

Power-Conscious and Intersectional Approaches to Supporting Student Activists: Considerations for Learning and Development

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Employing a power-conscious, intersectional framework (Crenshaw, 1991; Dill & Zambrana, 2009), I argue educators must understand power, privilege, and oppression to effectively support and guide learning and development among student activists. Students from minoritized groups, including students of Color, women, and lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) students, frequently engage in activism because of their experiences with marginalization and face different consequences for their activist engagement than do White, male, cisgender, and heterosexual students. Recommendations for educators striving to support student activists include connecting student activism to student learning and development, developing strategies for managing multiple and conflicting roles on campus, and developing a power-conscious framework for engaging with students.

Keywords: activism, intersectionality, power, privilege, higher education

Attention to and momentum behind student activism has ebbed and flowed over time, with renewed attention to campus activism in recent years (Broadhurst & Martin, 2014; Rhoads, 2016). Technology and social media have contributed to an increase in visibility among campus and community-based activists (Bonilla & Rosa, 2015; Linder, Myers, Riggle, & Lacy, 2016) who frequently engage in activism and resistance related to identity-based discrimination and oppression (Hope, Keels, & Durkee, 2016). Although some student activists focus their energy explicitly on college campuses, many activists engage both on and off campus, connecting their experiences with oppression on campus with larger systemic issues of racism, sexism, genderism, homophobia, and additional forms of oppression (Hope et al., 2016; Rhoads, 2016). Student activists challenge college and university administrators, as well as their peers, to address oppression on campus and in the community at large. Over the years, college and university students have organized around issues affecting campus and broader society, noting the importance of college and university responsibility to improve societal conditions through civic engagement (Astin, Astin, Bayer, & Bisconti, 1975; Rhoads, 1998).

The term *activist* is not explicitly defined in most scholarship about college students engaging in social change. Generally speaking, activism refers to the commitment of transforming systems for comprehensive social change (Broadhurst, 2014; Renn, 2007). Activism is a process, not an outcome or a goal, and the very nature of activism is to disrupt the status quo. Students may engage

in activism in a variety of ways, including what many people consider traditional forms of activism like sit-ins, protests, and marches. Others may engage in awareness-raising among their peers through networking and formal leadership roles (Delgado Bernal, 1998). Still others may not resonate at all with the term activist, instead considering their work a form of resistance or even survival (Linder & Myers, 2017; Collins, 2000; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012). Student activists likely engage a variety of these strategies throughout their time as activists on and off campus.

Some scholarship has highlighted activism as a developmental process (Kezar & Maxey, 2014; Renn, 2007) and central to supporting students in their development as citizens contributing to a democratic nation (Hamrick, 1998; Rhoads, 1997). Kezar (2010) advocated the importance of faculty and students working together to engage in activism on campuses, resulting in long-term change. She described faculty and staff roles as working with students to facilitate activism or working behind the scenes to create environments in which students could participate in a variety of social actions. Similarly, activism can lead to a variety of educational outcomes for students, including “(a) developing plans for change, (b) determining strategies, (c) learning approaches to consciousness raising, (d) learning the language of those in power and how ‘the system’ works, (e) understanding mediation and negotiation, (f) using data to influence decision makers, and (g) navigating and overcoming obstacles in the change process” (Kezar & Maxey, 2014, p. 33). Similarly, Renn’s (2007) work on lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender (LGBT) and queer student leaders indicates that there may be a developmental continuum of leader to activist, where student leaders are motivated by and commit to positional leadership and often evolve to activists, or people committed to transforming systems of oppression.

The purpose of this article is to examine the role of power, privilege, and identity in student activism. I argue educators must understand oppression, power, and privilege associated with social identities to effectively support and guide student learning and

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development among student activists. Although many institutions espouse a commitment to equity and inclusion, many student activists' experiences demonstrate that institutional leaders fail to enact this commitment (Linder & Myers, 2017). Drawing on campus activism literature and intersectionality theory, I examine the influence of oppression on students' relationship to activist and student leader identities. Specifically, I highlight the ways students from various social identity backgrounds relate to the identity of *student activist*, providing implications for educators in higher education striving to support these student activists. An intersectional analysis of activist identity development contributes to a deeper understanding of the ways in which power, privilege, and oppression influence students' relationship to activism and the levels of support they receive from educators.

History of Student Activism

Documented history privileges those with the power to share their stories and have those stories heard. Ignorance or minimization of historically marginalized groups is often the very purpose of activism (Rhoads, 1998), creating a unique challenge in documenting the history of activism on college campuses. Although scholars and the media have heralded the 1960s in the United States as a period against which all other forms of student activism are measured (Astin et al., 1975; Broadhurst, 2014; Rhoads, 1998), student activism has existed on college campuses since they were founded (Altbach, 1989; Rhoads, 1998) and at a variety of institutional types (Rogers, 2011). Higher education scholars have likely ignored, minimized, or are otherwise unaware of a variety of activism on college campuses because of a lack of documentation or lack of desire to examine some forms of activism. For example, despite clear evidence of radical Black activism at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs) in the 1960s and 1970s, many scholars have cited the origins of Black campus movements at historically White institutions (Rogers, 2011). In addition, although many students work to create change on campuses, they often do not call or consider themselves activists (Linder & Myers, 2017; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012), resulting in scholars failing to examine their work as activism.

In the earliest years of college in the United States, students protested around issues of *in loco parentis* (the college or university having too strict of policies monitoring behavior; Altbach, 1989), curriculum, food, living quarters, (Broadhurst, 2014), and administrative control over athletics (Rhoads, 1998). In addition, students demonstrated an awareness of national and international events warranting attention, including protests to the Revolutionary War and boycotting British goods (Broadhurst, 2014). Mainstream higher education history highlights students' awareness of and protesting war from the 1930s through the 1960s (Altbach, 1989), with some attention to African American students' activism related to desegregation in the 1950s (Broadhurst, 2014).

In the 1960s, students actively protested the Vietnam War and pushed university administrators to take a stand on this issue (Altbach, 1989; Caple, 1998). Similarly, in the 1960s and 1970s, students engaged in activism related to civil rights, with some advocating racial integration on college and university campuses (Caple, 1998; Pratt, 2002), and others pushing back against the idea of racial integration, advocating instead for "culturally relevant education by and for African Americans" (Rogers, 2011, p.

173). In the 1980s, student activists organized around divestment, impacting college and university administrators' decisions about investing and doing business with countries and businesses with unethical practices (Rhoads, 1998). Student activists also advocated for and successfully instituted curricular and climate change related to equity and diversity in the 1990s (Hernandez, 2013; Rhoads, 1998). Women's studies, ethnic studies, and queer studies academic programs largely emerged as a result of student and faculty activism (Arthur, 2011; Jaschick, 2015; Rhoads, 1998). Despite many claims that today's students are apathetic and disengaged, student activism related to racism, sexism, homophobia, and other forms of oppression is alive and well on U.S. campuses (Broadhurst & Martin, 2014; Hope et al., 2016; Rhoads, 2016). A brief review of history of activism on college campuses indicates a significant relationship between social identity and activism. Using an intersectional framework, I will explore the relationship between identity, power, privilege, and activism.

Intersectionality Theory

Intersectionality theory explores the ways in which systems of domination and oppression influence individual people's experiences differently based on the intersection of their identities (Crenshaw, 1989; Crenshaw, 1991). Although some scholarship has misappropriated and misused intersectionality theory to engage in individual-level self-reflection about ways that individual people experience the world (Cooper, 2018; Harris & Patton, 2017b), the original intention of intersectionality theory was to center the experiences of women of Color, highlighting the ways in which systems of domination uniquely influenced their experiences with violence. Crenshaw's (1991) conceptualization of structural, political, and representational intersectionality provides a framework for exploring systems of domination and oppression in student activism. Crenshaw's (1991) work stemmed from advocating for equitable treatment of women of Color survivors of interpersonal violence and has been developed as an analytical framework for examining intersections of multiple forms of oppression in a variety of contexts. Structural intersectionality refers to the ways in which social location influences individuals' experiences. Crenshaw (1991) describes the reality that the "location of women of color at the intersection of race and gender" makes their experiences of sexual violence "qualitatively different than that of white women" (p. 1245). Political intersectionality highlights the reality that people may experience competing agendas at the intersection of their identities. For example, given the history of racism within the criminal justice system, women of Color must balance the tension between reporting experiences of sexual violence to police for their own perceived safety with the violence they or their male counterparts may experience at the hands of police. Finally, representational intersectionality refers to the "cultural construction of women of color" (Crenshaw, 1991, p. 1245), or the stories created without women of Color about their experiences. For example, when issues of racism or sexism are discussed among civil rights or feminist groups, the unique experiences of women of Color are frequently ignored because they do not fit the dominant experiences of racism experienced by men or sexism experienced by White women.

Higher education and student affairs scholars frequently use intersectionality to highlight how students experience multiple

identities (e.g., Jones & McEwen, 2000); however, much of the student affairs scholarship exploring the intersections of identities fails to highlight the influence of power on students' experiences. For example, the initial version of the Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity (MMDI) highlights identity salience based on context (e.g., a lesbian student likely has high identity salience in spaces where her sexual orientation is not welcomed), but does not specifically highlight power and privilege as central to these arguments (Jones & McEwen, 2000). Later iterations of the MMDI specifically address the role of power in how students experience multiple identities (Abes & Kasch, 2007; Jones & Abes, 2013), yet student affairs educators frequently use the model to ask students to reflect on their identity intersections without attention to power and privilege. Intersectionality theory requires educators move beyond simply describing identity to exploring the power implications related to social identity. Intersectional scholars call on educators to engage in praxis related to social identity, specifically highlighting a need for understanding power as it relates to social identities (Dill & Zambrana, 2009; Luft, 2010). For example, rather than simply asking students to identify their salient social identities, educators may help students examine why an identity is salient or not and how that relates to their experiences with power and privilege. Generally when an identity is less salient to a person, it is because they experience privilege in that identity, which does not require them to pay attention to or wrestle with that identity in the same way they must pay attention to identities in which they do not experience privilege. Examining the role of identity-based power and privilege in the context of activism warrants increased attention.

Power, Privilege, and Activism

Power and privilege influence student activism in a variety of ways, including which students consider themselves activists; activists' strategies for creating change; and the ways educators, administrators, and people in the media discuss student activism and treat activists. In addition to intersectionality theory, student engagement and ally development provide additional frameworks for exploring student activism related to power and privilege.

Who Is an Activist?

Social location, or structural intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991), influences which students define themselves or are labeled by others as activists, which has implications for the kinds of support they receive from educators, administrators, and the media. Identity influences the kinds of issues around which students organize, resulting in disparate treatment and support of student activists. Some students engage in activism related to their privileged identities as a form of ally behavior (Altbach, 1989), which is frequently highlighted as good activism. Ally identity development describes the process of students becoming aware of a dominant or privileged identity, then acting appropriately to address oppression from that identity (Broido, 2000; Reason, Roosa Millar, & Scales, 2005). Some students protest campus bookstores supporting companies that use sweatshop labor (Einwohner & Spencer, 2005) or advocate for equitable labor conditions for staff on campus (Pfosi, 2015). For example, student activists at Duke University and Harvard University recently issued demands for an equitable pay

for custodial, dining, and other staff on campus (Beyer, 2016; O'Neil, 2016). Inherent in this activism are issues of power and privilege related to social identities because most students are organizing as allies to those who experience oppression. Most of the students organizing are not suffering from inequitable labor practices, yet they are advocating on behalf of the staff who are (Pfosi, 2015). Although some staff who experience inequitable labor practices may also be students, most of them would not have time to engage in organizing or activism around these practices given that they are working full-time and taking classes. Students organizing around labor issues likely have access to social capital to which those on whose behalf they are advocating do not have access. These students frequently identify themselves and are identified by others as activists (Einwohner & Spencer, 2005; Pfosi, 2015).

Other students organize related to their own experiences with oppression on campus. For example, some students have engaged in activism related to sexual violence (Linder et al., 2016), racism (Bonilla & Rosa, 2015; Hing, 2014; Hope et al., 2016; Lee, 2014), and transphobia (Bellware, 2014; Dupere, 2017) on campus. Many sexual violence, racial justice, and queer justice activists are directly and personally impacted by issues of oppression (Linder & Myers, 2017; Rhoads, 1997). Their motivation for action is often rooted in their own experiences with racism, sexual violence, transphobia, homophobia, or other forms of oppression. Many students who organize around issues affecting them directly do not associate with the term activist—they are simply working to survive in a hostile environment that was not created with them in mind (Collins, 2000; Linder & Rodriguez, 2012). Some activists refer to work on behalf of one of their own minoritized identities as a “burden” or “responsibility” (Linder & Rodriguez, 2012, p. 390), fearing that if they do not do it, no one will. In addition, educators and peers frequently expect students with minoritized identities to address oppression as part of their daily experience (Hoffman & Mitchell, 2016), rather than seeing it as a form of activism, involvement, engagement, or leadership. College and university administrators and educators often resist or minimize this type of student activism (Hoffman & Mitchell, 2016), resulting in minoritized students receiving less support than their peers who are considered student leaders or allied activists.

What Kind of Activism?

Power and social identity also influence the kinds of activism in which students engage and their strategies for effectively creating change. Consistent with political intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991), activists must frequently engage with administrators and other power holders with competing agendas and must negotiate ways to have their voices heard through a variety of mechanisms. Although some administrators may share some minoritized identities with some student activists, most do not. Furthermore, even when administrators and students share some experiences and identities, administrators with minoritized identities likely have limited power to address issues of concern raised by the students. Access to resources, consequences for civil disobedience, and oppression within activist spaces all influence strategies for engaging in activism.

Access to resources. Administrators and educators prize engagement and leadership as intended outcomes of cocurricular

learning experiences. Defined as “the time and effort students invest in their studies and other educationally purposeful activities” (Kuh, 2009, p. 683), engagement covers a wide variety of activities. However, certain types of student engagement are privileged on college campuses. For example, administrators and educators frequently praise students engaged in community service or service-learning projects “helping” those in the community; some even refer to this as activism (Biddix, 2014). Campus administrators fund offices, programs, and staff dedicated to supporting this type of student activism. Most campuses have an office dedicated to leadership development, which frequently includes a staff person dedicated to supporting students in engaging in community service. Furthermore, some campuses also have an office dedicated to service-learning, supporting students and faculty in engaging in community service as part of the learning experience in a variety of courses. Campus administrators, therefore, privilege service-learning and community service over other forms of activism by providing support in the form of staff, funding, and opportunities for continued development.

Conversely, when students advocate for systemic change on their campuses, administrators often resist their advocacy and have developed strategies for ignoring or waiting out the student activists (White, 2013). In addition, because administrators frequently do not support activism related to campus change, fewer opportunities for educator-supported growth and development exist for these student activists. Minoritized students’ experiences are frequently incongruent with espoused institutional commitments to diversity on campus. In many cases, the concept of diversity has been coopted to placate and center whiteness and other forms of dominance (Ahmed, 2015; Hoffman & Mitchell, 2016). Specifically, when student activists raise concerns about their experiences with oppression on campus, administrators make statements to “assert their support for equity and diversity,” which often serve to “recenter majority culture by deflecting the problems articulated by [students] back on minoritized students” (Hoffman & Mitchell, 2016, p. 279). For example, after a major incident with racism on campus, some administrators may meet with or send an e-mail to the students affiliated with race-based student organizations on campus to discuss their concerns, but never make a public statement or meet with or address the students who caused the harm through their racist behavior, citing “freedom of speech” as a protection. Similarly, student activists raised concerns about racism at the University of Michigan and the president vowed to “work with the Black community to find solutions” (St. John, 2017, para. 12), yet the president never released a statement condemning the acts, nor met with the students who engaged in acts of racism. The result is that students of Color end up doing the bulk of the labor related to addressing racism on campus and students who cause harm are rarely required to engage in any reflection or education related to their behavior.

The few offices on campus that do exist to support minoritized students are underfunded when compared with mainstream leadership and involvement offices (Harris & Patton, 2017a), and staff in these offices are frequently expected to maintain order on campus, working to represent the university view to students. The expectation to both support students advocating for change and navigate their roles as university administrators puts many student affairs professionals in a bind (Gaston-Gayles, Wolf-Wendel, Tuttle, Twombly, & Ward, 2005; Harrison, 2014). For example,

staff in multicultural centers, LGBT resource centers, and women’s centers where student activists frequently gather to share their experiences and organize around issues of oppression and discrimination, are frequently asked to manage these students’ concerns and help students assimilate, rather than disrupt, campus cultures and structures.

Furthermore, students from economically privileged backgrounds often have access to more time and resources to engage in what some would consider traditional activism, defined as protests, marches, sit-ins, and demonstrations (Altbach, 1989; Broadhurst, 2014). Economic and cultural capital often provide knowledge of how systems work, access to people in political or powerful positions, and access to mainstream media, powerful tools for organizing. When students from economically and otherwise privileged backgrounds or communities participate in activism, they often have the luxury of spending less time trying to gain access to systems and more time raising consciousness and engaging in direct policy or institutional change related to their issues of importance. Students with minoritized identities often have cultural capital in the form of persistence and navigational know-how (Yosso, 2005), they must still spend more time accessing these resources than students whose networks automatically connect them with powerful people. Furthermore, students from low-income backgrounds (which are frequently tied to additional minoritized identities), work more hours than other students (Kyte, 2017), resulting in them having less time to engage in student activism.

Consequences for civil disobedience. Many activists and supporters of activism herald civil disobedience, or being arrested for disrupting campus and community spaces, as “real” activism, failing to account for the roles of identity and power in this kind of activism. White, cisgender, economic, and heterosexual privilege all result in opportunities for students to engage in traditional forms of civil disobedience with less significant consequences. When students of Color, queer/trans students, or working class students engage in activism that results in arrest or conduct violations, the consequences are far more significant than the consequences for White, cisgender, heterosexual, middle-class students. Unemployment rates for trans, LGB, and/or people of Color are significantly higher than for White, cisgender, heterosexual people (Center for American Progress, 2015; Ross, 2014). A criminal record only complicates this reality. A White person with a criminal record will likely not face the same consequences as a person of Color with a criminal charge on their record (Ross, 2014). In fact, a White person may be praised for engaging in civil disobedience, while a person of Color is punished by not being hired for a job for the very same act. Furthermore, not everyone has the financial resources to navigate the criminal justice system, resulting in more significant consequences for working class students related to civil disobedience. For these reasons, some students of Color, working class students, and queer and trans students may choose to engage in activism behind the scenes or using social media.

Oppression in social justice spaces. In addition to the consequences of racism, homophobia, sexism, genderism, and transphobia in criminal justice systems and campus environments, oppression also exists in some activist and social justice spaces. Consistent with the representational tenet of intersectionality theory (Crenshaw, 1991), students whose identities exist at the inter-

section of multiple forms of oppression frequently do not see themselves represented in mainstream activist movements. For example, a history of racism, classism, and genderism in feminist movements (Linder, 2011; Newman, 1999) and sexism, transphobia, and homophobia in racial justice movements (Chen, Dulani, & Piepza-Samarasinha, n.d.) result in some activists spending time and energy wondering if they will be welcomed in activist spaces. Experiences with marginalization in social justice or activist spaces may result in some students choosing not to participate in consciousness-raising or other direct action with a specific identity-based group, resulting in decreased efficacy of the movements. Instead, some students may choose to engage in activism in less visible ways, including connecting with activists with shared identities and experiences in online spaces or employing social media as an awareness-raising tool (Linder et al., 2016). Varied approaches to activism result in varied responses to activism from administrators, educators, and media.

Responses to Activism

Structural intersectionality influences the ways campus administrators and policymakers and educators respond to student demands for change and the consequences of activism for students involved. For example, senior administrators may revere students engaged in “traditional” forms of activism around labor and off-campus civil rights issues because the senior administrator has nostalgic memories of engaging in activism the same ways. Those who engage in less traditional (e.g., using social media as a tool) and potentially more personal (e.g., based on their identities) activism may experience more resistance from administrators because the activism is directed at interrupting campus-based problems, rather than problems “out there” that college and university administrators may more easily take a stand. Furthermore, when students engage in activism in their dominant (or ally) identities, administrator and educators frequently laud them; when students engage through their subordinated identities (e.g., gender or race), educators, administrators, and the media frame them as troublemakers and rabble-rousers, an example of political intersectionality.

Resistance from administration. Administrators and policymakers have a history of resisting student activism directed at campus-based change, including the development of policies to police student activists’ behavior and ongoing surveillance of student activists (Rogers, 2011; Sun, Hutchens, & Sponsler, 2014). Administrators began to develop policies about activism in the late 1960s after students’ organizing around racial justice gained prominence and national attention. Specifically, administrators created policies that restricted building takeovers and instituted suspension and expulsion of student activists (Rogers, 2011). For example, in the summer of 1969, many campuses expelled Black student activist or engaged in significant surveillance of them when they returned to campus in the fall (Rogers, 2011). After a lull in the 1980s and 1990s, visible student activism about campus climate has ramped up again, resulting in administrators developing new policy related to student speech and assembly to “safeguard the school’s academic and business operations so as to protect against negative headlines” (Beassie & Gomez, 2014, p. 2). It is interesting that no new policies emerged in the 1990s when students more visibly protested issues that did not directly affect their campuses’

reputations or ways of operating, like sweatshop labor and apartheid in South Africa.

Rather than considering the developmental outcomes (Kezar, 2010) or recognizing the ways in which student activism contributes to engaged citizenship (Hamrick, 1998; Rhoads, 1997), administrators may consider student activism a “disruption” to campus life (Broadhurst & Martin, 2014, p. 1), something to manage, rather than something to embrace and from which to learn. For example, many professional associations have developed publications and conference sessions for administrators to learn “how to deal with” student activism (*Responding to Campus Protests*, 2014; White, 2013).

In addition to administrators, campus educators, including faculty and entry and midlevel student affairs professionals, may also struggle to understand their role in working with student activists (Harrison, 2010; Kezar, 2010). Educators frequently feel stuck in the middle, unsure how to navigate their roles as employees charged with “maintaining order on the campus” (Gaston-Gayles et al., 2005, p. 268) and facilitators of student development (Gaston-Gayles et al., 2005; Hamrick, 1998; Kezar, 2010). Faculty (tenured and untenured) may have more flexibility in navigating their roles supporting students than student affairs educators, who are frequently considered administrators or mediators between students and upper-level campus administration (Gaston-Gayles et al., 2005). At various times throughout campus history, faculty and student affairs educators have played different roles in helping students engage in activism and create change on campus, including educating about institutional politics, showing up and supporting students at protests and rallies, and participating in behind the scenes organizing (Gaston-Gayles et al., 2005; Kezar, 2010).

Influenced by political and structural intersectionality (Crenshaw, 1991), navigating roles in supporting student activists are also mediated by identity. Faculty and staff of Color and LGBT and women faculty and staff likely experience different consequences for supporting student activists. Although faculty or staff may not be immediately fired for their involvement with student activism, opportunities for advancement and promotion may be limited as a result of their support for student activists (Harrison, 2010). Similar to students, faculty and staff from historically minoritized groups frequently engage in activism related to their social identities as a form of survival, rather than a conscious choice. Furthermore, faculty and staff minoritized groups often provide additional support and mentoring to students without compensation or recognition, referred to as a “cultural tax” (Paddilla, 1994, p. 26).

Lack of structural support. In addition to a failure of administrators and policymakers to see student activism as a developmental process and active citizenship, university structures are not set up to support all student activists equitably. As highlighted previously, students involved in service-learning, volunteerism, and other revered forms of engagement receive support from relatively well-staffed and well-funded leadership and service offices. Students engaged in activism related to social identities frequently receive less support from staff for a variety of political and structural reasons. Identity-based centers, including multicultural centers, women’s centers, and LGBT resource centers have smaller staffs and budgets than most other offices in student affairs, if they exist at all. Furthermore, because identity-based offices may already be vulnerable to losing funding or staff for

political reasons (especially at state-funded institutions), staff may be less willing to publically support students in their activist efforts, resulting in student activists engaged in identity-based activism receiving little support from student affairs educators charged with supporting student development (Linder & Myers, 2017).

Social identity intersects with student activism in multiple and complex ways. Using an intersectional framework with an explicit focus on power, I highlighted some of the ways in which students engaging in activism related to experiences with oppression may have different experiences from students approaching activism from a privileged, often allied, role. Exploring the role of power, privilege, and social identity in student activist movements provides an opportunity for educators to consider their roles in more effectively supporting student activists.

Implications and Recommendations for Educators

Ignoring or minimizing power dynamics associated with social identities limits educators' ability to support and work with student activists to achieve important campus and societal change and to effectively guide student learning and development. In addition, higher education leaders espouse a value of developing engaged citizens for a democracy and student activism may contribute to students' learning and development in this way (Biddix, 2014; Hamrick, 1998). Equitably and effectively supporting students as they develop skills to create change in their environments warrants increased attention from educators.

In this section, I use the term *educators* to refer to people who work on college campuses and are actively involved in the process of supporting students through in and out of classroom learning experiences. Previous scholarship refers to people in these roles as student affairs professionals, yet many people who support students in learning work outside structures of student affairs and some oppose the term "professional" because it connotes a focus on customer service and standards rather than education.

When administrators and educators herald some students as leaders and change agents while considering others rabble-rousers and trouble-makers, students receive disparate levels of support from educators for their growth and development. Failing to consider students' involvement advocating for changes to campus climate related to sexual assault, racism, homophobia, and transphobia as student engagement may contribute inequitable educational opportunities and lack of support for students navigating complex and mentally and emotionally exhausting efforts.

Analysis through an intersectional framework (Crenshaw, 1991) highlights political, structural, and representational challenges associated with student activism and social identities. The failure of administrators and educators to consider students engaged in creating change related to racism, sexism, genderism, and homophobia on campus as student leaders represents oppression related to political and representational intersectionality as students leaders are seen as one-dimensional, participating in mainstream leadership activities like service-learning and volunteerism. Educators' failure to see identity-based student activists as student leaders may lead to student activists not considering themselves activists or leaders. When students do not see themselves as leaders, they may choose not to participate (or be selected or encouraged to participate) in leadership development opportunities offered

through more mainstream student leadership programs and services. In addition, the lack of institutional support for identity-based centers on college campuses is an extension of oppression related to structural intersectionality. The offices are set up with one identity in mind and must compete for limited resources with the other identity-based centers, resulting in lack of opportunity for collaboration based on shared experiences and intersecting social identities. Reflecting on these challenges allows educators to consider strategies for more effectively supporting student activists.

Highlight the Learning and Development Outcomes of Student Activism

The role of educators supporting student activists is different depending on the perspective from which student activists approach their work. For students approaching activism from a privileged, or allied, perspective, the role of educators may be to continue to challenge students to consider their role as an ally in activist work. As highlighted by a variety of ally identity development models (Broido, 2000; Reason et al., 2005), students move through several stages when attempting to engage in allied behavior. In some cases, student activists acting in their allied identity may show up as a savior, highlighting the distance between them and the people on whose behalf they believe they are advocating. This will have detrimental effects on the movement or the activism in which the student is attempting to engage. Educators supporting students engaging in their allied identities must continue to support them in interrogating their privilege and understanding how to effectively engage in activism through a place of solidarity, rather than saviorhood.

Conversely, student activists advocating on behalf of issues that directly impact them need different kinds of support. Educators must develop an awareness of ways students may internalize and manage the stress and trauma associated with their work as activists. Because they often see their work as a form of survival, not activism, they may not take (or have) the time for self-care, reflection, and renewal, which becomes an important part of an educator's role in supporting students. Educators may also support student activists by helping them to identify ways to integrate their activism or survival strategies into academic and cocurricular parts of the collegiate experience, broadening the definition of student success and engagement.

Navigate Multiple and Conflicting Roles

Educators may experience conflicting messages about their roles in supporting student activists. For example, student affairs educators are trained to support student learning and development in all of their efforts on campus; additionally, student affairs educators are responsible for "maintaining order on the campus" (Gaston-Gayles et al., 2005, p. 268) and being responsible for student crises. Unfortunately, these two goals appear to conflict with each other related to student activism. Educators often serve as mediators, people serving as a bridge between students and administrators (Gaston-Gayles et al., 2005; Harrison, 2010), further illustrating the complexity of their roles. It is interesting that many students do not view entry- and mid-level educators as administrators, even though some educators may consider themselves as such. For this reason, students may share plans, ideas,

and activist strategies with educators; in some cases, these ideas may violate campus policy, resulting in the educator needing to choose how to respond in the situation, which may result in the student no longer trusting the educator or the educator losing their job or being reprimanded for failing to follow university policy.

Fortunately, most situations allow educators to find a both/and response to apparently conflicting roles relate to supporting student activists. Educators can support student activists by helping them understand how to navigate university bureaucracies, recognize key political issues, and develop strategies for communicating with administrators and policymakers (Kezar, 2010). Educators may also support students in planning more radical demonstrations, protests, or other activism by simply getting out of the way or directing students to people who can more effectively support students like faculty or community members (Linder, Quaye, Lange, Roberts, & Evans 2017). Furthermore, some educators may choose to risk their jobs and status to support student activists who decide to engage activist strategies outside the realm of institutional policies and practice. For example, the director of the women's center at the University of Cincinnati recently resigned her position in response to university administrators' failure to provide adequate support for survivors of sexual violence despite student activists' calls for more attention to the issue of sexual violence on campus (Howton, 2015).

Student affairs educators would be well suited clarify their personal and professional values and consider ways they may effectively support students without significant consequence to their status as a university official and know at what point they may choose to leave a position at their institution because their values are incongruent with the institutional values. Related to awareness of personal and professional values, student affairs educators must also engage in ongoing education to better understand the complex issues of discrimination and oppression facing students on their campuses and why some students experience campus environments differently from other students.

As described previously, educators with minoritized identities frequently experience more significant consequences and higher expectations for engagement with minoritized students than educators who hold dominant identities (e.g., White, man, cisgender, heterosexual). Educators who hold dominant identities should especially pay attention to their roles in supporting minoritized students and colleagues. Given that the consequences of speaking up and naming oppression are frequently less severe for White, heterosexual, cisgender men, it is important for them to do so. Supporting minoritized students cannot fall solely on the shoulders of minoritized educators. Although minoritized students may trust educators who share some of their minoritized identities more readily, this does not alleviate other educators from doing the work of trying to understand issues of power and privilege and seeking opportunities to listen to and advocate alongside minoritized students and colleagues.

Develop a Power-Conscious Framework

To effectively support student activists, educators must develop a power-conscious framework, including the ability to engage in ongoing reflection and awareness related to power, privilege, and oppression (Linder, 2018). A power-conscious framework pushes student affairs educators to consider the various ways power and

privilege influence students' experiences, including dominant group members' investment in and benefit from systems of domination. By recognizing ways people in dominant groups benefit from systems of domination, student affairs educators may develop more effective strategies for interrupting and addressing systems of domination. For example, when student affairs educators can see the ways people in dominant groups benefit from the current interpretation of "freedom of speech" as a completely hands off approach to addressing oppression, they could start to challenge the notion that "freedom of speech" means that no one can talk to people engaged in racist or homophobic language. Although students may not be removed from campus for engaging in racist behavior, they may still experience some consequences for the behavior. Furthermore, when student affairs educators develop a power-conscious approach, they can also shift their framework from focusing on "helping" minoritized students to survive in a hostile environment to engaging with the people causing the harm as a strategy to eradicate the harm. Although student affairs educators should continue to support minoritized students in navigating a hostile environment, it is equally important for student affairs educators to challenge the hostile environment that exists, and this often requires engagement with people causing harm.

In addition to being cognizant of the ways in which students experience marginalization and oppression on campus and in campus activism, educators should also consider how their colleagues experience and navigate marginalization and oppression in their jobs. By recognizing that faculty and staff of Color, and women and queer faculty and staff engage in service and mentoring above and beyond their White, cisgender, straight male peers, educators may provide support to their colleagues by stepping up to mentor and support students, even when they do not have a shared identity. For example, individuals who identify as straight may effectively interrupt homophobia on campus—it does not have to be the responsibility of queer faculty, staff, and students to always interrupt oppression they face.

Furthermore, by highlighting the injustices inherent in the additional "cultural tax" (Padilla, 1994, p. 268) paid by faculty and staff of Color and women and queer faculty and staff, educators may contribute to a more just work environment. However, educators must not stop with awareness. A power-conscious framework requires educators to change their behaviors (Linder, 2018). Educators must not only name the phenomenon of the cultural tax, but also develop strategies and advocate for institutional policy and practice that rewards minoritized faculty and staff for additional service expected of them by students and university structures.

Integrate Activism into Student Learning and Development

Administrators, policymakers, and educators frequently consider student activism an extracurricular activity outside the scope of student learning and development (Kezar, 2010). Educators should review recent work highlighting the developmental outcomes associated with student activism (see Biddix, 2014; Kezar, 2010; Kezar & Maxey, 2014) and consider ways to integrate these learning outcomes into their work. Furthermore, because some student activists do not consider themselves activists or leaders, educators could attend student events and activism outside their

purview to connect with student activists to better understand their experiences and to encourage their work as legitimate and important. Educators may also consider developing workshops and programs about navigating institutional bureaucracy and highlighting key considerations for creating institutional change, both key considerations for engaging in activism on campus and as an active citizen in the larger community.

Finally, faculty and staff teaching courses may also consider incorporating student activism in their course materials and assignments. Similar to service-learning and volunteer assignments, faculty may design assignments asking students to identify a problem or issue and to develop a plan for addressing the problem. Action-based assignments contribute to students' understanding of social change strategies and reward students who already engage in activism by centering their experiences in classrooms. Creating opportunities for students to earn credit for the activism in which they are engaging contributes to better self-care for these students because their engagement becomes cocurricular, rather than extracurricular, and it allows them to see themselves and their work as legitimate and important.

Conclusion

Increased visibility of activism on college requires educators and administrators in higher education to consider new ways of responding to and supporting student activism and engagement. As issues with oppression continue to plague campuses and students continue to raise awareness and demand improvement in campus environments, it becomes even more important for educators and administrators to listen to these demands and consider steps toward improvement of their environments.

In addition, supporting students' growth and development remains a primary role of educators in higher education. Given that students engage in activism, leadership, and engagement differently based on their social identities, educators must understand the influence of power, privilege, and oppression on students' experiences with activism. Recognizing the consequences of activism as different for students based on their varying social identities allows educators to better support and guide student activists in their quests to improve campus and the larger community. Furthermore, student activism may contribute to many college and university missions to contribute to the public good. If college and university educators embrace, rather than resist, student activists, they may be better positioned to create more socially just environments on their campuses and contribute to addressing issues with oppression in the larger community.

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