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Community Engagement Experiences of College Students with Minoritized Sexual and Gender Identities

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Utilizing national data from the Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) survey coupled with in-depth interviews, the authors explored the community engagement experiences of queer- and trans*-identified students. Community engagement is nearly ubiquitous in institutions of higher education, and while the impact of this practice on students has been explored broadly, queer and trans* experiences are absent from extant literature. The research discussed in this article centers the perspectives and experiences of students with minoritized sexual and gender identities in an effort to understand how community engagement classrooms and placements engage with issues of sexuality and gender identity. The results of these analyses suggest that gender identity and sexual orientation play a role in predicting students' community involvement and that those experiences are complicated by instances of marginalization, silencing, and erasure.

Keywords**:** *college students, community engagement, LGBTQ, service-learning*

In the study detailed in this article, we explored the community engagement experiences of queer- and trans*-identified students. Community engagement is a nearly ubiquitous practice in institutions of higher education, but the experiences of students who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual, queer, questioning, and/or transgender (LGBTQ[1]) have rarely been addressed in the literature. We utilized data from the 2017 Student Experience in the Research University (SERU) survey, which, per Renn's (2010) strategic directive, includes "demographic questions that capture sexual orientation and provide a transgender option for gender identity" (p. 137). This national survey offers a unique opportunity to consider whether queer and trans*[2] students participate in community engagement experiences differently from their heterosexual and cisgender peers, and to consider the implications of LGBTQ-identified students' participation in community engagement and service-learning. We coupled this dataset with in-depth interviews of LGBTQ-identified students to center their perspectives and experiences in order to better understand how community engagement classrooms and placements engage with issues of sexuality and gender identity.

Review of the Literature

Service-learning has emerged as a high-impact practice within U.S. higher education that demonstrates the potential to create transformative and engaged learning experiences (Kuh, 2008). Faculty may be compelled to integrate community engagement experiences in an effort to develop students' leadership skills, foster their civic engagement, hone their critical thinking, or expand their cultural understanding (Astin, Vogelsang, Ikeda, & Yee, 2000; Eyler & Giles, 1999; Mitchell, Donahue, & Young-Law, 2012). Research has linked service-learning and community engagement to desirable student outcomes in these domains (Eyler & Giles, 1999; Jones & Abes, 2004; Moely, McFarland, Miron, Mercer, & Ilustre, 2002). Yet, despite a proliferation of research on service-learning in the last two decades, the experiences of LGBTQ students have been woefully under-addressed in the literature.

Existing research on LGBTQ students' community engagement experiences is primarily qualitative and often includes just one LGBTQ student among a larger number of presumably heterosexual and cisgender participants. As such, the research neither centers on nor is intended to deeply explore themes of LGBTQ students' experiences with service. In an early example, Battistoni (1995) referred to a service-learning project in which a gay student "was forced to confront the homophobia of minority children in an urban after-school enrichment program" (p. 34). Exploring the experiences of peer facilitators in a community service-learning seminar, Chesler, Ford, Galura, and Charbeneau (2006) included the experience of a gay peer facilitator who, upon observing another gay student being stereotyped in the seminar, "could see no other recourse besides outing myself" (p. 351). Since this research focused on the facilitators' experiences, the authors offered no additional insight into the experience of the stereotyped student in the seminar. Jones, LePeau, and Robbins (2013) examined learning outcomes for participants in an HIV/AIDS-focused alternative break trip; one of the five participants in the study identified as a White gay man. Jones et al. demonstrated that the student's prior knowledge of and beliefs about HIV/AIDS based on experiences in his queer community had an impact on what he took away from the trip. This finding is important in that it is one of very few that explicitly considers LGBTQ student experience in community engagement; however, this inquiry was not the core component of the study and left questions unaddressed, such as whether the student's gay identity impacted his decision to participate and how his experience was different from that of his heterosexual counterparts.

Squire and Norris (2014) conducted one of the only studies in service-learning in which the LGBTQ community was the intended server as well as the served. In their study, LGBTQ-identified students participated in an alternative spring break with an LGBTQ focus as part of a first-year experience program. Retention was 100% from the first to second year for all participants in the program (Squire & Norris, 2014). In a separate line of inquiry, Donahue and Luber (2015) considered what it means to "queer" service-learning by exploring emergent tensions between traditional service-learning paradigms and queer activism on campus. In this way, community engagement, with an explicit LGBTQ theme, was considered through an institutional change framework (Donahue & Luber, 2015). Jones et al. (2013), Donahue and Luber (2015), and Squire and Norris (2014) all situated LGBTQ students and issues as deserving of specific attention within community engagement scholarship, highlighting the lack of research on this topic.

Quantitative research about LGBTQ students' experiences with service-learning is virtually nonexistent. Most survey instruments measuring student experience across institutions nationally do not include demographic questions about sexuality or gender identity. In his research on the most commonly utilized survey instruments in research articles published in top-tier journals, Garvey (2014) pointed to the lack of inclusion of LGBTQ students in national datasets. Of the 10 most often utilized national datasets in quantitative articles published between 2010 and 2012, only four asked about sexual identity, and only two included trans* or non-binary options for gender. The lack of existing research on queer and trans* student experiences in service-learning necessitates a more generalized review of the literature that considers LGBTQ students' curricular and co-curricular involvement more broadly.

Some initial effort has been made to explore quantitatively queer and trans* students' involvement in high-impact practices and leadership development initiatives. In an exploratory study, Gonyea and Moore (2007) examined campus involvement of "GLBT" students by analyzing data from a set of experimental questions in the National Survey of Student Engagement (NSSE). The NSSE benchmark that measures involvement includes, among many forms of engaged learning, participation in service-learning. The results showed that "GLBT" students who were "more out" (as measured by self-report) indicated participating in significantly more engaged-learning activities than either heterosexual or "less out GLBT" students (Gonyea & Moore, 2007). Notably, the instrument measured sexual orientation and gender identity separately, creating the opportunity to disaggregate "GLBT" data. In the analysis, however, these separate identity categories were collapsed, and students who identified as gay, lesbian, bisexual, questioning/unsure, or transgender were coded as "GLBT." The study measured "GLBT" students' engagement in service-learning only tangentially as it reported data based on the broad NSSE

benchmark of "Active and Collaborative Learning" but not specifically on service-learning participation (Gonyea & Moore, 2007). BrckaLorenz, Garvey, Hurtado, and Latopolski (2016) also used NSSE data to investigate "gender variant" students' experiences with high-impact practices and student-faculty interactions. In this administration of NSSE, students could select "another gender identity" and provide a write-in response instead of selecting "man" or "woman." Those responses indicating "another gender identity" (0.3% of the sample) were utilized in the data analysis. BrckaLorenz et al. reported no significant difference in participation in high-impact practices based on gender identity. Similar to Gonyea and Moore's (2007) research, BrckaLorenz and colleagues did not report on service-learning experiences specifically but rather as part of an aggregate of 10 high-impact practices.

Quantitative research about LGBTQ students is nearly always aggregated, and, thus, research specific to trans* students' experiences is virtually nonexistent. In the limited extant research about trans* students, data are nearly always compiled to create a monolithic identity category that invisibilizes the unique experiences of students across a spectrum of trans* and non-binary enactments of gender. Dugan, Kusel, and Simounet (2012) examined trans* students' leadership experiences, including a measure called "socially responsible leadership." The authors did not precisely capture trans* students' participation in service-learning or community engagement but rather measured a broad category of engagement that includes community service in addition to multiple composite measures of leadership. The scholars found no significant differences between trans* and cisgender students' reported levels of leadership engagement (Dugan et al., 2012). Jourian and Simmons (2017) troubled existing efforts to measure leadership outcomes among trans* students by pointing to the cisnormative framework inherent to traditional conceptions of college student leadership. Asserting that trans* leadership is both under-researched and "unexpected," they stressed the importance of considering the resilience necessary for trans* students to simply navigate and persist amid systemic oppression, and suggested that trans* students' leadership may take the shape of resistance or activism rather than positional leadership. The existing literature has begun to scratch the surface of important measures of trans* students' collegiate experiences but does not explicitly measure the participation of trans* students in service-learning and community engagement.

There is much to be learned about LGBQ and particularly trans* students' participation in and experience with service-learning and community engagement in higher education. The research on LGBTQ students' experiences in service-learning is sparse and provides little understanding about how and whether this high-impact practice, pervasive in higher education, is experienced by queer and trans* students. The important yet limited knowledge shared in the existing literature serves to highlight the need for additional research.

Methodology

This study relied on both quantitative and qualitative methods following sequential mixed-methods exploratory design (Creswell, 2009). The initial analyses of the quantitative data presented in this study raised several questions that were best interrogated using qualitative methods.

Data Sources

We utilized data from the SERU survey, which was administered by staff at eight large public research universities to undergraduates in spring 2017 (n = 45,239). The SERU survey contains over 600 items, including items related to civic and community engagement, campus climate, and demographic questions. Researchers have provided evidence for the internal consistency of students' responses over several administrations of the survey (Chatman, 2011; Douglass, Thomson, & Zhao, 2012; Soria, 2012, 2013). Response rates ranged from 15% to 40% at the participating institutions.

We also utilized verbatim transcripts of in-depth interviews conducted with nine students who responded to an email invitation calling for participants who identified as queer and/or trans* and who had participated in community engagement experiences as undergraduates. On average, interviews lasted 45 minutes, and the protocol included questions that inquired specifically about sexual and gender

identity while participating in community engagement. For example, one question asked, "Was your sexual identity salient at your service placement?" and another inquired, "Did you observe or experience homophobia or transphobia at the service placement (or in the service-learning classroom)?"

Participants

We analyzed survey responses from 45,239 undergraduate students enrolled at eight large public research universities. Within the sample, 11.9% of the respondents were Hispanic (n = 5,363), 0.2% American Indian (n = 97), 13.8% Asian (n = 6,257), 0.2% Hawaiian or Pacific Islander (n = 99), 4.2% Black (n = 1,903), 4.2% international (n = 1,917), 3.5% multiracial (n = 1,578), and 59.3% White (n = 26,826), with 2.6% declining to state their race or ethnicity (n = 1,199). Within the sample, 11.5% were the first in their families to attend an institution of higher education (13.9% had one or both parents/guardians attend, but not complete, a four-year degree), 29.4% had received a Pell grant, and 19.1% were transfer students. The mean age was 20.93 (SD = 3.29).

Students provided their gender and sexual orientation identification in the survey. Within the sample, 35.8% identified as male (n = 16,181), 62.2% female (n = 28,154), 0.1% trans male (n = 56), 0.1% trans female (n = 39), and 0.7% genderqueer or gender non-confirming (n = 300), with 0.6% preferring to self-describe (n = 258) and 0.6% declining to state (n = 251). Further, 2.7% were gay or lesbian (n = 1,215), 5.0% bisexual (n = 2,263), 1.3% queer (n = 585), 1.2% questioning (n = 525), and 87.3% heterosexual or straight (n = 39,347); 1.3% indicated another sexual orientation (n = 566), and 1.6% declined to state (n = 738).

The nine interview participants self-identified in multiple ways. All participants claimed a marginalized gender and/or sexual identity. As part of the interview protocol, we used an open-ended question format to ask participants how they named these aspects of their identities. Regarding gender, participants described their identities with words that included *agender*, *complicated*, *ciswoman*, *woman*, *transwoman*, *female*, and *femme*. Regarding sexuality, participants reported naming themselves using words that included *gay*, *lesbian*, *queer*, *bisexual*, *pansexual*, *asexual*, and *sapiosexual*. Given the emphasis on gender and sexuality in our study, we did not systematically ask participants a full set of demographic questions but chose to focus on those identities that most significantly impacted participants' experiences with gender and sexuality. We asked participants what, if any, other identities or experiences shaped their understanding of their gender and/or sexuality. Examples of the identities about which participants spoke included socioeconomic class, being on the autism spectrum, being polyamorous, being Native, and being Christian. Many participants' narratives reflected experiences with multiple marginalized identities.

In addition to speaking from a variety of gender and sexuality identities, the participants reported an array of community engagement experiences. Both formal service-learning classes and non-credit-bearing community engagement experiences were reported among the nine participants, who represented multiple campuses and institution types in a metropolitan area of the midwestern United States. Most participants were current undergraduate or graduate students, while one was a recent alum. Regardless of their current student status, all participants were asked about community engagement experiences that occurred during their time as an undergraduate.

Data Analysis

In the survey, students were asked to respond to an item that asked them to identify how many hours they spent during a typical week (seven days) performing community service or volunteer activities. Students responded on a scale of 1 = 0 hours, 2 = 1-5 hours, 3 = 6-10 hours, 4 = 11-15 hours, 5 = 16-20 hours, 6 = 21-25 hours, 7 = 26-30 hours, and 8 = more than 30 hours. Among the respondents, 43.6% indicated spending 0 hours per week on community service, 42.6% spent 1 to 5 hours per week in community service, 8.1% spent 6 to 10 hours in service, and the remaining 5.7% spent over 11 hours per week in service. We recoded this variable into two new variables: One variable measured whether students had ever participated in service (0 = 0 hours per week; 1 = at least 1 hour per week) and the other variable

measured service in the four largest categories of time spent in service: (0 = 0 hours per week; 1 = 1-5 hours per week; 2 = 6-10 hours per week; 3 = over 11 hours per week). We examined differences in students' participation by their gender identity and sexual orientation using their self-reported demographics. Pearson chi-square tests were used to determine whether students participated in community service at different rates per week.

Interviews were transcribed verbatim and analyzed using the constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). Transcripts were coded, with codes compared across transcripts to produce categories. Participants were asked to explore factors that influenced their decision to engage in community engagement experiences, including their community service and how they made meaning of their community engagement experiences. In particular, students were asked if and how their sexual and/or gender identity were salient in their classroom and community service connected to the community engagement experience.

Results

The results of the chi-square tests of independence suggest there were significant differences between the rates at which students participated in community service by students' gender identity and sexual orientation. Within the various gender identity categories, we discovered the relation between gender identity and community service participation (in average hours per week) was significant, $\chi 2(42) = 763.93$, $p < .001$. While we observed significant results for students who preferred to self-describe their gender and those who declined to state their gender, we report the results for only cisgender, trans*, and genderqueer students because we do not know enough about students who preferred to self-describe their gender and those who declined to state their genders to offer meaningful insights. The results suggest that students who identified as cisgender females had significantly lower rates of spending 0 hours in community service per week (39.7%) than cisgender males (49.9%) and genderqueer students (55.3%; Table 1). Genderqueer students also had significantly higher rates of spending 0 hours per week in service (55.3%) compared to trans* female students (28.2%).

The results of the chi-square tests also suggest that cisgender females had significantly higher rates of spending 1 to 5 hours in service per week (46.0%) compared to cisgender males (37.3%) and genderqueer students (32.3%). Cisgender females also had significantly higher rates than cisgender males of spending 6 to 10 hours per week in service (8.9% compared to 6.8%). Trans* females had significantly higher rates of spending 11 to 15 hours (20.5%) and 16 to 20 hours per week (10.3%) than cisgender males (2.9% and 1.6%), cisgender females (2.9% and 1.2%), and genderqueer students (3.3% and 1.3%). Trans* female students also had significantly higher rates of spending 26 to 30 hours per week in service (7.7%) compared to cisgender males (0.4%) and cisgender females (0.3%).

When examining the results by sexual orientation, we also chose not to report on the significant results for students who selected their sexual orientation as "other" and "decline to state." The results suggest that gay or lesbian (51.7%), bisexual (50.2%), and questioning students (54.9%) had significantly higher rates than heterosexual students of spending 0 hours per week in service (42.6%; Table 2). Heterosexual students had significantly higher rates than gay or lesbian, bisexual, and questioning students of spending 1 to 5 hours in service each week (43.6% compared to 35.3%, 37.2%, and 32.8%, respectively).

The qualitative findings revealed that LGBTQ students in community engagement faced instances of homophobia and/or transphobia that challenged their ability to engage fully and authentically in their community engagement experiences. Experiences of marginalization, silencing, and erasure were the primary themes emergent in the narratives of LGBTQ participants.

Table 1: Students' Participation in Community Service (Hours per Week) by Gender

Hours	Male		Female		Trans Male		Trans Female		Genderqueer		Prefer to Self-Describe		Decline to State	
	n	%	n	%	n	N	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
0	8070	49.9%	11171	39.7%	27	48.2%	11	28.2%	166	55.3%	155	60.1%	128	51.0%
1-5	6033	37.3%	12954	46.0%	15	26.8%	9	23.1%	97	32.3%	73	28.3%	78	31.1%
6-10	1096	6.8%	2519	8.9%	7	12.5%	2	5.1%	19	6.3%	12	4.7%	18	7.2%
11-15	471	2.9%	819	2.9%	3	5.4%	8	20.5%	10	3.3%	11	4.3%	8	3.2%
16-20	254	1.6%	350	1.2%	3	5.4%	4	10.3%	4	1.3%	4	1.6%	8	3.2%
21-25	134	0.8%	155	0.6%	1	1.8%	1	2.6%	3	1.0%	0	0.0%	6	2.4%
26-30	57	0.4%	78	0.3%	0	0.0%	3	7.7%	0	0.0%	1	0.4%	1	0.4%
30+	66	0.4%	108	0.4%	0	0.0%	1	2.6%	1	0.3%	2	0.8%	4	1.6%

Table 2. Students' Participation in Community Service (Hours per Week) by Sexual Orientation

Hours	Heterosexual or Straight		Gay or Lesbian		Bisexual		Queer		Questioning		Other, please Specify		Decline to State	
	n	%	n	%	n	N	n	%	n	%	n	%	n	%
0	16745	42.6%	628	51.7%	1135	50.2%	271	46.3%	288	54.9%	319	56.4%	342	46.3%
1-5	17144	43.6%	429	35.3%	842	37.2%	224	38.3%	172	32.8%	186	32.9%	262	35.5%
6-10	3232	8.2%	87	7.2%	173	7.6%	54	9.2%	38	7.2%	34	6.0%	55	7.5%
11-15	1141	2.9%	34	2.8%	69	3.0%	23	3.9%	16	3.0%	12	2.1%	35	4.7%
16-20	546	1.4%	20	1.6%	18	0.8%	8	1.4%	5	1.0%	8	1.4%	22	3.0%
21-25	267	0.7%	9	0.7%	10	0.4%	1	0.2%	2	0.4%	2	0.4%	9	1.2%
26-30	123	0.3%	5	0.4%	3	0.1%	2	0.3%	1	0.2%	1	0.2%	5	0.7%
30+	149	0.4%	3	0.2%	13	0.6%	2	0.3%	3	0.6%	4	0.7%	8	1.1%

Marginalization

Students reported being marginalized in their community engagement experiences. These experiences often "set a negative tone" for their community-engaged work since students "didn't feel able to … be honest about myself," which meant "I wasn't fully engaged" (Sage[3]). Elle described the experience as "really isolating," and both participants described ways they were asked to perform queerness and/or transness for the benefit of cisgender and heterosexual peers in their community-engaged learning classroom spaces. Sage described reflection questions that were raised for discussion:

> There were sometimes questions about, like, "What's a way that you're different from everyone," or like, "What's a thing that's bothering you today?" Or, like, what's a, like those kinds of questions that could be interpreted any number of ways, but for trans people, they often end up being about being trans.

These questions resulted in Sage's sense of "being, like the trans person … and like the gender person." Sage continued, "I was forced to bring it with me, or I was kind of just like, I was always accompanied by that. I never felt like I got to just be me." It was "a disconnect between how people were perceiving me, and how I was perceiving my contribution" that left Sage feeling "typecast, or feeling kind of pigeonholed." Similarly, Elle found these experiences to be "tokenizing and othering and not empowering."

Julie described the obligations of needing to respond to transphobia at the service placement based on a sense that no one else would. Julie "would repeatedly" correct people regarding the pronouns they used in reference to persons who had made their identities known. "[O]bviously this person has said … that they identify as a transman—their name is Jack. I need you to stop using she/her pronouns." While the students sometimes dismissed these instances as "small things," the accumulated impacts of these instances were evident.

For instance, Sage had multiple experiences of being misgendered at the service placement, housed in a local church, and decided not to speak out about it. Sage offered:

> Considering how much could have probably gone wrong there, remarkably little did. That's kind of what pushed me to keep being quiet about everything, was I felt like there was kind of this bucket of transphobia over the doorway, and if I tried to go through, it's going to fall over, so I was just like, "I'm just not going to go there."

Angel had encounters with older adults at the homeless services organization where she volunteered that caused anxiety "every time I go there." Angel elaborated:

> There's just sometimes people who say what's on their mind. Sometimes that's anxiety-inducing or offensive kind of language. I think it was my first time, I got that, "Are you a guy or a girl?" And it's just like, the unnecessary or transphobic or homophobic things that come out of people's mouths.

These regular experiences created "ever present" anxiety, but Angel found "getting to the room and starting the activity is the most enjoyable part" and focused on this piece of the community service experience. Feeling "very much like an outsider" when entering the building, Angel hurried to retreat to a space "where I'm with people that I know now, and I'm friendly with."

Silencing

Silencing—a conscious or unconscious need to keep quiet about one's sexual or gender identity—deeply influenced LGBTQ students' community engagement experiences. Students explored their hesitations about or fears of disclosing their identities and ways they "don't talk about it and avoid it" in their service experiences (Farrah). Farrah expressed clearly that "I definitely hide details of my life" and named the service site as "a trickier space" to navigate with regard to sexuality and gender.

Others spoke about their hesitation that expressions of their sexuality or gender might be perceived as "questionable" (Angel) or "dangerous" (Sage). Sage discussed it as "this very dangerous thing that I shouldn't share, at risk of being told to leave, or, like, being seen as a threat to the kids."

In thinking about the salience of her sexual identity at the site, Angel continually described it as "disconnected." She added later, "I feel like it doesn't really come with me to the location, which is interesting to think about. It's not like you can really leave it at home, but it feels kind of like you do." Angel elaborated, "You never know what teenagers will say in that respect … especially like looking a certain way or something. Or even casually like, 'Do you have a boyfriend?' Then you have to answer the question and it's…" As Angel trails off, she raises concern that talk about her sexual identity might be "inappropriate" for the teenagers with whom she works. "I haven't intentionally brought it up or brought it with me at all, but also, none of the volunteers do. That's just not the topic of conversation." About the teenagers, she surmised, "They just want to talk about video games and make art."

This experience of silencing is troubling given the ways these students saw their identities as informing their community engagement. Angel identified her experience "as a queer person from a small town" as providing "a really interesting outlook on whatever they're doing" but did not see a way she could "bring my identities to service-learning." Elle saw her desire to connect to the community engagement experience as "motivated" by her identities, but then having her community placement in a space that "isn't historically super welcoming to people that are not straight white cis men" left her feeling isolated. Sage described the experience as one of "total dismissal or total tokenization" and continued, "I didn't feel like anyone could both take that part of me seriously and see that there were other dimensions to my personality, which was really frustrating." Sage was left resenting the community engagement program, explaining the expectation of "me doing all this emotional labor to explain myself and try to be acknowledged, and then still only get like halfway there."

Erasure

The erasure or invisibility of LGBTQ people and experiences also emerged as a key theme in these students' community engagement experiences. Students reported a willful ignorance or dismissal of LGBTQ lives as represented in the courses or service sites that were central to their community engagement experiences. Angel, for instance, pointed to a number of LGBTQ-serving and/or focused organizations near her school that "were no longer partnered with." She explained that the one LGBTQ-focused service-learning class ended, and it seemed that other service-learning classes did not see those LGBTQ organizations as relevant partners for their courses. This lack of partnership meant that few students had opportunities to connect with LGBTQ-focused work through their community engagement experiences.

Julie, who spoke of her community engagement experience with a program serving women in prison, talked about a lack of awareness of or attention paid to queer and trans issues. She described a project that focused explicitly on trans issues as "sort of like lumped in" and not intentionally focused on the work at the program or the preparation of students to do that work. Julie went on to describe an introductory sociology course that sent two "problematic, uneducated people" to the placement site "because it met on Sunday afternoons." She continued, "They did not care what it was, had no interest, worked with their schedule." Feeling that the course did very little to prepare students for the kinds of issues and people they might engage with as part of the service, Julie was disappointed in both the students and the placement site for what felt like blatant disrespect and disregard for the communities they were meant to serve. She noted that one of the "cis white men athletes" did "some very blatant horrible, horrible thing." In trying to confront the students on the matter, she explained:

> I said something to him, and him and his friend basically just laughed at me … laughing at the whole situation, and just kept going. I brought it up to the person in charge, and they just looked at me, and they were like, "At least they're here volunteering."

Julie and Sage both indicated an absence of attention to queer and trans issues in the curriculum of their community engagement experiences. Julie explained, "It didn't come up…. We might have had a section on trans stuff. We didn't even really have, like … a section on it." Sage offered, "It never really was brought up as a formal topic," and as a result:

> It wasn't so explicitly homophobic or transphobic a lot of the time, but it was not an environment that centered the comfort of those identities, either, and so a lot of just like uncomfortable interactions … occurred because of that lens.

Different from the other students, the curriculum of Elle's community engagement experience included several "different topics on queer and trans experiences." Elle continued, "There were a fair amount—I mean obviously I would've liked more, but it was included, definitely." Despite an inclusive curriculum, Elle still expressed erasure and feeling "like I had to represent an entire group of people, and challenging the ways that things were presented.… [I]t was kind of like us against this sort of cisnormative, straight, white paradigm."

The qualitative data demonstrated that students' sexual and gender identities informed and impacted their community engagement experiences in multiple ways, both in their curricular experiences that occurred on campus and the service experiences in the community. Students shared multiple examples of marginalization, silencing, and erasure that were directly related to their identities as LGBTQ-identified persons.

Discussion

This study brings attention to the community engagement experiences of queer and trans* college students which remain underreported in research. The quantitative analyses demonstrated that LGBTQ students reported lower rates of participation in community engagement experiences than their cisgender and heterosexual peers, but also showed that no significant differences existed in community engagement participation for those service experiences that require the most community hours per week (i.e., 11 or more). Though we neither focus on motivations for participation nor provide information about the ways students enter communities (e.g., service-learning course, alternative break experience, volunteer project through a student organization), the community engagement literature offers some possible explanations for this difference in participation, including a limited number of service-learning courses and experiences that focus on LGBTQ communities (Donahue, 2018) and experiences of homophobia or heterosexism in classroom or community sites (Battistoni, 1995; Chesler et al., 2006). The absence of opportunities to engage with queer and trans* lives or the possibility that one might regularly encounter homophobia in their community engagement experience may signal to LGBTQ students that they are not the intended audience for these opportunities. Similarly, instances in which community engagement experiences offer students the chance to volunteer at the campus LGBTQ center if it is an issue they are "least comfortable with" (Good, 2005) provide insight into why queer and trans* students appear less likely to participate in community engagement projects.

Larger societal discourses of queer and trans* people as dangerous or predatory may influence participants' decisions about (non) disclosure at the service placement, especially when working with children. This suggests that facilitators of community engagement experiences navigate with organizational partners in the community and the students themselves to destigmatize queer and trans* identities in order to better support LGBTQ students' entry into and persistence in service placements. Further, recognizing that some service placements may be spaces of structural violence directly impacting LGBTQ people requires a more conscious evaluation of community partner sites

to ensure that there will be accepting and inclusive spaces for LGBTQ students to participate fully and authentically in community engagement experiences.

Classifying instances of harassment, bias, or misgendering as "small things" is resonant of minimization. Interview participants' tendency to minimize concerns onsite generally meant that students did not report issues or incidents at their site or on campus for fear of making situations worse or being seen as the problem. Students reported a sense of risk that their participation in community might be jeopardized if they named the discrimination they faced in community engagement experiences. Minimization, in this aim, serves as a safeguard for students who protect themselves by seeking to lessen the impact of these persistent microaggressions. However, it also ensures that facilitators of community engagement experiences remain ignorant to these concerns and encourage students to continue in spaces that may be both physically and psychologically harmful. Creating an environment that supports students in reporting their experiences and documenting these instances may encourage students to exit spaces and experiences that do not affirm their identities. Further, this documentation can lead to proactive discussions, trainings, or other interventions that might improve conditions for LGBTQ students now and in the future.

Another reading of students' tendencies to minimize harassment or to choose not to disclose their identities is recognition of students' engagement in oppositional consciousness (Sandoval, 1991). For example, Sage, Emily, and Hannah all discussed having to "teach" their peers in the on-campus/classroom aspects of their community engagement experiences and their active decision to do so. At the same time, these students talked about selectively disclosing their identities at the service site, often consciously deciding not to be "out" at their community placements. These distinct environments in community engagement experiences—in the classroom and the community—offer different levels of security for students and varying manifestations of cisnormative and heteronormative power formations that students may choose to resist through practices of oppositional consciousness. Spaces on campus, where students often have more agency and more confidence, offer more freedom to speak, whereas community spaces may require students to be in survival mode, recognizing they have less power, agency, and safety to fully enact their identities. Sandoval (1991) saw these decisions (whether conscious or unconscious) as exercising oppositional consciousness whereby "subjugated citizens can either occupy or throw off subjectivities in a process that at once both enacts and yet decolonizes their various relations to their real conditions of existence" (p. 11).

Alternatively, the on-campus environment of the community engagement experience may evoke felt pressure related to tokenization, invisibility, and body as pedagogy (Darder, 2009). As students identify the absence of attention to or naming of LGBTQ experiences or identities in their community engagement opportunities, it reflects heteronormative and cisnormative assumptions about students, community and social concerns, and the people who are most impacted by those concerns. The erasure of their identities from the curricular and service experiences of community engagement leaves these students with the sense that they, for all practical purposes, are the LGBTQ curriculum. In this way, their "very bodily presence," as articulated by Jaekel and Nicolazzo (2017), serves as "an important moment of disruption" (p. 169) in community engagement spaces. For LGBTQ community engagement students, there develops an implicit pressure that their experiences of marginalization become the text in the on-campus aspects of the community engagement programs. This recognition requires greater inclusion of LGBTQ voices, perspectives, and experiences in community engagement offerings. It requires recognition that the community and social concerns that form the service placements of community-engaged learning projects inevitably impact people who are LGBTQ. It requires rethinking curriculum to ensure that readings, reflection prompts, activities, and discussions create space to center LGBTQ perspectives, identities, and lives.

Limitations

We acknowledge the limitations associated with this research. The first limitation requires naming the precarity of "measuring" fluid identities with categorical variables. We witnessed the limitations of these measurements through the self-identifiers used by the interview participants, who often included names for themselves not included in the SERU instrument. The wording of the question as "volunteering" on the SERU survey may have also skewed responses. The qualitative interviews included responses from participants that showed that not all LGBTQ students described what they were doing in the community as service. This may mean that this measurement of LGBTQ students' engagement is underreported. We also acknowledge that looking at chi-squares, while insightful, did not control for other variables that may have impacted the differences we saw in community participation, gender identity, and sexual orientation.

The qualitative analyses we included are not generalizable and were further limited by the absence of masculine-identified participants. This is very interesting, given the larger trends of cisgender women and trans* women being more likely to report participating in community engagement experiences. There may have also been some influence of time that shaped respondents' reflections on their community engagement experiences. Some participants spoke about community engagement experiences they were currently involved in, while others reflected on experiences from one to three years prior. The passage of time may have impacted the meaning making and level of reflection participants shared in interviews.

Our methodological approach of sequential mixed methods was driven by a desire to further understand the information uncovered through our analyses of the SERU data. The primary focus of the quantitative analyses explored queer and trans* service participation, and the qualitative interviews sought to better understand what that experience of service was like for students who identified as queer and/or trans*. While we noted multiple similarities in the experiences of those participants we interviewed as reported in the themes of marginalization, silencing, and erasure, we cannot assert that these experiences were reflective of those of the service-involved queer and trans* students responding to the SERU survey. A multi-institutional qualitative study at SERU institutions would create opportunities to further explore these connections and the engagement of queer and trans* students in community-based service and learning experiences.

Conclusion

This study serves to correct the erasure of LGBTQ identities from research on community engagement in higher education. In addition to being one of the first studies to use national survey data to analyze community engagement participation by LGBTQ-identified students, this research creates space to consider how queer and trans* students participate in community service. Additionally, the qualitative inquiry encourages discussion of the ways identity informs experience and how facilitators of community engagement experiences (both on campus and at community placement sites) might interrogate their practices to ensure that experiences are accessible to, inclusive of, and welcoming for LGBTQ persons and experiences. The proliferation of community engagement in higher education is largely supported by a consistent charge that colleges and universities are best positioned to prepare students for active engagement in our increasingly diverse democracy (National Task Force, 2012). This project centers queer and trans* identified students, frequently ignored in discussions of community engagement and service-learning, to demonstrate their participation.

We, as the authors of one of the first empirical explorations to center LGBTQ students' participation in community engagement experiences, are reluctant to draw any specific conclusions from these results; rather, we see this project as an indicator that more research is needed to understand queer and trans* student participation in service-learning and community engagement. The insights gained in this exploratory study point to pressing issues which ought to be addressed in

future research on the high-impact practice of community-engaged learning. As scholars and practitioners, we have an obligation to more fully understand if and how students with minoritized gender and sexual identities experience harm as participants in community engagement. At the same time, we ought to explore how these students utilize oppositional consciousness as a means of resisting dominant power formations in both community site and classroom contexts. As more community engagement research centers the experiences of students with minoritized gender and sexual identities, we can better understand how this highly touted practice in higher education is experienced by more of our students.

Notes

1. We use the acronym LGBTQ because it represents our dataset and the populations/communities we intend to represent. When discussing other scholars' work, we utilize the acronym they selected and place it in quotation marks to indicate that it serves as a representation of their data.

2. We use the asterisk in *trans** to be as inclusive as possible in representing the gender identities in the literature and our discussion. As we cannot assume this same inclusion in the narratives of our participants, we do not include the asterisk when citing quotations from their interviews.

3. All names used in this research are pseudonyms.

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