

# “Invisible Minority” in Higher Education

Suresh Rai  
LSU, Baton Rouge

# Topics

- Invisible minority (for this talk)
- Higher Education (students in undergraduate and graduate education)
- Problems in their endeavor
- Brightside (survival kit)

# Minority

- Well-Known (visible - hyphenated ID)
  - African-American
  - Spanish-American
  - Italian-American
- Less-Known (invisible – F1/J1/M1 visa)
  - East European, Russian
  - Asian (Chinese, Korean, Indonesian, Middle East)
  - Indian sub-continent

# Minority (contd.)

- The "invisible minority" represents those, mainly **students**, who do not belong to the most salient minority groups
- For a long time, universities, for example ardently recruit **Asian students (especially South Asian/Indian) students** - yet provide them with nowhere near the level of help, attention, tuition, or whatever that other students receive
- **Tuition for non-resident/foreign students have increased substantially (e.g., LSU, in last three years, has increased from \$11,500/semester to \$14,000/semester and is going up)**

# Asian (and Indian sub-continent) students

- Undergraduate Students (most hyphenated category)
  - Harvard University issues a news release (that Asian-Americans would make up 20.9 percent) of the freshman class, the announcement includes information about the *racial and ethnic make-up of the newly admitted students*.
  - The College Board releases its report on SAT scores with impressive mean scores – for minorities such as Asian-American, Indian-American

Stereotype: Educational attainment of the Asian-American and Indian-American “minority” is very impressive.

- Undergraduate/Graduate Students (Invisible minority)
- Wealthy Indian families have been sending their children to the best American schools for years
- Undergraduate enrollment has grown by more than 20 percent in the past few years.
- In spite of this, the majority of Indian students in the United States are still graduate students.
- In 1966 only 23% of science and engineering PhDs in America were awarded to students born outside the country. By 2006 that proportion had increased to 48% and is increasing.

- Graduate Education (status)
- Representatives from many of the Ivy League institutions have begun making trips to India to recruit students (institutions are beginning massive recruitment drives in developing nations). Some have set up offices in India.
- The State Department held a United States-India higher education supports (and universities explore) partnerships with Indian schools
- Indians are now the second-largest foreign student population in America, after the Chinese, with almost 105,000 students in the United States in the 2009-10 academic year

# Invisible Minority - Problems

- Cross-cultural experience (lack of)
- Slave labor (politically incorrect, but noisy)
- Missing nativeness (Culture, Food, etc.)
- Lack of job opportunity



# Cross-cultural Experience

- More than one in three foreign students in a [survey](#) say they have no close U.S. friends, and many say they wish they had more, and more-meaningful relationships with Americans (Host families !)
- In one study, students from China and elsewhere in East Asia report fewer friendships and greater dissatisfaction than do other international students
- Difficulties in forming friendships is a two-way problem. **Forty-six percent blamed an internal factor, such as shyness or poor English-language ability, while 54 percent said they hold American students responsible.**
- Study focusing learning from the cross-cultural perspectives of doctoral students from five Asian nations: Thailand, China, Korea, India, and Japan studying at a USA university **reveal limitations of school emphasizing intercultural aspects** as a place of learning in the globalized world

# Slave Labor (some quotes)

- One thing many PhD students have in common is dissatisfaction. Some describe their work as “slave labor.” Seven-day weeks, ten-hour days, low pay and uncertain prospects are widespread.
- “It isn't graduate school itself that is discouraging,” says one student, who confesses to rather enjoying the hunt for free pizza. “What's discouraging is realizing the end point has been yanked out of reach.”
- Foreign students tend to tolerate poorer working conditions, and the supply of cheap, brilliant, foreign labor also keeps wages down.
- The fiercest critics compare research doctorates to Ponzi or pyramid schemes.

# Missing Nativeness

- Graduate students suffer from excessive amounts of assignment and lack of sleep
- They suffer/cherish/share a common yearning for culture, good food, some noise on the streets and a dirty road (in short nativeness)
- The major task for them is to re-define themselves at the intersection of multiple native and target cultures

# Job Opportunity

- Shrinking job opportunity for F1-visa holders

Optional Practical Training (OPT) is a **permitted 12-month working period for undergraduate and graduate students on F-1 visas** who have finished their degrees or have studied in the U.S. for more than nine months. During this year-long period, graduates are allowed to actually work and be paid ; something that's [heavily restricted while they're still studying](#)

- OPT opportunities can sometimes lead to a H1B working visa (lottery system) and ultimately a green card — though the chances are slim; working in the U.S. for a year is still an invaluable experience that can open doors anywhere in the world
- Hard to find visa-sponsorship
- Many companies have reduced their internship opportunity
- Even these days getting part time jobs in US universities is difficult

# Brightside

(survival kit offered by some universities)

- In general, people in US are:
  - nice and they respect who you are. Whether you are black/white/indian/hispanic/good-looking do not matter.
  - very professional at work. They are diligent and follow strict work ethics.
- Got to learn professionalism
- In order to live independently and know different cultures, spend some extra money and live in a mixed community; it is totally worth it
- Getting a job should not be sole goal. It is not about showing off the offers you have got, its about your personal satisfaction
- Be open and understand what people are trying to achieve

Thanks !!!

# Source

- <http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2013/06/07/report-calls-end-grouping-asian-american-students-one-category#sthash.fgz0ehJb.dpbs>
- [http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/14/world/asia/squeezed-out-in-india-students-turn-to-united-states.html?\\_r=0](http://www.nytimes.com/2011/10/14/world/asia/squeezed-out-in-india-students-turn-to-united-states.html?_r=0)
- <http://chronicle.com/article/Many-Foreign-Students-Find/132275/>
- <http://www.economist.com/node/17723223>
- <http://chronicle.com/article/In-Big-Shift-India-Heats-Up/142823/>
- <http://www.happyschools.com/international-student-life-is-difficult-usa/>
- <http://www.quora.com/Higher-Education-in-the-United-States/What-is-it-like-for-an-Indian-student-to-pursue-MS-PhD-from-a-US-European-University>
- <http://seattleglobalist.com/2015/04/09/opt-international-student-optional-practical-training-f1-visa-washington-seattle-uw/35679>