ADVISORY IDENTITY & PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE: HOW SOCIAL IDENTITY INFORMS PRACTICE

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About the Presenters

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Teaching advising students (masters and doctoral)
Session Agenda

- Introduction to Topic
- Identity Exercise – Jamboard*
- Overview of Research Study
- Self-Reflection Activity – Target & Agent Identities*
- Implications & Recommendations
- Closing and Q&A

Introduction

- First formal advising program on college campus – mid 1800s
- NACADA creation (late 1970s) – academic advising began journey toward professionalization.
- Growing importance on understanding professional identity in advising – relevant to expanding expectations of role, job satisfaction, training and development.
- Integration between an individual's identity and career is related to job satisfaction and effectiveness.
- Professional identity is formed through experiences and socialization in the field - but know little about the role of our own social identities in shaping professional identity
Personal vs. Social Identity

- Important to note difference between social and personal identity
- Social identity: Membership in groups tied to -isms in society (e.g., race, class, gender, sexual orientation, age, ability, religion)
- Personal identity: Characteristics that define an individual as a unique person, often based on interests and experiences
- Examples:
  - I am a mom! I am a Dodger's fan!
  - I identify as a White female.

Conceptual Framework

- RMMDI (Abes et al., 2007)
  - demonstrates relationship between core self, salient social identities, meaning making filter, and the role of context
  - Core: personal inner self
  - Multiple social identities: the more salient and identity is, the closer it is to the core; identities can intersect with one another
  - Contextual influences: external influences (e.g., family, peers, norms)
  - Cognitive filter: differences in filters (thickness/tightness) determines the degree of control individuals have harnessed over their environments.
- Relationship between social identities and power structures in the workplace
- Role of Advisor/Counselor and Identities of Advisor/Counselor are hardly understood in how they work and relationships with students
- Framework has been helpful in our understanding in exploring these concepts & the relationship to advising practice
Identity Exercise - Jamboard
Reflect on the following…

• How do your social identities influence your:
  • Relationships with students
  • Relationships with colleagues
  • Relationships with supervisors
  • The professional development you participate in
  • Your professional identity

How do your social identities influence your relationship with students?

- I am able to use shared identities to form deeper relationships with them.
- I have more empathy because I’ve lived through similar experiences.
- They don’t really trust me because there are so few counselors of color.
- They trust me because there are so few counselors of color.
Overview of Study

Research Questions

1. What role do social identities play in professional identity?

2. How do advisors feel their social identities influence the advising relationship and professional practice?
Methodology & Sample

- Part of a larger national qualitative study (n=23 early career professionals)
- Presentation focus is 10 who identify as advisors
- Data collected in spring 2020 via Zoom interviews
- Analyzed using Saldaña’s analytic two-cycle coding process
- Sample includes:
  - 6 females; 4 males
  - 4 AAPI; 3 Latinx; 1 Black; 1 Muslim; 1 white
  - All with 1-5 years of experience
  - Community colleges and 4-year institutions

RQ 1 Findings – Social ID & Professional ID

- Most participants mentioned at least one of their social identities when describing their professional identity
  - Experiences with marginalization & empowering/supporting students was also a theme

- Others describe professional identity based on task and functional area (job description)

- Family influenced professional identity
Social Identity in Professional Identity

Apple:

My professional identity how I'm defining it is very much someone who is a first gen professional. I do know that when you are a first gen student, you don't suddenly graduate and know how to navigate the world. You become a first gen professional, and I feel like that is a big part of my identity. I think with that, since I've been working at home, my partner sometimes overhears my advising calls, and he always talks about like, "You do a really good job of being relatable to students while also pushing them to do things to meet their goals."

And so, I feel like part of that is tied to being, one, a first gen professional, but also being a woman of color.

Social Identity in Professional Identity

Vicente:

I consider myself an educator...The way I see it, it's not just academically. It's just life overall. Because of my experiences, I feel like I can help educate and empower other students that may have similar backgrounds and allow them to see beyond what their social upbringing or their current circumstances allows... So I also would like to think of myself as a mentor, as a role model, as somebody who inspires. That's how I would like to see myself, and I think that's my professional identity beyond any title...Somebody who is here to help, and empower, and educate.
Job Description as Professional Identity

Tuesday:

I guess I see myself as a higher education professional that my job is to work specifically with students within the higher education context, whether it's as undergraduates, graduate students, post-graduates and so on. And I see myself as someone who is trained and equipped to provide a lot of roles, whether it's advising, consultation, event planning, project management, all those different things. So, I'd say my professional identity is just to be well rounded, responsible, and efficient.

The Important Role of Family

Sebastian:

And then, I can't also forget my father's wonderful rule and strategy creation of everything. The man who made me, at age seven is the earliest memory I have of this, use like a map book. You could have printed out MapQuest, but he has these books, these Atlas books. And I would always be there just like my finger on the dot, tracing us all the way up. And so, I think that's part of how I build plans with some of these young people is, "Well, here's my book. Here's all those things. And here's those collection of details." So, in your aspiration, how do those things come together? How do we stop at every place reasonably? How do we get to sophomore year?
The Important Role of Family

Superman:

So, I think my identity as a Student Affairs professional, I'm not only a Student Affairs professional when I'm working from 9:00 to 5:00. I constantly have family members call me and say, "Hey, Uncle so-and-so, I'm applying to school. Can you help me with this application?" Or I have cousins call me and say, "Hey, I'm considering transferring. Can you help me with that?" So, it's actually ingrained in my personal life as well, but I would say my social identity plays a role in who I am professionally and personally.

RQ2 Findings - Relationship to Practice

• Advising Relationship
  • Relationship building and trust
  • Advocacy

• Other Aspects of Professional Practice
  • Community of Support
  • Identities influence professional involvement
Relationship Building & Trust

Carlos:

When the students I have built really good relationships with, that will send me an email, to my personal email address, or will not meet with other advisors, that they only want to meet with me. Students where we’ve connected on the fact that they’re also first generation, or they come from a low-income background, or that they identify as Latinx. That’s okay, cool, we can connect on that, too.

So that part has really helped me connecting with students in a way that they’re going to be comfortable sharing whatever is going on. And sometimes we’ll talk about things that don’t even have anything really to do with the academic side of things... So yeah, no, it’s definitely helped build really good, strong relationships with the students that I’ve been able to open up with.

Relationship Building & Trust

Tracy:

But I think also because I’m a young professional, I look young even though I don’t feel young. I’m still reminded I’m young so I feel like that gives me a level of comfort and ability to say certain things and relate to the students in a way that older professionals might not be able to.
Relationship Building & Trust

Apple:

So, I think my social identities, especially with people that I connect with and feel that similarity within terms of those identities, *I feel like have helped me show up more authentically but also just have authentic reactions in the work field. I think with my students, too, it helps me feel more authentic, too.*

If feel like there isn’t that formality that creates space between us. There’s still that mentorship relationship, like I’m not your friend, but I think there is a more authentic, warm relationship because of the identities I have.

Advocacy for Students

Annie:

*I think my race plays a huge role, because I'm able to talk to the students of color, because there's not a lot of counselors of color on campus,* and it’s definitely something that needs to change because I’ve had students come and vent to me about some of the microaggressions that they see in their classes, that they feel in their classes. I felt that too when I was a student, so *I want them to know that this is something that, although it happens so often, you shouldn't be normalized to it, and making sure that they know when to acknowledge that and what their options are if they want to move forward with reporting.* Because I feel like every student should be comfortable in their class, but it's not that way.
Advocacy for Students

Diane:

I'm always trying to advocate for students ... in whatever capacity, and I'm saying this because I serve on some committees like conduct and grade appeals. It's like, "The student's not going to like it. They're not going to feel like it's helping them, but in the long run it's going to hopefully be a lesson that they learn that can help them." Being an educator and advocate isn't always fun. It's not always that warm, fuzzy feeling. Sometimes you have to say things or tell them something that doesn't immediately make sense to them, especially during these days with the uprisings and the protesting and, "How do I become a better advocate for my black students?" That forces you to, not just for your students but also for you. There's a lot of uncomfortable conversations that I need to have with myself on where I am, my unconscious biases.

Community of Support

Tuesday:

There's a lot of women that work in education. I found that that's kind of nice to have that connection with other people who share that part of my identity. So we have a lot of issues that are common to just being a female in the workplace. So, like how best to earn respect, how to make sure you're getting compensated fairly? Like what if there are major life changes that you need to take on? So those kinds of things are really helpful in my interactions and knowing that there's always people to go to.
Community of Support

Diane:

I don't know if there's one central person that was really integral in helping me. It's like a lot of different folks. Well, a lot of them being APIs, which played a big role because growing up in Lancaster, I didn't have a lot of folks who looked like me. So when I came to LA, I was like, whoa. I really gravitated towards folks who ... Without really realizing there were a lot of API folks that helped me along the way.

Professional Involvement

Sebastian:

I think beyond going to NASPA, and attending particularly LatinX events, or the person of color events, that space too felt very ... Suddenly, I had to perform some like dance to make everyone know, "Well, I'm worthy enough of this."
Professional Involvement

Diane:

Because I got hired at a school that I went to, a lot of the folks who helped me as a student still work there. So, I've had a lot of support from my department chair, my dean, my vice president, but outside of campus, I really had to go find a space that I felt comfortable with. I am pretty involved with the National Organization APAHE, which stands for Asians and Pacific Americans in Higher Education. Through that network, I've been able to connect with a lot of folks who are just in higher ed, like folks my age.

Discussion

• Social identities played a significant role in how advisors describe their professional identity and their day-to-day work
  • This was especially true with advisors who identified with more marginalized communities
  • Others stuck strictly to positional roles
• Family plays a bigger role that one might assume
• Identity influences student relationships, support, and advocacy
• Tension between desire to advocate and ability to do so – supervisors and mentors can support navigating this
• Building professional community and being involved in professional orgs had challenges when it came to connection
Self-Reflection Activity

- Target vs. Agent
  - Race
  - SES
  - Gender
  - Sex
  - Sexual Orientation
  - Age
  - Religious or Spiritual Affiliation
  - National Origin
  - Physical, Emotional, Developmental (Dis)Ability

Implications for Practice

- Notable relationship between social identity and professional identity
- Most significant, is how advisors use their social identities and experiences (positive & negative) to form connections across differences and similarities
- Advisors have leveraged these to build relationships (with students and colleagues), develop empathy, and advocate for students
- Advisors should try to do these types of things to build capacity in students and colleagues to work together to dismantle institutional structures
- One such model for practice is Intergroup Dialogue (IGD)
Recommendation for Practice: Intergroup Dialogue (IGD)

- What is IGD?
  - Nationally recognized four-stage model for social justice education that combines experiential learning and dialogue to examine issues of social group identity, privilege and oppression, and social action

- Use to build trust, empathy, and allyship

- Practical Applicability in Advising
  - Reflection - personal growth
  - Use for facilitation of dialogue with students, departments, etc.

- Use IGD to build more awareness of these matters – as both individuals, and within your collective units.

Questions?

- Thank you for attending!

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