Navigating Intersecting Identities that Inform Student Experience

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Learning Outcomes

- Participants will develop the skills needed to help students understand their intersecting identities and how they play into their lived experiences.
- Participants will understand the theory of self-authorship and R-MMDI and the limitations that each possess in regards to diverse students.
- Participants will apply theories learned in the session to case study group work to learn how to best support students in various situations.
Who we are?
The Theory of Self Authorship

- **Cognitive Development**
  - External Definition: Knowledge in terms of right or wrong and as truths that only highly trained experts possess
  - Crossroads: Recognize the possibility of making decisions based on a set of values and beliefs they have internally constructed, yet they are not yet clear on how they form beliefs
  - Internal Definition: To take ownership of how they made meaning of the world rather than looking to others to construct their perspective

- **Interpersonal Development**
  - Seek to build relationships with others who are similar to them and may be hesitant to interact with those who are different
  - Can identify how external sources such as their friends’ and family members’ views influence them, though they are not yet able to overcome or coordinate these influences
  - Continuously reevaluate relationships, particularly ones that were not grounded in a sense of mutuality and respect

- **Intrapersonal Development**
  - Base identities almost exclusively on the beliefs and values with which they are most familiar and comfortable rather than those they have examined
  - Still in the process of discovering what they value and who they are
  - In control of their emotions and were able to create their own happiness

(Magolda & King, 2012)
Identities Influence Lived Experiences
At the center of multiple dimensions of identity is a core sense of self, or “core identity.”

Externally defined singular social group memberships surround the core.

Contextual influences are represented by intersecting circles of identity. Importance of each secular identity is represented by a dot on the model.

How far these dots/identity dimensions are from the core identity signifies the importance that identity dimension has for the individual at that time.

(Jones & McEwen, 2000)
Reconceptualized Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity

- Recreated the Model of Multiple Dimensions of Identity along with the role of Meaning-Making Capacity in the construction of Multiple Identities
- Portrays in 2 dimensions the interactive nature of the relationships among 3 components of the identity construction process: context, meaning-making, and identity perceptions
- The Meaning-Making Capacity is drawn in the new model as a filter & contextual influences move through the filter depending upon the depth and permeability of the filter

(Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007)
RMMDI and Self Authorship Relationship

Self-Perceptions of Multiple Identity Dimensions, such as race, social class, sexual orientation, gender, religion, ability

Meaning-Making Filter
Depending on complexity of development, contextual influences are filtered to a greater or lesser extent.

Contextual Influences, such as peers, family, norms, stereotypes, sociopolitical conditions

External Crossroads Internal
C, cognitive; I, intrapersonal

(Abes, Jones, & McEwen, 2007)
Intersectionality

- Intersectionality is a way to understand how identities and systems of oppression intersect
- Refers to how race, class, gender, sexuality, the body, and nation, among other markers of social and cultural difference, come together simultaneously to produce identities and experiences, ranging from privilege to oppression, in a particular society
Intersectionality cont.

- People’s identities are greater than the sum of individual attributes such as race, class, gender, ability status, sexual orientations, etc.
- Intersectionality challenges the idea that an individual’s lived experience is grounded in a single social identity and that aspects of oppression can be examined and understood singularly (Bowleg, 2008).

“There is no single issue struggle because we do not live single issue lives.” - Audre Lorde
Intersectional Critique on Student Development Theories

Intersectional Critique on Student Development Theories

External Influences → Identification with personal identities → Internal Influences

Exposure to incident

External Influences → Internal influences → Engagement with personal identities

Recognizing intersecting identities and how they contribute to lived experiences

Moving towards internal self-definition
Theory Comparisons

RMMDI

- Identities at core
- Multiple identities
- Looks at context of situation

Intersectional Critique

- Funnel idea
- Focus on identities and systems
- Linear model, does not go back and forth

Similarities

- Filter aspect
- Saliency of identities
- Meaning making
- Contextual influences
- Internal and external influences
## Theory Comparisons

### Self-authorship
- Students identified as “absolute knowers”
- College is seen as when students begin a continuous process of distinguishing and possibly distancing themselves from the societal standards

### Intersectional Critique
- The idea of “absolute knowing” is called into question.
- The concept of external definition is not as easy to apply.

### Similarities
- Presence of External and Internal definition
- Centrifuge similar to the “crossroads”
Case Study

A racially charged bias incident happened on your campus that sparked a lot of discussions surrounding the support of students of color on your campus. You serve on your campus’ Sexual Assault Awareness Committee and you realize that your committee has been primarily focused on the white, heterosexual experience.

How can you begin discussions within your committee around intersectionality within sexual assault and coming up with ideas through an intersectional lens?
Worksheet/small group time
Action Steps
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Thank you!