



# Research Impacts Project

Documenting, Evaluating, and Valuing Impactful Research

## Mapping Q

According to [a 2022 survey](#) of 34,000 LGBTQ youth ages 13-24, 45% of LGBTQ youth seriously considered attempting suicide in the past year. Moreover, nearly 1 in 5 transgender and nonbinary youth attempted suicide, with LGBTQ youth of color reporting higher rates than their white peers. LGBTQ youth who live in affirming and accepting communities reported significantly lower rates of attempting suicide than those who do not.

Mapping Q is a series of art making and mental health workshops for Arizona LGBTQ youth ages 14-24. This project aims to foster positive identity development and build community among LGBTQ youth by providing a forum for youth to learn about LGBTQ artists and explore topics including self-care, harm reduction, and how to effectively advocate for oneself and one's community. Through this project, youth attend a series of workshops where they explore artmaking, self-care, and harm reduction. Throughout the program, youth are asked to map the various spaces in which they exist—public spaces, school spaces, home spaces, online spaces—and explore the way in which they do or do not feel visible or fully accepted in those spaces. They are then encouraged to create art that explores these dynamics and maps futures that are more inclusive for them and others that come after them.

Each session of Mapping Q culminates with an exhibit of youth artwork. Through this exhibition youth voices and perspectives are made visible and the exhibition provides an opportunity for the public to engage with youth artwork, creative ideas/solutions and experiences in new ways. Youth select the art they want in the public exhibition and have the opportunity to include artist statements with their work that explains the larger context or intention of the work.

This project was founded in 2014 by Chelsea Farrar, current Curator of Community Engagement at the University of Arizona Museum of Art and longtime formal and informal educator. Farrar had initially begun doing mapping workshops with LGBTQ+ youth at a local high school in order to better understand their experiences of space and place. Collaborations with community organizations including the Southern Arizona AIDS Foundation (Tucson) and one•n•ten (Phoenix), served as a way to integrate mental health focused workshops into the program curriculum.

In 2016, Dr. Russ Toomey, Professor of Family Studies and Human Development, joined the project. With research expertise in LGBTQ+ youth experiences in schools, families, and communities and how these experiences shape youth outcomes, Dr. Toomey was excited about the work Chelsea was doing and the prospect of exploring how participation was affecting youth.

Data collection with youth has indicated significant reductions in depressive systems and increased feelings of belonging in the LGBTQ+ community (+7%) and peer support (+17%). Mapping Q

provides an opportunity for youth to use art to cope with the challenges they face, a forum for building relationships with each other, and a chance to see people like them highlighted in public spaces. As one participant commented:

[“Because as someone who is only a youth, but has experienced homelessness and is queer, I don’t have many opportunities to be in a museum. You know, I feel like it opened a door and said you can do things like this.”](#)

By allowing youth the opportunity to engage in art-making and skills development in a supportive environment built with their experiences in mind, the program opens up spaces of belonging and inclusion. As one participant succinctly stated: “This [program] allows us to be seen in the way we want to be seen.”

However, Chelsea, notes that the impacts extend beyond the youth involved in the program. The project has, for example, prompted important conversations within the Museum of Art regarding their approach to diversity, equity, and inclusion and how they can actively work to make the museum a more inclusive space. Moreover, the annual exhibition provides an opportunity to intervene in the museum space in a way that highlights LGBTQ+ youth voices and providing an opportunity for LGBTQ+ members of the university community and the public to see themselves represented. The artist statements that youth can include with their work in the exhibition provide opportunities for museum staff and visitors to read about the experiences of LGBTQ+ youth. In creating space for LGBTQ+ youth voices and experiences to be highlighted and seen, Mapping Q works to create more inclusive museum spaces while simultaneously prompting conversations and reflections among those who interact with the museum in formal and informal ways.

Mapping Q illustrates the powerful ways in which university staff, researchers, and community partners can bring together resources and expertise to create programs that enable us to learn about pressing social issues while simultaneously actively working to address their root causes.

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Societal Impact