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Diversity without Race:
How University Internationalization Strategies Discuss International Students

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ABSTRACT

This article examines how a sample of 62 higher education institutions in Canada, the United States and the United Kingdom discuss international students in their official institutionalization strategies, focusing on how ideas of race and diversity are addressed. We find that institutional strategies connect international students to an abstract notion of diversity, using visual images to portray campus environments as inclusive of racial, ethnic and religious diversity. Yet, strategy documents rarely discuss race, racialization, or racism explicitly, despite the fact that most international students in all three countries are non-white. Moreover, in the few instances when race is discussed, racial injustice is externalized as a global issue and racial diversity is instrumentalized as a source of improving institutional reputation or diversity metrics. We argue that a first step to creating more inclusive and anti-racist campuses is to acknowledge international students' racial identities and experiences with racism in official discourses and strategies.

Keywords: race, internationalization, diversity, higher education

Increasing international student mobility has rapidly changed higher education in many parts of the world. In 2019, international students accounted for 25% of all enrollments in the United Kingdom (U.K.), 21% in Canada and 5% in the United States (U.S.) (Institute of International Education [IIE], 2019). In many countries, international students are viewed as a source of supplemental, even necessary, revenue for institutions faced with

declining public funding. However, revenue generation is not the only stated benefit for institutions (Buckner, 2019; Khoo, 2011). International students are also viewed as a resource to help diversify the student body and expose domestic students to "diversity" (Stein, 2015). This is particularly true in the English-speaking Global North, where the normative domestic student is generally assumed to be a white, Christian, middle-class, monolingual citizen with little experience abroad (Jones, 2013).

Much of the literature on how higher education institutions engage in internationalization is oriented towards the experiences of international students. A large literature in higher education documents the many challenges they face when integrating into campuses and communities with different academic and cultural norms (see Chen, 2006; Guo & Guo, 2017; Kenyon et al., 2012). However, there is less focus on institutions' responses and responsibilities to their growing international student enrollments (Yao et al., 2019).

Recognizing this gap, this article explores international student recruitment as an institutional project through a close reading of how higher education institutions discuss international students in their official international strategy documents. Specifically, we ask: how do higher education institutions in Canada, the U.K. and U.S. discuss and portray international students in official internationalization strategies? We find that while institutions celebrate cultural diversity in their official strategies, their discussions nonetheless frame whiteness as the norm against which cultural diversity is defined. Meanwhile, the strategies ignore international students' racial identities and experiences with racism. We argue that by not acknowledging international students' racial identities and experiences with racism, internationalization strategy documents ignore their institutions' role in perpetuating racism and the normalization of whiteness in higher education.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Around five million students in higher education studied in foreign countries in 2017 (UNESCO Institute for Statistics, 2018.) with one-third of all international students enrolling in only three countries: the U.S., the U.K., and Canada (IIE, 2019). Despite some differences, international students in all three countries are overwhelmingly treated as sources of additional revenue and diversity for their changing societies (Buckner, 2019; Khoo, 2011; Pandit, 2013; Sawir, 2013; Stein, 2015). For example, studies find that internationalization in English-speaking countries is linked to students' international awareness (Buckner, 2019) and developing global citizens (Khoo, 2011). These findings are part of a broader body of work that finds diversity has become a ubiquitous word in higher education. Diversity is increasingly viewed as a valuable resource that "diverse" students bring to their institutions, and so even abstract commitments to diversity can bolster the image of the university (Ahmed, 2007; Glasener et al., 2019; Smith & Khawaja, 2011).

In line with these discourses, many institutions strategically represent their diversity visually through their websites and recruitment brochures (Ford & Patterson, 2019; Pippert et al., 2013). For example, institutions in the United States strategically include images in recruitment brochures of a student body that is more diverse than their actual student population (Pippert et al., 2013). Glasener et al. (2019) argue that many U.S. institutions

focus on diversity to avoid discussing how race is experienced on campus, while also giving the impression that the institution offers a progressive and inclusive campus environment. These studies point to the need to critically unpack how institutions invoke certain ideas through their visual images and representations.

The large number of international students on campuses has prompted a growing literature on international students' experiences. Studies find that international students in English-speaking countries face challenges adjusting to new academic environments and socio-cultural stressors (Andrade, 2006; Kuo, 2011; Sawir et al., 2008; Smith & Khawaja, 2011). The literature also finds that international students face racism and discrimination of various types. A deficit assumption is pervasive (Hanassab, 2006; Jones, 2017). International students are often treated as a problem and in need of support to catch up with local knowledge to fit in (Jones, 2017; Leask, 2015). East Asian and South Asian international students report feeling excluded and avoided, ridiculed for their accents, disregarded, and stereotyped in the United States and Canada (Houshmand et al., 2014; Yao et al., 2019). Studies also find that international students from the Middle East, Africa, Asia and Latin America experience more discrimination than their white international student peers in the United States (Hanassab, 2006; Yao et al., 2019). Studies in the U.K. also find that international students of color are more likely to report having experienced racism and verbal abuse (Brown & Jones, 2013).

Yet, there has been much less discussion of institutional roles and responsibilities to international students (Yao et al., 2019). Higher education institutions create the academic and social environments in which their international students live and learn: they are undoubtedly aware of the many challenges, including racism, that international students face and have both the responsibility and the resources to respond. Unpacking institutions' understanding of their international students can be an important first step to addressing international students' challenges by identifying how institutional oversights and assumptions harm students.

THEORETICAL PERSPECTIVES

Our analysis is informed by three distinct, but related, literatures: critical race theory, critical whiteness studies, and critical multiculturalism. First, we draw on key ideas in critical race theory (CRT) and critical whiteness studies to ground our analysis of how race is discussed, or evaded, in internationalization strategies (Henry et al., 2017). Our analysis draws on the idea, foundational to critical race theory (CRT), that race is a central identity marker and shapes individuals' lived experiences in our three focal countries (Gillborn, 2005; Omi & Winant, 2014). Similarly important to CRT is the idea that racism is endemic to society and that in a racialized society, whiteness becomes a lens through which all else is compared and interpreted (Hiraldo, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1998). In higher education, critical race theorists explore how policies and structures impact how race and racism are experienced on campus and point to the need to analyze how institutions discuss and engage with race and racism.

Drawing on CRT, the related field of whiteness studies, seeks to unpack and denaturalize the norm of whiteness, and points to the ways in which current social, economic, political, and ideological structures privilege white people and disadvantage people of color (Gillborn, 2005). A key goal of CWS is to deconstruct the "unnamed and

unmarked role of whiteness in producing racialized subjects and structuring racial hierarchies" and recent studies have used CWS to deconstruct practices that uphold whiteness in higher education (Foste & Irwin, 2020, p. 443). For example, scholarship finds that in higher education, whiteness structures evaluations of merit, intelligence, aptitude, and other characteristics (Croom, 2017; Iverson, 2007). Scholars have argued that whiteness is assumed to be "the norm," and so to be not white is "abnormal" (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005; Thompson, 1998). In higher education, whiteness is a prism through which the concept of diversity is interpreted (Iverson, 2007). This observation is important to our research because even as higher education institutions increasingly claim to celebrate diversity and institutionalize equity, diversity, and inclusion initiatives, whiteness remains the unarticulated norm against which "diversity" is defined. Although both CRT and CWS developed to discuss the experiences of non-white citizens, particularly African and Latinx Americans, in the United States, many of their insights in education also apply to the experiences of international students (Yao et al., 2019).

In analyzing how strategies discuss the idea of diversity in particular, we also draw on the critical scholarship on multiculturalism. A large literature on multicultural education explores how ideas of racial, ethnic, linguistic, religious, and economic diversity can and should be incorporated into educational policy and practice in democratic societies (Banks & Banks, 2019). Approaches to multiculturalism are often classified into three categories: traditional, liberal, and critical (McLennan, 2001). Traditional multiculturalism tends to view cultural categories as relatively fixed and essentialist and argues for a multiculturalism that acknowledges the identities of racial, ethnic, and religious minorities in order to prevent societal division. In this view, multicultural education tends to advocate for the inclusion of non-western cultures and histories of ethnic, racial, and religious minorities into the dominant curriculum, but rarely questions the dominance of a white majority.

In contrast, liberal multiculturalism values cultural pluralism, and argues for education to enhance intercultural awareness and understanding, premised on the idea of a universal humanity. Liberal multiculturalism moves beyond tokenistic or essentialist understandings of culture, to call for a more sophisticated and nuanced understanding of how varied identity characteristics, including race, ethnicity, gender, language, social class, gender, and exceptionality intersect (Banks & Banks, 2019).

Yet, while liberal multiculturalism recognizes the reality of racism, it does not focus on the role of power in perpetuating racist structures. Therefore, in his analysis of multiculturalism, Fish (1997) groups together both traditional and liberal forms as 'boutique multiculturalism' and argues that this form of multiculturalism represents only a superficial and cosmetic form of commitment to diversity. Hall (2018) similarly explains that boutique multiculturalism as something that "celebrates difference without making a difference" (p. 97). In contrast, critical multiculturalism explicitly recognizes the role of power in perpetuating white privilege. It views the goal of multicultural education not as simply greater inter-cultural understanding or awareness, but rather, the transformation of society and dismantling of existing racist social structures. These three conceptions of multiculturalism have proven useful in orienting our analysis to recognize different possible framings of international students' identities. In our analysis, we draw on these three conceptions of multiculturalism to interrogate how strategies discuss race and diversity in their internationalization strategies.

DATA AND METHODS

Data for this project comes from internationalization strategy documents, which are discursive artifacts that define and articulate the university's formal vision for internationalization. We focus on these documents because they are typically formally endorsed by the highest levels of leadership and can be important in guiding resource allocation (Childress, 2009; Taylor, 2004). We collected a set of internationalization strategies produced by colleges and universities in Canada (N=32), the United Kingdom (N=20), and United States (N=10) that were publicly available in English in 2020. To find documents, we conducted online searches of documents titled Internationalization Strategy, Internationalization Plan or Global Engagement Strategy that were available on the institutional website of any college or university in the three countries, using advanced searches that included educational institutions' URL extensions (i.e., .edu, .ca, .ac.uk). In total, our sample includes 62 documents published between 2009 and 2020. The vast majority of these institutions, excepting nine colleges in Canada, were four-year Bachelor's degree granting institutions. Although there are many differences in terms of geography and demographics of the institutions represented in our sample, the discourses concerning international students were strikingly similar. Therefore, we focus on commonalities across all institutions, and leave the question of how institutional characteristics shape subtle differences in discourses to subsequent analyses.

This article emerges from a larger study that employs critical content analysis methods to analyze trends in internationalization strategies (Krippendorff, 2018). Using emergent, iterative qualitative coding (Charmaz, 2006), a team of research assistants developed a standardized coding protocol that covered the major activities and discourses captured by the strategies. All research assistants were trained extensively on the protocol and performed a series of inter-rater reliability assessments to ensure consistency of coding. For our analysis, we conducted a close reading of all excerpts coded at the "international student" and "diversity" nodes. In addition, given our interest in race, which was not initially coded, we conducted targeted searches using NVIVO and did close readings of all mentions of the words race and racial.

To complement the textual analysis, we also examined how strategy documents visually represent students. To do this we first identified all images in the documents that seemed designed to represent students or graduates. To be included in the analysis, an image had to portray one or more individuals who were conceivably a student and in a setting that could be their campus; we intentionally excluded photos of international travel or study abroad. We found a total of 155 relevant images in 24 strategic documents from Canada (15), the U.K. (8); and the U.S. (1). For the analysis, we employed an iterative qualitative coding process to categorize representations of students. For each image, we made notes on how many students were included in the image, whether the students appeared to be white or non-white, what activities the students were engaged in, if any symbols were included to imply particular national origins, and students' demeanors. In the first pass of coding, we noticed that non-white students were much more likely to be portrayed with particular material symbols. Therefore, in a second round of coding, we examined the images for how cultural symbols were being used to represent or imply specific student identities.

FINDINGS

Our analysis pointed to an overarching finding: institutional strategies map international students onto the idea of "diversity," while ignoring race and racism. Visual images are used to celebrate racial, ethnic, and religious diversity, and represent diverse and inclusive campuses. Yet, strategy documents rarely explicitly discuss ideas of race, racialization, or racism, despite the fact that the majority of international students in all three countries are non-white. In the section that follows, we organize these findings into two over-arching discussions: celebrating diversity and ignoring race and racism.

Celebrating Diversity

International Students as Carriers of Diversity
There was a common tendency in the internationalization strategies we examined to associate international students with the word "diversity." An initial quantitative analysis revealed that 47 of the 62 strategies discussed "diversity" as a discursive rationale for internationalization, and diversity was coded more frequently than any other rationale, including revenue, reputation, or globalization. Word counts from all 62 documents found diversity mentioned 220 times and culture/cultural 754 times, in contrast to race/racial (12 times), ethnic/ethnicity (22 times), multicultural (26 times), religion/religious (29 times) and linguistic (17 times). These quantitative counts show the extent to which generic and depoliticized ideas of culture and diversity dominate discussions of international students, while references to specific forms of diversity, such as racial, ethnic, religious or linguistic are less common.

Strategy documents frame international students as sources of "diversity," which is often equated with cultural difference. For example, the University of Waterloo (Canada, 2018) states that international students "contribute to the diversity of the student body" (p. 10) and Bristol University (U.K., 2009) states that they have "a diverse student body from multiple cultures and societies" (p. 3). Similarly, Queens University (Canada, 2015) states that through domestic and international student recruitment, they "will cultivate an inclusive, culturally diverse student body" (p. 5). Meanwhile, Mount Allison University (Canada, 2019) states that international students: "enhance the cultural diversity of campus and bring a different and important array of perspectives to the classroom" (p. 4). Mount Allison's strategy, which states that international students "bring the world to Mount Allison" is illustrative of how international students are portrayed as "carriers" of diversity.

Notably, discussions of "diversity" often occur within a narrow, almost exclusive, focus on nationality. This typically happens by referring to diversity in terms of the number of countries that international students represent. Plymouth University (U.K., 2014) mentions that, "We will increase the diversity of our student body by seeking to attract international students from a wider range of countries," making a clear link between national origin and the diversity of the student body (p. 7). Similarly, the University of Regina (Canada, 2016) states: "our students currently come from more than 60 countries" and then state that "these enrolment increases have been crucial in enhancing and diversifying our student population" p. 3). In this framing, having too many students from one country is framed as a risk. For example, the University of Bradford (U.K., 2016) explains that they need to diversify students' countries of origin: "not only to avoid

overexposure to particular markets but to ensure a diverse student body without overrepresentation of particular nationalities" (p. 6). In equating nationality with culture, strategy documents reflect a traditional, essentialist view of culture, and seem to ignore the ways in which students' multiple identities overlap. Moreover, assuming that international students' identities are defined primarily by their nationalities implicitly frames both culture and identity as static and homogenous markers, rather than viewing identity formation and cultural meaning-making as complicated, ongoing processes (Bhabha, 1994; Hall, 2018).

Strategies then link international students' diversity to many positive outcomes, including student learning and quality. For example, Queens University (Canada, 2015) states that by increasing the "size and diversity of the international student population" the university could "enhance learning experiences for all" (p. 10). Bristol University (U.K., 2009) states that the diversity of their student body "enriches our intellectual environment" (p. 3). Similarly, the University of Regina (Canada, 2016) explains that their increasing numbers of international students have helped to "internationalize the experience of our domestic students" (p. 2) suggesting that international students, "expose" their domestic students to diversity. Notably, the diversity of international students is expressed as supporting the identity development and experiences of domestic (read: white) students, not the other way around. As such, international students implicitly constitute a racialized 'other' who are then made responsible for teaching white students about 'diversity.' Meanwhile, the needs of international students to learn about forms of diversity in host countries, as well as confront and overcome their own prejudices and biases is not mentioned at all.

Out of the 62 strategies we coded, only one (Ryerson University, Canada, 2017) frames discussions of diversity beyond the idea of "culture" and other identity attributes to note that international students may have different worldviews and epistemologies. It also acknowledges the role of imperialism and colonialism in shaping the dominance of Western perspectives, stating that:

> A broader definition of global learning incorporates engagement with other cultures and nations within Canada and elsewhere. This perspective includes an acknowledgement of the role imperialism and colonialism have played both at home and abroad. This recognizes the importance of meaningful collaboration with Indigenous studies and perspectives on campus, as well as an exploration of how we engage with difference in Canada given the co-existence of diverse worldviews and epistemologies. Global learning can, and should, include recognition of other ways of knowing and being that function outside the dominant Western point of view – a framework that is not necessarily challenged through international exchanges or travel experiences.
> – *Ryerson University, Canada (p. 11)*

Ryerson's more expansive definition of global education stood out, given that most of the strategies we examined viewed individual students as carriers of diversity. In short, our analysis shows how current institutional discourses surrounding international students celebrate international students as sources of a vague and essentialist notion of cultural diversity, in line with a traditional, static, and depoliticized view of multiculturalism. In these documents, culture is often equated with nationality, while being detached from other

identity attributes, such as race, ethnicity, and religion. We also find that international student diversity is then linked to many positive outcomes for the institution, including improved student experiences and student learning. This finding resonates with prior work on how the concept of "diversity" is instrumentalized in higher education (Glasener et al., 2019; Pandit, 2013).

Inclusive, Multicultural Campuses

To complement our textual analysis, we also analyzed images that portrayed students. We found that 80% of all 155 analyzed images included at least one individual who was non-white. Moreover, many included groups of students from different religious and racial backgrounds, often smiling or talking in small groups. In this section, we select six illustrative images to discuss common tropes.

In Figure 1, from Vancouver Island University (Canada, 2017), three smiling students are depicted. The image focuses on a man, who is wearing a turquoise dastār, a symbol of Sikh faith. The young man is surrounded by a Black woman, smiling, and a white woman, whose face is blurred and partially obscured. Nonetheless, she also appears to be smiling or laughing. This image seems to be conveying a multi-racial, multi-cultural, and multi-faith campus, where students from different racial and religious backgrounds mingle with joy. British Columbia, where VIU is located, is home to the largest population of Sikhs in Canada and the largest outside of India and London, England. As a result, it is not at all obvious that this student is international – he could be from the Vancouver area. Yet, when employed in the institution's internationalization strategy, this image seems designed to signal that Sikhs, and by association, Punjabis and Indians, are welcome in Canada. Given the rapid increase in international students from India and their high representation in British Columbian colleges and universities, the image also seems to be signaling the importance of a multi-racial campus and suggests to potential Indian international students that VIU offers the opportunity to meet and intermingle with students from other backgrounds.

Figure 2, from Cardiff University (U.K., 2018), depicts two Black women hugging and smiling. The young woman on the left is dressed in graduation regalia, while the woman on the right is older and their close embrace suggests that the older woman is her mother, a relative, or mentor. The older woman is wearing a bright blue cloth head scarf, possibly a gele, a tied cloth head covering that is common in Western and Southern Africa. The older woman's headdress seems to imply she is of African heritage, and therefore implies a sense of foreignness or international status to both her and her presumed daughter. Given the happy celebratory smiles of the graduating woman, the image symbolically conveys the institution's support for the success of its racialized international students.

Figure 3 from Manchester Metropolitan University (U.K., 2017) appears in a section of the strategy titled "ambitions," which highlights the potential of the university to diversify its income streams through increasing the enrollment of international students. The photo depicts three students: a Muslim woman, a Black woman, and a white man, walking side-by-side. We identify the Muslim woman from her hijab, a symbol of the Muslim faith. A closer look also reveals that in addition to wearing a hijab, she has a henna tattoo on her right hand, a cultural tradition at weddings, Eid, and other celebrations in the Middle East and South Asia. Unlike the Muslim woman, the Black woman's religious

background is not clear. As with Figure 1, this photo seems designed to present an image of an institution that celebrates and welcomes religious, ethnic, and national diversity.

Fig. 1: Vancouver Island, Canada
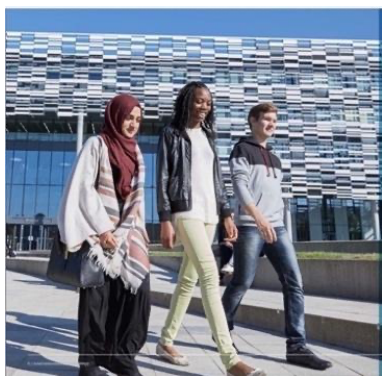

Fig. 2: Cardiff, U.K.

Fig. 3: Manchester Metropolitan, U.K.

Fig. 4: Western, Canada

Figure 4 appears on the cover of the strategy from Western University (Canada, 2014). This photo, like the others, seems designed to highlight a harmonious, diverse campus by representing a number of Asian students (some blurred out) mingling well with white students on campus. The image focuses on a man, who appears to be of East Asian heritage, and a young white woman smiling and chatting. As with Figures 1, 2 and 3, these students may not be international, but they do convey a sense of opportunities for positive interactions with members of different genders, and those from different racial, ethnic or religious backgrounds.

Fig. 5: De Montfort, U.K.

Fig. 6: Lehigh, USA

A second common trope we found in international strategies' choice of images was the use of traditional ceremonies and symbols to invoke an institution's sense of cultural diversity. For example, Figure 5 from De Montfort University (U.K., 2018) depicts a student of presumably Chinese heritage holding two red fans in what appears to be the staircase landing. There is not a clear message in this image, but it does seem designed to signal that "Chinese culture is here."

Similarly, Figure 6 from Lehigh University (U.S., 2018) depicts a group of about ten young people throwing colored powder in the air. For those familiar with the holiday, the image is a clear symbol of Holi, a holiday associated with the coming of Spring and new life in Hinduism. Today, Holi is strongly associated with play and fun, and celebrated by throwing colored water and smearing others with paint. Upon close inspection, the image shows the event was organized by the India Club and the International Student Association (ISA). However, among the large numbers of Americans likely unfamiliar with Holi, this image nonetheless conveys a sense of fun through its portrayal of bright colors, movement, and bare arms. The image links international students with fun and celebration, a common trope in portrayals of study abroad in the U.S. (Miller-Idriss et al., 2019).

Our visual analysis showed that a very high proportion of images in internationalization strategies include individuals from seemingly different racial and religious groups mingling, smiling, and celebrating together. It is worth noting that the primary types of diversity represented in the images are race, ethnicity, and religion; other forms of diversity are less visible; notably, students are overwhelmingly portrayed as young, thin, and able-bodied. Also noteworthy is how strategy documents make strategic use of cultural and religious symbols, including head coverings, henna tattoos, traditional clothing and ceremonies to connote religious, ethnic and cultural diversity of primarily non-white students. Combined, these images seem designed to visually represent their institutions as culturally, religiously and racially diverse communities, while the many smiles and laughs depicted in images imply that their campuses are inclusive environments. These visual displays of diversity allow institutions to demonstrate depoliticized commitments to inclusion through images of "colourful happy faces" (Ahmed, 2007, p. 604). Yet, the use of symbolic tropes particularly in pictures of non-white students

reinforces the idea that the international and/or racial minority student is an 'exotic other,' while the white student is the neutral norm against which diversity is implicitly defined (Applebaum, 2019; Hanassab, 2006; Haynes, 2017; Miller-Idriss et al., 2019). Furthermore, the emphasis on happy, smiling faces ignores the reality of racism students of color may experience on campus whether based on skin colour, religion, or possibly for appearing 'too foreign.'

Ignoring Race and Racism

Absent and Avoided

In contrast to discussions of cultural diversity, which are plentiful, other aspects of international students' identities, including their race, ethnicity, and religion are rarely discussed in the texts. We find that the word race or racial is only mentioned explicitly in five of the strategy documents, all from U.S. institutions. The word "ethnic" is found only eight times, socio-economic is mentioned in two documents, and religion is mentioned in five documents. A notable exception was the University of Bradford (U.K., 2016), which states that: "the Internationalization Strategy will support the University's mission to…increase the diversity of our staff and student body in terms of cultural, ethnic, religious, and socio-economic backgrounds" (p. 2). In another exception, the University of British Columbia (Canada, 2011) explains that supporting international students requires "keeping in mind the intersection of ethnicity, gender, age, language proficiency and culture" (p. 13), a clear reference to the idea of intersectionality, which has become an increasingly common framework through which to understand identities and student needs.

Given such few mentions, our analysis of how race is discussed in internationalization strategies centers on five U.S. institutions: Lehigh, Vanderbilt, Northwestern, MIT and Seton Hall. It is notable that the word "race" and "racial" occurred only in strategies from the U.S. While we can speculate that this is likely due to the greater prominence given to issues of race and racism in U.S. higher education policy and discourse, we cannot be certain. Regardless, the fact remains that race appearing in only five of the 62 documents demonstrates its overall absence from strategic planning in internationalization of higher education.

When race was mentioned, it was often coupled with culture broadly, seemingly interchangeable with ethnicity or cultural diversity. For example, in response to a question about how the college responds to students from different *cultural backgrounds*, Seton Hall's strategy (2009) states: "Most of our professors and classes are inclusive in their practices and approaches and are welcoming to persons of different cultures and *racial* backgrounds" (p. 40). The document then quotes an individual who states that "Our college has a large number of Asian Students. All cultures are welcome in our school" (p. 40). In this context, it is not clear whether references to "different cultures" and "racial backgrounds" are to be read as a stand-in for all identity attributes, or if they are intended to be grouped together, implying that culture and race are synonymous. Similarly, in the next sentence, it is not clear here whether "Asian students" is meant to refer to a homogeneous cultural group, which is highly problematic in of itself, or is used to connote a particular racial background.

Race is also minimized under the broad umbrella of diversity in Northwestern's strategy (2016). The Northwestern strategy identifies six priority areas for its

internationalization activities, of which one is "difference," where the word "race" appears five times. For example, Northwestern's (U.S., 2016) strategy states that the university has "considerable strengths in the study of global race, ethnicity, religion, indigeneity, socioeconomic status, and other aspects of human sociality" (p. 15). In four of these mentions, race is mentioned along with other social markers of difference such as gender, ethnicity, class, indigeneity, sexuality, and religion. Race is not explicitly centered in the discussion of difference but rather used as one of the ways difference can be understood and defined. In general, the discussion of difference is related to Northwestern faculty's scholarly expertise and research on related topics, including critical race studies. It is used to suggest that Northwestern can lead scholarly work concerning difference as it already houses a variety of critical fields of study, including critical race studies. While race is explicitly mentioned multiple times, a notable contrast to other documents, it is mentioned primarily as a scholarly field and an object of study – rather than as an integral aspect of students' identities and experiences. It is also framed as existing within the general category of "difference." Recognizing that race is a floating signifier, Hall (2018) argues that the preoccupation with 'difference' is used to not only define the 'other' but also establish the normalcy of whiteness. The effect of this conflation in these strategies is to minimize the nuanced and specific ways that international students of color experience race and racism on campus. This finding is not surprising, as the absence of explicit support for underrepresented groups among higher education institutions has been well documented (see Squire et al., 2019 for the case of undocumented individuals in the U.S.).

Externalized and Instrumentalized

When racial injustice is mentioned, it is externalized as a global issue, and not a pressing institutional concern. For example, in MIT's strategy (2017), a discussion of racial discrimination is mentioned alongside discrimination due to gender and sexual orientation and is framed as a global or foreign issue. Specifically, in its principles for global engagement MIT states that:

> If MIT is to establish a presence in societies whose cultural norms or policies appear biased against women, or against particular racial or ethnic groups, or against groups based on sexual or gender preference, we should do so only if our faculty and administration are confident that members of these groups will experience no such bias within the frame of MIT's operations…

> – *MIT, USA (p. 28)*

Such a statement offers no acknowledgement of racism as a local, institutional and national issue, despite the fact that race and racism are fixtures of U.S. history, society and higher education (Ladson-Billings, 1998). Similar framing of race as an external and global issue can also be found in strategies from Lehigh (2018) and Northwestern (2016). In Lehigh's strategy, race, along with other identity markers such as gender, comes up only once in the document and is inserted in a paragraph about their leadership in addressing "critical global questions, including...race..." (Lehigh University, p. 2). Similarly, as mentioned above, the Northwestern strategy frames race as part of a larger "global theme" (Northwestern, p. 15). How race and racism may be experienced on campus by students,

staff, and faculty and how that is connected to internationalization efforts is not acknowledged in these documents.

A number of strategy documents also instrumentalize racial diversity by linking international students' racial backgrounds to concrete institutional benefits. For example, race is mentioned once in Vanderbilt's strategy (2017) as a type of diversity that foreign graduate students add to their institution. The document explains that international students are counted as only foreign and are not counted in other more specific measures of diversity such as racial diversity, stating: "a student from Ghana would count as an international student but not in domestic diversity metrics" (p. 8). It continues: "the diversity benchmarks, upon which graduate programs are partially evaluated, should be expanded to include foreign graduate students who add racial, ethnic, religious, and intellectual diversity at Vanderbilt" (p. 8). Although not directly stated, the mention of "Ghana" suggests that that the institution wants "credit" for enrolling an additional Black student – a carefully monitored metric in the U.S. context, given its history of discriminating against African-Americans. In this example, it seems that institutions are seeking to leverage the racial diversity of international students to improve accountability or reputational metrics.

In a second form of instrumentalism, a number of strategies coupled racial diversity to concepts of research excellence and scholarship. However, as explored above, this scholarship focuses on global questions and issues rather than proving excellence in addressing issues of racism on campus. For example, Lehigh's strategy (2018) states:

> We will advance leadership... as related to the university's key areas of excellence in teaching and research and build on interdisciplinary programs that address critical global questions, including...religion, gender, race and identity, and global citizenship.
>
> – *Lehigh University, USA (p. 2)*

This idea is echoed in Northwestern's strategy (2016), which states:

> Northwestern is well positioned to become a leading venue for the study of how difference shapes identity, understanding, and interaction across all levels of the human experience.
>
> – *Northwestern University, USA (p. 15)*

Both quotes focus on the universities' scholarship and areas of strength and in this context, race and diversity are instrumentalized to support institutional narratives of excellence and reputation.

Meanwhile, in contrast to diversity, explicit mentions of race or students' racial backgrounds or experiences with racism are exceedingly rare. The general absence of race and racism in internationalization strategy documents aligns to prior studies that have also found only minimal and cursory mention of racism as an explanation of experiences and outcomes in higher education (Harper, 2012). In fact, despite many international strategies stating explicit student recruitment goals, often with specific targets for students and particular countries identified as "target markets," they largely ignore the reality that the majority of international students in all three countries are non-white and are known to experience racism on and off campus. Rather, when the idea of race is mentioned, strategy documents externalize and instrumentalize race, by focusing on how international students'

racial diversity could benefit the institution. Specifically, both Lehigh and Northwestern discuss their ability to address race as an area of institutional expertise that could be leveraged to improve their global reputation for research excellence. Similarly, Vanderbilt instrumentalizes international racialized students for their diversity metrics.

Given the almost absent discussion of race and racism in the text of these documents, the widespread usage of people of color in the images seems incongruent at best. We interpret the disconnect between the written text and the images in the strategy documents as a form of "cosmetic diversity," whereby institutions celebrate diversity in their marketing materials and websites, but avoid discussion of racial inequalities, or the ways in which their institutions are complicit in racism and racialization (Ford & Patterson, 2019). We argue that the absence of race and systemic inequities in official discourse concerning international students reflects, and likely exacerbates, the othering and exclusion of international students. The fact that official strategy documents do not acknowledge international students' racial identities and experiences likely reflects the more pervasive practice of ignoring the discrimination and exclusion that many international students experience.

IMPLICATIONS AND FUTURE DIRECTIONS

Our analysis of internationalization strategies shows how these official documents celebrate their students' diversity, while largely ignoring international students' race and experiences with racism. While we do not know how these documents map onto institutional practices, official strategies have their own form of power. Documents such as these can become part of institutionalized narratives and can also shape employees' beliefs and perceptions about how the institution is serving its students (Ahmed, 2007). The absence of mentions of race in these documents implicitly reinforces the idea that whiteness is the norm in higher education, with little institutional questioning or reflection on institutional responsibilities to address students' intersectional identities and experiences with racism. When institutional strategies celebrate diversity and portray happy students in multi-racial and multi-faith groups, it can become difficult for employees to recognize and acknowledge systematic forms of racism and discrimination (Ahmed, 2007). As long as institutions fail to acknowledge the racial identities and racialized experiences of their international students, they will most likely have very limited ability or desire to address the historicized and ongoing forms of racial discrimination and racism they face both on campus and in the larger societies.

We argue that higher education institutions must begin by acknowledging their students' racialized identities and experiences on campuses as a starting point for building more inclusive and anti-racist spaces. We might start by asking leaders, faculty and staff to reflect on the construction of these documents, and to ask themselves: what are the racial structures and stereotypes embedded in these documents? What does it mean for institutional practice when internationalization strategies center whiteness as normative? How could shifting our lens to center the experiences of people of color impact how we strategize for internationalization?

This study also raises many avenues for future research. Although beyond the scope of our paper, we urge, as Ahmed (2007) does, scholars to "follow" these strategic documents to examine how they are taken up within their institutions. Future research can

explore how the exclusion of race impacts how institutions recruit, educate, and support racialized international students, and how their experiences are understood by various groups within the institution.

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