

Deconstructing White Identity and the Effect on Campus Climate

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Abstract

This study seeks to better understand White identity salience at a predominantly White, religiously-affiliated, private university in the Midwest and establish an effect on the campus climate.

Research Questions

To what extent are racial climate and white identity salience related?

Does saliency of racial identity of white students change behaviors towards black students?

Does the saliency of racial identity of white students affect the campus climate?

Methodology

The study consisted of eight individual interviews grounded in the Ethnographic method with students who identified as White. The interviews were transcribed, coded, and analyzed resulting in study themes.

Selected References

Torres, V., Howard-Hamilton, M.F., & Cooper, D.L. (2003). *Identity development of diverse populations: Implications for teaching and administration in higher education*. Jossey-Bass: San Francisco, CA.

Hurtado, S., Ruiz Alvarado, A. & Guillermo-Wann, C. (2015). Thinking about race: The salience of racial identity at two- and four-year colleges and the climate for diversity. *Journal of Higher Education* 86(1), 127-155.



Literature

Acceptance



Resistance



Redefinition



Internalization

Hardiman White Identity Theory (2001)

Contact



Disintegration



Immersion



Emersion

Helms White Identity Theory (1992)

Research Themes

- Lack past diverse experiences
- Minimal introspection about Whiteness
- Minimal racial integration on campus
- Social Media plays a role
- Influenced by White culture and peers
- Racism is an abstract concept; not real
- There is privilege in not engaging
- Tension provokes thought

Implications

Gap of education about Whiteness, privilege and systemic racism.

Need for programs to strengthen self-reflection, persistence and communication skills when discussing race

Future research could examine intersectionality of minority identities and socioeconomic status, and influencing factors such as childhood environment, social media, peer influence, and adult mentors.

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