ABSTRACT

KING, ASIA Y'CHEIKA. Constructing Diversity Discourse: An Exploration of International Educators' Perceptions of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Global Education. (Under the direction of Dr. Stephen Wiley).

This study explores the landscape of diversity discourse within global education by examining the perspectives and experiences of international educators. Specifically, those who work within International Student and Scholar Services and Education Abroad. The research questions analyzed during this study included:

RQ1: In what ways do international educators understand and interpret the terms diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, belonging, accessibility, and access in the context of diversity discourse within international education?

RQ2: How do power relations and societal context influence these interpretations?

RQ3: How do international educators incorporate diversity discourse into concrete practices within the field?

RQ4: How do international educators come to make sense of the field's move toward more diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives?

For this study, thirteen sessions were observed and there were 24 participants who participated in in-depth semi-structured interviews. Key themes included a sense of diversity within the field, a connection between identity and a sense of belonging, and navigating organizational power.

Constructing Diversity Discourse: An Exploration of International Educators' Perceptions of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion in Global Education

by
Asia Y'Cheika King

A thesis submitted to the Graduate Faculty of
North Carolina State University
in partial fulfillment of the
requirements for the degree of
Master of Science

Communication

Raleigh, North Carolina
2023

APPROVED BY:

_____	_____
Dr. Stephen B. Crofts Wiley Committee Chair	Dr. Kami Kosenko
_____	
Dr. Tugce Ertem Eray	

DEDICATION

Ubuntu. I am because we are. This work is dedicated to my community. To the individuals who have shaped me, nurtured me, and reminded me that we are all interconnected.

BIOGRAPHY

Asia Y'cheika King obtained her Master of Science in Communication from the Department of Communication at North Carolina State University in December 2023. As an international educator, DEI practitioner, and facilitator, her research interests explore the intersections of global education and diversity, equity, and inclusion. Asia is passionate about connecting theory to practice and providing educators the tools necessary to thrive within the field.

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

I want to express my gratitude to the community of international educators whose support and encouragement breathed life into my research. Hours of thoughtful interviews, impromptu conversations, and thought-provoking sessions filled with knowledge truly made this work a collective endeavor. To my participants, thank you for sharing your stories. You each provided me with a diverse array of insights, beliefs, and knowledge. This work could not have been created without your labor.

A special appreciation goes to my committee, whose guidance, wisdom, and unwavering belief in my potential kept me on course throughout this journey. Your invaluable feedback has helped me refine my ideas and shape this work into what it is today. To Dr. Wiley, who was instrumental in my choosing this Communication pathway, thank you for your mentorship. I feel honored to have learned from you over these past few years.

Finally, to my wife who has been an unwavering pillar of support and encouragement, I am truly grateful. Words cannot express how thankful I am for what you've done for me as I've embarked on this journey.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

LIST OF TABLES

LIST OF FIGURES

PREFACE

Conferences feel like home to me. It's something about the space that allowed an introverted extrovert like me to thrive. The power of connections, both old and new, is what draws me in. I've been warned this year by my colleagues and supervisors.

"It's your first national conference. Ease into it. Remember to pace yourself."

"It's ok to be a bit overwhelmed. Don't feel like you have to do everything you see in the program."

"Make time for your own interest and networking. Of course, there are things we need to be at but remember this is also a professional development opportunity for you."

When I step into this convention center, I don't feel overwhelmed. I feel energized. I instantly feel a sense of familiarity. International educators have taken over the city. There are signs everywhere announcing our presence. I don't know many folks, but I feel a sense of community as I walk through the exhibit hall with hundreds of booths highlighting a multitude of countries, cultures, programs, and services. I overhear meetings in a variety of different languages and get a recommendation that I ***must*** *get an invite for an annual event at a local embassy. For me, conferences have always been more than just gatherings of professionals and experts within the field. They're a place of learning, exploration, and discovery.*

International education has permeated every aspect of my life: my career, my research, my friendships, my interests. It's difficult to distinguish where one ends and the other begins. Conferences serve as a gathering ground where I can connect with others who share the same passion for this field. Others who understand the challenges and hurdles that sometimes seem insurmountable. Others who are dedicated to making an impact, changing the culture, and challenging the status quo.

I've built a community here within the global education field. One that I know collectively we can make impact and change. I'm curious to learn more about the people within my community and the overall community itself. What are our goals, our purpose, our passion projects? What are the hidden layers underneath the rose-colored glasses through which I've been viewing things? Am I seeing the full picture or just the one I want to be a part of?

CHAPTER 1: Introduction

Access. Belonging. Diversity. Equity. Inclusion. Justice. Each of these terms could be considered to fall within diversity discourse. Since the 1960s, the popularity around diversity, equity, and inclusion (or DEI) work has steadily grown. Evolving out of the Civil Rights Movement, diversity discourse has expanded to include more than just race. Concerns around gender, disability, age, sexual orientation, economic status, educational level, veteran status, and the intersectionality of these identities have moved the conversation from tolerance to recognition and even value (Beavers, 2018).

Included in this expansion is the intersection of how DEI is understood and embedded throughout educational fields. While DEI is a common acronym used in the landscape of diversity discourse, it is not the "best" term nor the only term used to encapsulate the everchanging conversation around diversity discourse. Therefore, I will use the term diversity discourse to attempt to encompass the depth and breadth of language being used in educational fields.

International education, sometimes referred to as global education, is one of those fields that is actively discussing the connections between DEI and the research, scholarship, and practice that occurs. While the diversity discourse commands the most attention, it is important to note the shadow it cast over the actions needed within international education to move towards a more socially just field. Even though international education's connections to what would now be known as "DEI initiatives" have a history back to the 1930s and 40s when German-Jewish scholars were welcomed at historically Black colleges and universities (HBCUs), the current climate has focused on superficial initiatives rather than structural (Berger, 2020).

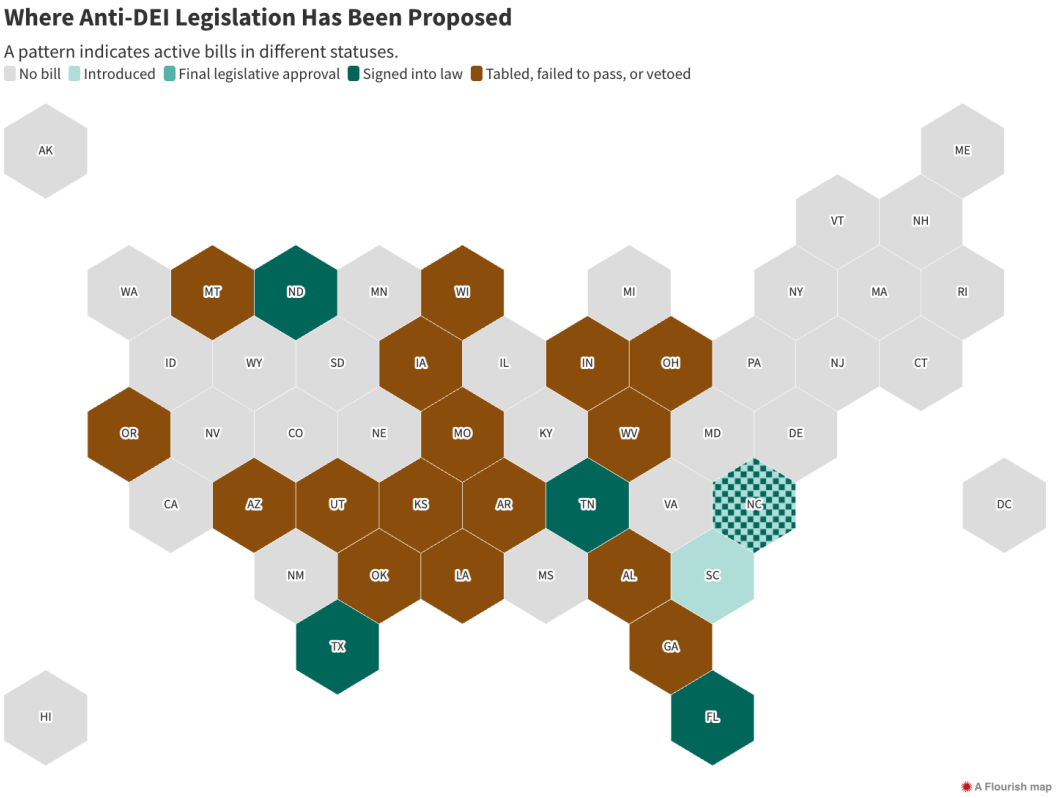
A move towards structural changes becomes even more challenging as diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts are facing legislative attacks across the United States. In July 2023, 40 anti-DEI legislation bills had been introduced, seven of which have final legislative approval and another seven which have become law (Chronicle Staff, 2023). Coined "the assault on DEI" by the *Chronicle of Higher Education*, states such as Texas, Florida, Tennessee, and North Dakota have banned diversity statements, mandatory diversity training, diversity, equity, and inclusion related questions during the hiring process and even prohibited colleges from spending funds on diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts (Figure 1).

As a discursive marker, DEI has the possibility to elevate the conversation and rally international educators around a common cause and purpose: enhancing global education for all. However, the current political attack towards DEI initiatives limits the field's ability in creating systemic change hindering their ability to retain talent, provide equitable opportunities to global education, and impact the larger society through higher education.

Prior research on the intersection of international education and conversations around diversity, equity, and inclusion is scarce. Most of the research on discourse around diversity, equity, and inclusion in higher education is broad in nature and focuses on DEI at an institutional level rather than specifically in international education (Ahmed, 2012; Ballard et al., 2020; D'Enbeau et al., 2020; Hoffman & Mitchell, 2016; Lemus et al., 2022). Historically, the research focused on international education examines historical trends, areas of improvement, and perspectives (Berger, 2020; Christian, 2022; Majeed, 2023). Only recently has there been movement towards examining how diversity, equity, and inclusion principles can be applied practically within the field (Gozik & Hamir, 2022). However, most of the research centers around education abroad rather than international education as a field. Consequently, research

Figure 1.

Where Anti-DEI Legislation Has Been Proposed



Note. This figure demonstrates 40 Anti-DEI bills being tracked in 22 states. From "DEI Legislation Tracker," by Chronicle Staff, 2023, https://www.chronicle.com/article/here-are-the-states-where-lawmakers-are-seeking-to-ban-colleges-dei-efforts?. Copyright 2023 by *The Chronicle of Higher Education*.

is needed at the intersection of these two areas of scholarship in order to illuminate how international education practitioners understand and make sense of the discourse within the field and how that might influence their own practice.

This study aims to examine how international educators view diversity, equity, and inclusion conversations within global education and the connections they draw between that discourse and the work they do supporting diverse student populations. To highlight the dichotomy between outbound and inbound support within international education, this study uses two lenses--International Student and Scholar Services and Education Abroad--to examine the diversity discourse. This study aims to provide more insight into the complexities of diversity discourse within international education.

Through ethnographic observations, semi-structured interviews, and my own experiences as an international educator, I provide context on how international educators come to navigate diversity discourse and the impact this discourse has on the field of international education. I utilize a social constructionist approach to grounded theory and critical organizational sensemaking to frame my findings.

Research Questions

RQ1: In what ways do international educators understand and interpret the terms diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, belonging, accessibility, and access in the context of diversity discourse within international education?

RQ2: How do power relations and societal context influence these interpretations?

RQ3: How do international educators incorporate diversity discourse into concrete practices within the field?

RQ4: How do international educators come to make sense of the field's move toward more diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives?

Overview of Study

This thesis proceeds as follows. First, I will provide relevant research to the study including background on the field of international education, research on decolonization within international education, and the impact of COVID-19 on diversity discourse within the field. Next, I will review the methodology for this study and the themes that emerged throughout the process. The research study uses a constructivist grounded theory framework and a critical sensemaking lens to examine the experiences conveyed by international educators. Through the constructivist grounded theory framework, the study aims to learn more about the intersections of diversity, equity, and inclusion in international education while the critical sensemaking lens enables a deeper examination of the underlying ideologies and power dynamics that influence participants interpretations. The thesis will conclude with a discussion on the implications of the findings and recommendations for future research.

The study of diversity discourse in international education is an important and timely topic given the increasing emphasis on global engagement and intercultural exchange coupled with the prevailing political climate that faces challenges concerning diversity, equity, and inclusion. By examining the discourse around diversity within two key areas of international education, this study seeks to shed light on how practitioners make sense of the field's stated value of diversity, equity, and inclusion. By highlighting these issues, this study aims to contribute to ongoing efforts to create a more equitable and inclusive international education. Ultimately, the impact of this study lies in its potential to inform and inspire meaningful action towards a more just and equitable global community.

Chapter 2: Literature Review

From International Education to Global Learning

According to the National Association for International Educators (NAFSA), an organization that supports over 10,000 individuals within the field of international education worldwide, the overarching goal of international education is to "advance policies and practices that build global citizens with the knowledge and skills they need to succeed in today's interconnected world" (NAFSA). In the United States, international education is typically divided into five knowledge communities:

- **Education abroad** primarily focuses on the outbound mobility of US domestic students to international locations for short-term or long-term educational programs commonly referred to as study abroad.
- **International student and scholar services** primarily focuses on the immigration compliance of international students to US institutions for degree-seeking programs.
- **International enrollment management** is comprised of admissions, recruitment, enrollment management, credential evaluation, intensive English programs, and other areas related to international enrollment strategy.
- **International education leadership** is comprised of senior international officers and other leaders whose focus is on comprehensive internationalization of the institution.
- **Teaching, learning, and scholarship** focuses on providing international educators with the knowledge, tools, and skills needed to support professionals throughout international education.

Expanding outside of the knowledge communities, a new focus emerges – **global learning.** Accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic, global learning (now sometimes referred to as global learning for all) has grown beyond the traditional goal of cultural immersion (Hyndman, 2022). Global learning aims at enriching students' knowledge of global issues; fostering their understanding of shifts in global balance of power; informing them about the world's different political systems; developing their interest in becoming civically engaged and socially responsible for local and global communities; providing students with intercultural skills they will need to navigate the diverse global cultural landscapes; and ultimately preparing them to be successful as global leaders. (Togunde et al., 2022, p. 224)

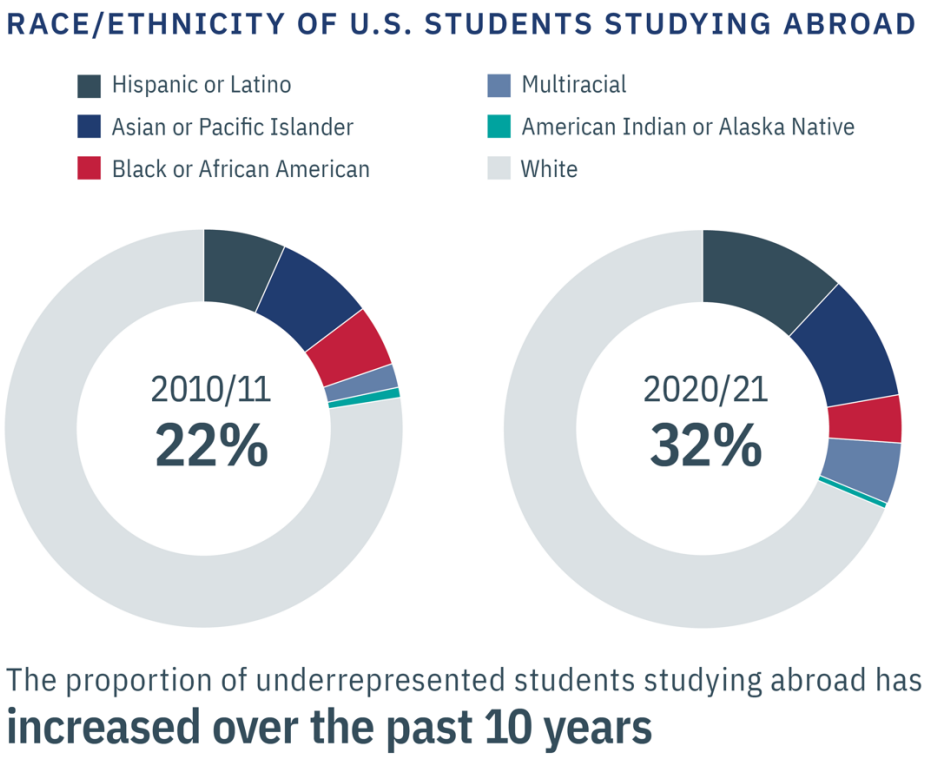
While the goals of global learning might be clear, they come from a perspective that is heavily dependent on a US narrative of what it means to be global. Earlier conversations around internationalization in higher education were focused on a deficit model. It centered on the dominant Western knowledge system that misrepresented difference as "lack" or "absence". It focused on the idea that the priority was to "identify gaps and build capacities" in parts of the world, often the Global South, where education systems were viewed as less sophisticated (Unkule, 2022, p. 305). This stemmed from a belief that the US higher education system was superior to others and the issues lay within the Global South institutions. Due to global learning's positionality in a higher-education landscape where Western knowledge systems are prioritized, "study abroad becomes an instrument of sustaining global inequality" whereby those with means are afforded more opportunities to engage in global education while also being the benefactors of destinations used to accommodating North American and Western European students (Unkule, 2022, p. 301).

Within global education in the United States, there is a spectrum of privilege that widens the gap between students participating in globally focused programs. Domestic students who hold historically marginalized backgrounds (students of color, students with disabilities, and LGBTQIA+ students) have difficulties when it comes to accessing and participating in global learning experiences (see Figure 2 and Table 1). Education abroad offices and program providers are often "playing a game of 'catch-up'" rather than designing programs from the start that accommodate a variety of student needs (Aburakia-Einhorn, 2020, p. 195). International students, particularly those from predominantly non-white regions, face greater difficulties and have more negative experiences than their peers from predominantly white regions when at US-based institutions (Lee, 2010). This can range from East Asian international students feeling isolated from their campus community and subjected to verbal and/or physical assault (Lee, 2010) to Black African international students being racialized and facing prejudicial or discriminatory treatment (Boafo-Arthur, 2013).These disparities in experiences not only impact each segment of international education individually but also the overall field.

The vast needs of the student population that international education aims to support presents a unique challenge for educators who aspire to embed diversity discourse into their programs, offices, and institutions. When engaging with diversity, equity, and inclusion work in international education, educators turn towards the array of acronyms available within diversity discourse in order to make sense of the beliefs, assumptions, and action (or inaction) that occurs within international education. However, without a clear consensus on where to focus diversity efforts within the field, practitioners may be uncertain on how exactly to begin enacting change in the areas of diversity, equity, and inclusion to support a variety of student experiences within international education.

Figure 2.

Comparison of Racial/Ethnic Profile of U.S. Students Studying Abroad



Note. Infographic comparing the number of underrepresented students studying abroad from the 2010/2011 Academic School Year with the 2020/2021 Academic School Year. The exact percentages from 2010/2011 are American Indian or Alaska Native (0.5%), Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (7.9%), Black or African American (4.8%), Hispanic or Latino(a) (6.9%), Multiracial (2.1%), White (77.8%). The exact percentages from 2020/2021 are American Indian or Alaska Native (0.5%), Asian, Native Hawaiian or Other Pacific Islander (8.6%), Black or African American (5.5%), Hispanic or Latino(a) (10.6%), Multiracial (4.8%), White (70.0%). From "Institute of International Education. (2022). "Profile of U.S. Study Abroad Students, 2000/01-2020/21." *Open Doors Report on International Education Exchange.* Retrieved from http://www.opendoorsdata.org.

Table 1.

Disability Profile of U.S. Students who Study Abroad

		Year						
Category	Characteristic	014/15	2015/16	2016/17	2017/18	2018/19	2019/20	2020/21
Disability Status*	Disability	5.3	8.8	8.5	9.2	10.5	12.4	11.2
	No Disability	94.7	91.2	91.5	90.8	89.5	87.6	88.8
Type of Disability	Autism Spectrum Disorder**		1.8	2.0	2.2	2.2	2.0	2.3
	Chronic Health Disorder**		23.2	16.8	16.1	17.2	18.1	22.5
	Learning Disability	42.1	34.4	34.3	33.5	32.5	31.5	35.2
	Mental Disability	27.0	27.7	32.4	35.0	35.5	37.9	31.5
	Physical Disability	5.2	3.6	4.5	4.1	3.3	3.2	1.7
	Sensory Disability	5.0	4.4	4.4	3.1	3.0	2.2	3.1
	Other Disability	20.7	4.9	5.6	6.0	6.4	5.1	3.7

Note. Chart displaying the percentage of U.S. students with a disability who study abroad from the 2014/2015 Academic School Year to the 2020/2021 Academic School Year. From "Institute of International Education. (2022). "Profile of U.S. Study Abroad Students, 2006/07-2020/21." *Open Doors Report on International Education Exchange.* Retrieved from http://www.opendoorsdata.org.

Decolonization within International Education

The history of education in the United States is a history rooted in colonization. In Urban and Wagoner's "American Education: A History" (2009), they provide a chronological overview of the development of the American education system and how colonization played a part in that history. From instilling European culture on Indigenous individuals in North America to the creation of a dominant Eurocentric narrative in the modern school system, the American educational system is one that prioritized establishing control over the narrative and therefore the individuals within it. One pivotal moment in the American educational system was the aftermath of the Depression and the Second World War. Even though education in the United States had been disadvantaged and the crisis in both domestic and foreign affairs fueled uncertainty, there was an influx of foreign students to US institutions.

These increases were due in part to the Fulbright Act. The Fulbright Act of 1946 authorized funds for broad educational activities and exchanges through grants. These funds could be used for "American citizens in schools and institutions of higher learning located in such foreign country" and for "furnishing transportation for citizens of such foreign country who desire to attend American schools and institutions of higher learning (Ward, 1947, p. 198)." In the current United States Code, the purpose for the Fulbright act is to

> Enable the Government of the United States to increase mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries by means of educational and cultural exchange; to strengthen the ties which unite us with other nations by demonstrating the educational and cultural interests, developments, and achievements of the people of the United States and other nations, and the contributions being made toward a peaceful and more fruitful life for people throughout the world; to promote

> international cooperation for educational and cultural advancement; and thus to assist in the development of friendly, sympathetic, and peaceful relations between the United States and the other countries of the world. (2003)

While the Fulbright Act was not the beginning of international education, it has been credited as the catalyst for the growth seen within the field prior to the 1990s (Gayner, 1996). Shortly after its enactment, the National Association of International Educators was founded as the National Association of Foreign Student Advisers to support the institutional officials responsible for "assisting and advising" the incoming students (NAFSA). Even with the focus on facilitating cultural exchange, the field's emergence developed from a need to control how knowledge flows between the United States and other countries.

International education as a field faces significant challenges in grappling with power dynamics and the dominance of western hegemonic beliefs. There is even a view that study abroad programs perpetuate global inequities (Unkule, 2022). The Fulbright Act is a United States code that international educator's pride for its ability to build bridges between nations. However, the code has multiple limitations, authorizations, and regulations that dictate how and to what extent engaging in education abroad is acceptable. Therefore, it is critical to acknowledge and address how Western nations wield their power. As Christian (2013, p. 57) argues, "postcolonial theory challenges us to recognize and address the ways in which Western power hierarchies and knowledge systems have come to dominate globally," which is essential in a field that profits from the global experiences of individuals.

Based on the characteristics of a colonial curriculum, it can be argued that international education is a colonial field. The disparities that persist within the field are a result of centuries of historical power relations and their influence on the field's development.

> Anne Kimunguyi described a colonial curriculum as characterized by its unrepresentative, inaccessible, and privileged nature. Unrepresentative, because it selectively constructs teachings which exclude certain, oftentimes, crucial narratives. Inaccessible, because it consequently prevents many of its recipients from identifying with the narratives construed, whilst appealing to a historically favored demographic. Privileged, because it ensures the continued participation, comfort and flourish of this select group of people, in both an academic and a wider societal context. (James-Dunbar, 2022, p.253)

Based on the three criteria – unrepresentative, inaccessible, and privileged – it can be argued that international education as a field, specifically education abroad, meets each of the requirements. Education abroad programs rarely reflect the larger institutional student population. It is hard to overlook that an overwhelming 66.3% of students who studied abroad in the 2020 – 2021 academic school year were hosted in Europe with 44% of students studying in just five countries: Spain, Italy, the United Kingdom, France, and Ireland (Open Doors, 2022). The privilege associated with international education stems from historical power relations and perceptions that have equated Europe with progress, modernity, and civilization, while often portraying the Global South as underdeveloped, foreign, and in need of assistance. Faculty-led programs and outside program providers tend to disproportionately highlight European destinations, while programs in Asia, Latin America, and Africa are underrepresented.

International education opportunities are often inaccessible to marginalized students due to historical barriers they face when attempting to engage or participate. Dr. Marjorie Ganz placed these barriers within four areas she titled “the 4 F’s” or family, finances, fear and faculty (Verto Education, 2023). The first challenge “Family” speaks to the concerns that family

members may harbor regarding their children's participation in a program abroad. These concerns may arise from a lack of familiarity with the culture and customs of the intended destination, or a reluctance to have their child far away from their familiar community. "Finances" encompasses all financial considerations related to global education programs. Concerns such as whether the student has the financial means to support their participation in the program, whether they might need to forgo a stable income source like a part-time job to pursue this opportunity, and whether they will be able to meet their basic needs while abroad. "Fear" represents the third hurdle, which stems from various sources including the fear of traveling to a new country, fear of academic underperformance, and the fear of lack of family support, among other factors. Lastly, "Faculty", the fourth "F" involves faculty members expressing concerns that global education experiences could lead to delays in graduation timelines. This barrier could also include faculty selecting a specific group of students to participate in these opportunities. Historically, these barriers would have been considered individual in nature placing the onus on the students themselves rather than the structural and institutional factors in play. This perpetuates the ongoing disparities in racial, geographic, and curriculum representation.

Acknowledging how colonization and coloniality have shaped international education, the field has a duty to examine the impact these historical and foundational characteristics have on DEI initiatives as "globalization is inextricably linked to colonization" (Abraham, 2022, p.263). It is important to note the differences between colonization and coloniality. Colonization is used in a historical context in reference to the multiple "colonial administrations" that have existed (Grosfoguel, 2008, p. 9). Coloniality focuses on the ongoing power that influences and shapes our current existence. Grosfoguel (2008, p.8) describes how our society has moved from a "period of 'global colonialism' to a period of 'global coloniality'" which imposes a "colonial

power matrix" that creates a hierarchy between European and non-European systems, structures, and beliefs.

It is important to examine the DEI initiatives within international education as intersectional, historical, and critical to moving the field forward. As such, advancing DEI cannot be considered without also examining the need to decolonize the field. "Decolonization aims to highlight alternative ways of knowing and understanding, allowing other marginalized voices to speak, and thereby increasing our collective understanding of the past and present (Christian, 2013, p.57)." Higher education focuses its decolonization efforts (when present) towards the "values, mission, and identity" of an institution (Togunde et al., 2022, p.219). For international education, the spotlight historically has been placed on cultural diversity and intercultural competency rather than decolonization.

Cultural diversity and intercultural competency are initiatives that promote respect and understanding for different cultures. However, they tend to focus on surface-level differences without acknowledging the power structures that perpetuate marginalization and oppression. In contrast, decolonization requires acknowledging and dismantling the systemic power structures that have historically marginalized and oppressed certain cultures. Thought leaders in the field are opening the doors to conversations around practical approaches to decolonization and "addressing issues of power in institutional and cultural forces that retain dynamics related to colonization or social injustice" (Togunde et al, 2022; Johnson, 2022, p.240).

Conversations around decolonization within the field of international education became more prevalent following the events in 2020. The COVID-19 pandemic was a catalyst that allowed our larger society to reflect on the global systems we operate within. Alongside the global pandemic, a racial reckoning occurred within the United States that brought to the

forefront many of the injustices that marginalized communities have experienced and continue to experience (Quarcoo & Husaković, 2021). The interconnectedness and global nature of these events served as a turning point for how we understand diversity, equity, and inclusion efforts.

The Impact of COVID-19 on Diversity Discourse

In the post COVID-19 era, the disparities throughout the United States are amplified through conversations led by movements such as Black Lives Matter, Stop Anti-Asian Hate and United We Dream. These conversations have proven uncomfortable to unpack for educators. Reilly concluded that although many academics are willing to discuss topics such as "upholding truth, social justice, and freedom of thought and expression, too many demonstrate a stronger tendency to suppress queries into deep matters of race, especially racial whiteness, than show a willingness to face the reality of them" (Reilly, 2022, p.99). According to Audrey Murrell, "any post-pandemic recovery or advancement will require more focused attention and efforts toward acknowledging, understanding, and addressing these persistent disparities in global education access and experience" (2022, p.15). Within the field, international educators have the tools necessary to facilitate uncomfortable conversations and challenge students to move into their own growth mindset (Beaudin, 2022). However, how does this translate to international educators' own growth and development?

The argument has been made that the communication around diversity, equity, and inclusion has little impact on the actual policies, procedures, and strategies in higher education (Ballard et al., 2020). The view is that the discourse itself, whether in statements, strategic plans, or institutional communication channels, does not actually produce the change that it declares. These "non-performatives" can be used to preclude the actual changes they state are their mission (Ahmed, 2012, pp.116-119). As Ahmed argues, "The failure of the speech act to do

what it says is not a failure of intent or even circumstance but is actually what the speech act is doing… the names come to stand in for the effects. As a result, naming can be a way of not bringing something into effect" (2012, p.117).

These empty offers of change, also known as virtue signaling (see Westra, 2021), can make it difficult for practitioners to understand the differences between what is being done versus what is just being communicated. International educators are reflecting on the field and the ramifications of not prioritizing DEI initiatives (Gordon, 2022). Statements crafted around pivotal moments such as the murder of George Floyd, the SEVP Fall 2020 guidance, anti-Asian hate, and the COVID-19 crisis globally tend to lean more towards image maintenance or repair for the statement-maker rather than concrete action. These statements have become so formulaic that Ballard et al. even provided a step-by-step satirical guide to crafting them including optional enhancements (see Appendix A).

Although diversity discourse has been discussed in international education prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the summer of 2020 proved to be a significant turning point within the field in terms of its commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion. In 2020, NAFSA introduced a fellowship program titled NAFSA RISE (Representation, Inclusion, Support and Empowerment) which provides "international education professionals from underrepresented communities with financial support and access to professional development, mentorship, and networking" (NAFSA, 2023, Advancing the Profession section). In 2022, they refreshed their critical competencies for international educators and listed "inclusion and equity" as one of those competencies (Hendley, 2022, 9:40). This recent edition is viewed by the NAFSA Competencies Commission as vital to the growth of international education. In practice, the commission mentions the need to intentionally remove barriers, expand beyond "faces and cultures" and into

"ideas, experience, and creativity" regarding diversity, and focus on equity and accessibility (Majeed, 2023, Theory into Practice section). The hope is that one day this competency will become common alongside the practices and policies of the field.

NAFSA is not the only international education organization placing a higher importance on diversity discourse. The Forum for Education Abroad includes equity, diversity, and inclusion as one of their guiding principles and shared values in their Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad, 6th ed which was published in 2020. This shows a shift from the 5th ed, published in 2015, of their Standards of Good Practice for Education Abroad where diversity was only mentioned in the introduction. Other organizations within the field have seen an increase in request for diversity related trainings, resources, and talks.

Mills et. al. (2010) offers us a lens through which to view the summer of 2020 as an important organizational event. The COVID-19 pandemic, wave of civil unrest, racial discrimination, and police aggression in the United States that summer created an organizational shift throughout the field of international education in how we come to understand and make sense of the work we do. In critical sensemaking processes, this is seen as a "trigger" through which we can apply the sensemaking framework (Mills et. al., 2010, Application section).

This literature review examines the evolution of international education and the current challenges the field is discussing. It reviews the shifts within the field including a move towards global learning and a decolonial perspective while acknowledging the Western-centric bias within the field. It highlights the current arguments around diversity discourse which has been accelerated by the COVID-19 pandemic and the racial reckoning within the United States. Notably, the review underscores the need to move beyond symbolic diversity discourse to tangible transformation. While the current literature highlights these issues, it does not analyze

these concerns through a specific global education lens. There is also a gap between bridging the theoretical discussions with practical implementation. This study aims to address these gaps by examining how international educators view diversity discourse and providing actionable insights for moving the field beyond catchy acronyms and ineffective statements.

Chapter 3: Methods

This research study examines how international educators view diversity, equity, and inclusion conversations within global education and the connections they draw between diversity discourse and their work supporting diverse student populations. The present chapter discusses the use of constructionist grounded theory and critical sensemaking throughout the research process, the study design, participants and observations, research procedures, and my own positionality while conducting this research.

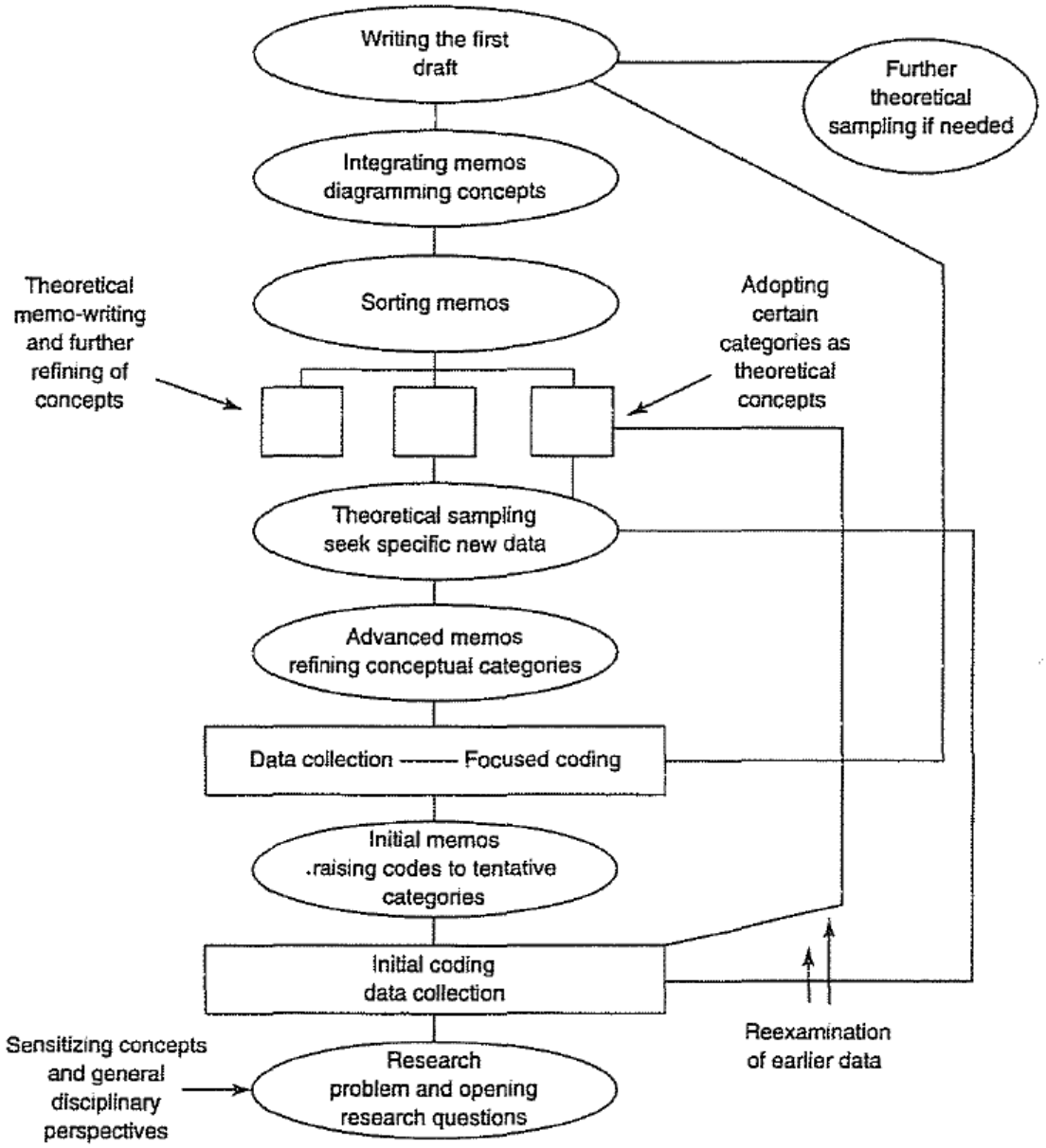
Constructionist Grounded Theory

Constructionist grounded theory (see Figure 3) was used throughout the collection and analysis phases of my research. Grounded theory, a method of analysis created by Barney Glaser and Anselm Strauss, allows the analytical focus to emerge during the research process rather than beforehand (Charmaz & Thornberg, 2021). Interviews are analyzed throughout the process and data are organized into themes and patterns. Through a detailed coding process, the interview questions are adjusted during the research process to explore topics that had been previously overlooked.

Since the initial construction in 1967, grounded theory has been adapted, molded, and tweaked to introduce new avenues through which to view both quantitative and qualitative research. Berthelsen et. al. (2018) provides detailed context on the differences between the three major philosophical approaches within grounded theory: Glaser; Strauss and Corbin; and Charmaz. My focus on Charmaz's constructivist grounded theory approach allows the expansion upon the "flexible guidelines for collecting and analyzing data" and provides a non-linear approach through which both researcher and researched have a hand in creating understanding (Charmaz, 2006, p.2). It highlights a process of reflexivity which highlights a

Figure 3.

The Grounded Theory Process



Note. From "Constructing Grounded Theory: A Practical Guide through Qualitative Analysis," by Kathy Charmaz, SAGE Publications, p. 11.

researchers' positionality rather than ignoring it. Constructionist grounded theory recognizes that we do not research within a vacuum. It makes assumptions that our "(1) reality is multiple, processual, and constructed; (2) the research process emerges from interaction; (3) it takes into account the researcher's positionality, as well as that of the research participants; (4) the researcher and researched co-construct the data" (Charmaz, 2008, p.402).

Critical Sensemaking

One key lens through which to view international educators' understanding of diversity discourse in international education is through a critical sensemaking framework. Adapted from Karl Weick's sensemaking framework, critical sensemaking focuses on providing a broader perspective of how individuals process their experiences by focusing on systems of power and privilege (Mills et.al.). According to Weick (1995, p.15), "people make sense of things by seeing a world on which they have already imposed what they believe." While Weick's framework does not directly address the power and privilege that is at play within diversity discourse, Mills adaptation provides a useful framework to analyze how international educators are making meaning of the diversity discourse within the field based on their own identity, environment, experience, and relation to power.

Design

The guiding interest for this research emerged as I began to dive into my career as an international educator. As I transitioned from purely an institutional lens focused specifically on international students to a diversity, equity, and inclusion specific lens focused on the larger field, I began to connect with more and more practitioners who struggled to connect research to practice. In an assignment focused on field research, I contemplated the initial questions that had developed from my interactions. How is race and racism constructed within the field of

international education? How do practitioners navigate their own understanding of race/racism alongside the needs of their specific disciplines? How does this impact the work that they do? How are they engaging in conversations around this topic with the populations they support? How does the field come to understand their role in diversifying and providing accessibility and equity within the field?

This qualitative study was conducted from May 2022 – June 2023. The study uses a constructivist grounded theory methodology which structures the study around a particular exploratory interest rather than a set hypothesis. In the case of this story, the subjects of interest (who I view as co-collaborators) were international educators. They were also the primary audience for this research. I aimed to understand their own perspectives, beliefs, intentions, and tangible actions in relation to diversity discourse within their work. Based on the focus of my study, I chose two research methods that provide rich data with which to build the analysis: field observations and in-depth semi structured interviews. The following sections provide more detailed insight into the study participants, observation sites, and procedures.

Participants and Observations

At the time of this study, the participants for this research study were employed in international education at higher education institutions within the United States. For the purpose of this study, a higher education institution is a college, university, or similar institution offering a postsecondary education (United States Code, 2018). This includes community colleges, four-year public institutions, four-year private institutions, and for-profit institutions. This study focused on participants who were employed within the following sectors of international education: international student and scholar services, education abroad, and international education leadership. The focus on international student and scholar services and education

abroad was intentionally chosen to highlight the dichotomy between discourse held in outbound and inbound support in international education. The inclusion of international education leadership is to provide perspective from individuals in leadership roles who can speak to both areas of focus.

Participants for the semi-structured interviews were invited to participate through interest fliers. These fliers were distributed through channels such as the North Carolina Association of International Educators listserv, LinkedIn post, and direct emails. Interested individuals completed a preliminary screening questionnaire to ensure they aligned with the study guidelines.

The observation sites for this research study Included sessions from the National Association of International Educators Annual Conference, the National Association of International Educators Region VII Conference, the Global Inclusion Conference, and the Forum on Education Abroad (See Appendix B). These sites were chosen due to their focus on the field of international education. These sites also provided an alternative setting to study interactions around diversity discourse. The hosting organizations for each of the sites are leaders within the field when it comes to providing a platform for conversation on topics pertinent to international education. Each of the workshops that were observed were chosen from the list of all available workshops. Workshops with an additional fee or set as pre-conference events were removed from the initial list of available workshops. Selected workshops included one of the key terms (diversity, equity, inclusion, race, and racism) and were held during session time slots congruent to my conference schedule availability.

The study selection of interviewees and observation sites was guided by the aim to gather a diverse range of perspectives from international educators situated in various positions of power and institutional contexts.

Procedures

In order to conduct this research, I obtained Institutional Review Board (IRB) approval from North Carolina State University. In total, thirteen sessions were observed and there were 24 participants who participated in in-depth semi-structured interviews. By combining both observation and interview data, this study aims to provide a more nuanced understanding of how DEI is understood and practiced in international education.

The sessions observed were selected from four conferences: the National Association of International Educators Annual Conference hosted in Denver, CO (five sessions); the National Association of International Educators Region VII Conference hosted in Charlotte, NC (three sessions); the Global Inclusion Conference hosted in San Francisco, CA (three sessions); and the Forum on Education Abroad (two sessions). All workshops were attended in person.

Virtual interviews were conducted with the international educators after obtaining informed consent from the participants. All participants were required to be employed in the field of international education and employed at a higher education institution based in the United States. Each interviewee had a diverse perspective based on their years in the field, institutional type, sector within international education, and personal experiences (Table 2). Interviews ranged from a duration of fifty minutes to one hour and thirty minutes. The average interview duration was one hour and twelve minutes.

Table 2. List of participants' pseudonyms and self-reported characteristics including: gender, race/ethnicity, international education sector, years of experience, and institutional type.

Pseudonym	**Gender**	**Race/Ethnicity**	**International Education Sector**[1]	**Years In the Field**	**Institutional Type**
Jake	Male	White	International Student and Scholar Services	5—- 10	4 Year Public Institution
Diana	Female	White	Study Abroad	5 – 10	4 Year Public Institution
Katrina	Female	White	Study Abroad	10—- 15	4 Year Private Institution
Anthony	Male	Not Specified	Leadership	20+	4 Year Private Institution
Deborah	Female	European	Study Abroad	10 – 15	4 Year Public Institution
Brennan	Male	White	International Student and Scholar Services	10 – 15	4 Year Public Institution
Makayla	Female	Asian	International Student and Scholar Services	0 – 5	4 Year Public Institution
Jasmine	Female	White	International Student and Scholar Services	10 – 15	4 Year Public Institution
Ada	Female	White	Study Abroad	10 – 15	4 Year Private Institution
Alexis	Female	White	Study Abroad	5 – 10	4 Year Public Institution
Bria	Female	White	Dual	0 – 5	4 Year Private Institution

[1] In this table, the term Leadership indicates that the participant holds a leadership position within global education such as Director, Vice Provost, Provost, or Dean. The term Dual indicates that the participant holds a position that supports both the Study Abroad office and the International Student and Scholar Services office.

Table 2 (continued).

Sedona	Female	Bi-racial	Study Abroad	15 – 20	4 Year Public Institution
Carmen	Female	White	International Student and Scholar Services	0 – 5	4 Year Public Institution
Valeria	Female	White	International Student and Scholar Services	20+	4 Year Private Institution
Kai	Female	Asian	Leadership	5 – 10	4 Year Private Institution
Jena	Female	White	International Student and Scholar Services	0 – 5	4 Year Public Institution
Raven	Female	White	Dual	20+	Community College
Chloe	Female	White	Study Abroad	5 – 10	4 Year Private Institution
Alisha	Female	Asian	International Student and Scholar Services	10 – 15	4 Year Public Institution
Fabrizio	Male	Native American/ Pacific Islander	Study Abroad	0 – 5	4 Year Private Institution
Dawn	Female	White	International Student and Scholar Services	0 – 5	4 Year Private Institution
Leanna	Female	White	Leadership	15 – 20	4 Year Private Institution
Bay	Female	Middle Eastern	Study Abroad	0 – 5	4 Year Public Institution
Wendy	Female	White	Study Abroad	0 – 5	4 Year Private Institution

My Own Positionality

My positionality as an international educator added both a depth and complexity to my research study. I have often drawn on my own lived experience for my academic research and this has been no different. Wanting to explore another side of international education was the impetus for this thesis. I had the desire to pull back the layers of a field that I had made home. Charmaz notes that "a social constructionist approach to grounded theory allows us to address *why* questions while preserving the complexity of social life" (2008, p.397). I realize now that this inquiry has been to answer my own "whys".

When engaging in the observations my lens was both participant and observer. I was there to learn but in different way—-once for my own practice and once for my research. I am aware that many of my interviewees may have seen me not as a researcher but as a colleague. This may have influenced what they shared and how. Perhaps it made them more open. A certain comradery in being able to share an experience without needing to define every term or concept. Perhaps it made them more guarded. Was I perceived as an "expert" in this area? "Judging" whether they had been successful in their own diversity, equity, and inclusion work.

While how folks viewed me was partially out of my control in those spaces, my own identity as a queer Black international educator working specifically within diversity, equity, and inclusion spaces does influence my own analysis. My own ethnographic lens allows me to recognize that my own positionality as an underrepresented individual within the field of international education will inevitably influence the interpretation of the data. I aim to not only describe the experiences and perspectives of my colleagues within international education, but also to contextualize their narratives within broader cultural and societal structures.

Chapter 4: Themes

Throughout this research, multiple categories emerged from the data collection and analysis of the in-depth semi-structure interviews and observational sites. As new categories emerged, questions were adapted to ascertain participant'' thoughts. New sites were added to provide a deeper view into the most frequent and powerful categories. The emerging themes for this study highlighted three main perceptions, beliefs, and experiences of international educators. These themes suggest that there is a dichotomy between how international educators perceive their own individual agency versus that of some of their colleagues within the field. Structurally, international educators tended to agree that organizational power limited the capacity of how they could engage with diversity discourse.

"But We're Diverse"

A common theme among participants was a tendency to center most of their understanding of diversity discourse around the word diversity. Many participants who heavily focused on the diversity aspect of their campus without a strong focus on other topics under the diversity discourse umbrella. Consider participant Leanna (Leadership) who has been in the field for almost twenty years and works predominantly in a leadership capacity at a four-year private institution. For her, diversity was always a core requirement for where she would end up next. She reflects on her experience at her current institution:

> We are the only two Hispanic Serving Institutions in the state… We're also the most diverse. And that was something that was important to me. To work at a diverse campus where, you know, students would have like different experiences and interact with different people.

Several other participants also regarded diversity as an influencing factor when choosing what institutions to apply to. They note including personal statements of diversity on applications, searching for acceptance indicators such as usage of pronouns in email signatures, and looking for on campus markers of diversity such as cultural centers. While diversity was important for many participants, they did highlight some concerns with their experiences of diversity on the institutional level. Jena (International Student and Scholar Services), who is an early professional in the field, reflected on her belief that her office is "tokenized" due to the diversity they bring to the campus community:

> And I think there's always the push to make your university look diverse. And I think our University genuinely is diverse, like we have a very large international student population. But I think it's… Yes, we have this large student population. But I think no one looks at what that means. Do these people always feel welcome? Are they integrated into our university?

Jena continued to share misconceptions folks within her campus community have regarding the student population her office supports. This led to her feelings that others on campus don't understand "what they're (international students) are going through". This separation between globally focused offices and other campus partners was also communicated in how participants attempted to get involved with campus diversity related initiatives outside of their central offices. While many participants mentioned a knowledge of diversity statements, policies, and committees within their institutions, they also shared their lack of understanding of the actual impact or actionable items that came from these communicated ideals. Diana (Study Abroad) had communicated her desire to get more involved with diversity work on her campus but stated her efforts were stifled when the Chief Diversity Officer told her that they were

"good" and that they "had enough people". She was provided resources for the institutional training videos, but the conversation did not progress any further.

Even though there is representation from her unit on the institutional DEI Committee, Diana has never spoken to anyone on the committee. When asked about what the group was tasked with she stated "I honestly don't know." She had assumptions on how often they met (most likely monthly) but beyond that she felt the work they were doing "isn't really super apparent" if they are doing anything at all. This sentiment on organizational responses to DEI seemed to be shared by Anthony (Leadership) who is still learning about his own campus dynamics. Anthony said that there were two main beliefs on his campus about the newly minted role of Chief Diversity Officer. On one hand, folks saw it as "a necessary evil," while on the other, folks believed it was "there right now not being that effective."

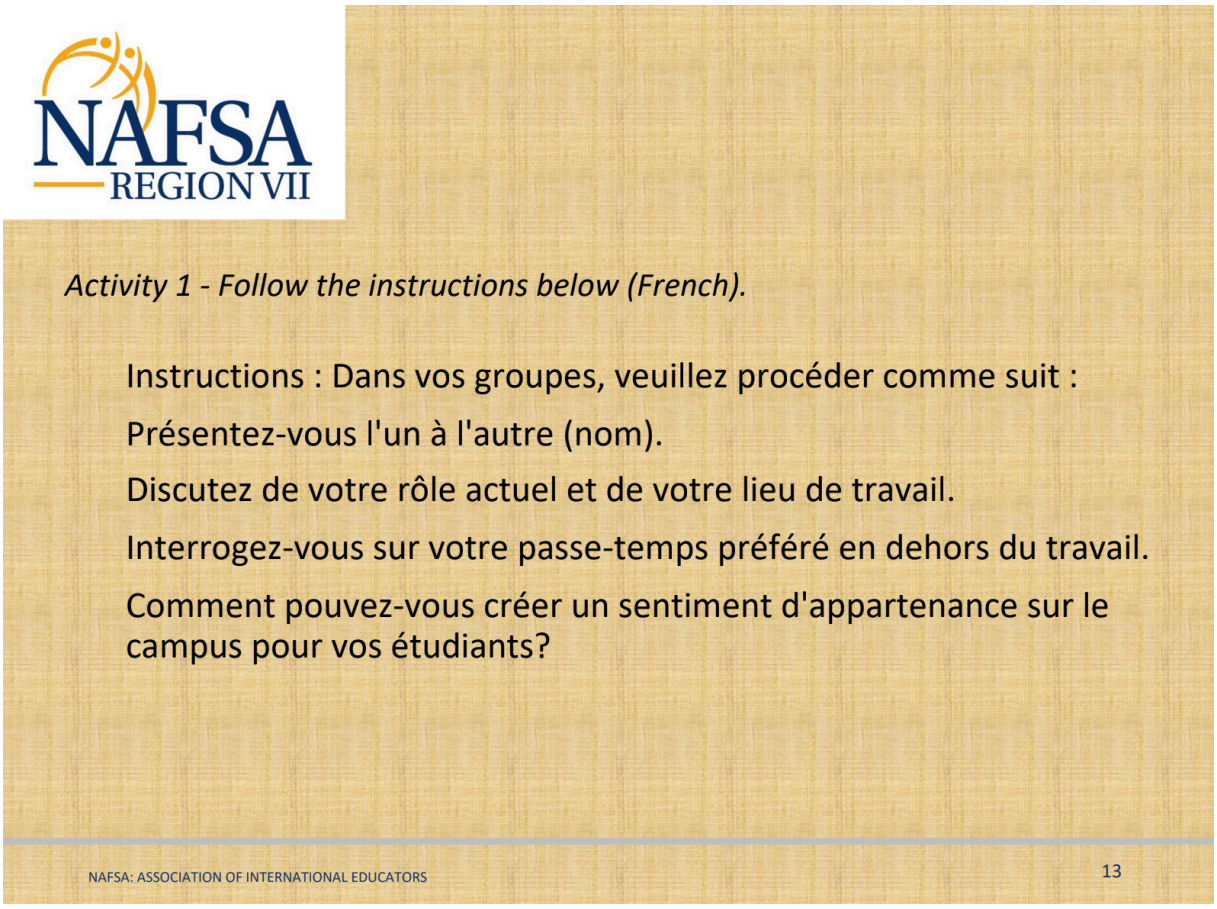
During the interviews, participants were asked about their current and historical understanding of diversity, equity, and inclusion focuses at their institutions. Many could list initiatives on their campuses such as diversity, equity, and inclusion offices, mission statements, strategic plans, committees, and cultural programming. However, there seemed to be a disconnect that existed between their diverse campuses and diversity initiatives. This sentiment of isolation, or international education diversity efforts being disconnected from the larger institutional efforts appears in many of the observational sites. Many sessions mentioned "building partnerships" to connect the work happening within the field to the larger campus communities. They aimed to help communicate the value the global community added to the institution with one of the goals being to better "support the intersectionality" of student identities.

In many of the sessions I attended at NAFSA and FORUM, the presenters aimed at supporting international educators' understanding of diversity discourse beyond the base level of "diversity". One session, the "ABCs of DEI Work in ISSS" provided letter correlations such as "H" for heteronormativity and "V" for validation to provide a common language built on more than just diversity, equity, and inclusion. Another term, "belongingness" or "the feeling that a person has that he or she is a valued part of the group," was apparent in a regional session titled "Enhancing DEIB: Counteracting Implicit Biases that Affect Connectedness to International Students" (Escobedo, 2022, Slide 7). The session highlighted ways to promote international student belonging on campus such as creating intentional and purposeful spaces on campus and training faculty and staff on cultural competencies. One of the ways in which this was demonstrated was during the opening activity:

"Bienvenue" the presenter says as she welcomes us into the space. "We're going to start with an activity. In your groups, please follow the instructions on the screen."

My group looks up at the screen which has instructions completely in French (Figure 4). "Um, does anyone know French?" I say as I try to make out what little I can remember from my ninth-grade French class. Unfortunately, no one in my group speaks French but we piecemeal it together bit by bit. A colleague tries to call a friend who majored in French, she doesn't pick up. I try to utilize my Spanish and Italian language skills to find cognates in the French instructions. "Presentez-vous" is present yourself. "Discutez" must mean discuss. And "etudiants" is students? Finally, another individual in our group uses a screen reading app that reads the slide and translates it back to English. It's only marginally successful.

Figure 4.
Presentation slide instructions in French



Note. The presentation slide provides a list of instructions for an activity during a conference session. Slides from Escobedo, A. C. (2022, November 6-9). *Enhancing DEIB: Counteracting implicit biases that affect connectedness to international students* [Conference session]. NAFSA Region VII Conference, Charlotte, NC, United States. https://www.nafsa.org/conferences/2022-nafsa-region-vii-conference

Once we've struggled for five to ten minutes or so the presenter brings us back. The next slide, the instructions in English. As we move into the activity reflection, we are posed with four questions:

1. *What did you think about that activity? Consider how some of your students may feel when navigating spaces with a language barrier.*
2. *Were you familiar with the language?*
3. *If you were unfamiliar, how did not knowing the language make you feel?*
4. *What was the biggest challenge in answering the questions?*

As we debriefed within the larger group, I couldn't quite make sense of how I felt. Was this supposed to help folks be more empathetic? Understand how our students felt on our campuses? While I understood the correlation, I struggled to see how this challenged us as educators to truly counteract our implicit biases.

Hands-on activities, like the one described above in the "Enhancing DEIB: Counteracting Implicit Biases that Affect Connectedness to International Students" conference session at the NAFSA Regional Conference, are typical in conference spaces to simulate experiences student populations might have or challenges international educators may face when supporting those populations. The stated goals of this activity were to "establish actionable best practices" for counteracting bias with students; determine "effective ways to promote a sense of belonging"; and "develop effective approaches…that promote belonging and connectedness" (Escobedo, 2022, Slide 16).

Who I Am Determines If I Belong

Many participants engaged in sensemaking of their own positionality as international educators throughout the interview sessions. Sensemaking is grounded in how we construct our

own identity. How we come to see ourselves is constantly shifting as we engage in new experiences and interact with others. With such a high prioritization of diversity within the field of international education, practitioners placed a lot of emphasis into how their own identities shaped their roles within the field. For example, Jake (International Student and Scholar Services), an international educator who specifically works with international students was conflicted in his own identity as a white male supporting predominately international students of color.

> When I see my identity… I'm a white male. And this was a really personal challenge for me at the beginning, before I even applied for this position. I was like, I'm not *not* white. And I'm a dude. Like, I'm… are people who are not like me going to come to me and be willing to talk about some of the things that one would need to talk about, and some of the personal challenges and obstacles that they confront here at this institution.
>
> I really feared that because I'm not from a non-US background. I don't speak another language other than English. That students wouldn't be drawn to the resource that is this position. That I would somehow create an obstacle just by my existence. I can't say that that's not true, that there might be students out there who feel that. But my own experience has been overwhelmingly positive. And in the feedback that I get from students who do come talk to me and say things like "I just needed someone to talk to, and I didn't know that was going to happen during this meeting, but I'm really glad that it did."

In retrospection, Jake took comfort in the fact that many of the students he works with have had a positive experience with him and felt supported by the work that he does as an international educator. This helped to challenge Jake's uncomfortable feelings about being a

white male in international education. Jake was not the only participant to express the strange negotiation of identity that occurs for many within the field. Anthony, a senior level administrator who overlooks both Study Abroad and International Student and Scholar Services, reflected on his own identity and how that impacts the work he does:

> When I am traveling, just to give you an example, when I'm traveling, people will have to say, "Well, you as an American." I'm like, "Well, no. I'm not an American. I'm representing an institution that is, but personally I'm not. I might be a US citizen, but I'm not an American."

Anthony describes his experience as a person of color in leadership as being "an imposter." He states that he sometimes must "Code switch. Go under the radar. Just things that you have to do to sort of navigate the system." The system he refers to seems to go further than simply the field of international education but to a broader United States system rooted in colonialism. "Again, living in the US for so long, you sort of neutralize your accent and who you're talking to without losing yourself. But have I lost myself? I don't know." Anthony continued his reflection of his experience existing within the field:

> I have had to kind of water myself down, if that makes sense, in order to navigate different constituents, students. You know a very diverse work. So you almost become… sometimes I feel like myself has sort of become a chameleon, in the sense that you adapt without losing your identity. Because it's not that I don't necessarily vocalize it, but it's who I am anyway. But you have to evolve a bit to fit and for others… I'm using the terminology of intercultural leadership… I know who I am and I know I understand who I am and my culture in order to be able to adapt and to respect others. So that sort of creates blurred lines in many ways.

The emphasis on fostering a sense of belonging, in both the sessions and interviews, focused almost exclusively on students rather than international educators themselves. However, it was discernible that there were conflicting beliefs between how identity impacted what it meant to be an international educator. Unanticipated in my initial study, a new subsection of this theme emerged highlighting how practitioners of color perceived their white colleagues. While their white counterparts often viewed their own global experiences as making them more "relatable" or "empathetic" to the experiences of the student populations they supported, practitioners of color had a more skeptical view. This dichotomy is explored further in the following subsection which explores what one participant, Kai, described as "the dangers of well-intentioned white women".

A Space Created for "Well-Intentioned White Women"

For those that fit the typical demographics of international educators, they connected their passion for international education with past experiences embedded in a global context. Jena shared her experience as a white American living abroad in Asia and how it provided her with the opportunity to relate with her students. Her experience as an "immigrant" struggling through complicated policy, fear of breaking specific laws around her status, and language fatigue communicating in a non-native language daily.

Leanna's passion stemmed from her family's history. She shares that due to her family being Jewish, that "generations of people were displaced from four different continents." One of her biggest regrets was not studying abroad, and when she was able to transition from a role in corporate America to academia she fell in love with working with international students. It makes sense that Leanna would regret her decision to not study abroad. For many of the

international educators I spoke with, that was a common connection point and one that sparked their interest in the field.

Diana had first been exposed to people not from the United States in high school. Her mom taught English to the wives and children of individuals relocating to her state for work opportunities. Connecting with them was a highlight for her: "sharing our food and different holiday traditions and things, I just really loved it." These experiences influenced her decision to choose a school specifically where she could study abroad and utilize her Pell Grant to fund her studies.

Many of the female-identified white international educators I spoke with had fond memories of their journey into the field as well as their current experience. Unlike those that did not fit those demographics and who worried about their place within the field, most of these interviewees did not spend a lot of time examining what it means to be a white woman within the field. When they did, it was mostly in the context of an "other" or that it did not apply to them even though they fell within that category. Participants acknowledged that there were "a lot of white women in our field" and one participant Sedona (Study Abroad) stated that "people (who are white) don't feel whiteness as much as other people feel their whiteness."

Throughout my interviews, there was a clear distinction between how white female international educators shared their experiences within the field and people of color international educators differing perception. One participant, Kai, an Asian American woman in a leadership position shared an archetype that she deemed "well intentioned white women":

> I think because so many international educators are well intentioned white women. And like the dangers of well-intentioned white women, which has been heavily researched and written about, right? There's so many articles. If people ever read what Black women

> write like it's there. That well-intentioned white women are coming in… are in this field and they are just like "Well, I just feel so badly." Like they are driven… it is clear they are driven by their understanding of empathy.

She worries about the impact these educators have not only on the field but on the students as well. Her major concern is that many of them haven't done any identity development work, are not actively educating themselves, and engage in tokenizing students. To put it frankly she says "they're not actually seeking how to be better." She describes that these individuals within the field do the work from a place of white saviorism. That international education as a whole "centers the feelings of white women" and ignores "the dangers of white women's tears."

Makayla (International Student and Scholar Services), who works specifically with international students and is the only person of color in her office, shared that since many of her white colleagues work directly with international students they believe they have a DEI perspective. However, when she tries to bring up conversations surrounding diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives she is shut down. She shares a recent interaction with her office staff:

> They only think "Since I work in the international unit, that's diversity." But it's really not so. I feel like that's where the disconnection comes from. And then when I try to say, "Hey, like we need to have this conversation." They go "Oh, no, no. I'm okay. Like, I know this stuff." But my question is do you really know?

Alisha's (International Student and Scholar Services) concerns came from the fact that much of this culture is historical. That during the creation of international education as a professional field "white people who have gone on one study abroad trip decide that they love international education and that that's what they're going to do as a career." For her, there are folks in the field that have been working in international education for decades but have no

formal credentials or standardized training. Kai is also conflicted with the historical culture within international education. She acknowledges that these practitioner's have "never been taught" and "don't have access to the education" but worries about the current educational resources being provided in the field.

> When we think about what are the sessions that are at these conferences and who are the people and what are the groups that are meeting it's like they're all white people. Or they're like, you know, everything is still settled in this like white American context. And how international seems to assimilate to it versus this like let's *not* use a deficit model when we're talking about international students, right? And that just like, there's a slow shift to that.

How international educators make sense of their identities, their role within international education, and their responsibility to the field was greatly influenced by their experiences and interactions both in their professional and personal lives. For some, validation from students helped to ease imposter syndrome while global interactions or experiences served as the catalyst for career decisions. Others, however, communicated a need to be vigilant in protecting themselves and the marginalized student populations they supported.

"I don't need a bathroom ally."

> *I come out of the bathroom stall and see my co-presenter washing her hands. "Ready for tomorrow?" I say as I take my place beside her and try to work the automatic soap dispenser.*
>
> *"I'm excited. It should be a good one. Did we want to try and meet in the room beforehand? Maybe like 30 minutes?"*

Before I can respond a woman interrupts our conversation and addresses my co-presenter. "Hey! I loved your comments in that last session. That other guy was a real piece of work. He shouldn't have interrupted you like that."

"Thanks." My co-presenter responds as we leave the restroom. Once we're out of earshot she turns to me and says "I don't need any more bathroom allies."

I chuckle. "Bathroom allies?"

"Yeah, you know. The folks who will stop you in the bathroom, or on the way to lunch, or down the street and say how much they support you and believe in what you said but won't do it in the actual meeting. You know, a bathroom ally."

"Oh! Yeah… I know."

The obstacles faced by individuals in international education vary and are impacted by factors such as race, gender, and class. This interaction represents a common sentiment from many of my participants of color who wanted more out of their white colleagues. These conversations stand in line with Kendall (2020, p.12) that white allies (specifically white women) utilize a "redemption narrative that requires no actual change or even accountability for prior behavior". Kendall (2020, pp.250-251) provides additional context on the comfort of being an ally:

> Identifying yourself as an ally is a convenient way to give yourself a pass for dismissing the words or experiences of people with less privilege and power than you. You can be in their corner, right up until it makes you feel uncomfortable. Then because you think they're overreacting or that it has "nothing to do with race," you can tell yourself that you tried to help, that "those people" are really the problem. If you stop being an ally or never manage to become a good ally, you can assuage any possible guilt by coddling yourself with fond memories of that one time you did something. It doesn't even matter if it was what was needed, as long as it makes you feel better.

Individuals of color within the field are looking for more than just bathroom allies, they want accomplices. Individuals who will stand with them in their anger, their struggle, and their advocacy. It is more than just platitudes but the willingness to take risks to move beyond the performative and into a space of collective justice. The field needs accomplices who are willing to yield their own positional power as well as influence organizational powers, rather than waiting until after all the work has been done and claim they had supported the effort from the beginning.

Understanding Organizational Power

One theme that emerged consistently was participants understanding of how diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives were influenced by their own power and agency versus that of their office, unit, or institution as a whole. Participants shared that the work they were able to engage in surrounding diversity discourse was oftentimes limited by their "level of influence." Although they may serve on specific committees, engage in working groups within their units, or advocate for changes on campus, they shared the difficulty of moving past these discussions to actionable items. This is in line with Zheng's view on "DEI volunteerism" where the work of

these employees is often seen as a replacement for hiring trained professionals and results in exploitation of labor, diminished accountability, and slower results.

Even though Leanna holds a leadership role at her institution, she struggled to implement a "campus read", or book club, for faculty and staff that aimed at providing structured conversation around diversity, equity, and inclusion related topics.

> It was a mix of faculty and staff that were planning this. One of the other women and I were like "Here's the thing. We all know who's gonna say 'Oh, yeah, of course I'll do that' and who's going to be at the table. There's plenty of people that aren't gonna sign up for this that need to. How do we get them to the table? And we were both like "Well, maybe we need to make it mandatory…" Eventually, we did get it to be a part of the institute, and some of the discussions have been. But again, even though it's mandatory, not everyone comes, and not everybody is part of those hard discussions. So there's a little bit of that.

Leanna shared that the difficulty was not necessarily in creating the committee but in the implementation. Participants shared this common sentiment and mentioned that implementing these committee created initiatives required things like "authority," "funding," and "time". Due to the hierarchal nature of higher education, participants acknowledged that it requires influence such as "leadership titles" and "relationships with higher level administrators" to begin to bring forth request for change. Take for example Diana's experience as she transitioned from an early/mid-career level role at one institution to a director level role at another.

> I'm glad, you know. Because then I actually can, you know, make some of those bigger, honestly very needed changes that would otherwise have been a lot tougher just to, you

> know, get the ball rolling not in that position. So I do hate that higher ed is such, a you know, hierarchy.

Within that hierarchy are folks above Diana's level with presumably even more power. Anthony shares that in these senior leadership spaces they should be "having more transformational conversations on the topic." But it seems that there is a need to isolate to protect decisions that senior level leaders deem as non-negotiables. Anthony explained his reasoning for removing committees.

> That's why I don't have committees for anything, because again, I just don't want to have to justify some of these things. If it gets into a problem, then the buck stops with me. I did it. So I've always, I will have to say I'm very controlling when it comes to some of those things.

Jena shared her own belief on why a disconnect exists between the multiple levels within higher education.

> Personally, I think it's the nature of the beast. The bureaucracy is slow. And then the major levels, I think, are more concerned with creating goals and creating a plan to show the public or to show people what we're doing. And then those of us further down are in the Department actually doing the things.

Each of the barriers communicated by participants aligns with a larger belief that many DEI initiatives are "unaccountable and inconsistent" (Zheng, 2023). If it appears to be this difficult to implement changes on campus then why does the field even engage with diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives?

The Capitalist Argument for DEI

For individuals who work in international education, a common theme was the acknowledgement that capitalism is a driving factor for how their institution and the field prioritize diversity initiatives. They mention the financial benefits that international students and scholars bring to US institution in contrast with "insensitive comments" from other campus community members. Anthony shared his frustration on the commodification of DEI resources:

> There are organizations out there that started a few years ago before the entire discourse about diversity. So now I feel that it is just another feather in your cap that you have to… you need to be seen with that you are working and incorporating with this organization and all of that. So I often question… I mean for others it may be a very valid resource, but sometimes I'm like 'Ugh, another membership I have to pay. What is the benefit that I'm getting out of that?'

All of these concerns come at a time when diversity initiatives are under legislative attack in many locations across the United States (Lu, 2023; Chronicle Staff, 2023). Jake speaks to the legislative bans on DEI: "But at the same time you have to find language that speaks to the dudes who are writing the laws… and I guess that's money. I don't know? Money and power. I'm not sure what other language they understand, but that's what I'm going with right now." He believes that these legislative changes will impact higher ed in a dramatic way: struggling recruitment efforts for students, faculty, and staff; loss of high level leadership roles such Chancellors and Provost; and loss of new ideas and innovative spaces for learning. But maybe, Jake considers, that was always the point: "You are going to lose unless that was always your objective. And maybe it doesn't matter then. And that's the piece that scares me the freakin most. Is that maybe they don't care if education falls like this."

The landscape of global education and diversity discourse is intricate. Participants shared a wide array of experiences from which the multifaceted themes emerged mirroring their own perceptions and beliefs. Overall, the field struggles with accountability and consistency in addressing concerns that fall under the diversity, equity, and inclusion umbrella. This chapter offers valuable insight into these challenges and complexities. The core themes presented in this chapter serve as a foundation for the broader discussion of the implications and recommendations, which will be explored in subsequent chapters.

Chapter 5: Discussion

International educators often find it challenging to navigate the complex landscape of diversity, equity, and inclusion. This is compounded when the field, institutions, departments, and even offices have a conflicting view on what is most pressing to tackle within this space or even use the terms synonymously. Diversity, equity, and inclusion have been stated as common values for the field, and international educators are navigating how that impacts who they are and what they do.

Research Question 1: In what ways do international educators understand and interpret the terms diversity, equity, inclusion, justice, belonging, accessibility, and access in the context of diversity discourse within international education?

Framed by research question 1, my initial set of interview questions aimed to understand how international educators attributed meanings and interpretations to terms falling under the diversity discourse umbrella. The findings showcased the complexity of these terms and shed light on how they are perceived and operationalized by those in the field of international education. When international educators shared their experiences, they expressed a range of emotions and perspectives regarding the influence of diversity discourse within international education. Some focused purely on the impact to the student populations they supported. While others questioned whether the discourse truly challenged professionals to reflect on their own implicit biases.

Diversity was the most frequent term referenced not only in interview settings but also within the observational sites. Participants consistently emphasized a belief that diversity is inherently embedded within the field due to the range of cultural backgrounds, ethnicities, languages, perspectives, and experiences held by both students and practitioners. A prominent

theme “But we’re diverse” reflected participants strong alignment that an impact is being had simply by the global nature of international education. This fallacy places practitioners in a dangerous space of being complacent with their diversity initiatives.

Additionally, participants communicated the significance of transitioning toward initiatives focused on fostering a sense of belonging. Many participants mentioned their individual offices’ programming efforts to integrate students with the larger campus community or making students of marginalized identities and backgrounds feel welcome within global education. This is consistent with the multiple conference sessions that placed a high emphasis on belonging initiatives as a core focus of DEI efforts within international education. However, critics believe that belonging is difficult to act on, unable to scale, and hard to measure due to its individualistic and subjective nature (Bloom Blog, 2020). The findings highlight this tension between numerical representation and genuine inclusion, underscoring the importance of developing clear objectives with which practitioners can measure the impact of the initiatives they create.

Surprisingly, terms such as equity and justice appeared less frequently throughout my interviews. Participants tended to have difficulties communicate how equity and justice influenced their day-to-day practice. When considered, equity and justice were often intertwined. This reflects participants’ recognition of the structural imbalances and historical injustices present in international education but not necessarily how to address unequal power dynamics, resource distribution, and opportunities for marginalized groups. A few of the sessions observed during fieldwork provided practical tips such as adapting program elements, providing support for marginalized identities, and advocating for students across campus. However, few addressed how to combat systemic and/or structural issues such as the prohibitive high cost of education

abroad programming, federal regulations governing international students educational experience, new state government laws impacting language around DEI, or the impacts of systemic racism in hiring practices. These inconsistencies demonstrate that diversity, equity, and inclusion work does not always create the impact it aims for.

The diverse range of interpretations implies that international educators should engage in deliberate discussions and trainings to align their understanding of these terms and their practical implementation. The field must recognize the need for clarity within diversity discourse and tailor strategies to address the specific needs of each stakeholder group within the field of international education. Moreover, the field should aim to elevate and center diverse voices (see Cupples & Grosfoguel, 2018; Grosfoguel, 2008; Hernández, 2016; Kendall, 2020), including those of marginalized groups, in shaping and refining the discourse surrounding these terms with the ultimate goal of fostering more inclusive and equitable environments.

Research Question 2: How do power relations and societal context influence these interpretations?

In regard to my second research question, I aimed to dive deeper into the intricate dynamics of power relations and the contextual background that shape the interpretations of diversity discourse within international education. Each participants perspective was shaped by their own identity, positionality, and spaces that they occupied. This is at the forefront of a larger overall picture of how coloniality has shaped and influenced the field of international education as a whole.

The influence of racially constructed power structures can be seen in the contrasting experiences of white international educators and BIPOC international educators which can make it difficult to navigate the complexity of their identities within the field. This idea that some

international educators may feel the need to "water themselves down" is plausible given that the field itself was built on colonial values.

The examination of power relations highlights the pivotal role they play in molding perceptions around diversity discourse within international education. As communicated by participants, power dynamics are inherent within educational institutions influencing relationships between students, educators, administrators, and other stakeholders. The findings underscore how power imbalances often perpetuate dominant narratives and perspectives while marginalizing alternative viewpoints. In the context of this research study, this phenomenon becomes evident in the ways in which BIPOC practitioners are verbally supported privately but not provided with sufficient resources or authority to implement change in their respective roles. It is often evident in the different narratives produced surrounding domestic students participating in outbound study abroad programs versus international students participating in US-based higher education programs.

Societal experiences also influence how participants may have valued their own situational power within the field. For example, Jena's experience as an "immigrant" and her use of that term to describe her experience is not incorrect, as according to sensemaking each of our experiences are "driven by plausibility rather than accuracy" (Mills, 2010, Conceptual Overview and Discussion Section) but may be deemed by others to be insensitive to the lived experiences of immigrant communities given her inherent privilege as a white United States citizen. For Jena, her experience in Asia aligned with the experiences of her international students here in the States. However, as an individual with roots from a western country who only temporarily resided abroad, some would deem a more appropriate term to be "expat". This is since both terms are rooted in coloniality and carry hierarchal notions constructed by race. The inquiries

into the difference between expatriate or expat and immigrant seem to align that "expat" has been more commonly reserved for white individuals as "immigrant" holds more negative connotations historically in association with people of color (Taylor, 2019; Cranston, 2017; Nash, 2017; Koutonin, 2015).

Represented in both the interviews and observational sites, there is an interplay between varying power dynamics within international education and practitioner's societal context. These are inseparable components influencing interpretations of diversity within international education. For example, Anthony's unique perspective as someone who doesn't identify as an American complicated his positionality as a leader within a private institution. He communicated feelings of estrangement when speaking about adapting to the institutional culture. At the same time, he indicated his reluctance in involving others in decision making processes concerning matters that impact the broader landscape of global education at his institution. During the conference sessions, it was not uncommon to hear comments to the effect of "I don't have control over that" or "How do I communicate this need to my organization". It is important to acknowledge the ways in which power dynamics mold who gets to speak and how different voices are valued within international education. Acknowledging the relationship between these two factors is crucial when engaging in difficult conversations surrounding diversity discourse in the field.

Research Question 3: How do international educators incorporate diversity discourse into concrete practices within the field?

The goal of addressing research question 3 was to provide practitioners with concrete practices on how to move from discourse to impact and showcase practical strategies and approaches that international educators employ to incorporate diversity discourse into their daily

activities. While there were some examples of innovative ways to embed diversity, equity, and inclusion into practice, the dialogue often seemed superficial and veered towards the topic of safety rather than collective accountability. This shift moves the focus away from answering demands of structural changes at predominantly white institutions (PWI) and towards the creation of task forces and committees.

The larger impact moves the intentional practice away from decolonizing international education and instead towards diversifying the field. While diversity of a campus community should be something to strive for, we run into challenges when it is our primary focus or measurement of success. The current incorporation of diverse voices often remains superficial, with the focus on showcasing differences rather than critically examining the historical, socio-political, and economic power imbalances that exist within global education. In essence, the push for diversity risks becoming a performative gesture rather than a substantive effort to deconstruct entrenched inequalities. This is in line with Zheng's (2023, p.16) take on diversity policies as "high-visibility statements that establish an organization's intentions on "DEI" but rarely reduce the inequities that affect disadvantaged groups.

While implementing initiatives that enhance access to global education opportunities such as scholarships, removing GPA requirements, and adapting program design appears promising, more work needs to be done to dismantle systemic barriers faced in global education. Collaborative initiatives that facilitate exposure to various cultural perspectives also have their own set of challenges including the potential to inadvertently reinforce cultural essentialism or exoticism. In examining administrative policies and institutional practices, there was a pessimistic outlook based on the current political climate. Although many participants communicated the adoption of policies promoting diversity and inclusion which signified a shift

towards acknowledging the experiences of underrepresented voices, they were concerned about the impact larger legislative changes would have on their work.

In conclusion, while policies, procedures, and programs are being implemented within global education and influenced by the increase of diversity discourse within the field, there are various limitations of these approaches to achieving the goals communicated. Addressing the challenges of performative diversity requires a holistic reimaging of international education that recognizes the entanglement of knowledge, power, and historical legacies.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

Conferences ~~felt~~ feel like home to me. It's something about the space that allowed an introverted extrovert like me to thrive. The power of connections, both old and new, is what draws me in. When I step into a conference space, particularly one for international educators, I instantly feel ~~like an imposter~~ a sense of familiarity. For me, conferences have always been more than just gatherings of professionals and experts within the field. They're a place of learning, exploration, and discovery. A place ~~I want to be~~ for me.

International education has permeated every aspect of my life: my career, my research, my friendships, my interests. It's difficult to distinguish where one ends and the other begins. Conferences serve as a gathering ground where I can connect with others who share the same passion for this field. Others who understand the challenges and hurdles that sometimes seem insurmountable. Others who were dedicated to making an impact, changing the culture, and challenging the status quo. Or so I believed.

It is interesting what people will mention when they are ~~privileged~~ comfortable enough. Whether it's during a private meeting or to an entire conference session room.

"We can still squeeze a few more years out of Jean."

"I love your hair. Can you do a little spin for me?"

"I come to these things because I have to. At this point, it's all for show."

"Students don't want to travel outside of Europe because of how unsafe it is."

"Whenever I meet new international students, I have them teach me how to say hello in their language."

"I don't believe we can ever decolonize education abroad. We just need to work with what we have."

The strange comments, microaggressions, and tokenization among other things, are typical for me in predominately white spaces. However, I had ~~false assumptions~~ higher hopes for these educators. These individuals I considered a core part of my community. Did they realize the power in their words? Did they understand the contradictions between the words they shared and the values they claimed to hold?

I ended this conference season with more questions than I had answers. Is international education a place for me? Or does it just pretend to be?

When I began my research, I wasn't sure what I was searching for, and the deeper I dove in the more skeptical I became. This research did not erase my passion for the field, the care for my colleagues, or the hope I had for the future. However, it did change it. This journey has been an embodied place of learning, exploration, and discovery – a move towards a "yes, and" mentality that forces me to hold two opposing beliefs as true.

Since its inception, the field has made a lot of strides towards diversification, including support for international educators through programs like the NAFSA RISE Fellowship, professional development provided by organizations like Diversity Abroad, and enhanced scholarship centering the needs of diverse student populations. AND "diversity" and "inclusion" will never be enough to enact the change the field states it would like to see such as decolonizing global education, restructuring curriculum models, rejecting a deficit model, and decentering a white Western perspective in education-abroad programming.

The field of global education is a unique tapestry comprised of individuals of various backgrounds, ethnicities, beliefs, and cultures. AND too many international educators feel the need to codeswitch in order to fit in for it to be a field that prides itself on inclusivity and belonging.

There are hundreds, if not thousands, of international educators doing the work to push the field forward in the realms of diversity, equity, and inclusion. AND that will mean little to nothing without the collective understanding that in order to create systemic change we must leverage our power to implement deliberate and sustainable transformations within the larger system, which may require us to reimagine new possibilities that are outside of our current structures.

Overall, this study explored how international educators connected diversity, equity, and inclusion discourse to their work within the field of international education. International educators within this research study are passionate about the work they do but often lack clear guidance on moving from discourse to practice. Participants' own positionality deeply impacted their perceptions of the current state of the field of international education. While there is a place for acronyms, task forces, committees, and diversification, it is important to examine the need for respectful disruption of the hegemonic systems embedded into international education. Actionable changes can range from decolonizing the curriculum to dismantling the bias historically embedded in the hiring process and disrupting the deficit-based narrative around underrepresented groups in international education. All this is to say that importance should be placed on whether the diversity discourse is bringing about superficial or structural changes.

Currently, in both academic and corporate settings, support of diversity, equity, and inclusion initiatives are under attack (see Ayas et al., 2023; Bhaskara, 2023; Chronicle Staff, 2023; Lu, 2023). Amidst growing scrutiny and challenges, this research offers timely and relevant insights into the perceptions and beliefs of those engaged in this work. These perspectives underscore the necessity of uplifting their voices as we collectively shape the vision for a more inclusive future within international education.

For future studies, I recommend focused attention to how international educator's identities and perceptions influence their engagement with diversity-focused initiatives. A mixed-methods approach to this study would be beneficial in quantifying and examining participants' attitudes towards specific diversity discourse within the field of international education. A larger sample size of international educators could provide a broader perspective and include participants from varying backgrounds and demographics. Additionally, a longitudinal study aimed at understanding how discourse impacts a specific diversity initiative development over time could provide the field with insight into best practices for fostering inclusive environments and driving sustainable change within the field.

REFERENCES

Abraham, K. (2022). On globalization and colonization: When and where we enter. In Christian, J. (Ed.), *Justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion: The JEDI anthology* (pp. 261-274). CAPA: The Global Education Network.

Aburakia-Einhorn, B. (2020). Supporting Deaf students in education abroad. In Berger, L. (Ed.). (2020). *Social justice and international education: Research, practice, and perspectives* (pp.191-214). NAFSA: Association of International Educators.

Ahmed, S. (2012). Commitment as a non-performative. In *On being included: Racism and diversity in institutional life* (pp.113-140). Durham, NC: Duke University Press. https://doi-org.prox.lib.ncsu.edu/10.1215/9780822395324

Appelman, A. (2020). "Alphabet soup": Examining acronym and abbreviation style in headlines. *Journalism Practice,* 14(7), 880-895. https://doi.org/10.1080/17512786.2019.1642125

Ayas, R., Tilly, P., Rawlings, D. (2023, February 7). Cutting costs at the expense of diversity. *Revelio Labs.* https://www.reveliolabs.com/news/social/cutting-costs-at-the-expense-of-diversity/

Ballard, D., Allen, B., Ashcraft, K., Ganesh, S., McLeod, P., & Zoller, H. (2020). When words do not matter: Identifying actions to effect diversity, equity, and inclusion in the academy. *Management Communication Quarterly*, 34(4), 590–616. https://doi.org/10.1177/0893318920951643

Baum, S. V. (1955). From "Awol" to "Veep": The growth and specialization of the acronym. *American Speech*, 30(2), 103–110. https://doi.org/10.2307/454270

Beaudin, G. (2022). Seeking a third space: Resisting the dominant narratives of civil right in US higher education. In Christian, J. (Ed.), *Justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion: The JEDI anthology* (pp. 275-285). CAPA: The Global Education Network.

Beavers, D. (2018). *Diversity, equity and inclusion framework: Reclaiming diversity, equity and inclusion for racial justice.* Greenlining Institute. https://greenlining.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/05/Racial-Equity-Framework.pdf

Berger, L. (Ed.). (2020). *Social justice and international education: Research, practice, and perspectives.* NAFSA: Association of International Educators.

Berthelsen, C. B., S. Grimshaw-Aagaard, and C. Hansen. 2018. Developing a guideline for reporting and evaluating grounded theory research studies (GUREGT). International Journal of Health Sciences 6 (2):64–76.

Bhaskara, V. (2023, July 7). DEI is under attack at colleges and universities. *Forbes.* https://www.forbes.com/sites/vinaybhaskara/2023/07/07/dei-is-under-attack-at-colleges-and-universities/?sh=293cd3d97dae

Bloom Blog. (2020, September 10). It's time to replace "belonging" in the diversity and inclusion conversation. *Medium.* https://bloomcollective.medium.com/its-time-to-replace-belonging-in-the-diversity-and-inclusion-conversation-f9f4fff9f90d

Boafo-Arthur, S. (2013, August 9). Acculturative experiences of Black-African international students. *International Journal for the Advancement of Counselling,* 36(2), 115-124. https://doi.org/10.1007%2Fs10447-013-9194-8

CCDI Consulting Inc. (2022, March 7). The case for the acronym IDEA (inclusion, diversity, equity, accessibility). *CCDI Consulting Inc.* https://ccdiconsulting.ca/articlesblogs/the-case-for-the-acronym-idea/

Charmaz, K. C. (2006). Constructing grounded theory: A practical guide through qualitative analysis. SAGE Publications.

Charmaz, K. (2008). Constructionism and the grounded theory. In J. A. Holstein & J. F. Gubrium (Eds.), *Handbook of Constructionist Research* (pp.397-412). New York: The Guilford Press

Charmaz, K., Thornberg, R. (2021). The pursuit of quality in grounded theory. *Qualitative Research in Psychology,* 18(3), 305-327. https://doi.org/10.1080/14780887.2020.1780357

Christensen, L. (2021). Talk-action dynamics: Modalities or aspirational talk. *Organizational Studies,* 42(3), 407-427. https://doi.org/10.1177/0170840619896267

Christian, J. (2013, April). *What if?* [Plenary address]. Diversity Abroad Conference, Chicago, IL, United States.

Christian, J. (Ed.). (2022). *Justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion: The JEDI anthology.* CAPA: The Global Education Network.

Cranston, S, (2017, March 29). Expatriate as a 'good' migrant: Thinking through skilled international migrant categories. *Population, Space and Place,* 23(6). https://doi.org/10.1002/psp.2058

Cupples, J., & Grosfoguel, R. (Eds.). (2018). Unsettling eurocentrism in the westernized university (1st ed.). Routledge. https://doi-org.prox.lib.ncsu.edu/10.4324/9781315162126

D'Enbeau, S., Mesmer, K., Socha, D. (2021). Discursive strategies and dilemmas of institutionalizing social justice in a higher education setting. *Western Journal of Communication*, 85(3), 319-338. https://doi.org/10.1080/10570314.2020.1798496

Diversity Abroad. (2022). *2022 Survey of diversity and inclusion among international educators.* https://www.diversitynetwork.org/common/Uploaded%20files/Research_Reports/2022-Survey-Diversity-Inted_report.pdf

Escobedo, A. C. (2022, November 6-9). *Enhancing DEIB: Counteracting implicit biases that affect connectedness to international students* [Conference session]. NAFSA Region VII Conference, Charlotte, NC, United States. https://www.nafsa.org/conferences/2022-nafsa-region-vii-conference

Fairhurst, G., & Cooren, F. (2018). Organizational Discourse Analysis. SAGE Publications Ltd, https://doi.org/10.4135/9781526430236

Fischer, K. (2022, June 8). A few observations from the NAFSA conference [Newsletter]. In *Latitudes.* The Chronicle of Higher Education.

Gayner, J. (1996). *The Fulbright Program after 50 years: From mutual understanding to mutual support.* Washington, DC: Capital Research Center.

Gordon, A. (2022). A commitment to diversity in education abroad. In Christian, J. (Ed.), *Justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion: The JEDI anthology* (pp. 47-49). CAPA: The Global Education Network.

Gozik, N. J., & Hamir, H. B. (Eds.). (2022). A house where all belong A house where all belong: Redesigning education abroad for inclusive excellence. Forum of Education Abroad.

Grosfoguel, R. (2008). Decolonizing political-economy and postcolonial studies: Transmodernity, border thinking, and global coloniality. *Revista Critica De Ciencias Sociais,* (80), 115-147.

Grosfoguel, R. (2008). Latin@s and the decolonization of the US empire in the 21st century. *Social Science Information, 47*(4), 605–622. https://doi-org.prox.lib.ncsu.edu/10.1177/0539018408096449

Harkins, D. (Host). (2020, November 11). What DIB and DEI mean in an industry that loves acronyms [Audio podcast episode]. In *Saying the Quiet Part Out Loud*. LiveRamp. https://liveramp.com/blog/dib-dei-meaning/

Hendley, E. (Host). (2022, July 11). What to know about the new IE competencies: Behind the scenes with the competencies commission (Season 3, Episode 6) [Audio podcast episode]. In *IE Podcast*. NAFSA: Association of International Educators. https://www.nafsa.org/ie-magazine/2020/7/9/new-international-educator-podcast

Hernández, R. (Ed.). (2016). *Decolonizing the westernized university: Interventions in philosophy of education from within and without.* Lexington Books/Fortress Academic.

Hoffman, G., Mitchell, T. (2016). Making diversity "everyone's business": A discourse analysis of institutional responses to student activism for equity and inclusion. *Journal of Diversity in Higher Education,* 9(3), 277-289. https://doi.org/10.1037/dhe0000037

Hyndman, W. (2022). Cosmopolitanism and diversity in France. In Christian, J. (Ed.), *Justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion: The JEDI anthology* (pp. 107-123). CAPA: The Global Education Network.

Institute of International Education. (2022). "Profile of U.S. Study Abroad Students, 2000/01-2020/21." *Open Doors Report on International Education Exchange.* Retrieved from http://www.opendoorsdata.org.

Institute of International Education. (2022). "Profile of U.S. Study Abroad Students, 2006/07-2020/21." *Open Doors Report on International Education Exchange.* Retrieved from http://www.opendoorsdata.org.

James-Dunbar, H. (2022). Creating inclusive curricula: English literature in study abroad. In Christian, J. (Ed.), *Justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion: The JEDI anthology* (pp. 251-258). CAPA: The Global Education Network.

Johnson, M. (2022). The decolonizing of study abroad. In Christian, J. (Ed.), *Justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion: The JEDI anthology* (pp. 240-250). CAPA: The Global Education Network.

Kendall, M. (2020). *Hood feminism: Notes from the women that a movement forgot.* Penguin Books.

Koutonin, M. R. (2015, March 13). Why are white people expats when the rest of us are immigrants? *The Guardian.* https://www.theguardian.com/global-development-professionals-network/2015/mar/13/white-people-expats-immigrants-migration

Lee, J. J. (2010). International students' experiences and attitudes at a US host institution: Self-reports and future recommendations. *Journal of Research in International Education,* 9(1), 66-84. https://doi.org/10.1177/1475240909356382

Lemus, D., Tindage, M. F., Stohl, C. (2022). Memorable messages matter: Diversity, inclusion, and institutional success for faculty and students of color in the United States. *Annals of the International Communication Association*, 46(1), 1-18. https://doi.org/10.1080/23808985.2022.2046126

Lu, A. (2023, May 31). Are diversity statements illegal? *The Chronicle of Higher Education.* https://www.chronicle.com/article/are-diversity-statements-illegal?sra=true&cid=gen_sign_in

Majeed, E. (2023, February 9). Reflections on the NAFSA IE competencies: Inclusion and equity. *International Educator.* https://www.nafsa.org/ie-magazine/2023/2/9/reflections-nafsa-ie-competencies-inclusion-and-equity

Mills, A. J., Durepos, G., & Wiebe, E. (Eds.) (2010). Critical sensemaking. SAGE Publications, Inc., https://doi.org/10.4135/9781412957397

Murrell, A. (2022). Introduction: Examining persistent racial disparities in education abroad through the lens of aversive racism: Creating a way forward. In Christian, J. (Ed.), *Justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion: The JEDI anthology* (pp. 13-26). CAPA: The Global Education Network.

NAFSA. (n.d.). About us. *NAFSA: Association of International Educators.* https://www.nafsa.org/about

NAFSA. (2023, July 5). Diversity, equity, and inclusion: A journey, not a destination. *NAFSA: Association of International Educators.* https://www.nafsa.org/blog/diversity-equity-and-inclusion-journey-not-destination

NAFSA. (n.d.). International education professional competencies (2015). NAFSA: Association of International Educators. https://www.nafsa.org/professional-resources/career-center/international-education-professional-competencies

NAFSA. (n.d.). Knowledge communities. *NAFSA: Association of International Educators.* https://www.nafsa.org/connect-and-network/networking-with-nafsa/knowledge-communities

NAFSA (n.d.). Past, present, and future. *NAFSA: Association of International Educators.* https://www.nafsa.org/about/about-nafsa/history-nafsa-association-international-educators

Nash, K. (2017, January 20). The difference between an expat and an immigrant? Semantics. *The BBC.* https://www.bbc.com/worklife/article/20170119-who-should-be-called-an-expat

Open Doors. (2021). *Report on international education exchange.* https://institute-of-international-education.mybigcommerce.com/open-doors-2021/

Quarcoo, A., Husaković, M. (2021). *Racial reckoning in the United States: Expanding and innovating on the global transitional justice experience.* Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. https://carnegieendowment.org/files/202110-Quarcoo_Racial_Reckoning_final.pdf

Reilly, J. (2022). Teaching whiteness in American literature: To preserve "truth, justice, and the American way". In Christian, J. (Ed.), *Justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion: The JEDI anthology* (pp. 94-105). CAPA: The Global Education Network.

Schaffer, A. (2022). The JEDI case (and a place) for funding: Framing philanthropy in education abroad. In Christian, J. (Ed.), *Justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion: The JEDI anthology* (pp. 27-37). CAPA: The Global Education Network.

Taylor, D. (2019, February 11). Expat vs. immigrant: What's the difference? *Travel Noire.* https://travelnoire.com/expat-vs-immigrant-whats-difference

Chronicle Staff. (2023, July 14). DEI Legislation Tracker. *The Chronicle of Higher Education.* https://www.chronicle.com/article/here-are-the-states-where-lawmakers-are-seeking-to-ban-colleges-dei-efforts

The Forum on Education Abroad. (2015). *Standards of good practice for education abroad* (5th ed.).https://mystudyabroad.unt.edu/_customtags/ct_FileRetrieve.cfm?File_ID=05027273734F767B0204077406701C757E0E7214750A08026E09740702740370720F0106727A740205

The Forum on Education Abroad. (2020). *Standards of good practice for education abroad* (6th ed.). https://www.forumea.org/uploads/1/4/4/6/144699749/standardsexp_8-22_web.pdf

Togunde, D., Lewis, A., Fall, R. (2022). Practical approaches to decolonizing education majors and global learning at Spelman college. In Christian, J. (Ed.), *Justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion: The JEDI anthology* (pp. 217-231). CAPA: The Global Education Network.

United States Code, 22 U.S.C. §2451 (2003). https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?path=/prelim@title22/chapter33&edition=prelim#:~:text=22%20USC%20Ch.,EDUCATIONAL%20AND%20CULTURAL%20EXCHANGE%20PROGRAM&text=*Public%20Laws%20117%2D328%20through,classification%20has%20not%20been%20finalized.

United States Code, 38 U.S.C. § 3452 (2018). https://uscode.house.gov/view.xhtml?req=(title:38%20section:3452%20edition:prelim)

Unkule, K. (2022). Homogenize and rule: Empires of the mind in twenty-first century higher education. In Christian, J. (Ed.), *Justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion: The JEDI anthology* (pp. 301-310). CAPA: The Global Education Network.

Urban, W. J., Wagoner Jr., J. L. (2009). *American Education: A History* (4th ed.). Routledge, London and New York. https://doi.org/10.4324/9780203872246

Verto Education. (2023, May 30). How do we achieve diversity in study abroad? *Verto Education.* https://vertoeducation.org/blog/how-do-we-achieve-diversity-in-study-abroad/

Ward, I. (1947). The Fulbright act. *Far Eastern Survey, 16(17),* 198-200. https://www.jstor.org/stable/3021675

Weick, K. E. (1995). Sensemaking in organizations. London: Sage.

Westra, E. (2021). Virtue signaling and moral progress. *Philosophy and Public Affairs, 49(2),* 156-178. https://doi-org.prox.lib.ncsu.edu/10.1111/papa.12187open_in_new

Woolf, M. (2022). Why a JEDI anthology? In Christian, J. (Ed.), *Justice, equity, diversity, and inclusion: The JEDI anthology* (pp. 38-45). CAPA: The Global Education Network.

Zheng, L. (2023). *DEI deconstructed: Your no-nonsense guide to doing the work and doing it right.* Berrett-Koehler Publishers, Inc.

APPENDICES

Appendix A

Ballard et al. Formula for Statements

Step 1: [This bad thing] just happened that goes against our [DEI] values, and we will not tolerate it. Name [this bad thing] in relatively safe, technical, bureaucratic and otherwise sanitizing terms (e.g., in response to George Floyd's death and related events, use "racism" and "killing" rather than "white supremacy" and "police murder"). To be safe, retain some display of so-called balance or even-handedness (e.g., support "peaceful" protest).

Optional enhancement: Attempt to empathize via a clueless, virtue-signaling personal statement.

Step 2: To anyone who might somehow be affected by [this bad thing], we're sorry; we support you; we want you to feel safe and welcome—in a word, included.

Optional enhancement: Look at these resources—mainly, existing campus and community offices and programs. It will go without saying that many of these are inadequate and underfunded, or that they individualize both problem and response (e.g., by treating racial trauma as personal rather than collective and inter-generational).

Step 3: Repeat that [this bad thing] does not correspond with our DEI values, and we promise to "continue" the work we are already doing to uphold those values.

Optional enhancement: Indicate, and assume ownership of (credit for), some [DEI] efforts already underway, even if these do not address, directly or even indirectly, [this bad thing]. Hyperlinks ideal.

Appendix B

List of Sessions Attended with Descriptions from Conference Program

2022 National Association of International Educators Annual Conference

Role of International Students and Scholars in Diversity Initiatives

Social justice efforts strive to address inequality and oppression, but diversity and inclusion initiatives rarely reference global education or international populations. This session presents the latest research findings on international students' sense of belonging and shares practices of engaging international students and scholars in diversity.

Good Intentions Are Not Enough: Reversing Racist Practices in International Education

This session interrogates unexamined but problematic assumptions and practices in international education, questioning why international educators often fail to achieve equitable outcomes. Presenters share strategies to confront, reverse, and eliminate racist practices, and attendees are guided to explore structural racism in the field, secure support for change, and advocate for underrepresented populations.

Diversity and Internationalization Leadership Strategies

This open meeting provides an opportunity to share strategies and openly exchange ideas on how to lead a discussion of diversity and internationalization on your campus.

The ABCs of Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion for International Student and Scholar Services Offices

Diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) is often passed off to diversity offices and multicultural centers rather than acted on by international student and scholar services offices. In this interactive session, presenters share their ABCs for DEI work and how they are infused in hiring, onboarding, student support programs, professional development, and office culture.

Bridges Not Walls: Building Partnerships Between Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion and International Student and Scholar Services Offices

International Student and Scholar Services (ISSS) and Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion (DEI) offices are often siloed on university campuses, yet there are critical areas of cooperation between these units for students and institutions. Join us for a SWOT analysis panel discussion of the strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats associated with partnering ISSS and DEI initiatives at various institution types. Presenters discuss opportunities to work together and help attendees understand why DEI work is critical to international student and scholar support. This session was selected as the Region VII conference highlight from the NAFSA 2021 All-Region Summit.

2022 National Association of International Educators Region VII Conference

Rebuilding, Recovering, and Reimaging Global Education through DEI

As institutions return to student mobility, diversity, equity, inclusion, and strategic outreach the recovery should not only center international education operations. . In this open session, four individuals will share their unique experiences navigating recovery while working in the field of international education. By holding space to share experiences around support, burnout, and institutionalized change, the facilitators hope to allow for collective healing and coalition building to identify strategies to best support ourselves, our teams, and our students as we move toward our new reality.

Reflecting on the paradox of inclusive international student engagement

While advising international students, it's easy to make assumptions about the needs of our students, and these assumptions are often driven by our implicit biases that shape our approach to advising and support. This interactive session will review the tools we are using for

self-assessment, such as the intercultural continuum, then introduce reflective methods, such as cultural humility and strength-based approaches. Last, we will share reflective tools advisors can use to recognize their own biases and the biases of their students using case studies and discussion.

Enhancing DEIB: Implicit Biases that Affect Connectedness to International Students

Belongingness refers to "the feeling that a person has that he or she is a valued part of the group" (Cornell University, Fostering an Inclusive Climate, 2018, p. 1). Implicit biases are rooted in subjectivity and serve as inhibitors to belonging and inclusion. These factors cause a disconnection between faculty, staff and international students. One of the primary challenges within the construct of implicit bias is the potential for microaggressions or discrimination to emerge. A secondary challenge is the probability of preconceived notions about international students to be fabricated. International students are often most closely connected to the faculty and staff who work directly with them. The primary goal of this session is to help participants to counteract their implicit (or unconscious) biases when working with international students. A secondary goal is to share some effective ways to promote a sense of belonging and inclusion on campus for this group.

2022 Global Inclusion Conference

Developing Diverse, Equitable, and Inclusive Faculty-led Programs

Bringing our JEDI lens to the first steps of program design and review will help our faculty-led programs be more inclusive, impactful, and successful. This session will facilitate discussion that encourages participants to think critically about inclusive practices in faculty-led programs and provide a framework for comprehensive program design and evaluation to meet the needs of all participants in study abroad. Sample proposals will be reviewed, discussed, and

edited in teams to ensure that the goals of DEI are clear in the intention, design, and execution of the program. Upon completion of this session, participants will be able to develop or review program proposals based on how well a program has been designed to meet the diverse needs of underrepresented students and visiting faculty abroad.

Beyond Dichotomies & Acronyms: Exercise in Modeling Inclusivity and Belonging (or a Lack Thereof)

As practitioners in International Education operating within a US-centric framework, we are either complicit in upholding antiquated ways of being or actively changing how the field engages stakeholders and supports participants. Our language is rooted in the power dynamics that govern our society and through the simplicity of dichotomies and acronyms we are taught to create "us" vs. "them" and black/white value judgments related to all aspects of life. Attendees will boldly participate in exercises designed to assess conscious and subconscious biases to examine how we may unknowingly uphold and model an inequitable and outdated status quo. How do we unpack dichotomies and embrace complexities? Why is exemplifying trustworthiness and appreciation to and for students and colleagues worldwide important? Join us to learn more.

Why Inclusive Language Matters in Global Education. Making it the Norm, Not the Exception

In decolonizing our minds and the international field, it's really important to look at the language that we use in global education. The language we use affects the ways we interact with our students and ourselves as colleagues. We invite you to explore the way language is often used when working with students and colleagues of the global majority. How do our conscious and unconscious biases impact our work? This session will examine how we can actively move

away from deficit model language and move towards making inclusive model language the norm.

2023 The Forum on Education Abroad

Becoming the Equity and Inclusion Future We Want and Our Students Deserve

Tired of the same old approaches to inclusion? Join us to "Kick it up a notch!" Four respectful paradigm disruptors employ a simulation, small-group work & more to help you imagine a future in which education abroad more effectively creates belongingness for all. Among our approaches: calling out the toxic workplace culture of Westernized higher ed, centering Blackness, & reframing decolonization.

From Colonial Conceptions to Decolonial Practices: How to Make the Switch?

Based on currents debates related to Decolonial Perspectives, Justice, Equity, and Inclusion, and having as a background the publication Voices from the South: Decolonial Perspectives in International Education, this panel seeks to present practical tools to deconstruct colonial conceptions found in our daily practices in the field of International Education.

Appendix C

Interview Format

Study Background

For the record the date is (state date) and I am currently interviewing participant number (state participant number).

Thank you again for agreeing to participate in this research study. In this research study, I am interested in understanding how individuals who work in international education discuss topics such as diversity, equity, inclusion, and race. Before we begin, I would like to review the consent form with you.

The consent form was sent over to your email address upon confirmation of this interview. Did you have any questions about the consent form that I can answer for you now? Do I have your verbal consent for your participation in this interview? As a reminder we will be audio recording this interview. Do I have your verbal consent to record? Thank you.

Throughout this interview I will ask you questions about yourself; your workplace; and the field of international education. This interview should take approximately 60 - 90 minutes. As we go through the questions, please answer each one of them to the best of your ability. If at any moment you would prefer not to answer a question, simply let me know and I will move on to the next question.

Interview Questions

1. What do you do within the field of international education?
2. Tell me about your journey to your role now. How did you enter into the field of international education?
3. What identities are the most salient for you in the work that you do?

4. How does your institution frame “diversity”?
5. Does your office, unit, or institution have a specific focus on diversity, equity, and inclusion, or anything that kind of falls under that diversity umbrella? This could be a statement committee, council, or other initiative.
    a. If so, could you tell me what you know about it?
    b. Do you have any historical knowledge of what you shared?
6. Do you feel like there is a disconnect between these focuses and what institutional stakeholders perceive is being accomplished?
7. Have you ever been to a workshop that focuses on diversity, equity, inclusion, or race?
    a. If so, can you tell me about it?
    b. What did you think about the workshop?
8. What strategies have you used to promote equitable access to international education opportunities?
9. How do you balance the need for cultural sensitivity with the desire to promote diversity and inclusivity in international education?
10. ISSS Specific Question: How do you navigate the challenges of what you would like to do to support students versus what you have to do in terms of your legal obligations to USCIS?
11. ISSS and Education Abroad are two large areas within international education. Based on your experience and perceptions, how do you feel those two areas overlap and what do you see as the major differences between those two areas?
12. What role do policies and procedures play in promoting DEI initiatives in international education?

13. How can international educators effectively communicate the importance of diversity initiatives to stakeholders?
14. What steps are necessary to implementing structural and systemic changes in the field?
15. Is there anything else you would like to share with me?

Additional Interview Questions

1. How do you involve students, faculty, and staff in conversations around diversity discourse in international education?
2. What are some of your favorite things about the field of international education?
3. What are some of the things you most dislike about the field of international education?
4. How has working in the field of international education influenced your views around diversity, equity, and inclusion?