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CONFERENCE

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Problematizing
Education Abroad in
Europe Through a
DEI Lens



PARIS 2023
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Introductions

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Agenda

- Context & Rationale
- Salon - Small Group Discussions
- Salon - Larger Group Discussion
- Call to Action & Next Steps

Grounding Framework: Disruptive Leadership



What makes for a disruptive leader?



Our argument...

Traditional education abroad programs in Europe perpetuate colonial traditions and mindsets. They do so by glorifying, celebrating, and centering colonial and majority perspectives. This can be seen in several areas, including:

- **Recruitment & advising:** is the experience of underrepresented students fully accounted for? What biases exist in advising them?
- **Curriculum:** what course topics, authors, and perspectives are covered?
- **Co-curricular experiences:** what social-cultural field experiences are included? What neighborhoods are visited and communities engaged?
- **Student support:** are on-site staff equipped with a nuanced understanding of the U.S. DEI context and needs of diverse students?

Why does this matter?



Qualities of Gen Z

- More racially and ethnically diverse than previous generations
- On track to be the most educated generation yet
- Gen Z and Millennials share similar viewpoints on major socio-political issues
 - Racial Justice
 - Environmental Justice
 - Value-based consumerism and employment
- More likely to know someone who goes by gender-neutral pronouns than older generations
- 95% of 13-17 year olds have access to a smartphone

*Data from Pew Research Center and Forbes



Does our study abroad
program design align?

Europe is More than its Colonizers

- Many of the European cities we send students to are much more racially diverse than people may initially think
- Remnants of colonization
 - Migration
 - Cultural Symbols
 - Cuisine
 - Museums
- LGBTQ+ rights and disability advocacy varies greatly by country and even by city
- Western European cities are often positioned as incredibly progressive... is that the reality?



The Connection Between Mental Health & Identity

- CIEE 2022 Summit: Responding to student mental health concerns was cited as one of the most challenging aspects of the job by onsite staff
- What role do identity and intersectionality play in student mental health during a program?
- How do feelings of isolation and lack of belonging contribute to students' mental health during a program?

Cultural incompetence of health care providers likely contributes to underdiagnosis and/or misdiagnosis of mental illness in BIPOC. (MHA 2023)

Black adults are 20 percent more likely to report serious psychological distress than adult Whites. (MHA, 2023)

Mental health distress incidents were the most likely incident type to result in program withdrawal (66% of all mental health distress incidents reported) (Forum, 2023)

“We do not learn from our experiences, we learn from processing our experiences”

John Dewey



The Hidden Curriculum

Definition and Concept

Formal official curriculum: Academic knowledge and skills educators intentionally teach to students

Hidden curriculum: unwritten, unofficial experiences, values and perspectives students learn and that change the attitude and beliefs of students

Hidden curriculum in study abroad: Students absorbing cultural and social messages while they are abroad

Hidden curriculum at CIEE: Experiential learning

- Student life program elements supplementing the immersive academic program components like internships, direct independent research and co-curricular activities
- Embedded in cultural mentorship by CIEE staff to contextualize and reflect on experienced intercultural differences

Warm-Up Questions

1. Can a student be called a “Global Citizen” if they study abroad in Europe?
2. How can we balance the needs of our students with the realities of the cultures in which they are studying?
1. How do current program curricula and experiential learning activities further colonial mindsets and traditions?

Salon Discussion

Recruitment & Advising

- How are we positioning European education abroad programs in a way that speaks to students from underrepresented backgrounds?
- Does unconscious bias show up in our advising practices and the programs we connect underrepresented students to?
- Are we addressing the real challenges students from underrepresented backgrounds may face studying abroad in Europe?

Program, Curricular Design & Assessment

- How can the hidden curriculum support diverse perspectives and promote inclusion?
- How can community engagement opportunities involve underrepresented communities in the host culture?
- Do course syllabi include readings/guest lecturers from diverse perspectives?
- Health and safety: what are we saying about unsafe neighborhoods and the communities therein?
- How are we assessing DEI initiatives and if we are meeting our students' needs?

Student Support

- How are we preparing our onsite staff to support students from underrepresented backgrounds? How can we familiarize them with the U.S. DEI context?
- How can we balance the realities of different cultural perspectives related to underrepresented identities and our students' needs?

So now what?

Based on today's salon discussion, are there things you would like to examine at your own institution/organization to improve for students from diverse backgrounds?

- **Student Recruitment & Advising**
- **Program, Curricular Design, and Assessment**
- **Student Support**

Reimagining European Programs for All

Critically examine existing programs from every angle:

- Are our recruiting and advising practices inclusive of diverse students' interests and needs?
- Do learning objectives center decolonized, non-White, and other minoritized lines of inquiry?
- Will students be exposed to the diverse experts, theories, works, sites, and neighborhoods that exist in the target culture/location?
- How do you know that a program's DEI initiatives are succeeding?
- How are students from diverse backgrounds being prepared? How are onsite faculty/staff being prepared to support them?
- Are we striking a balance between student needs and expectations with local cultural norms and values?
- How are we positioning Europe alongside programs in other destinations?
- What does it mean to decolonize education abroad - and why should this be important?

Download our Self-Reflection Resource



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Thank You!

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