The Influences of Internationalization on Host Students:

A Review of the Literature

Gayle Schaub

Grand Valley State University

Intercultural Education: a Positive Experience

Although there has been a great deal of information written on the importance of the internationalization or globalization of higher education, research on the experience of domestic or "host" students and faculty and their interaction with international students has been rather limited.

Trice, building on the earlier work of Goodwin and Nacht's faculty interviews (1983) and Barber and Morgan's surveys of engineering faculty (1984), examined host faculty attitudes toward international students at three Midwestern universities. She found that faculty respondents showed "an awareness of and interest in international students and the unique challenges they faced;" issues such as language difficulties, segregation from the rest of the student body, and difficulty in achieving their academic goals. Faculty perceived both benefits and challenges in teaching international students. Benefits included an international perspective in the classroom, high quality students, and the ability to establish international ties. Challenges outnumbered benefits: integrating domestic and international students, providing adequate funding, meeting international students' unique academic needs, and managing their colleagues' preferences for American students (2003).

Perceived Benefits and Barriers: What Host Students Think

Much of the work in the past decade deals with domestic students' perceptions of international students. Barron studied HTM and Leisure Management students in Australia, a country with one of the highest percentages of international students. He described the large number of students as one that "at best, resulted in a more culturally diverse and challenging environment; at worst" cultivated "a feeling of resentment on the part of domestic students" (Barron, 2006, p. 12). Unlike previous studies that found domestic students viewed international students as "more important" than them, in competition "with them for limited educational resources" (Spencer-Rodgers and McGovern, p. 627 2002), or causing academic standards to decline (Anyanwu, 2004), Barron's questionnaire results showed an 86% positive rating in the presence of international students in classes. This conclusion, that host students view "their international peers from a very positive perspective" is evident in the extant literature, with one caveat. Despite the positive opinions of intercultural experiences, researchers, like Barron, continue to find that although domestic students find their education "enhanced by the inclusion of international students…they are "as unlikely as their predecessors to choose to work with people of different cultures" (2006).

The findings of several related studies done in New Zealand showed that while 72% of students surveyed agreed that cultural differences are respected and classmates are mostly accepting of each other's cultural differences, fewer than half believed that college campuses offer enough opportunity to learn about other cultures or that groups from different cultures work well together. According to the collective results to these five studies, the purported willingness on the part of host students to interact with international students is high: 58% of students are "glad to interact with international students in free time" (Ward, 2005, p. iv). This appeared to be true, however, only when international enrollment numbers were between 2% and 9% of the total student body population. There seemed to be a "sweet spot" for intercultural interactions. "Between 9-14% the attitudes became more negative and the interactions less frequent." This

was true as well for teachers. The researchers attributed this trend to the "pressures of dealing with rapid increases in international enrollments" (2005, p. v).

Other researchers attempting to better understand host students' feelings about an internationalized college setting include Dunne's 2009 focus on host students at an Irish university. He explored students' perceptions of cultural difference, what factors "facilitate or hinder" intercultural contact, and detailed the students' experiences of intercultural contact. His results were interesting in that host students advocated for obligatory rather than voluntary contact. They were aware of benefits to such interaction but also their own tendency toward "hemophilic" behavior, or the tendency to bond with others who are similar (McPherson, Smith-Lovin, and Cook, 2001).

A common finding among studies of host students' observations of themselves, internationals, and intercultural relationships is their perception of international students as more studious, hardworking, intelligent, and mature. Other commonalities are perceived differences in cultural attitudes toward social activities; the idea that students from other, mainly non-western cultures don't enjoy the same leisure activities, particularly those involving alcohol (Ward, 2005), (Peacock and Harrison, 2009), (Dunne, 2009).

Peacock and Harrison also addressed this lack of integration and the "realisation that the mere presence of international students does not constitute an international experience" (2009, p. 488). Their study, done at two U.K. universities triangulated findings from tutor diversity trainings, questionnaires, and feedback from cross-cultural staff development events. As mentioned earlier, their findings included students' perceptions that international students work harder, face cultural and linguistic barriers to socialization (humor, sarcasm, wordplay), and probably have different leisure time interests (2009).

Intercultural Communication: Beyond Perceptions to Realities

In a more recent study, Williams and Johnson acknowledge the rarity of interaction between host and international students. They sought to better understand U.S. students' lack of interest in host-national relations at the University of Mississippi. They hypothesized that students who self-report having no international friendships would score lower on measures of cultural empathy, open-mindedness, and social initiative, among other qualities and score higher on measures for racism and intercultural apprehension. Those qualities affected by a lack of international friendships were open-mindedness and intercultural communication apprehension. Most illuminating in these results is the researchers' statement that open-mindedness, not a "static trait," is one that can be, according to the authors, "cultivated with appropriate education and experiences" (2011, p. 46).

A model of facilitated intercultural learning proposed by Ippolito in a 2007 study acknowledged the difficulty in achieving intercultural learning while underscoring its importance. The author listed barriers present in much of the literature: students' perceptions, teachers' perceptions, linguistic inequalities, a deficit of models, and added the concept of "privileged knowledge," the idea that there is a culturally 'correct' academic practice (p. 760). In work groups pairing 64 post-graduate students, Ippolito facilitated a process in which intercultural groups brainstormed about barriers to intercultural communication and devised strategies to overcome them. The author found, as did previously mentioned researchers, that allowing the groups to self-select groups led to the "formation of cliques" (p. 755). Students, though aware of the benefits of diversity, would choose to work in mono-cultural groups if given

the choice. The author concluded that the "interconnectedness of their multiple, shifting and contradictory identities, positionings, and needs" provided challenges and opportunities, and should not be ignored. (p. 761).

A survey conducted by Parsons in 2010 looked at 1,302 students in Australia and the U.S. It examined the primary components of an internationalized education: study abroad, contact with international students, an internationalized curriculum, and frequent attendance at international events. These components were positively correlated with their primary outcomes: foreign language acquisition, knowledge of country or region, international knowledge, attitudes and perceptions, cross-cultural skills and international behavior. Students who had taken more courses with international content "interacted with international students on a deeper level." Students who studied abroad showed greater cross-cultural and language skills and exhibited behaviors that were more internationally aware and cooperative. Study abroad was found to be significantly more effective at developing change in these components than travel abroad (p. 328). Deepening the contact with international students through curriculum content, cross-cultural events, or socialization was found in the literature to strengthen such components of host students' intercultural competence as defined by Deardorff: self-awareness, openness, respect, empathy, and adaptability (2006).

Nittaya Campbell's 2012 intercultural engagement "buddy project" paired host students to international students for an entire semester. The goal of the project was threefold: social support for international students new to the campus and/or country of New Zealand, help both groups of students better understand course content, and to allow each to develop intercultural communication competence. Students were paired up by gender for the course of the semester and required to keep regular contact with their 'buddy,' either social or class-oriented. Over the 12 weeks, the pairs faced communication challenges, found their stereotypes challenged, and believed that as a result, they "had a greater capability to communicate and interact effectively in different intercultural environments." Not all students went into this project willingly. Some felt the project should have been voluntary rather than mandatory, but admitted that had the project not been compulsory, they would have missed an opportunity that was "a good grounding for [their] entry into today's multicultural workforce" (p. 222).

References

Anyanwu, C.J. (1998). Is internationalisation in the classroom a reverse discrimination on Australian students? *Teaching and Learning Forum, 98.* Retrieved January 27, 2013 from:http://otl.curtin.edu.au/professional_development/conferences/tlf/tlf1998/anyanwu.html

Barron, P. (2006). Stormy outlook? Domestic students' impressions of international students at an Australian university. *Journal of Teaching in Travel & Tourism*, 6(2), 5-22.

Campbell, N. (2012). Promoting intercultural contact on campus: A project to connect and engage international and host students. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 16*(3), 205-227.

Deardorff, D.K. (2006). The identification and assessment of intercultural competence as a student outcome of internationalization. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 10,* 241-266.

Dunne, C. (2009). Host students' perspectives on intercultural contact in an Irish university. *Journal of Studies in International Education,13*(2), 222-239.

Ippolito, K. (2007). Promoting intercultural learning in a multicultural university: Ideals and realities. *Teaching in Higher Education,12*(5/6), 740-763.

McPherson, M., Smith-Lovin, L., & Cook, J.M. (2001). Birds of a feather: Homophily in social networks. *Annual Review of Sociology, 27,* 415-444.

Parsons, R.L. (2010). The effects of an internationalized university experience on domestic students in the United States and Australia. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 14*(4), 313-334.

Peacock, N. & Harrison, N. (2009). "It's so much easier to go with what's easy:" "Mindfulness" and the discourse between home and international students in the United Kingdom. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 13*(4), 487-408.

Spencer-Rodgers, J. & McGovern, T. (2002). Attitudes toward the culturally different: the role of intercultural communication barriers, affective responses, consensual stereotypes, and perceived threat. *International Journal of Intercultural Relation, 26*(6), 609-663.

Trice, A.G. (2003). Faculty perceptions of graduate international students: The benefits and challenges. *Journal of Studies in International Education, 7,* 379-403.

Ward, C., Masgoret, A.M., Ho, E., Holmes, P., Cooper, J., Newton, J., & Crabbe, D. (2005). Interactions with international students: Report prepared for Education New Zealand. *Center for Applied Cross-Cultural Research.* Retrieved December 8, 2012 from: http://www.educationnz.org.nz/secure/eeidfReports/A6.pdf

Williams, C.T. & Johnson, L.R. (2011). Why can't we be friends?: Multicultural attitudes and friendships with international students. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations, 35*, 41-48.