Research Roundup & Counter-Narratives: International Students at UCLA

Integration & Friendship Networks

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Better than we assume; Consistent with other populations; Still more work to do

Integration: Our Work & Yours

Interaction Across Difference

International Undergraduate Students, n = 697

- Different backgrounds
- Different opinions
- Extracurricular activity
- Discussed academic outside class
- Interacted in class
- Shared a meal

Always/Most of the time | Sometimes | Rarely/Never
---|---|---

Shared a meal

Interacted in class

Discussed academic outside class

Extracurricular activity

Different opinions

Different backgrounds

Interaction Across Difference
International Graduate Students, n = 723

Always/Most of the time

Sometimes

Rarely/Never

• International students interact across difference (race/nationality) most often in the classroom
• International graduate students also interact across difference when discussing academics outside the classroom
• Discussing different opinions across difference occurs least often (perhaps because it requires the most risk)
• For graduate students, interacting across difference in extracurricular settings also occurs infrequently
• About half of all international students (UG/G) discuss their different backgrounds frequently with others
Friendship Network

UG

24% Co-National Friends

71% Mixed or Domestic (from the U.S.) Friends

Benchmarking Friendship Networks

40% White Americans & 25% non-White Americans

No friends from another race

(Reuters/Ipsos Poll)

Grad

27% Co-National Friends

65% Mixed or Domestic (from the U.S.) Friends

• Most international students report diverse friendship networks, which pushes on the common narrative that international students “only spend time with their own” (NOTE: friendships with co-nationals serve an important purpose as well)

• **Benchmarking.** About a quarter of all international students report friendship networks comprised of mostly co-national friends, which means they are forming more diverse networks than white people and similar networks to people of color.
Approximate Number of Close Friends From...
International Undergraduates, n = 785

- **U.S.**
  - Average # of Close Friends = 3.847

- **Home country**
  - Average # of Close Friends = 4.725

- **International, Other**
  - Average # of Close Friends = 2.833

Approximate Number of Close Friends From...
International Grad Students, n = 797

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Source of Close Friends</th>
<th>Average # of Close Friends</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>U.S.</td>
<td>2.792</td>
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<tr>
<td>Home country</td>
<td>5.174</td>
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<tr>
<td>International, Other</td>
<td>2.696</td>
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Spotlight

• About 15% of international undergraduates have no friends from the U.S.; over 10% have no friends from their home country; and around 25% have no international friends from other countries

• Over 25% of international graduate students have no friends from the U.S.; nearly 10% have no friends from their home country; and nearly 30% have no international friends from other countries

• International undergraduate students have more diverse friendship networks and close friendship groups than international graduate students

What's the Function of Co-National Friendships, etc.

A focus on diverse friendship networks comes from 1) a value for diversity, and 2) a research finding from the Dashew Center (and elsewhere): those with more diverse friendship networks typically report better outcomes.

Yet co-national friendships serve an important purpose. They preserve home culture, which can be important for identity development, self-efficacy, and, indeed, integration (which is not assimilation). Also, international students can act as cultural brokers to newer students who share parts of their identity. As students become more comfortable with their environment, they may also be more comfortable making friends across difference.