

Confronting Whiteness in Tanzania

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INTRODUCTION

Universities are positioned to help students confront and challenge previously held assumptions regarding historical and modern racism.



Modern racism is subtle and marked by ambivalence and theories of Whiteness.

Contemporary racism has adopted subtle forms marked by ambivalence and theories of Whiteness (Bonilla & Forman, 2000). Cross-cultural contact (Trilokekar & Kukar, 2011) under the right conditions may challenge racial perspectives though it has also been known to reinforce stereotypes, prejudice, or White privilege if not properly managed and debriefed (Mitchell et al. 2012).

PURPOSE

The purpose of this study is to qualitatively investigate whether cross-cultural contact challenges student perceptions of racism and related social inequalities.

METHODS

Sample

N = 14 undergraduates from a large South Eastern university.
Primarily White/Female
Two-week trip to Tanzania-May 2015.

Data Sources

Stage 1 (n = 14)
Unstructured Journaling
Field notes and observation

Stage 2 (n = 6)
Self-Administered, open ended questionnaire
Prompted photo elicitation

Stage 3 (n = 6)
Two 90 minute focus groups

Analysis

Stages 1, 2-Interviews, and 3
• Open, Axial, and Selective Coding

Stage 2-Photos

- Ego-centricity
- Subject matter
- Photographer or Subject



Tanzania is a least developed country (LCD) in West Africa.

Photo Results

Based on 25 Images

- Ego-centric: 40%
- Power-reinforcing subject matter: 48%
- Student as subject: 44%

RESULTS & DISCUSSION

“They see everything and they understand nothing: Fleeing from social others at home and exoticizing them abroad” (Priest & Priest, 2008, p. 69)



Naming Whiteness, makes it visible. Outsider status often draws attention to one's Whiteness, which may create discomfort for one whose race/status has traditionally been "invisible."

Difficulty parceling out differential treatment based on race, ethnicity, group membership, or identification as a tourist.

Reconciling inequality: “The Westerner is burdened with stuff...reconstituting the self as innocent” (Mahrouse, 2011, p. 384).

Adopting victim status: “Casting the self as victims in order to distract from empowered position” (Fletcher, 2005, 97).

Rationalizing poverty. “Poor-but-happy” (Guttentag, 2009, p. 546)

The enclavic nature of study abroad results in an under-examination of Whiteness.

Mzungu: A signifier of stratification through mobility (Gross, 2015, p. 12).

Student's body becomes the symbolic medium of difference.

