

# "I'm a Believer (and I'm \_\_\_\_\_)": Religion and Intersectional Identity

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**DIVERSITY ABROAD  
CONFERENCE**

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# What we are covering today!

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- Intersectionality and Religion
- Background of Intersectionality
- Religion and Race/Ethnicity
- Religion and LGBTQ+ Identities
- Scenario Activity/Discussion
- Questions
- Resources and Identity Toolbox

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# What is Intersectionality?



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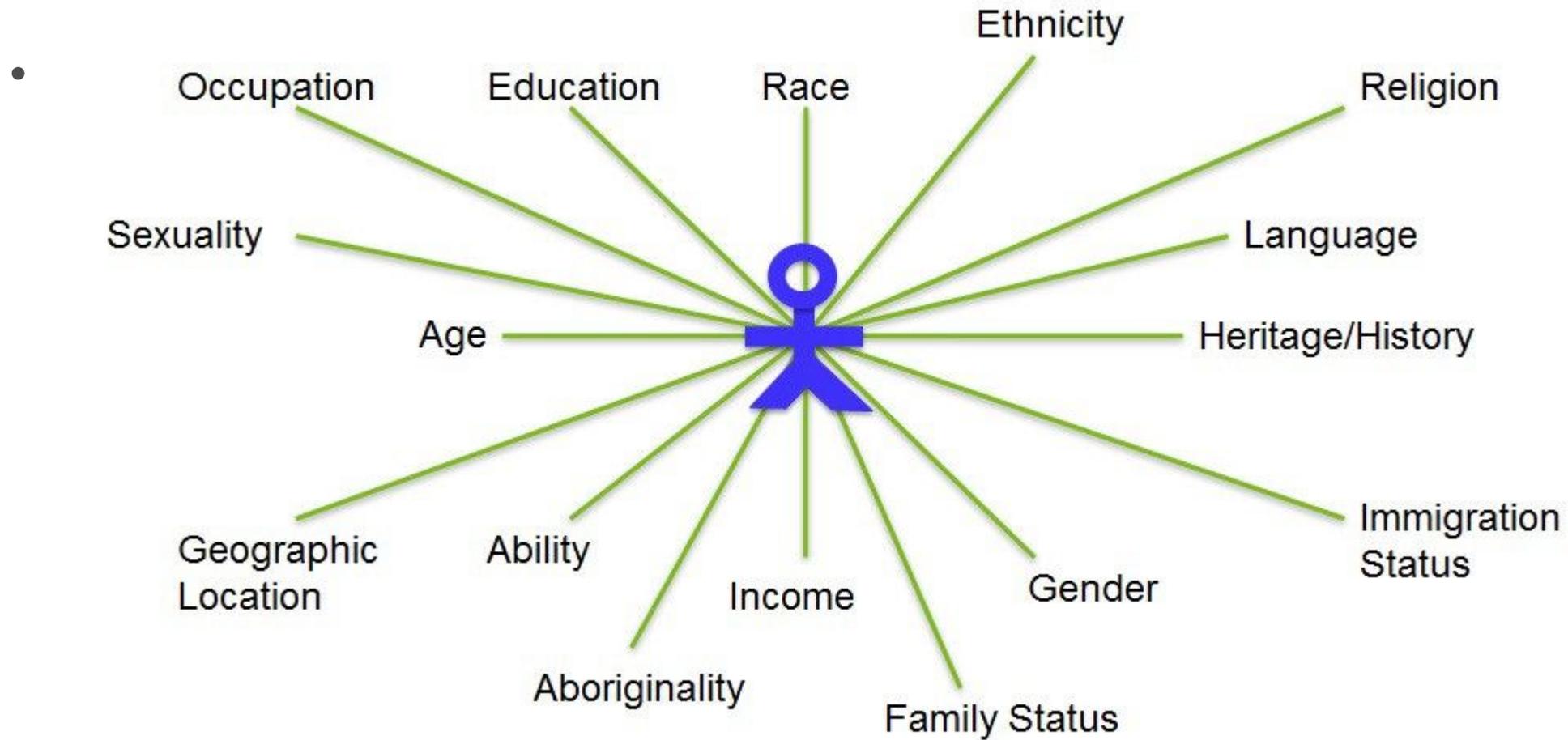
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# What is Intersectionality?

The complex, cumulative way in which the effects of multiple forms of discrimination (such as racism, sexism, and classism) combine, overlap, or intersect especially in the experiences of marginalized individuals or groups - Merriam-Webster

First coined in 1989 by Kimberlé Crenshaw in a paper arguing the experience of being a black woman has to take into account both race and gender, not to consider them independently of one another

# Intersectionality and Religion



# Intersectionality and Study Abroad

- Student's experience with their intersecting identities while abroad may look different than in their home country
- Resources and support for those identities may look different at the study abroad institution vs. the home institution
- A change from minority to majority or vice versa of a student's salient identities can be trying for them

# Religion and Race/Ethnicity



- Ethnicity is tied to a person's culture
  - Beliefs
  - Customs
  - Traditions
- A person may identify as French, but this does not mean they have specific physical features
  - As we know, not all French people look the same
- Race is a group of people of common ancestry, distinguished from others by physical characteristics, such as hair type, colour of eyes and skin, stature, etc.

# Religion and Race/Ethnicity

## Racial and ethnic composition by religious group

% of adults who identify as...

Chart

Table

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Religious tradition	White	Black	Asian	Latino	Other/Mixed	Sample Size
<b>Buddhist</b>	44%	3%	33%	12%	8%	262
<b>Catholic</b>	59%	3%	3%	34%	2%	7,113
<b>Evangelical Protestant</b>	76%	6%	2%	11%	5%	8,479
<b>Hindu</b>	4%	2%	91%	1%	2%	197
<b>Historically Black Protestant</b>	2%	94%	< 1%	3%	1%	1,913
<b>Jehovah's Witness</b>	36%	27%	< 1%	32%	6%	242
<b>Jewish</b>	90%	2%	2%	4%	2%	838
<b>Mainline Protestant</b>	86%	3%	1%	6%	3%	5,995
<b>Mormon</b>	85%	1%	1%	8%	5%	656
<b>Muslim</b>	38%	28%	28%	4%	3%	232
<b>Orthodox Christian</b>	81%	8%	3%	6%	2%	184
<b>Unaffiliated (religious "nones")</b>	68%	9%	5%	13%	4%	7,427



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# Religion and LGBTQ+ Identities

## College: A Time for Identity Formation

Religious identity  often stigmatized by secular society.

LGBTQ+ identity  often stigmatized, including possibly by their religious “home”.

The common results: tension and stress.

# Scenarios



## Questions to think about:

- How do you respond to your student's concerns?
- Where do you turn for resources to help student and yourself?
- As an advisor, what can you do to keep students from underrepresented groups from being singled out while abroad?

# Scenarios



1. A student of Indian-American heritage is a practicing Catholic who will be studying abroad in India. Ethnically this student is the majority, but religiously she is in the minority.
2. This is Angela's second semester at a small Catholic liberal arts college in the Northeast. Angela was raised in a traditional Catholic household in which her parents toed the Church's line on homosexuality. At college she has come out as a lesbian to her closest friends, but she has not yet come out to her parents or to anyone else at college. Angela still considers herself Catholic, and is searching to find ways to reconcile her sexual identity with her religious identity. Angela plans to study abroad next semester in Costa Rica for her Environmental Science major and she has visited the Education Abroad Office for a preliminary meeting. How should the Education Abroad Advisor conduct this meeting in a way that respects Angela's undisclosed intersecting identities while preparing her to study abroad?

# Scenarios



3. A black Jewish student in Kenya has found that she is now in the racial majority, but still the religious minority. She is looking for advice on navigating her Jewish identity in it's newfound context of her race being in the majority.

4. A white Christian student going to China had anticipated navigating the experience of being in the minority in terms of race, but had not thought much about being in the religious minority until arriving. He emails you asking for advice with his first experience in not one but two minority identity groups.

# Scenarios



5. Micah has long openly identified himself as bisexual, and he chose the large public university an hour away because of its reputation for diversity and tolerance. Micah considers himself a rationalist and an atheist who actively resists decisions that are not rooted in science. A Public Health major, Micah is working with his Study Abroad advisor to spend the summer volunteering at a clinic in Tanzania. Micah is keen to maintain his sexual and religious identities. How should the Education Abroad Advisor work with Micah in a way that respects his disclosed intersecting identities while preparing him to study abroad?



# Questions?

# Resources and Identity Toolbox

- **Questions for Advisors to Ask**
  - How important are your visible/non-visible identities to be known while you are abroad?
  - Who can you share those pieces of your identities with while abroad?
- **Advisor's framework in addressing a student's intersecting identities (both disclosed and undisclosed):**
  - What are the potential social costs and benefits of studying abroad?
  - How does an age of rising nationalism impact how intersecting identities are navigated?
- <https://www.diversityabroad.com/guides/diversity-and-inclusion-abroad-guide/religious-diversity-abroad>
- On campus communities/religious leaders

# Contact Us!

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**Keep your eyes peeled for the opportunity to serve on a Diversity Abroad Task Force!**