Not All Identities Created Equal:
Marginalized Identities and their Impact on College Student Campus Experience

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INTRODUCTION

Organizations across the U.S. spend nearly $8 billion on diversity and inclusion efforts each year (Marketwatch, 2019). Despite this investment, many organizations report little, if any, gains in diversifying their membership or creating more inclusive cultures where all members (e.g., employees, students) thrive and stay for the long-term. Women and individuals from other historically marginalized groups report fewer positive experiences and continued experiences of discrimination and exclusion than their white male counterparts across a range of sectors. These experiences are more pronounced for employees who possess multiple marginalized identities. For instance, women of color in STEM faculty positions are more likely than non-URM women to report microaggressions (Sue et al., 2007) and feeling ostracized and devalued (Carter-Sowell & Zimmerman, 2015), likely reflecting the intersection of their racial and gender identities.

> *Intersectionality reflects the crossing of multiple forms of often marginalized identities that yield distinct perspectives and oppressive consequences among individuals (Hooks, 1984).*

The intersectionality literature makes it clear that the negative experiences of individuals with multiple marginalized identities leads to greater turnover intentions compared to those possessing just one (or no) marginalized identities as the alternative often is to stay but actively manage their identities to portray selves aligned with the prototypical (i.e., white male) role holder. Such efforts can deplete internal resources (Vohs et al., 2005), fueling stress and reducing performance. Research also suggests that experiencing discrimination, microaggressions, or exclusion based on specific marginalized identities can lead an individual to devalue (i.e., (lower the valence) of those identities, threatening their sense of self and well-being. Valence refers to the positive or negative evaluation of a given identity.

Creating more inclusive organizations, including institutions of higher education, therefore requires that organizations recognize and adapt to individuals' multiple and varying identities so that everyone can bring their "full selves" (Debebe & Reinert, 2014) to a given role. These identities can include personal identities (e.g., gender, sexual orientation), relational identities (e.g., mother, spouse, son), or social identities (e.g., scientist, Muslim), that may or may not be marginalized within a given domain.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

To date, however, intersectional studies primarily focus on the intersection of race and gender, ignoring other, equally important, identities. This omission may help explain why efforts to create more inclusive climates often fail. The purpose of this study was to study student's marginalized identities and to understand:

1. What aspects of students' identities contribute most positively to their sense of self? Which identities are less positive?
2. Does the valence with which students view their identities vary as a function of whether they identify with a marginalized group?
3. How does the valence of each identity relate to the attitudes/perceptions of interest?

METHOD

We collected pilot data from current undergraduate and graduate students from the U.S. and abroad. We distributed an online survey via Survey Monkey and allowed respondents a two-week period to respond and sent out a reminder email at the halfway mark, resulting in 40 responses in total. The online survey asked respondents to report their demographics in relation to their schooling, race, gender, sex, health status, religious identity, familial identity, employment status, friendships status, and how these identities related to the student's turnover intentions, and anxiety and stress levels associated with being a student. This survey took respondents on average 10-15 minutes to complete. As an incentive to complete the survey, all the students were entered in a random drawing to receive one of four $50 Amazon gift cards.

Measures
- Valence was measured by asking students to report how positively or negatively each of their identities was related to their sense of self, via a 6 item Likert scale. Sample Item "Student Identity is *positively related to my sense of self", "Employee identity is *negatively related to my sense of self".
- *Inclusive Climate.* We used the six-item scale developed by Nishii (2013). Sample item: "My university has a culture in which students appreciate the differences that people bring to campus". $\alpha = .05$
- All latent variables were measured using existing scales, including intention to leave (Meyer et al., 1993), well-being (Tennant et al., 2007), generalized anxiety (Tennant et al., 2007) and satisfaction as a student (Spector, 1997).

RESULTS

Descriptive statistics, shown in Table 1, reveal:

- Gender ($r = .53$, $p<.001$), race ($r = .35$, $p=.030$), sexuality ($r = .45$, $p=.005$) and religious identity ($r = .45$, $p=.009$) were positively related to satisfaction as a student.
- Race identity ($r = -.36$, $p=.025$) was negatively related to students' anxiety level.
- Religious identity ($r = .48$. $p=.005$) was positively related to students' well-being. However, religious identity ($r = -.43$, $p=.013$) was negatively related to student's turnover intentions.

RESULTS (CONT.)

Table 1: Correlation Metrix

Variable	Mean	SD	N	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9
1. GENDVAL	4	.76	39	—								
2. RACEVAL	3.92	.85	38	.299	—							
3. SEXOVAL	3.61	.86	38	.520***	.476**	—						
4. RELVAL	4	.97	33	.239	.426*	.273	—					
5. HEALTHVAL	3.19	1.10	26	.074	.400*	.482*	.560**	—				
6. Satisfaction	4.29	.64	40	.527***	.352*	.477**	.445**	.399*	—			
7. Anxiety	3.14	.64	40	-.135	-.363*	-.190	-.293	-.318	-.399*	—		
8. Well-being	3.38	.51	40	.298	.277	.201	.475**	.435*	.530***	-.568***	—	
9. Turnover	3.38	.65	40	-.264	-.038	-.207	-.426*	-.244	-.588***	.351	-.559***	—

* p < .05, ** p < .01, *** p < .001

- T-tests were conducted to compare the valence means for students identifying with marginalized groups with differences occurring for health (t=3.37, p=.002) and sexual identity(t=2.88, p=.006). This finding indicates that those who identify as heterosexuals view their sexual identities more positively than those with other sexual identities. Likewise, those who identify as having a health-related disability view this aspect of self less positively than those without a disability.

DISCUSSION

- Students' gender, race, sexual orientation, religious and health-related identity can contribute to create a more inclusive climates to the marginalized group in campus.
- Gender, sexual orientation and health-related identities are positively impact on student's campus experiences of satisfaction as a student and well-being. However, as a marginalized group with race identity is making students being more anxiety.
- Results suggest that marginalized identities relating to sexual orientation and health status have negative valence when associated with university life, when compared to the other marginalized identities.

LIMITATIONS AND FUTURE RESEARCH

- The sample size (n=40) limits our ability to generalize these findings to other universities. Additionally, the original study design was intended to be a 2-wave design, however Covid-19 halted this from happening, thus causality cannot be determined.
- Future research can be done on a larger scale to take geographic location into account to see how geographic culture can shape marginalized identities.
- Based on these findings, universities should be aware of the negative valence associated with students' sexual identities. Universities may benefit from implementing programs, information sessions, and resource sessions on this topic. Universities should also strive to provide services for a wide range of student health concerns and conditions to mitigate the negative association students may have with their health identity.