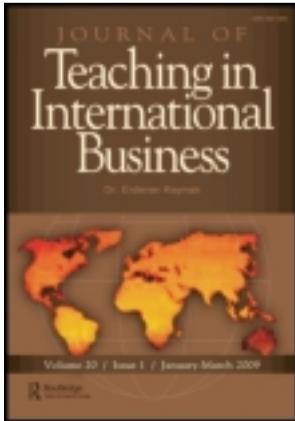


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Student Perceptions of Internationalization, Multiculturalism, and Diversity in the Business School

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Over the last five decades, business schools all over the world have adapted their strategies for introducing the theoretical and pedagogical consequences of globalization. Educational institutions have gone to great lengths to internationalize their curricula to stay current with the most recent trends in the globalizing economy. As this evolution takes place, the issues of multiculturalism and diversity are increasingly included in the internationalization dialogue. In this article we use qualitative focus groups to examine how U.S. business students experience the relationships among internationalization, multiculturalism, and diversity. Next, we consider the role of international business faculty in addressing this issue. We conclude by offering recommendations for successfully integrating these perspectives into a coherent curriculum.

Keywords: Internationalization, Multiculturalism, Business pedagogy

1. INTRODUCTION

Over the last five decades business schools all over the world have adapted their strategies for introducing the theoretical and pedagogical consequences of globalization. Educational institutions have gone to great lengths to internationalize their curricula to stay current with the most recent trends in this increasingly globalized economy (Tesar & Moini, 1998; Stromquist, 2007; Kedia & Englis, 2011; Zimmer et al., 2005). As this evolution happens, the complementary issue of diversity management constitutes a parallel but separate track within the organizational dialogue (Avery & Thomas, 2004; Donald, 2007; Bell, Connerley, & Cocchiara, 2009). Multicultural diversity management and cross-cultural abilities are rarely recognized as overlapping competencies, nor do they develop naturally in tandem. In this article, we analyze how this fragmentation plays out in business student attitudes and aptitudes. We call this phenomenon the internationalization/multiculturalism gap. Through this exploration, we seek institutional and

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curricular strategies to address student competencies across this gap. Specifically, we ask the questions: What is the relationship between internationalization, multiculturalism, and diversity? How are they similar? How are they different? Can business schools successfully address all three? Can they afford not to? And finally, what is the role of international business faculty in facilitating these conversations?

In studying business students' attitudes, we found a conundrum: high levels of enthusiasm and developmentally appropriate competency for international business engagement among White students, but much lower levels for domestic multiculturalism. In this article, we detail this finding, while speculating on the origin of the gap. We argue that the consideration of the two competencies should not be fragmented, as the two types of cross-cultural interactions are not divided in work settings domestically or abroad. Similarities exist; indeed, diversity competency is defined as recognizing how culture and group identity affect workplace dynamics (Avery & Thomas 2004) or cross-cultural competency in which behaviors, attitudes, and policies come together to allow individuals to work effectively in cross-cultural settings (Cross et al., 1989). Similarly, cross-cultural competence in international business has been defined as an "individual's effectiveness in drawing upon a set of knowledge, skills, and personal attributes in order to work successfully with people from different national cultural backgrounds at home or abroad" (Johnson, Lenartowicz, & Apud, 2006, p. 530).

This article is organized as follows. We review the interconnected and intersecting literatures on internationalization of business education and multiculturalism. Next we discuss the qualitative focus group methodology as employed in this research context. After that we present the main findings of the data analysis. Next we offer recommendations for successfully integrating these perspectives into a coherent curriculum. We conclude by discussing the role of international business faculty in addressing this issue.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1. Internationalization of the Business Curriculum

In recent decades, the internationalization of the business-school curriculum has been an important priority for faculty, administrations, students, and employers. This trend began nearly five decades ago when Stephen Robock, Jean Boddewyn, and others made a case for the importance "Internationalizing the Traditional Business Curriculum" (Robock & Hert, 1964; Fayerweather et al., 1966; Otteson, 1968). These pioneers could see the changing global political economy and the need for a practical response by business schools to prepare the next generation of leaders. The Association to Advance Collegiate Schools of Business (AACSB) and the Academy of International Business (AIB) have been strong and consistent institutional supporters of these efforts throughout the years. They have served to legitimate and facilitate the internationalization of business school education through formal accreditation and informal dissemination of best practices (AACSB, 1979; Ryans, 1983). As the new millennium approached, globalization dominated headlines with an equivalent response from business educators. Researchers compared national models (Mockler, Chao, & Dologite, 1996) for the most relevant and effective ways to integrate the complex themes of the interconnected global political economy into the classroom (Vogelsang-Coombs, White, & Mlckovsky, 1996; Tesar & Moini, 1998). Finally,

business educators continue their work on *Transforming Business Education to Produce Global Managers* (Kedia & Englis, 2011) even in the midst of a global recession and predictions of a postglobalization era (Samuelson, 2012). All of these efforts have advanced the goals of developing a global mindset to be able to effectively communicate across national cultures. However, the overwhelming treatment of preparing business school students for the global economy has historically overshadowed the complementary need for multicultural and diversity training. Ghemawat's (2003, 2008) arguments for "Why The World Isn't Flat" underscore the necessity for integrating the internationalization and multicultural perspectives: Despite many popular predictions, borders still matter. Business school students must be prepared to operate effectively in a multicultural environment as well as a global one. Furthermore, international business faculty are in a unique position to be able to address these complementary skills by employing many of the same cross-cultural concepts to within-country contexts.

2.2. Diversity Competency and Multiculturalism

The issues of multiculturalism, domestic diversity, and racism have not been a main part of the movement by management faculty and administrators to internationalize the business school curriculum. This omission holds two risks: marginalization of non-White students in international business curriculum and inadequate preparation of all international business students for the complex social settings in which they will work. The task for educators becomes difficult, as our students come to us increasingly educated in racially and ethnically segregated K-12 environments (Avery, 2007). How might this impact the task of creating internationally and diversity competent students? Two areas of inquiry are of particular importance to answer this question: the emergent concept of *colorblind racism* and the importance of higher education for creating *racial cognizance*.

First, "colorblind racism" has emerged as a new classification of racism that accepts the principle of racial equality while diminishing the continued importance race plays in shaping world around us (Forman, 2004; Bonilla-Silva, 2009). As Gallagher (2003) notes, the emergent colorblind perspective "insinuates that class and culture, and not institutional racism, are responsible for social inequality" (p. 6). Colorblindness diminishes the role that racism plays in the expanding social inequality in the United States by legitimating the dominant institutional structures that privilege Whites (Forman, 2004).

Scholarly analysis of colorblind racism provides us with insight into what management faculty must help students to "unlearn" (McKendall, 1994, p. 410) when seeking to teach them diversity competency. Bonilla-Silva (2009) describes colorblindness using four dominant themes: (a) abstract liberalism, (b) naturalization, (c) cultural racism, and (d) minimization. Abstract liberalism assumes a social and economic meritocracy in which individual's achievements are determined only by individual effort as opposed to any form of institutional racism. Second, naturalization suggests that minorities' grouping behavior is a natural or desired form of self-segregation by failing to recognize the historical legacies of limited choice. Next, cultural racism uses culture to explain enduring differences between privileged and underprivileged classes. Finally, minimization allows members of the privileged classes to maintain that institutionalized privilege by minimizing minority experiences of racism or by explaining it away. This is particularly problematic because the powerful dictate what is and what is not racism for the marginalized.

The enumeration of these themes allows us to identify and classify their use among the focus-group participants. Furthermore, we can examine how the incidence of these themes relate to students' perceptions of internationalization.

2.2.1. *Racial Cognizance and University Experiences of Students of Color*

In recent years students of color's higher education experiences have also been studied in much greater depth. This has led to an intimate understanding of racism in the university context as well as new prescriptions for administrative policy (Faegin, Vera, & Imani, 1996; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Reason & Evans, 2007). Faegin et al. (1996) explored the campus climate for Black students at a predominately White institution (PWI). By interviewing Black students and their families at an unnamed state university, the authors provide a detailed description of the constant challenges faced by minority students including everything from subtle insensitivity to overt and hostile harassment. The subsequent policy recommendations range from stronger administrative leadership on multicultural issues, to specific types of interventions such as a tougher enforcement of antidiscrimination policies.

Following Faegin et al.'s (1996) qualitative work, other researchers have used large-scale surveys to study the effectiveness of specific interventions such as diversity workshops (Springer, Palmer, Terenzini, Pascarella, & Nora, 1996; Whitt, Edison, Pascarella, Terenzini, & Nora, 2001; Villalpando, 2002), multicultural living environments (Pike, 2002), and increased administrative support for multiculturalism (Aguirre & Messineo, 1997; Flowers & Pascarella, 1999; Rowley, Hurtado, & Panjuan, 2002). Rankin and Reason (2005) argue that a combination of interventions focusing on all campus stakeholders (students, faculty, and administrators) is an effective strategy. Educational interventions focused on students and faculty combined with strong and symbolic institutional leadership focused on the entire campus community would, "send strong messages about institutional climate" (p. 58).

Reason and Evans (2007) go beyond recommending specific interventions to articulating an idealized goal of what those interventions should hope to achieve. The authors introduce the ongoing process of developing a *racially cognizant* understanding among White students that fundamentally transforms the meaning of race (Reason, Roosa Millar, & Scales, 2005). Achieving racial cognizance,

. . . involves an active exploration of what it means to be White in American society and likely results in a transition from White as "the color of my skin" to an active reconstructing of a racialized sense of self. A racially cognizant sense of Whiteness encompasses an understanding of guilt, power, and privilege yet avoids the paralysis and victim perspectives that some Whites assume. It involves the translation of this understanding of Whiteness into positive action. (Reason & Evans, 2007, p. 71)

In conclusion, it is important to recognize that a racially cognizant campus climate is an idealized goal that requires planning and commitment on the part of administration, faculty, and students. However, the first step is to have an appropriate assessment of the current campus resources and capabilities relating to multiculturalism and diversity. In the next section we will address the available models that facilitate this assessment.

2.3. Models for Diversity Competence

To attain a racially cognizant campus climate, institutions need to leverage all the resources and skills that are available at their disposal. Certain faculty members are more fully racially cognizant and certain disciplines/majors allow more opportunity to address these issues within the curriculum. This is complicated by the rationalized climate of business schools where the curriculum disproportionately privileges market-oriented content at the expense of what may be perceived to be the purview of the social sciences such as psychology or sociology. However, today's employers are demanding employees who can operate in an increasingly multicultural environment (Hemphill & Haines, 1997; Ely & Thomas, 2001; Orlitzky & Benjamin, 2003). Within the business academic community, both the management and international business disciplines have displayed some insight and leadership on these issues. Each discipline has a unique approach to issues of diversity, multiculturalism, and internationalization given their respective histories and objectives.

2.3.1. Management Models

Within the business academy, the management discipline clearly has the most experience dealing with issues of diversity and multiculturalism. Specifically, there are well-developed literatures about workplace diversity including such factors as team diversity (Joshi & Roh, 2009), diversity management practices (Yang & Konrad, 2011), and diversity training (Kalinowski et al., 2012) in addition to many others. Avery and Thomas (2004) propose an excellent model for fostering a diversity management competency (DMC) within the business school curriculum by simultaneously pursuing pedagogical strategies of *content* and *contact*. First, a diversity management competence is conceptualized by tailoring a psychological perspective on multicultural competence (Hansen et al., 2000). Specifically, DMC is defined as international business. The relationship between internationalization, multiculturalism, and diversity may be judged to be naturally antagonistic (Grobman, 1999; Jackson, 2003; Donald, 2007). With the prodigious attention given to globalization and the perceived loss of competitiveness of U.S. graduates (Duncan, 2010), administrators naturally want to do what they can to prepare students to succeed in this globalized marketplace. As a result, the issues of multiculturalism and domestic diversity may receive less attention (Donald, 2007). As we argue in our data analysis, the result is an internationalization/multiculturalism competency gap. However, the relationship may not need to be viewed as a zero-sum game. Internationalization, multiculturalism, and diversity can be viewed as having complementary content with a mutually reinforcing skill set, but only when done with intentionality. Business school curricula can be designed to facilitate synergistic growth in all three areas.

3. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Qualitative focus groups inherently use *interaction* among participants as part of the method and have a strong capacity to reveal how participants experience and interpret the phenomena they are asked about (Kitzinger, 1995; McQuarrie, 1990; Morgan, 1997; Morgan & Spanish, 1984; Denzin & Lincoln, 1994). The method's strengths include generating data that: (a) concentrate

on a specific topic of interest; (b) create deeper insights and reflection as respondents interact with each other and use their own vocabularies and frameworks; (c) allow comparisons across diverse focus groups; (d) draw attention to cultural nuances such as silences, humor, anger, and other emotions (Kitzinger, 1995; Morgan, 1997, 1996). A researcher listens to the conversation in terms of content, but also carefully notes the emotions, ironies, tensions, and contradictions present in the focus group interactions (Grudens-Schuck et al., 2004). The topics raised (and avoided) by the students provide highly valid data of how students *understand* and *interpret* their educational experiences.

The research context is a midsized, private, university in the United States that is accredited by the AACSB. The school will remain unnamed, but will be referred to by its pseudonym *Kokoro University (KU)*, and the *Kokoro University Business School (KUBS)*. We completed focus groups with six groups of KUBS undergraduates in the College of Business to hear how they perceived internationalization and multiculturalism in their curricular and cocurricular experiences. Because the topic of discussion involved attitudes about culture, nation, and ethnicity, we used a theoretical sampling model (Mays & Pope, 1995), recruiting students in groups with shared characteristics of nationality and ethnicity; one additional group included College-identified “student leaders,” all of whom but one was a U.S. White student. All groups were created using random sampling (stratified by nationality and ethnicity) from a list of all enrolled undergraduates in the College. The focus groups included students chosen in six subgroups of KUBS majors: (a) KUBS Leadership Council members, (b) White U.S. students, (c) U.S. students of color, (d) Chinese Malaysian students, (e) Indian and Malay Malaysian students, and (f) non-Malay international students (Table 1).

An undergraduate research assistant who knew international students well also followed up with invited international students. Students were invited by a personalized, individual email addressed to them and re-contacted using a bcc email to all in their group. Given recommendations in the literature to recruit three to four times the number of students desired for an 8- to 10-person focus group, we invited 30 randomly selected students from each group. Students were compensated with a pizza dinner and entered into a drawing to win an iPod. Personal connections were important; international students participated at a higher rate than either U.S. White or non-White students.

A total of 32 students participated in the focus groups. Despite the small size of the U.S. groups, we can be reasonably confident in the validity of the conclusions as they mimic findings of other social science research regarding student attitudes on multiculturalism and cultural diversity on college campuses (Faegin et al., 1996; Bonilla-Silva, 2009). Because of the small number of

TABLE 1
Focus Group Participants

<i>Focus group</i>	<i>Number of participants</i>
KUBS Leadership Council	6
White U.S. Students	5
U.S. students of color	2
Chinese Malaysian	5
Non-Chinese Malaysian	5
Non-Malaysian International	9

TABLE 2
Focus Group Participant's Demographic Information—Listed by Group

<i>Group</i>	<i>Participant Identifier</i>	<i>Year</i>	<i>Major</i>	<i>Nationality</i>	<i>Ethnicity</i>	<i>Gender</i>
Group 1	E.	First Year	International Business	U.S.	White	Male
Group 1	T.	Junior	Accounting, IS	U.S.	White	Male
Group 1	Z.	Sophomore	Advertising, Marketing	U.S.	White	Male
Group 1	A.	First Year	Accounting, IS	U.S.	White	Male
Group 1	M.	Junior	Actuarial Science, Finance	China	Asian	Female
Group 1	S.	Senior	Marketing, Entrepreneurial Management	U.S.	Asian-American, White	Female
Group 2	C.	Junior	Marketing, Management	U.S.	White	Female
Group 2	D.	Senior	Marketing, Management	U.S.	White	Male
Group 2	B.	Sophomore	Accounting, Finance	U.S.	White	Male
Group 2	L.	Senior	Marketing, Management	U.S.	White	Female
Group 2	J.	Senior	Accounting, Finance	U.S.	White	Female
Group 3	K.	Junior	Actuarial Science	Malaysian	Chinese	Male
Group 3	F.	Senior	Actuarial Science, Mathematics	Malaysian	Chinese	Female
Group 3	I.	Senior	Actuarial Science	Malaysian	Chinese	Female
Group 3	X.	Senior	Actuarial Science	Malaysian	Chinese	Male
Group 3	H.	Senior	Actuarial Science	Malaysian	Chinese	Female
Group 4	Q.	NA	NA	U.S.	African American	NA
Group 4	V.	NA	NA	U.S.	African American	NA
Group 5	O.	Senior	Actuarial Science	Malaysian	Indian	Female
Group 5	P.	Junior	Actuarial Science	Malaysian	Malay	Male
Group 5	G.	Junior	Actuarial Science	Malaysian	Indian	Female
Group 5	HH.	Senior	Actuarial Science	Malaysian	Malay	Male
Group 5	AB.	Senior	Actuarial Science	Malaysian	Indian	Male
Group 6	W.	Senior	Finance, Accounting	West African	African	Male
Group 6	KE.	Sophomore	Accounting	South African	African	Male
Group 6	BE.	Senior	Marketing, Management	West African	African	Female
Group 6	RV.	Senior	Finance	Israel		Male
Group 6	NK.	Senior	Actuarial Science	China	Chinese	Male
Group 6	TH.	Junior	Actuarial Science	Malaysia	Malay	Male
Group 6	LA.	Senior	Actuarial Science, Finance	Indonesia		Female
Group 6	KF.	Junior	Actuarial Science	Malaysia	Malay	Male
Group 6	JT.	Senior	Actuarial Science	Pakistan & U.S.		Male

U.S. students of color in the College, and possibly the emotional difficulty of the topic (given the tenor of the conversation, see below), this group was smaller and more difficult to recruit. Future research should consider more aggressive sampling and more personal contact to increase participation by this segment (Table 2).

Students who agreed to participate were sent the guiding questions that would direct the focus group conversation. The focus group facilitator covered all of these topics, but rarely in the order given in the document sent to the students. Instead, the students guided the order of the answers, often responding to what fellow participants said (Table 3).

TABLE 3
Guiding Questions to Direct Focus Group Conversation

-
1. Briefly tell us who you are. What kinds of unique perspectives on your education does your background provide you? Have you had a chance to develop and share this perspective at KUBS? How?
 2. Do you feel that classes in your major have prepared you to work with people who have perspectives different from yours? Try to think of a story or a specific example of a time that was particularly meaningful.
 3. What experiences outside the classroom have shaped your outlook on diversity and cross-cultural competency?
 4. Describe one of the most meaningful learning experiences you have had at KUBS. Specific examples are really helpful.
 5. What would you recommend to the college to improve how it prepares students to thrive in an increasingly globalized and diverse workforce? This can be things to expand or improve.
-

Eight hours of conversation were transcribed and analyzed to identify the principle themes of each group, as well as the commonalities and differences across the groups. In conducting the focus groups, transcribing the recordings, and analyzing the data, the focus group leaders noted the elements of silence and humor that emerged. What topics were comfortable for students to discuss? Which did they avoid or reframe? Which provoked humor or derision? Focus group methodology highlights the importance of these incidents to interpret the meanings behind the statements made by participants. This becomes particularly salient in the U.S. White students' discussion of internationalization and multiculturalism.

3.1. Institutional Context

KU is a midsized, Midwestern United States University. The student population is predominantly White; however, the business school has a significant international student population with a strong representation of Southeast Asians of Malay, Chinese, and Indian descent. The institutional context is a good environment to study the relationship between internationalization, multiculturalism, and diversity because the patterns of thought and action under study are evidenced everyday in every classroom. One key goal for the business school is to prepare students to be able to succeed in an increasingly diverse domestic and global work environment. Toward this end, we conducted a series of focus groups to explore how students experience issues of internationalization, multiculturalism, and diversity. The findings of this research yielded a *Cross-Cultural and Diversity Competency Curriculum Revision Proposal* that was passed and subsequently implemented by the KUBS faculty. The approved changes to the learning outcomes were designed to help students develop the knowledge-based, personal, and interpersonal competencies necessary to succeed in an increasingly diverse and global business environment.

In this article, *diversity* is used to describe any area of social difference; *multiculturalism* is used to refer to racial and ethnic diversity, particularly in a U.S. context; and *internationalization* is used to describe the process of infusing global and cross-cultural elements into the curriculum. As a result of this legislative process, KUBS now promises that students will achieve three specific learning outcomes:

1. gain awareness of the impacts of systemic and institutional factors to fully consider the interests of all stakeholders;

2. engage in productive and respectful interactions with others, considering how differences shape formation of contrasting perspectives, particularly when faced with complicated, conflict-ridden, or ambiguous situations;
3. develop and critique viable organizational strategies that function in the context of a diverse, global business environment.

In focus groups, we asked students questions designed for them to analyze themselves along multiple axes of social difference—for example: “Briefly tell us who you are”; and “What kinds of unique perspectives on your education does your background provide you?” In reality, KUBS faculty teach a student body that includes many types of diversity. One would be challenged to frame an example of a “typical” consumer, a “typical” high school, or a “typical” family and speak with accuracy among these students; any such categorization would artificially privilege one standard as “typical.” KU students bring heterogeneous life experiences to the KUBS classroom.

4. STUDENT TALK ABOUT DIVERSITY AND INTERNATIONALIZATION

The word *diversity* is recognized as shorthand for talking about racial and ethnic social difference (Avery & Thomas, 2004); on the KU campus, the topic of U.S. race and ethnic diversity is described using the term *multiculturalism*. These categories are of special concern and deserve central focus as a source of economic and social stratification. Although racial categories have no biological basis, race and ethnic categories as understood and practiced in the United States contain significant institutional, historical, and interpersonal components (Gallagher, 2003; Rankin & Reason, 2005). Racial and ethnic inequalities are pernicious in American society, leading to serious ethical challenges for business leaders (Grobman, 1999; Johnson et al., 2006; Donald, 2007; Mitry, 2008; Butler & Zander, 2008).

Student competency in working across racial and ethnic difference presents some of the biggest challenges for KUBS, as evidenced in AACSB accreditation committee comments. Creating a true multicultural learning environment is also a large challenge for KU as an institution. KU students matriculate from racially segregated K-12 settings with strong resource disparities, leading to widely chronicled achievement gaps (Hanushek & Rivkin, 2006) that create a shortage of diverse entering 1st-year classes. Their previous experiences in segregated communities also generate a lack of experience with multiculturalism.

4.1. Colorblind Talk: The Heart of the Internationalization/Multiculturalism Gap

In focus groups with White students, five themes emerged which, when analyzed together, indicate discomfort with talking about racial and ethnic difference and lack of multicultural competencies. In highlighting these findings, we seek to identify how business school curriculum might be adapted to increase White student enthusiasm for diversity education, improve climate for business majors of color, and enhance White students’ competencies in these areas. First, White students tended to operate from a “colorblind” rather than “racially cognizant” perspective. Specifically, they tend to see themselves as the “norm” against which non-White and non-U.S. others might be compared. They mark difference across location of origin rather than race/ethnicity, failing to see the documented differences in experience and perceptions based on

ethnicity. White students demonstrated discomfort with discussing racial/ethnic difference, preferring colorblind ideology; a strategy we call “changing the subject” was demonstrated as the preferred way of handling questions about racial and ethnic diversity.

Second, we note two discursive strategies that indicate a lack of multicultural competency as well as potential avenues to explore to increase this competency. First, the same students embrace internationalization, indicating that they can be encouraged and taught to be cognizant of social differences. In this section, we also examine discursive strategies White students use to navigate their lack of multicultural competence and racial cognizance. Through this exploration, we create an analysis of where intervention is needed towards improving racial cognizance in White students.

4.1.1. *“I’m Generic”*

White students repeatedly saw themselves as the “norm,” failing to recognize themselves as situated within racial and ethnic social categories around which education, and the larger social world, are organized. They often used the term “generic.” A few White students did not perceive themselves as adding *any element* to KU’s diversity climate; none saw their racial or ethnic identity as part of multicultural diversity. This corresponds closely to the findings of sociologists studying White student attitudes (Faegin et al., 1996; Bonilla-Silva, 2009). When the researcher asked the standard opening question, “Briefly tell us who you are. What kinds of unique perspectives on your education does your background provide you?” one White student passed, saying “I’m not going to go first, because I don’t have anything unique.” The next student in the group described himself as “generic.”

4.1.2. *Regional, Not Racialized*

White students instead define themselves by regional and rural/urban/suburban contrasts. When the researcher inquired whether their KU education gives them “a chance to develop and share this perspective,” D, a marketing and management senior, responds that he has a set of orientations he defines as “Franklin values,” as well as an insider knowledge of Franklin (KU’s location, midsized Midwestern city) to share with his peers:

Yes, I’d say that KU allows the opportunity to contribute what I have to bring to the table. Me, I’m a local, I’m from Franklin . . . Even if you’re a couple hours’ drive, you might not know what it’s like in Franklin. Me, being from twenty minutes off campus, I know the cool spots, the culture spots around. I even have friends from different countries. They have no idea what Franklin is. I enjoy in a classroom environment or in a social environment telling them what Franklin is about, and what KU is about. I think being from a small town, I’ve learned that you have to work for what you earn. I like to show what KU has earned.

This student, who aspires to work abroad after graduation, identifies his work ethic as “Franklinian.” He also takes special pride in his life-long proximity to KU and serves as an ambassador for students arriving from out of state or from around the world.

In turning to region and defining themselves as generic, White students in the focus group demonstrate a lack of adequate vocabulary to engage in multiculturalism discussions; nor, necessarily, do they see themselves as part of this discussion. Almost all White students easily articulate

their own unique life experiences that they feel shape their KUBS educational experience. At the same time, students seem to imagine the “typical Kokoro University student” as a White, U.S.-born, individual from Franklin, such as in this exchange between D, quoted above, and C, from a small town in a neighboring state and a 21-year-old Marketing and Management Senior:

D: I am from Franklin, a pretty generic KU student. From K-8 I went to a private Catholic school. I have a little bit of a religious background, but no ethnic diversity.
 Researcher: What is generic?

C: Well . . . White. I don’t have a double major. I’m just a typical Kokoro University student. I’m from Winslet. Small but not too small. Very Republican.

In this quote, the student effectively defines KU as a White university. The equation of Whiteness with typical indicates how the student views who belongs in the campus and who does not. This perspective sits in a broader institutional and historical context; Whiteness is typically not noticed, the power or privileges assigned to it rendered invisible. The “generic” or “no ethnic diversity” group is then seen as “normal” against which non-White people are compared and judged (McIntosh, 1988).

4.1.3. *Changing the Subject*

White student and international student focus groups repeatedly frame “diversity” in terms of “international students.” Only with prompting would these students talk about racial and ethnic differences. For example, in the Leadership Council group, each student responded to the question, “How does KU prepare students to achieve competency in an increasingly diverse and global workforce?” We share just four responses here:

- (1) Working with international students in SIFE [Students in Free Enterprise].
- (2) Meeting international students and “one hundred different guys” in the Greek system . . .
- (3) Any class you take at KU you’ll come across a diverse group of students, international students. You get thrown into the group with them.
- (4) Regional geography helps to learn about diversity and different cultures. We talked about India and the cultural diversity of that country.

The pattern repeats throughout the White student focus groups. Students tend to avoid or marginalize racial and ethnic difference even when directly prompted to discuss diversity. They demonstrate a general lack of vocabulary to discuss multiculturalism, using awkward phrases such as “guys who are diverse” to refer to non-White fraternity brothers or “generic” to describe oneself as White. It is difficult to imagine students who speak this way having a comfort level to lead, or even participate in, important conversations about racial and ethnic diversity. Paradoxically, the few students who mentioned multiculturalism often did so to say they had had enough. White student L, a Marketing student with a second major in the social sciences, says,

“Because so many of the classes are focused on diversity, I don’t feel there needs to be many more places to focus on it.”

A clear tension emerges in the data between student lack of comfort or interest in discussing U.S. multiculturalism and yet simultaneously saying they do not feel that more courses are needed in this area. Z, a sophomore Marketing and Management major, describes the problem of asking students to address racial and ethnic diversity issues in the classroom:

“That’s hard because people see it as a class, just a class. Not a window into a new ethical world. They’d see it as just a class—“I need to get an A, so I’ll write a paper about it.”

Indeed, improved diversity competency would be, for many of the students interviewed, a window into a new ethical world. Closely mirroring the tendency to see White as “generic,” many White students in the focus groups feel that the best way to be in demographically diverse situations is “colorblind.” For example, I, a 1st-year Marketing major defines cross-cultural competency as willfully not seeing difference: “Competency isn’t just being able to understand, but also not being afraid of it. Not noticing barriers. It’s not stepping over barriers, but rather that you don’t see a difference.”

L, a senior Finance major, pronounces her generation to be colorblind, a positive attribute in her eyes:

We don’t see it—colorblind. Sometimes I think that people who are teaching us and where we’re at, is a generation gap. We don’t notice diversity unless it’s pointed out to us. We just see them as another person who has different ideas. As far as group work, there might be an international student, there might be someone from the big city, whichever way you want to diversify is fine. But sometimes, I think that our generation overlooks it because we’re used to it. I don’t see it as a big problem.

Sociologists focusing on race and ethnic relations note that colorblind ideology is highly prevalent among White university students (Gallagher, 2003; Reason & Evans, 2007). It is also highly problematic. Colorblind ideology asserts that race is not important and should not be the basis for social judgments. It takes the ethical principle “do not discriminate” and pretends that no discrimination exists. The key problem with this framework is that the abstract principle does not hold true in practice. The institutional and historical sources of racial and ethnic discrimination in the workplace remain unaddressed with these attitudes; indeed, they may become impossible to see for someone who argues they are “colorblind.”

The difficulties students demonstrate in talking about race and ethnic difference cannot be dismissed as individual failures, these patterns fit into a larger United States in which many people feel uncomfortable talking about multiculturalism (Rankin & Reason, 2005). Students do not want to be seen as “racist”; therefore, their silences and awkwardness stem from a desire to *not be racist*.

The reason for continual “changing the subject” cannot be concluded from these data, but several possible factors exist. KU is currently focused on internationalization in its mission, hiring, and strategic planning; the connection to U.S. racial and ethnic diversity is not always made clear. White students in the focus groups define multicultural diversity as “non-White.” Because U.S. students of color are underrepresented at KU, this topic may feel too distant. Discussions of race and ethnicity are often fraught with discomfort; students learn that proper “racial etiquette” is to keep quiet to avoid offending. Q, a Black focus group participant, thinks that White students merely believe the topic doesn’t include them:

It’s interesting. It really is. There is a lot of satisfaction with the status quo. If it doesn’t affect me, than I’m not going to do anything about it. When I think of race, and things that need to be addressed at KU, in terms of teaching people to deal with others, when we think of diversity, we think of international more so than within the United States. The Latino population is increasing, but we don’t have that representation here at Kokoro. I feel like students aren’t going out of their way to learn about that, because they don’t think it affects them in the here and now.

4.1.4. *Enthusiasm for Internationalization*

In contrast, White focus group participants express both a matter-of-fact acknowledgment of the need for internationalization and an enthusiasm for global pursuits. The responses of students very much reflect the campus' push for global citizenship. Not a single student in the focus groups negates the importance of internationalization. While having different conclusions of the adequacy of Kokoro University and KUBS efforts, all see globality as a central "fact of life."

A, a 1st-year Accounting/Information Technology major, describes cross-cultural competency in terms of career success. "The point," he notes, "is to be able to work in different cultures and stuff. In different economies and different groups of people." He draws from a high school People to People trip to New Zealand, where he was told, "The main phrase is 'it's different, not worse.' Don't shut it out, don't think it's worse." Students in the White U.S. group might not have seen themselves as naturally pursuing international topics, but they universally agree that global and diversity awareness would be crucial to future success in business. Students have sought a diversity of international experiences, with enthusiastic reports of travel/study impacts. They appreciate the ability to blend study abroad with international experiences on campus as illustrated by D, a senior Marketing and Management major:

My international experience from my travel abroad has forever changed my life. It started a long time ago. My parents made me travel, and now I can't get enough of it. It was encouraged by other professors. It was powerful because [in my semester abroad,] I got to do business classes, and I got to meet international students. Everyone is different, has different set criteria from what they want when they study abroad. Mine was to be in Europe and to keep on my business track so I wouldn't be delayed. I found it, and the international center helped me out. I had a blast, the time of my life. I want to keep traveling. I even want to work abroad after graduation.

Focus group participants express clear understanding of the importance of knowledge of global issues, and willingness, even expectation, for global issues to be taught in class.

We conclude that White students in the focus group mirror very closely to sociological literature on attitudes toward racial and ethnic diversity (Faegin et al., 1996; Rankin & Reason, 2005; Reason & Evans, 2007; Bonilla-Silva, 2009). First, they tend to change the subject away from the topic of racial or ethnic diversity. When asked about the topic, they often steer the conversation toward other issues, such as internationalization or generational difference. Focus group methodology suggests that these discursive practices indicate discomfort. Second, these students describe themselves as "generic" or "normal," implying that they do not see themselves as part of a multicultural environment. Third, they advocate a "colorblind" approach to diversity, in which they claim that a culturally competent person should simply not notice racial and ethnic difference.

Regardless of why students in the focus groups turn away from consideration of multicultural diversity, this finding emerges as a concern for a college that promises its students the ability to "develop and critique viable organizational strategies that function in the context of a diverse, global business environment."

4.2. Institutional and Curricular Factors That Perpetuate the Multicultural-Internationalization Gap

In terms of meeting the KUBS learning outcomes, colorblind ideology is ineffective; however, student awkwardness indicates that students either want to or feel pressure to learn productive ways to engage around racial and ethnic difference. This suggests the school has not provided them with the resources to learn how. Kokoro University and KUBS have invested heavily in internationalization, providing the students with experiences, knowledge, and a vocabulary to think more comfortably about the topic. The possibility for developing similar competencies in multiculturalism and domestic diversity exists as well, but an investment of resources is required, just as the campus has created with internationalization efforts.

5. PEDAGOGICAL STRATEGIES

Students are enthusiastic to pursue internationalization, and have strong suggestions for where KUBS might proceed. However, the multicultural/internationalization gap hinders efforts to achieve competency and to create a climate of success for all students in the college. After analyzing the focus group transcripts, we propose the following observations and recommendations for international business faculty to consider when seeking to bridge the multicultural/internationalization gap within their own institutions.

5.1. Internationalization Efforts Have Been Successful

KUBS can feel confident that students of all backgrounds recognize the importance of internationalization. Enthusiasm for this topic is high and momentum is strong. While some institutional barriers exist to study abroad (cost and curriculum timing), students are finding ways to gain international awareness. However, it is important to remember that internationalization is only part of portfolio of solutions for increasing students' cross-cultural competency.

5.2. Diversity Competency Is Troublingly Low

A top priority for international business faculty and administrators should focus on addressing the discomfort or avoidance of domestic multiculturalism issues. The business school pedagogical and sociological literatures argue that for this to happen, students must be introduced to a racially cognizant approach that includes the acknowledgment of differential experiences and perspectives on the basis of ethnicity and race. By highlighting that *all students, not just students of color or international students*, possess unique perspectives, students can find more productive, racially cognizant ways of considering diversity. Students also benefit from cocurricular experiential learning, as noted by one White student:

I have tried to expand my horizons by becoming involved in KU Black Student Coalition, which has helped me to understand what the Black community goes through on an everyday basis. I expressed to my friend [a member of KUBSC] that I did not want to attend the meetings because I would feel

out of place, and he reminded me that he feels like that every day in class. This really helped me to understand that expanding my perspectives; I can use those experiences to my advantage in work situations.

This student does not make herself willfully “blind” to the experiences of her fellow students. Instead, experiential learning has provided her a space to consider how racial difference shapes student experience. While potentially uncomfortable, she sees this learning as important. This hopeful comment implies that students can and, with effort, will achieve deeper levels of diversity and cross-cultural competency if properly advised and encouraged. International business faculty can be excellent resources and advocates for these types of experiences. Cross-cultural experiences do not always necessitate crossing geopolitical borders. Cross-cultural interaction can be encouraged and modeled by simply walking across the street or across the hall to seek out different individuals or groups within the local community. The experience and resulting “muscle-memory” that comes with these interactions is then invaluable when the students do travel abroad or work in a globalized workplace.

5.3. Institutional Leadership on Multiculturalism Must Be Enhanced

KUBS students cannot be expected to recognize the importance of multicultural issues without institutional leadership. A broad range of stakeholders is needed to fully address the relationship between internationalization and multiculturalism in the KUBS curriculum. Administrators (Deans, Provosts, and Program Directors) and faculty should both be involved in the conversation regarding the overlap between the internationalization and multiculturalism efforts. Students have clearly learned that internationalization is essential for doing business; the same case must be made for racial and ethnic diversity (Varner, 2001) for students to be truly successful in the increasingly globalized workplaces. International business faculty are in a unique position to help bridge the multicultural/internationalization gap due to their extensive education, training and experience in cross-cultural communication, management, etc.

5.4. Don't Ignore Soft Skills

Recognize the importance of interpersonal and personal skills in achieving diversity and cross-cultural competency. Students' recognition of their own areas of difference and diversity can be used as an avenue to consider perspectives of others. The biggest dissatisfactions of international students came from (a) thoughtless comments from students and, less frequently, faculty, that felt like ethnic stereotypes and (b) international students feeling their opinions weren't valued in group work. International business faculty can teach these soft skills, but can also model these competencies in the classroom, in advising relationships, and in institutional governance.

5.5. Capitalize on Student Enthusiasm for Cross-National Interaction

KUBS can capitalize on U.S. student curiosity to meet and learn with international students through continued intentional collaboration. Students from all backgrounds need to develop interpersonal competencies to include different perspectives and avoid shortcuts (such as excluding minority students from decision making in groups) that cause long-term problems. International

business faculty are generally great leaders for promoting cross-national interaction. This is why they originally became international business scholars. The next step is to intentionally connect this experience and skillset to multicultural skills.

5.6. Faculty Hiring and Attitudes Matter

Continue efforts to diversify KUBS faculty, including U.S. faculty of color and international faculty. Continue efforts to “internationalize” U.S. faculty experiences (such as rotating study-abroad faculty roles). Students listen when respected faculty bring non-U.S. examples and frameworks into the classroom.

6. CONCLUSION

In their talk about multiculturalism and internationalization, White students routinely demonstrate a significant gap in comfort and competency. Having been raised in segregated K-12 settings and being told of the virtues of internationalization, many students do not naturally arrive with the skills needed to work in increasingly diverse domestic and global work environments. Indeed, a colorblind perspective, awkwardly deployed, works against the possibility of success. Students can develop a racially cognizant framework through both content and contact (Avery & Thomas, 2004)—knowledge and practical experience.

In this article, we sought to raise awareness among international business faculty about how majority students navigate conversations of diversity and multiculturalism. We contrast this with internationalization to highlight how the lack of multicultural competency cannot be explained as “discomfort with difference.” The internationalization/multiculturalism comfort gap indicates that institutional commitment, curricular emphasis, and previous experiences create barriers to White students achieving multicultural competence. The growing diversity of the world beyond the classroom, and the experiences of students of color within the academy, demand close attention to this problem.

AUTHOR BIOGRAPHIES

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