

Journal of Studies in International Education

<http://jsi.sagepub.com>

Diversity, International Students, and Perceived Discrimination: Implications for Educators and Counselors

Shideh Hanassab

Journal of Studies in International Education 2006; 10; 157

DOI: 10.1177/1028315305283051

The online version of this article can be found at:
<http://jsi.sagepub.com/cgi/content/abstract/10/2/157>

Published by:

 SAGE Publications

<http://www.sagepublications.com>

On behalf of:



[Association for Studies in International Education](#)

Additional services and information for *Journal of Studies in International Education* can be found at:

Email Alerts: <http://jsi.sagepub.com/cgi/alerts>

Subscriptions: <http://jsi.sagepub.com/subscriptions>

Reprints: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsReprints.nav>

Permissions: <http://www.sagepub.com/journalsPermissions.nav>

Citations (this article cites 12 articles hosted on the
SAGE Journals Online and HighWire Press platforms):
<http://jsi.sagepub.com/cgi/content/refs/10/2/157>

Diversity, International Students, and Perceived Discrimination: Implications for Educators and Counselors

Shideh Hanassab

This study assesses the experiences of international students in terms of perceived discrimination since entering an institution of higher learning in the United States. More specifically, the investigation focuses on the similarities and differences of the students as a function of their geographical region and other demographic factors such as gender, degree objective, and field of study. The findings indicate that international students coming from different regions experience discrimination in various degrees. The findings report that international students from the regions of the Middle East and Africa experience more discrimination than do students from other regions. The results also indicate that international students experience more discrimination off campus compared to on campus. In addition, the diversification of campus by international students is discussed as well as the importance of their presence in higher education. Challenges for the institutions of higher education and implications for counselors and educators are also addressed.

Keywords: *discrimination; international students; diversity; counselors; educators*

Increasing globalization presents new opportunities and challenges for institutions of higher education in the United States. According to Chapman (1999), the new millennium will bring an increased enrollment of diverse, “non-traditional” students. Chapman also notes that along with this diversification, there will be a “robust migration of students worldwide” (p. 25). These global trends, along with the continued premium placed on higher education, necessi-

Author's Note: The author would like to thank Dr. Lawrence Gower, director of the UCLA Office of International Students and Scholars, for providing his full support during all stages of this research project. Correspondence concerning this article should be addressed to Dr. Shideh Hanassab, University of California, Los Angeles, Office of International Students and Scholars, 106 Bradley International Hall, Los Angeles, CA 90095-1379; e-mail: shanassa@saonet.ucla.edu.

Journal of Studies in International Education, Vol. 10 No. 2, Summer 2006 157-172
DOI: 10.1177/1028315305283051
© 2006 Association for Studies in International Education

tate the development of innovative and well-conceptualized programs that will have as their foci the promotion, management, and guidance of international students. During the past decades, issues of diversity have moved from their peripheral positions to become central concerns of higher education institutions (Brown, 2004).

International students, representing more than 185 countries, constitute a very heterogeneous group of individuals in the United States (Institute of International Education, 2004). They differ markedly with respect to nationality, race, ethnicity, cultural norms and customs, physical appearance, and linguistic background. Notwithstanding the remarkable heterogeneity of the international student population, some researchers have argued that international students are stereotyped by their American peers, university faculty, university administrators, and members of the general community (Leong & Chou, 1996; Mestenhauser, 1983; Pedersen, 1991). As discussed by Spencer-Rodgers (2001), a number of specific characteristics are commonly ascribed to international students as a whole. Scholars have suggested that international students in the United States are viewed as handicapped, deficient (Mestenhauser, 1983), or bewildered (Pedersen, 1991) and lacking English-language ability and familiarity with the U.S. educational system (Paige, 1990).

International students interact with faculty and administrative staff on campuses, and they establish social relationships with members of the broader community. International students may be regarded as a "homogeneous group of highly talented individuals" (Leong & Chou, 1996) who are expected to adjust to a narrowly defined set of roles and behaviors in the U.S. educational system and American society. International students assume many roles in the host country, which affects the manner in which they are perceived. International students are learners, learning sources for domestic students, potential skilled workers, cultural diplomats, friends at times, and strangers at others (Spencer-Rodgers, 2001).

Discussions of prejudice and discrimination tend to focus on the biases and negative perceptions of individuals toward members of other groups. As discussed by Nieto (2004), discrimination denotes negative or destructive behaviors that can result in denying some groups' life necessities as well as the privileges, rights, and opportunities enjoyed by other groups. Discrimination is usually based on prejudice—that is, the attitudes and beliefs of individuals about entire groups of people. These attitudes and beliefs are generally, but not always, negative (Nieto, 2004). Unfavorable experiences and relations with host nationals have been found to seriously affect the psychological well-being of international students (Paige, 1990; Schram & Lauver, 1988). In addition, the stereotypes that host nationals hold about international students may carry important

consequences for international and intercultural relations (Spencer-Rodgers, 2001).

Researchers and educators agree that the “realization of the pluralism imperative is the most significant challenge ever faced by higher education” (Kuh, 1990, p. 93). Others note that so critical is the pluralism imperative that “it is hard to imagine the twenty-first century as a workable enterprise for the United States without colleges and universities imparting the necessary skills and sensitivities for living successfully amid ethnic diversity” (Kramer & Weiner, 1994, p. 42). In our increasingly diverse American society, the potential for cross-cultural interaction is enormous (Young, 2004). Hall (1992) noted that individuals from different racial and ethnic backgrounds have subtle variation in the ways they communicate, differences of which those from other cultures may be unaware. In an increasingly diverse learning environment, educators and learners must recognize differences to promote effective communication (Wang & Folger, 2004). A critical challenge for every college and university is to educate its diverse student population so that they are multiculturally competent and can successfully function in America’s pluralistic society (Rong & Brown, 2002). Higher education counselors and educators should consider possible strategies to help prepare their campuses for their diverse student populations and assume responsibility in supporting, facilitating, and enhancing the multicultural mission faced by institutions of higher learning (Grieger, 1996). These students will continue to offer higher education a multitude of challenges and opportunities (Fenske, Rund, & Contento, 2000; Galloway & Jenkins, 2005). Despite their growing importance, there have been few, if any, studies focusing on the discrimination experienced by international students at institutions of higher education. To help develop a better understanding of international students’ experiences, a survey was conducted with all international students at the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA).

Data reported in the *Open Doors Report on International Education Exchange* (Institute of International Education, 2004) indicate a substantial increase in the number of international students during the past 50 years, from less than 40,000 to 580,000 in 2001. In spite of recent cataclysmic events that are expected to have some immediate impact on the ease with which students may enter the United States for education, this long-term trend seems unlikely to end. UCLA is one of the most diverse universities in the United States. In spring 2000, UCLA’s student population consisted of 2,093 international students: 54% from Asia, 21% from Europe, 8% from the Americas, 5% from Southeast Asia, 5% from the Middle East, 2% from Africa, 1% from Oceania, and 2 students were reported as stateless. The primary objective of this study was to assess the discrimination experienced by international students and to examine

their experiences in Los Angeles. This study also examines the unique experiences of these students resulting from demographic and cultural factors.

METHOD

Respondents

The respondents were 640 international students enrolled at UCLA, 369 males and 271 females. They ranged in age from 17 to 47, with a mean age of 27. The student participants represented different regions; there were 327 students from Asia, 158 from Europe (excluding Canada), 62 from the Americas, 39 from Southeast Asia, 27 from the Middle East, 7 from Oceania, and 6 from Africa. There were 14 student respondents from Canada.

Approximately 74% ($n = 459$) of respondents reported their marital status as single, 25% ($n = 156$) as married, and 4 students as divorced. The mean number of years that the participants had been in the United States was 3 years. Approximately 42% ($n = 248$) were in science-related fields, 39% ($n = 228$) in the social sciences, 7.5% ($n = 44$) in professional schools, and 10% ($n = 60$) in the humanities. The proportion of respondents in the different fields corresponds closely to all international students' choice of majors. About 52% of respondents' degree objectives were doctoral degrees, 25% were in master's programs, and 23% were in bachelor's programs. The mean grade point average (GPA) for the participants was 3.6; the average cumulative GPA for all international students studying at UCLA in spring of 2000 was 3.56. The sample was closely representative of international students on this campus.

Instruments

A two-component instrument was used in this study. The first section focused on the areas of the students' experiences in Los Angeles and the second on the students' demographic information. The first section of the questionnaire, covering students' experiences, consisted of five yes/no questions addressing areas such as discrimination experienced when interacting with professors, classmates, staff, and potential employers. It was assumed that a higher frequency of "yes" answers to the five questions in a given area translates into a greater discrimination experienced by international students in that context. In addition to the five questions, there was one open-ended question asking students to describe the most serious case of discrimination they have experienced, if there had been any. The focus of this question was on the participants' perception of discrimination. The second part, focusing on demographic information, was

Table 1 Percentages of Students Experiencing Discrimination by Region

Area of Discrimination	AF	AM	AS	EU	ME	OC	SEA
Interacting with professors	17%	6%	16%	5%	11%	14%	21%
Interacting with university staff	17%	11%	19%	12%	15%	14%	14%
Interacting with classmate(s)	20%	21%	21%	8%	22%	14%	16%
Applying for a job on campus	17%	10%	13%	5%	17%	0%	12%
Prejudice in Los Angeles toward people from your country	33%	36%	29%	19%	46%	0%	16%

Note: The higher the percentage, the greater number of students experienced discrimination in each of the contexts. The numbers refer to the percentages of international students who answered "yes" to the statements regarding discrimination. AF = Africa, AM = Americas, AS = Asia, EU = Europe, ME = Middle East, OC = Oceania, SEA = Southeast Asia.

designed to obtain data on gender, age, nationality, major, GPA, degree objective, marital status, and length of time in the United States and Los Angeles.

Procedure

The names, addresses, e-mail addresses, and phone numbers of all registered international students were provided by UCLA's Office of International Students and Scholars. All 2,093 international students were invited, via mail, to participate in this study, and a questionnaire and a pre-addressed stamped envelope accompanied the invitation. The respondents completed the questionnaire anonymously and were assured of the confidentiality of their responses.

RESULTS

Respondents were divided into seven groups depending on their geographical regions of origin: Africa, the Americas, Asia, Europe, the Middle East, Oceania, and Southeast Asia. The responses for Canadian students were excluded, as their experiences were very different from those of other students coming from the Americas. Table 1 reports the percentages of international students from each region who responded "yes" to questions related to discrimination. The higher percentage number indicates that international students from that region experienced greater discrimination in that particular context. The findings suggest that Middle Eastern and African students experience higher overall discrimination than do international students coming from other regions.

Chi-square analyses were conducted to compare students from different regions in terms of their experiences in each of the contexts. Responses to the open-ended question and general comments on the questionnaire were compiled and categorized based on the subject of responses. The following section covers

the results of the chi-square analyses and some of the pertinent comments made by the participants.

Interaction With Professors

International students were asked whether they had experienced discrimination when interacting with their professors. The percentage of students who responded "yes" to this question is presented in Table 1. A chi-square analysis was conducted to compare international students coming from different regions regarding discrimination experienced in their interaction with the university professors. The chi-square result was significant ($\chi^2 = 15.84$, $df = 6$, $p < .05$), indicating that there was a difference in experiences of students from different geographical regions in terms of their interaction with their professors. The results indicate that 21% of students from Southeast Asia experienced discrimination. One student from Myanmar wrote, "One of my professors pays more attention to the comments made by native students [yet] looks down on my expressions and does not consider my comments seriously." One Indonesian student wrote that she was "verbally abused by a professor."

The second-highest discrimination reported was by African students (17%), and the third was by Asians (16%). Respondents wrote many comments about their interaction with professors on this topic. A Japanese student commented, "One professor ignores me completely in his class. . . . Another one wants to call me 'T' because she cannot pronounce my name properly; Americans are getting used to Tom and Bob too much." Another Japanese student wrote, "I get very frustrated if a professor ignores me because my English is not as good compared to a native speaker . . . such times, I feel I'm stupid." A Korean student reported, "I've been ignored by a professor to participate in a classroom discussion. I think everyone's opinion should be respected and heard." Another Korean student stated, "One professor thought I was not prepared culturally for graduate school in the U.S." A Chinese student wrote that his professor mentioned in class that "the good place to buy cheap pirated textbooks is in mainland China, my home country." Another student from Taiwan wrote, "Many look down upon foreign students, and they don't have respect for them."

A Costa Rican student wrote, "One professor in the department was racist. He refused to speak Spanish to students who were not from Spain because he believed that Spanish spoken in Central America is not Spanish." Another student from Uruguay commented, "I only experienced discrimination with one particular professor who believed that Latinos cannot be logical or scientific. He had little regards [sic] for different academic trainings, cultures, and ways of thinking." One Israeli student wrote, "One of my professors kept putting down

the country I'm from and kept giving examples and referring to my religion." A Bulgarian student wrote, "A professor in one of my classes said that my country was boring and not worth reading about. He didn't know that he had a student from Bulgaria in his class." A Romanian student indicated, "I was told to go back to my country, in a private conversation with a professor, if I don't like the teaching style here." One Greek student wrote, "I experienced very little support from my faculty advisor for career opportunities. I felt unwanted here."

Interaction With University Staff

International students were asked whether they had experienced discrimination when interacting with the university staff. The percentages of students who responded "yes" to this question are presented in Table 1. A chi-square analysis was conducted to compare international students from different regions regarding discrimination experienced in their interaction with the staff. The chi-square result was not significant ($\chi^2 = 4.7$, $df = 6$, $p > .05$), indicating that there was not a major difference in the experiences of students from different regions in terms of their interaction with university staff. The results indicate that among all regions, Asian students (19%) experienced the most discrimination when interacting with the university staff. A Taiwanese student stated, "A White guy (staff) was laughing at my name and making fun of it in public." Another student from Taiwan explained, "One day when I went to our department to submit a form, a female staff member pretended that she did not see me and dealt with another White student who came in later than I did . . . she knew I was there but just ignored me."

Interaction With Classmates

International students were asked whether they had experienced discrimination when interacting with classmates. The percentages of students who responded "yes" to this question are presented in Table 1. A chi-square analysis was conducted to compare international students of different regions regarding discrimination experienced. The chi-square result was significant ($\chi^2 = 14.18$, $df = 6$, $p < .05$), indicating that there was a difference in experiences of students from different regions in terms of their interaction with their classmates. European international students experienced the least discrimination (8%). A French student stated, "I have noticed that Caucasians use discriminating words to describe other people of different races." A Spanish student remarked, "It depends where you come from; if you are from Europe, you're OK." One Irish student wrote, "When people look at me, they take me for an American so I don't suffer any discrimination."

The highest percentage of discrimination was found for international students from the Middle East (22%). This finding could have been different, maybe higher, if this study had been conducted after the tragic events of September 11. A student from Iraq wrote, "I accidentally bumped into a Caucasian guy and he mumbled "f[expletive] immigrant!" Another student from Oman wrote, "I have experienced discrimination against my culture rather than my country per se. I'd rather not to talk about it."

The results indicate that 21% of students from Asia reported discrimination when interacting with classmates. One Japanese student wrote, "My classmates said that international students take the slots that should be offered to minority students . . . it seems that the majority of my classmates have no sympathy for international students." One Korean student remarked, "Racial discrimination among students definitely exists." Another Korean student stated, "Hostile environment here . . . it is mainly because of ignorance of cultural differences among students." A Taiwanese student indicated, "This person refused to answer my question due to my English pronunciation problems." The results indicate that 21% of students from the Americas reported discrimination when interacting with their classmates. One student from Costa Rica wrote, "Some classmates were saying that black comes in more shades of black, referring to me (Latino)."

Potential Employers

International students were asked whether they had experienced discrimination when applying for jobs. The percentages of students who responded "yes" to this question are presented in Table 1. A chi-square analysis was conducted to compare international students from different regions regarding discrimination experienced in applying for jobs. The chi-square result was not significant ($\chi^2 = 9.07$, $df = 6$, $p > .05$), indicating that there was not a major difference in experiences of students from different regions in applying for jobs. Students from Africa and the Middle East (17%) experienced the highest discrimination when applying for jobs. Students from Europe and Oceania experienced the least discrimination. Many students referred to the point that many companies only hire American citizens and residents. For instance, an Italian student wrote, "I cannot get a security clearance to work for some defense-related projects." One Colombian student wrote, "Not having good communication skills closes many doors. I applied for a job, [and] they selected a student who did not have a strong experience. . . . I think they made that decision because they did not want to deal with an international student."

Prejudice in the Community

International students were asked, "In your opinion, do people in Los Angeles express prejudice toward people from your country?" Table 1 reports the percentages of students in each region who responded "yes" to this question. The participants reported the highest discrimination in this area. Based on this finding, one could conclude that there is much less discrimination on campus compared with the outside community. Many students wrote that the academic and university settings are much more open to international students than the Los Angeles community outside. A chi-square analysis was conducted to compare international students coming from different regions regarding their perception of prejudice expressed toward people from their country in Los Angeles. The chi-square result was significant ($\chi^2 = 17.00$, $df = 6$, $p < .05$), indicating that there was a difference in perceptions of students from different regions. None of the students from Oceania thought people in Los Angeles express prejudice toward people from their countries. The highest discrimination reported was by Middle Eastern students, as 46% felt that people in Los Angeles expressed prejudice toward people from their countries. Again, this percentage might have been higher if this study had been conducted after the tragic events of September 11. A Turkish student explained, "I cannot call it prejudice, but they have wrong knowledge and all kinds of misconceptions about my country and culture." An Iranian male stated, "At the housing office, the lady said that you cannot have pets in the house. I said that is fine then she said, 'So what do you want to do with your camel?'" Another Iranian student wrote, "I have been asked whether I have four wives."

A Bulgarian student wrote, "A man in the bus asked me whether I am Armenian. When I told him I was not, he said that he was looking for an Armenian 'to beat him up' . . . then he asked whether I was a foreign student and went on a long and angry monologue speaking about 'the f[expletive] foreigners' and how they are more than Americans in the American public universities." Another student wrote, "I'm from Yugoslavia and I was here during the bombing. I couldn't believe what I heard from people here!" One German student wrote, "A lot of high school kids think all Germans are Nazis . . . that is very sad and disturbing!" A student from Serbia remarked, "One time at a fast food restaurant the employee was very impatient about my lack of knowledge of different brands of cheese . . . I felt that he thinks I'm not smart." One Korean student indicated that she had experienced discrimination at shops and restaurants: "Here some waiters/waitresses do not give Asians good tables." Another Korean student wrote, "My parents were visiting and they stayed at this hotel. The manager, a White guy, was unbelievably rude to us . . . he shouted at my father, who was asking some questions in very slow English." A Colombian student wrote, "The worst one

was discrimination toward my daughter at her school for being Latin." A Spanish student explained that he had faced many kinds of discrimination, saying, "It would take me volumes to describe them."

Many respondents stated that American people do not have a reasonably accurate knowledge of these students' home countries. An Iranian wrote that when an American asked her where she is from, she responded "Iran," then he asked, "Where is that?" An Italian student stated, "Americans should be more curious about other countries, cultures, history, and history [*sic*]." One student from Tanzania wrote, "[The] majority of people don't know if Africa is a country or a continent!" A Bulgarian student stated, "People don't even know where my country is!" A Chilean student remarked, "They cannot differentiate between different countries of Latin America; for them, all are the same." Another student wrote, "People here are very ignorant about the world outside California."

International student respondents wrote many comments about stereotypes and discrete discrimination they have experienced. Some felt that this is related to Americans' lack of knowledge and misconceptions about different countries and cultures. Many indicated that there are a lot of stereotypes but not much discrimination. One Chinese student wrote, "Not much prejudice but a lot of judgments." One Swedish wrote, "I feel that sometimes it's hard to be taken seriously when people find out I'm Swedish . . . so much stereotyping." Another Swedish female indicated, "One of the teaching assistants (TA) for my class was helping me when another TA walked by. They exchanged looks indicating that my TA was lucky getting to help me (kind of sexual)." A French male student wrote, "L.A. is a very multicultural place but [natives'] image of France and the French is fairly negative."

An Italian student wrote, "The discrimination is never open . . . it is just subtle . . . people are just less friends [*sic*] with me than with other Americans." Another Italian wrote, "I've heard a lot of stereotypes about Italy and Italians, but I would not go as far as saying people here are prejudiced." One student from Finland wrote, "You don't experience it in open; it is more implied through joking, soft ridicule, laughter, and belittling." Another German student also stated, "Only in jokes." One Mexican student wrote, "No overt discrimination but a lot of mild forms of it." A student from Tanzania stated, "They stereotype about how people live in Africa and what they wear, generalizing the customs of some tribes to all."

Many Asian students felt the general category of "Asian" is loaded with images and stereotypes. A Japanese student wrote, "Asian women are still viewed as exotic creatures in Los Angeles." Some Asian students emphasized a more subtle differential treatment in their academic activities that reflects divergences from the "model minority" image. For example, a Chinese student

explained that there are many stereotypes that people have for Asian students: "Chinese, and in general Asians, are immediately assumed to be hard working, smart, and submissive." One Korean student stated, "I feel tension toward me. I have overheard them saying Koreans are aggressive." Another student wrote, "Racism is not openly expressed for fear of criticism; however, it does not mean that it doesn't exist."

Participants in this study commented on the diversity of the campus and of Los Angeles. One Chinese student stated, "UCLA is really an international school." A German student wrote, "Incredible diversity of people!" Another German student commented, "There is opportunity to meet people from many different national and ethnic backgrounds." One Indian student wrote, "So many different cultures at a single place." A Bulgarian student commented, "It is interesting to see how similar people are from all over the world." An Argentinean student wrote, "I found UCLA more diverse than any other place of my prior experience." One student from Philippines indicated, "I was in Europe for two weeks recently and compared to Europe there is zero discrimination here!"

Respondents referred to the existing diversity but also pointed to the segregation and stereotypes that accompany it. For example, a Spanish student stated, "The cultural diversity in Los Angeles still coexists with racial stereotypes." One Japanese student explained that before coming to the United States, "I expected a perfect melting pot with its diversity, but I saw huge division among different groups (racial, religious, ethnic, etc.)." A Malaysian student wrote, "I think UCLA is the most diverse college in the U.S., but people from different cultures do not really interact."

This study also examined the relationship between the participants' demographic factors such as gender, field of study, degree objective, and discrimination experienced by the international participants. Chi-square analyses were used to compare male with female international students in terms of discrimination experienced for those five questions. The results found were not significant for any of the factors. These findings indicate that male and female international students do not differ significantly in their experiences of discrimination. Similar results were found for students studying in different fields. Participants were divided into four groups depending on their field of study: science, social science, humanities, and professional. Chi-square analyses were used to compare the responses of the four groups. The outcomes of the analyses were all nonsignificant, indicating that there are no major differences between students majoring in different fields in regards to their experiences of discrimination. Participants were also divided into three groups based on their degree objective: bachelor's, master's, and doctoral degrees. Chi-square analyses, again, were used to compare the responses of the students to the five questions. The results of

the analyses were nonsignificant, implying that there are no major differences between graduate and undergraduate students.

DISCUSSION

All across the United States, colleges and universities are becoming increasingly diverse; students are more varied ethnically and linguistically. There is ample evidence in literature that attests to the benefits of a diverse campus community (Brown, 2004). It is assumed by many that the days of discrimination reflecting prejudices are now over in the United States. Discrimination, however, takes many forms and often depends on the perceptions of the individuals in question. The findings of this study indicate that international students experience some discrimination in their interactions with faculty, staff, other students, and in the community. This type of experience, however, is much higher off campus than on the university campus.

The results of this study suggest that the international students from the Middle East and Africa experienced more difficulty regarding stereotyping and discrimination. This study was done prior to the September 11 tragedy; the results could have been different if it had been conducted post–September 11. The current findings are consistent with the results reported by Sodowsky and Plake (1992), who found that Africans perceived more prejudice than other student groups in their study. Schmader, Major, and Gramzow (2001) found similar results when their data indicated that African Americans' beliefs about ethnic justice predicted greater discounting and devaluing among other minority groups in the academic domain. The results of other studies at research universities in the United States indicate that the perceptions of White faculty and students, especially the males, were not consistent with those of the minority groups on many issues pertaining to their perceptions of the campus climate, as these related to race relations and feelings of acceptance. The African American students held a much more negative perception of the campus climate (Brown, 2004). Matlock (1997) observed that students of color more often feel that faculty does not respect them and that the university is not truly committed to diversity. Counselors and educators should be aware of this phenomenon, which is not surprising given the racial history of the United States. There should be programs specifically designed for African and Middle Eastern students addressing the issue of discrimination as well as awareness sessions for other students, faculty, and staff.

Theoretically, diversity is desirable and is an indispensable element of academic excellence. The discussion emerges in creating the conditions to promote and support a diverse campus community (Brown, 2004). As Hutchinson and Hyer (2000) contended, a commitment to diversity is much more than simply

achieving an adequate representation among the student body. It entails devising strategies and programs to realize its benefits in education, research, and service. This commitment inevitably means an openness to change. For educators, the emerging cultural diversity agenda should include the central objective of reducing prejudice and racism as implied by the present study. Programs pertaining to cultural diversity must promote both multicultural and international learning for all students, a more favorable climate for both cross-national and interracial relations on campus, and specialized opportunities for domestic students and international students to learn from each other (Zayas, Torres, Malcolm, & DesRosiers, 1996).

International educational programs are largely founded on the principle that contact with other cultures will heighten cultural sensitivity and understanding between national groups (Leong & Chou, 1996). Educators cannot neglect the experiences of international students or underestimate the intellectual, strategic, and financial resources they represent. Educators and counselors need to be aware of their own cultural values; have respect for cultural diversity, knowledge about the group to which the international student belongs, and a genuine interest in other cultures; and demonstrate these values (Altekruse, Harris, & Brandt, 2001; Johns, 2004; Lago & Moodley, 2002). As the findings of this study also indicate, it is important that they be sensitive to the tendency toward cultural stereotypes as well as the tendency to either over- or underemphasize cultural differences (Hanassab & Tidwell, 2002).

Diversity in every sense is central to the university experience; the fundamental purpose of the university requires an active quest for exploration of different intellectual perspectives. We are living through a transformative time. The composition of U.S. demographics is changing, and this is even more evident in California. The primary challenge facing institutions of higher education will be to embrace the opportunities that such developments offer. A diverse university campus serves its members by providing them with a window on the world, which requires knowledge of the diverse ways in which important matters are viewed across the world and across time. A diverse campus provides its members with the skills necessary to be productive in a multicultural environment. Students must learn to view things from the perspective of others and to discover mutually beneficial resolutions. International students provide the means of diversifying the campus.

University graduates will spend a substantial proportion of their careers working with those who come from different racial, national, and ethnic backgrounds. The student who learns how to work effectively in these new and diverse situations will be at an advantage. As Paige (1990) also noted, one of the best ways to have access to cross-cultural learning and cross-cultural research is

through extensive interactions with international students. Their presence provides an extraordinary learning opportunity that is often neglected. Through our mutual interactions, we can acquire new perspectives on our societies, learn about other nations and cultures, acquire intercultural communication skills, gain a more global understanding of the knowledge being produced, and more effectively prepare ourselves for future careers with multicultural and international dimensions. The opportunity for personal and professional growth is profound.

International educators need to recognize the urgency of building greater understanding of different cultures and customs. It is essential for educators to learn more about the parts of the world, religions, and customs most foreign to them and promote study of those areas by their students and scholars (Soppelsa, 2002). To reduce discrimination faced by international students, there is a need to promote cross-cultural communication and efforts toward tolerance among people of different customs and values. This can advance learning across cultures, build respect among different peoples, and encourage construction of a global community. If the United States wants to maintain a global presence, it is time for its institutions of higher education to pay particular attention to this unique group of students and their experiences.

A few points should be stressed. Although international students have some commonalities, there are also differences among the subgroups of these students. Future analyses need to examine the students' experiences and needs depending on their nationality, not their region. This article generalizes the students' experiences by classifying them into regions; however, there are differences between students coming from the same region but different countries. One should note that underlying the appearance of cohesiveness is an internal heterogeneity reflecting a wide range of ethnic groups. It is also difficult to assess the extent to which the results of this study, based on a public urban university student sample, are replicable among other segments of the U.S. population.

REFERENCES

- Altekruse, M. K., Harris, H. L., & Brandt, M. A. (2001). The role of the professional counselor in the 21st century. *Counseling and Human Development*, 34, 1-10.
- Brown, L. I. (2004). Diversity: The challenge for higher education. *Race, Ethnicity and Education*, 7, 21-34.
- Chapman, M. P. (1999). The campus at the millennium: A plea for community and place. *Planning for Higher Education*, 2, 25-31.

- Fenske, R. H., Rund, J. A., & Contento, J. M. (2000). Who are the new students? In M. Barr & M. Desler (Eds.), *The handbook of student affairs administration* (pp. 285-310). New York: Jossey-Bass.
- Galloway, F. J., & Jenkins, J. R. (2005). The adjustment problems faced by international students in the United States. *NASPA Journal*, 42, 175-187.
- Grieger, I. (1996). A multicultural organizational development checklist for student affairs. *Journal of College Student Development*, 37, 561-573.
- Hall, P. A. (1992). Peanuts: A note on intercultural communication. *Journal of Academic Librarianship*, 18, 211-213.
- Hanassab, S., & Tidwell, R. (2002). International students in higher education: Identification of needs and implications for policy and practice. *Journal of Studies in International Education*, 6, 305-322.
- Hutchinson, S. R., & Hyer, P. (2000). *The campus climate for diversity: Student perceptions*. Blacksburg, VA: Polytechnic Institute and State University.
- Institute of International Education. (2004). *Open doors 2004: Report on international educational exchange*. New York: Author.
- Johns, A. M. (2004). Linguistic diversity and instructional practices. In A. M. Johns & M. K. Sipp (Eds.), *Diversity in college classrooms: Practices for today's campuses* (pp. 133-151). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Kramer, M., & Weiner, S. S. (1994). *Dialogues for diversity*. Phoenix, AZ: Oryx Press.
- Kuh, G. D. (1990). The demographic juggernaut. In M. J. Barr & M. L. Upcraft (Eds.), *New futures for student affairs* (pp. 71-97). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass.
- Lago, C., & Moodley, R. (2002). Multicultural issues in eclectic and integrative counseling and psychotherapy. In S. Palmer (Ed.), *Multicultural counseling* (pp. 40-56). London: Sage.
- Leong, F., & Chou, E. (1996). Counseling international students. In P. B. Pedersen & J. G. Draguns (Eds.), *Counseling across cultures* (pp. 210-242). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Matlock, J. (1997). *Student expectations and experiences: The Michigan Study*. Retrieved from www.diversityweb.org/digest/Sm97/research.html
- Mestenhauser, J. A. (1983). Learning from sojourners. In D. Landis & R. W. Brislin (Eds.), *Handbook of intercultural training* (pp. 153-186). Elmsford, NY: Pergamon.
- Nieto, S. (2004). Racism, discrimination, and expectations of students' achievement. In A. S. Canestrari & B. A. Marlowe (Eds.), *Educational foundations: An anthology of critical readings* (pp. 44-63). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.
- Paige, R. M. (1990). International students: Cross-cultural psychological perspectives. In R. W. Brislin (Ed.), *Applied cross-cultural psychology* (pp. 161-185). Newbury Park, CA: Sage.

- Pedersen, P. B. (1991). Counseling international students. *The Counseling Psychologist*, 19, 10-58.
- Rong, X. L., & Brown, F. (2002). Immigration and urban education in the new millennium: The diversity and the challenges. *Education and Urban Society*, 34, 123-133.
- Schmader, T., Major, B., & Gramzow, R. H. (2001). Coping with ethnic stereotypes in the academic domain: Perceived injustice and psychological disengagement. *Journal of Social Issues*, 57, 93-111.
- Schram, J. L., & Lauver, P. J. (1988). Alienation in international students. *Journal of College Student Development*, 29, 146-150.
- Sodowsky, G. R., & Plake, B. S. (1992). A study of acculturation differences among international people and suggestions for sensitivity to within group differences. *Journal of Counseling and Development*, 71, 53-59.
- Soppelsa, B. (2002). The challenges of the cultural mosaic. *International Educator*, 11, 44.
- Spencer-Rodgers, J. (2001). Consensual and individual stereotypic beliefs about international students among American host nationals. *International Journal of Intercultural Relations*, 25, 639-657.
- Young, R. L. (2004). Cross-cultural experiential learning. In A. M. Johns & M. K. Sipp (Eds.), *Diversity in college classrooms: Practices for today's campuses* (pp. 232-246). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Wang, M., & Folger, T. (2004). Faculty and student diversity. In A. M. Johns & M. K. Sipp (Eds.), *Diversity in college classrooms: Practices for today's campuses* (pp. 152-173). Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press.
- Zayas, L. H., Torres, L. R., Malcolm, J., & DesRosiers, F. S. (1996). Clinicians' definitions of ethnically sensitive therapy. *Professional Psychology: Research and Practice*, 27, 78-82.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Shideh Hanassab received her PhD in educational psychology from the University of California, Los Angeles (UCLA). Currently, she serves as the director of research at UCLA's Office of International Students and Scholars. Her research interests include the adjustment process of international and immigrant students in institutions of higher education.