- Compare and contrast experiences to discover themes of Queer creative experiences

"I want to be able to share my story so other people feel **less alone** and know that what I've been through is a lot and I can still come out and do exactly what anyone else can like here, I'm at college. I didn't think I'd get here. So it's just like, I want to be able for people to know that they're not alone, that **their stories matter**."

-Ray



Scarf by Nat



"Five of Cups" by Jensen

