Whiteness Reconsidered
Navigating Diverging Identities Between Students and Staff

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Who are we?

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Agenda

▷ Introduction
▷ Let’s talk about whiteness
▷ How we got here
▷ Power Flower reflection activity
▷ Student survey data
▷ Next steps
▷ Questions
Learning Goals

▷ **Challenge** ourselves to discuss our own (dominant and/or privileged) identities
▷ **Recognize** how whiteness and other dominant identities have attained and maintained their power and privilege
▷ **Reflect** on our own identity and add a reflective activity to our toolbox
▷ **Understand** the impact of international education staff demographics on the student advising experience
Expect and accept lack of closure.
Share responsibility for including everyone in the discussion.
Respect others’ right to decide if and how they will share their experiences and perspectives.
Understand that other people will have different perspectives and experiences from yours.
Expect a range of emotions to be present, though not always visible.
Expect to have your perspectives challenged by others.
When responding to others’ ideas, be critical and compassionate.
Social identities | socially constructed groups categorizing how we identify ourselves in relation to others

- Dominant identities | often privileged
- Non-dominant identities | often disadvantaged

Identity salience | the frequency that an individual thinks about their group membership
The spark of an idea
**Gender**

Women represented 79% of the respondents, men 20%, .2% identified as transgender, and .8% preferred not to disclose their gender. While there is not national data on study abroad students’ gender identification outside of the female/male binary, 66.5% of study abroad students identify as female (IIE, 2016).

**Country of Origin**

The large majority of the 497 respondents who reported their country of birth were born in the United States (86.7%). The next top three countries of origin included Germany (1.0%), Mexico (1.0%), and Canada (0.8%).
### Table 1: Disability Identification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Disability Identification</th>
<th>Percentage</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>I do not identify as having a disability/impairment</td>
<td>79.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental health conditions</td>
<td>10.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chronic illness</td>
<td>5.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vision impairment (including blindness)</td>
<td>3.1%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Deafness or hard of hearing</td>
<td>2.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other health impairment</td>
<td>1.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Learning impairment</td>
<td>1.0%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical mobility impairment</td>
<td>0.8%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Autism spectrum disorder</td>
<td>0.6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Intellectual disability</td>
<td>0.4%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Speech or language impairment</td>
<td>0.2%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

### Figure 3: Generation Cohort

- **Millenial (1980 – 2000)**: 51.86%
- **Generation X (1965 – 1979)**: 14.79%
- **Baby Boomer (1946 – 1964)**: 10.07%
- **Other**: 2.41%
- **Generation Z (After 2000)**: 0.44%
- **Mature/Silent (1927 – 1945)**: 0.44%
Informal research to collect the perceptions of staff
Shared through personal networks and SECUSS-L
90 respondents in one week (thank you!)

Demographics
Which do you consider to be your most prominent social identities?

Staff Demographics
Comfort Discussing Social Identities with Others

- In general, how comfortable are you discussing your own identities with people who share your perceived identities?
- In general, how comfortable are you discussing your own identities with people who do NOT share your perceived identities?

How comfortable are you talking about identities?
Comfort Discussing Social Identities with Students

How comfortable are you discussing identities with students who share your perceived identities?

How comfortable are you discussing identities with students who do NOT share your perceived identities?

How comfortable are you talking about identities?
A Conversation With White People on Race
▷ What aspects of these video clips resonated with you?
▷ Do you find yourself more comfortable discussing your privileged or non-privileged identities? Why?
▷ Why do you think many people find it difficult to talk about privileged identities?
▷ How important is it to discuss our privileged identities?
Whiteness | Origins

▷ Pan-Europeanism

▷ Socially constructed, no biological basis

▷ Nonexistent until the 16th century
  ○ Used to justify slavery and perpetuate other pre-existing systems of exploitation
Whiteness | Today

▷ Unearned privilege
  ○ “Invisible knapsack”
▷ Freedom of movement
▷ Racial contract
▷ White supremacy
Whiteness | Invisibility

▷ Thrives on being unnamed
▷ White fragility
▷ Farce of individualism and meritocracy
▷ Attachment to good/bad binary
▷ Appreciating other cultures as sufficient “diversity”
Critical Race Theory

▷ Racism is endemic in US systems and life
  ○ Results in many forms of oppression
  ○ Intersectionality matters

▷ CRT in Education
  ○ Inequality
  ○ Eurocentric content and ideals
  ○ IE as an extension of this space
Diverse Learning Environments

- Students and their multiple identities at center
- Staff identities impacting all co-curricular processes
- Student perceptions of staff are likely to shape comfort levels and engagement

Dr. Sylvia Hurtado's Model for Diverse Learning Environments
Diverse Learning Environments

▷ Students and their multiple identities at center
▷ Staff identities impacting all co-curricular processes
▷ Student perceptions of staff are likely to shape comfort levels and engagement

Dr. Sylvia Hurtado’s Model for Diverse Learning Environments
Reflection Activity: Power Flower
Reflection Activity: Power Flower

**INTENTIONS**

▷ Define our belonging to various social identity groups
▷ Define positions of privilege and disadvantage within each social identity group
▷ Discover how close, or how distant, we are to the dominant identity of our current society
▷ Discuss the implications of social identity on day-to-day experiences
Power Flower | Step 1: Center

You
How you identify within each social identity group (1 in each petal)

For example: White (Race), Straight (Sexual Orientation)
Power Flower | “Big 8” Identities

- Race
- Ethnicity
- Gender Identity
- Sexual Orientation
- Ability
- Religion
- Nationality
- Socioeconomic Status
The dominant group for each social identity in US context

For example: Able-Bodied (Ability)
Power Flower | Step 4: Your Flower

Color in petals with dominant identities in one color; color petals with non-dominant identities in a second color.
1. What are your reactions to the process of drawing the Power Flower?
2. Which social identities are you more or less aware of? Are these dominant or non-dominant identities?
3. What questions about privilege and disadvantage are raised for you after doing this activity?
4. How might you use an activity like this either with staff or students in your organization or office?
Ask students to draw an additional ring of petals that represents the dominant social identities in the host country culture. How is this similar to or different from the US context? What information do we still need?
A snapshot of the student experience

▷ Informal research to collect the perceptions of students
▷ Shared with education abroad alumni at 20+ organizations
▷ 110 respondents
▷ Interviews with 13 students
▷ Survey consisted of demographic questions (optional), Likert scale and open ended questions
  ○ Demographics
  ○ Advising context
▷ Limitations
Surveyed student demographics

Which do you consider to be your most prominent social identities?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Identities</th>
<th>Percent of Students</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td>9.17%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Age</td>
<td>7.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Gender</td>
<td>32.11%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Race</td>
<td>21.10%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethnicity</td>
<td>19.27%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Personality</td>
<td>6.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Religion</td>
<td>6.42%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sexuality</td>
<td>7.34%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SES</td>
<td>8.26%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>37.61%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Student Identity Reflection

I believe that I share many of the same social identities as this staff member.

- **Strongly Disagree**: 6.4%
- **Disagree**: 21.1%
- **Agree**: 60.6%
- **Strongly Agree**: 11.9%
I believe that I share many of the same social identities as this staff member.

- **Top identities students perceived to be the same:**
  Gender, Race, Citizenship, Interest in traveling

- **Top identity students of color perceived to be the same:**
  Gender

- **Top identities white students perceived to be the same:**
  Race, Gender
Student Identity Reflection

I believe that I share many of the same social identities as this staff member.

▷ Top identity students perceived to be different:
  Gender, Race, Uncertainty of staff’s perceived identities

▷ Students who perceived gender to be different:
  100% of non-binary students, 9% of females, 4% of males

▷ Students who perceived race to be different:
  25% of Black or African-American, 7% of Asian, 4% of White students
Student Identity Reflection

The staff member's (perceived) social identities impacted what topics I brought up with them

- Strongly Agree: 6.4%
- Agree: 24.8%
- Disagree: 41.3%
- Strongly Disagree: 27.5%
The staff member's (perceived) social identities impacted what topics I brought up with them.

Common thoughts from students who agreed:

- “We only talked about academics.” (or finances, applications, etc.)
- “At the time, I was not comfortable discussing topics of race with white women.”
- “Knowing that she was also a Latina made me feel more comfortable to ask her questions. Especially about her abroad experiences and how I would tell my family that I wanted to study abroad - since it is really a family decision when you are Latinx.”
Student Identity Reflection

The staff member's (perceived) social identities impacted what topics I brought up with them.

Common thoughts from students who disagreed:

▷ “I felt no issue bringing up topics differently due to ‘perceived social identities.’”
▷ “I had only brief contact with my advisor and the topics were mostly logistical.”
Student Identity Reflection

I felt comfortable speaking about my social identities with this staff member.

- Strongly Agree: 34.9%
- Agree: 51.4%
- Disagree: 9.2%
- Strongly Disagree: 4.6%
Student Identity Reflection

I felt comfortable speaking about my social identities with this staff member.

Common thoughts from students who disagreed:

▷ “I did not feel it was necessary”
▷ “Only because we talked about applying, nothing related to social identities.”
▷ “Not really, because the process would involve outing myself (which I have no desire to do), explaining my fears of being treated a certain way because of my race, and having those discussed by someone who lacks any shared experiences with being racialized in the United States and abroad.”
Student Identity Reflection

I felt comfortable speaking about my social identities with this staff member.

Common thoughts from students who agreed:

▷ “We did not go much into social identities, but I was very comfortable with her.”
▷ “I felt as thought I could talk to this staff member about anything.”
▷ “I’m pretty comfortable with my social identities and have no problem openly talking about them with others.”
▷ “I have a similar social identity, so it was not an issue.”
Discussing Social Identities with Students

Feedback from students

▷ Primary goal of advising for logistical/administrative topics
▷ Student opinion was mixed about when identities should be discussed
▷ Majority of students indicated advisors should encourage students to explore their identities before going abroad
▷ “Be open about what you know and what you don’t know. Also, don’t be afraid to refer people to other people or resources who may better be able to understand or help given a particular social identity.”
Discussing Social Identities with Students

Key Challenges (as defined by students)

▷ Too many resources, students will not engage
▷ They hear what we say, but don’t understand its value until onsite
▷ Lack of connection to the importance of identity exploration
▷ Capacity to develop deeper relationships
Discussing Social Identities with Students

Resources to engage students in identity exploration

▷ Connecting with alumni that hold similar identities
▷ Videos (2-3 minutes)
▷ Hosting workshops or group discussions
▷ Links to resources
What advice would you give staff members to better support students with a variety of social identities?

**Relationships**
- Get to know each student as an individual
- Focus on listening; be patient, vulnerable, and open minded
- Check-in with student while they are abroad
- Ask students about concerns

**Professional Development**
- Diversify IE staff
- Learn about undoing institutionalized racism
- Stay up-to-date on how different social identities are received in your program locations
- Check your privilege and positionality
Now what?

NEXT STEPS
1. Talking about my privileged identities
2. Activities that reflect on social identities
3. Resources for students about social identities abroad
4. Learning more about whiteness and other dominant identities
5. Bringing up social identities in the advising space
6. Pre-departure orientation discussions about social identities
Thanks!

Any questions?

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