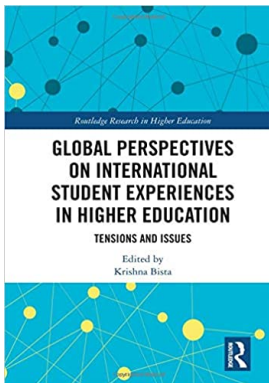


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Global Perspectives on International Student Experiences in Higher Education: Tensions and Issues

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The number of students studying abroad has increased in recent decades, but the 2019 Open Doors data revealed that the total number of enrolled international students in U.S. institutions decreased 1.6% in 2018–2019, with 51% of higher education institutions reporting a decrease in new international student enrollment (Sanger & Baer, 2019). The report listed many factors that contributed to the decline like the costs of higher education in the country, visa application issues, the increasing global competitive market, and the social and political environment.

Literature on the internationalization of higher education tends to focus on the efforts made by higher education institutions and policymakers, often leaving students, the ultimate beneficiaries and consumers of their service, behind. Enrolling international students can contribute to the internationalization of an institution when they serve as cultural resources (Urban & Palmer, 2014). However, it is possible to find evidence of discrimination toward international students on campus and/or in the community (Hanassab, 2006; Lee & Rice, 2007; Ramos et al., 2016; Wong et al., 2014). Given the complexity of the international student experience on campuses in the United States and other contexts, more studies are required. University administrators may see the international student population as one population with similar needs, as evidenced by the student profile data at each university. There is often a breakdown of the domestic student population according to race and ethnicity, but the entire

international student population is usually compiled as one despite racial and ethnic differences.

In *Global Perspectives on International Student Experiences in Higher Education*, Dr. Krishna Bista selected 18 studies that present important findings to the field, in which the authors provide examples of how the quality of the international student experience deserves the utmost attention of administrators, faculty, student affairs professionals, and policymakers. The book is divided into four main units, which are described separately in this review.

SOCIOCULTURAL EXPERIENCES: RECOGNIZING INTERNATIONAL STUDENT IDENTITIES

The first part of the book consists of seven chapters on the topic of international student identity. Given the complexity of this population comprised of individuals with multiple identities and different experiences, there can never be enough studies on the topic. Anita Hayes (Chapter 4) calls attention to the fact that international students may experience normalization in English universities, from imposing British perspectives in the curriculum and measuring success according to British terms. Another example presented by the author is that institutions, although well-intended, tend to force international students to attend remedial classes as if they have some sort of deficiency. This runs counter to international students' desire to be treated equal. This is corroborated by David Starr-Glass in Chapter 2, who describes how the classification of international students at a deficit makes pragmatic sense but can be exclusionary.

One of the standout chapters in this book was written by Duran and Thach, where the authors examined two queer international students' experiences of cultural shock at a predominantly White institution in the United States. This is a clear example of the importance of conducting studies on international students with marginalized identities. For instance, the findings revealed that student organizations such as the Queer Club did not speak to one international student's experiences concerning their other identities. These students face other issues, which may include a realization that returning home requires them to mask their true selves.

CONTEXTUAL INFLUENCES ON INTERNATIONAL STUDENT LEARNING EXPERIENCES

The five chapters in this section of the book introduce a variety of issues that may impact student learning, from developing leadership capacity on their campuses (Chapter 9) to the role of English deficiency as a predictor for committing academic violations (Chapter 11). In Chapter 13, Gaule presents the domestic (American) student perspective on their engagement with international students on campus. He provides a series of reasons for domestic students to interact with international students such as curiosity, roots (e.g., family connections to outside countries or cultures), and assignments given by faculty that require the interaction. On the other hand, barriers include cliques, staying in their comfort zone, traditions (e.g., domestic

students in Greek organizations), and the fact that international students speak a different language or have an accent.

RETHINKING INTERNATIONAL STUDENT WELL-BEING

The importance of international students' mental health and well-being is highlighted in the three chapters of this section. Chapter 15 by Gan and Forbes-Mewett describes Singaporean students' views of talking about their mental health and accessing mental health services. The results point to the fact that students may not utilize such services based on a culture of stigma and that the topic of mental health and well-being is a "very western thing" (p. 234). The same students may choose to seek help from friends and family, only turning to professionals in the case of an emergency. Hyams-Ssekasi and Caldwell in Chapter 14 report important findings in regard to Black-African international students' coping strategies, given the discrimination they suffer in their institution in the United Kingdom. One quote from a Nigerian student summarizes his experience of feeling social demotion: "My country helped build this country, but you are treated as not even a second-class citizen...here, they look at you like you are nothing, and it annoys me" (p. 222).

INTERNATIONAL STUDENT POSTSTUDY EXPERIENCES

The last three chapters of the book shed light on one of the most important topics for international students: access to jobs. Host country governments may still impose restrictions to students when it comes to working while studying as well staying in the country after completing their studies. Such immigration policies create barriers for brain circulation. In the chapter "International Students as a Vulnerable Army of Workers: Work Experience and Workplace Treatment," Tran and Soejatminah report that international students studying in vocational programs in Australia may not be able to obtain work experience while obtaining a degree. They may also suffer discrimination by (potential) employers and be forced to take on low-paying jobs. It is a situation where, if they do not accept the job, someone else who needs the money will do so, resulting in a (perceived) lack of bargaining power.

As a Brazilian student currently pursuing my PhD in the United States, reading the book felt close to home in several cases. It provided multiple opportunities for reflection on the complex issue of the international student experience. The book can serve as a guide to university administrators, student affairs professionals, and policymakers to review their internationalization plans and incorporate the international student perspective when recruiting, programming, teaching and assisting this population. As Dr. Chris Glass mentions in the foreword, "While many institutions strive to create inclusive environments for international students, their rhetoric does not often match the reality" (p. xxi).

In addition to demonstrating that international students have differing experiences and the findings cannot be generalized to the entire population, this book also calls for more research on the topic. After reading this book, I can suggest a few ideas, such as studies on the multiple (marginalized) identities of international

students and their well-being, the international student transition to the job market, as well as the international student experience in developing countries.

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