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Racial Unspeakability: Affect and Embodiment in Swiss International Higher Education Institutions

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ABSTRACT

Increasing diversity in international student mobility/migration has gained attention in recent years (Bilecen & Van Mol, 2017). Diversity in international higher education institutions has primarily been understood in terms of diversity of national origin, meaning the dynamics of racial and ethnic differences are not adequately addressed in the literature (Estera & Shahjahan, 2018). This study uses data collected during semi-structured interviews with international and domestic students, as well as administrators, to identify narrations of race, ethnicity, and nationality that delimit a modern/colonial imaginary global imaginary (Stein & Andreotti, 2017). It further demonstrates that internal heterogeneity of both sending and receiving countries leads to varied meaning-making schemes for engaging with embodied racial differences and their attendant affective relations (Ahmed, 2013; Wetherell, 2012). The project suggests the term racial unspeakability as a culturally contingent, affective force that governs narrations of race, ethnicity, and nationality.

Keywords: race, ethnicity, nationality, affect, embodiment

Study abroad continues to gain importance, as evidenced by increases in the number of international students every year leading up to the Covid-19 pandemic (UNESCO, 2019). International students, defined as "students who have crossed a national or territorial border for the purpose of education and are now enrolled outside their country of origin" (UNESCO, 2012), are often unproblematically assumed to have generally positive experiences, despite academic work on the experiences of racism

they face upon arrival to their new academic setting (Hanassab, 2006; Jon, 2012; Lee & Rice, 2007; Mitchell et al., 2017). Education scholars demonstrate how (neo-) racism negatively impacts international student experiences, specifically in Western nation-states or contexts around the world, focusing on the experiences of non-Western students (Hanassab, 2006; Yao, 2018). They show how race is linked with national origin; the two are imbricated in racial discrimination for students moving from countries where they are part of the majority population to countries where they are not (Lee et al., 2016).

There is a growing need for a critical stance towards analyzing the ideological and material contexts that make international study possible (Stein, 2017). However, the literature on internationalization often does not explain the differences and relations between 'sending' and 'receiving' countries, nor does it account for the heterogeneity within countries; international students may or may not face similar challenges in their home countries, resulting in experiences of exclusion and non-belonging in their newfound surroundings. Positive educational experiences matter for students and professors at the individual and collective levels; the emotional landscape of universities can be a positive or negative influence on knowledge sharing and production practices (Shahjahan et al., 2020).

Furthermore, extant literature on internationalization undertheorizes the role of emotions in academic processes. Emotions influence any given educational agenda and are deeply embedded in ideologies and practices that govern power relations in academic settings (Boler, 1999). However, embodiment as an affective process receives little to no attention in internationalization literature (Craig et al., 2018). How, for example, are we to engage with affective processes like the excitement of arriving in a new country, homesickness, or the anger at experiencing discrimination in an unfamiliar setting?

During their time studying abroad, international students engage with new institutionalized practices and social settings. These students face these challenges and opportunities relying upon their own cultural schemas, and these new experiences often result in highly emotionally charged interactions. Narratives of these emotions serve to inform how important demographic differences like race and nationality manifest in the international higher education context. Therefore, I ask the following research question: How do students and administrators narrate race, ethnicity, and nation in international higher education?

This article outlines the theoretical complexities of international academic mobility and the associated power dynamics related to dynamics of difference. The article also brings to the fore under-examined notions of diversity, namely race and nationality. It highlights Switzerland as an illustrative place to empirically explore the gaps in the internationalization literature due to its linguistic and national diversity and unique position within the global higher education landscape. It then discusses the themes discovered through conducting qualitative research on the role of effect on racial embodiment. It concludes by suggesting new ways of thinking and feeling diversity for international students, domestic students, as well as administrators.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Race and Affect in Internationalization

Internationalization programs categorize students according to differences between national origins and destinations. As such, researchers examine how students from particular national origins adapt in terms of language and to obstacles in everyday life (e.g., Marginson, 2014; Pitts, 2009; Tian & Lowe, 2013). A broad overview of research on international students demonstrates that the field has not captured the nuances of racial dynamics between students. Much research focuses on English-speaking students (usually American or English) abroad or exchange students studying in Anglo-American institutions (Jones, 2017; Riaño, Mol, et al., 2018). In these contexts, studies investigate how and why students are mobile (Collins et al., 2017; Lörz et al., 2016). Other studies examine how academic and experiential knowledge is transferred across borders (Findlay, 2011; Kim, 2010; Marginson & Van der Wende, 2007). However, these studies neglect how such transfers also entail interactions among students and faculty who are differentially positioned in terms of economic capital, racial and ethnic differences, language competencies, and legal status. These differences result in unspecified notions of how best to improve mobility experiences and a lack of understanding of both students' and administrators' differences, leading to potentially alienating interactions.

Some research addresses intersections of nationality and gender (Bryant & Soria, 2015; Willis, 2015), while other scholars' gesture towards other dimensions of difference like race and ethnicity (Hanassab, 2006; Lee & Green, 2016). Yet, these studies collectively downplay or neglect how structural inequalities and historical relations have shaped these categories as well as how international education is experienced within these categories, which thus shapes group and individual mobilities (Lee et al., 2016; Manathunga, 2017; Neveu Kringelbach, 2015). While knowledge, experience, and identity are contextually embodied (Sodhi, 2008), many studies in the field decontextualize and disembodiment those who are already marginalized.

International race perspectives

An emerging branch of critical internationalization studies conceptualizes exclusion/inclusion as resulting from structures of modernity heavily influenced by race and colonial ways of knowing and being (Estera & Shahjahan, 2018; Stein et al., 2016). These structures, such as racism, colonialism, etc., center Europe/North America as the pinnacle of human achievement undergirded by Enlightenment logics, which are supported by racial and colonial understandings of human difference (Hesse, 2007). Scholars in this critical branch demonstrate that universities are shaped by the global capitalist system based on colonial relations with their enduring economic inequalities as well as a global imaginary undergirded by Western, Eurocentric values (Stein & Andreotti, 2017, 2018). Liberal notions of diversity have endured through logics of neoliberal multiculturalism. This means that culture has

been viewed as a proxy for race, establishing a hegemonic understanding of cultural differences really meaning racial ones. This leads to what came to be known as cultural racism, a means that differentiates and excludes constructed racial groups based on culture (Taguieff, 1990). Cultural racism allowed these constructed groups to be discriminated against based on differences ascribed to their cultural origins. Further development of the understanding of race as culture gave way to a 'non-racial framework' in which references to race are avoided in search of modern civility (Melamed, 2006). A neoliberal framework of race seeks to obfuscate the causes of racial differentiation and systematically incorporate those differences within a system that privileges some racial groups above others.

The neo-liberalization of diversity rhetoric in international higher education means making empty gestures towards symbolic notions of inclusion, such as tokenistic inclusion of minoritized students/faculty (Cyr, 2018). Diversity, especially in Western higher education contexts, is premised on a vaguely theorized 'Other,' rather than engaging with context-specific realities of power imbalance between various demographic groups (Ahmed, 2012; Cervulle, 2014). Furthermore, diversity rhetorics in higher education rarely address the systemic dimensions of gendered and racial exclusions, instead institutionalizing and bureaucratizing forms of conditional inclusion that perpetuate the status quo (Tate & Bagguley, 2017).

Recent research suggests a plethora of ways to think of equity and equality and more just global systems (Haapakoski & Pashby, 2017; Stein & Andreotti, 2017) and encourages us to engage with the role of differences in university populations more critically. While differences drive desires for internationalization, university administrators and even students tend to treat, consume, and essentialize differences, which violently erases opportunities for transformative interactions and precludes even consideration of the systemic exclusions of certain bodies, let alone their substantive inclusion (Stein & Andreotti, 2016). Crucially, racial differences are often denied or ignored, resulting in experiences of alienation and discrimination for students racialized as non-White (Kamara, 2017). Conversely, this obfuscation of racial differences results in a misplaced sense of racial and national inclusion for international students racialized as White (Lee & Opio, 2011). This means that non-White international students face exclusion regardless of possible forms of belonging, and White international students are included solely based on phenotype.

As international students move, they bring in and encounter differing racial meanings, which might conflict with or change how they see themselves (Fries-Britt et al., 2014). While some racial groups might be perceived in terms of biologized phenotypical differences, others might be seen in terms of ethnic or cultural differences only. In other cases, national, ethnic, and cultural differences are conflated entirely. Globally, race has been employed as an exclusionary concept, identifying people by their real (or imagined) phenotypes and the meanings associated with those phenotypes (Goldberg, 2009). Certain phenotypes are articulated with meanings within specific cultural and geo-economic contexts resulting in distinct formations. For example, in Europe, those visually categorized as White are perceived to be

simply "European," and those not White are perceived as raced and non-European (Hesse, 2007; Murji & Solomos, 2005).

Race and Racism in Switzerland

The broader European tendency of ignoring the existence of race/racism and Switzerland's specific tendency to be unwilling to discuss issues of racial difference means that race has a regional specificity in this context (El-Tayeb, 2011; Goldberg, 2009; Lavanchy, 2014). Conceptualizations of race in Switzerland will therefore necessarily differ from race concepts elsewhere. Important in this endeavor is the consideration of how specific language refers to various bodies. For example, discussions of race have been rendered taboo through various institutional strategies, called "race-muteness" in the Swiss context (Lavanchy, 2014). In Swiss institutions, racial meanings are established through a "tacit premise of racialization" (Lavanchy, 2014), while people of color nevertheless frequently experience racial discrimination.

However, "race muteness" as a concept demonstrates some shortcomings. The ableist origins of terms equating disabilities with racial ideologies (i.e., "color-blindness") mask the exclusionary function of such ideologies (May & Ferri, 2005). It is not, as the term would have one believe, that those claiming "color-blindness" or "race-muteness" are unable to see or speak of race; it is rather that they find specific strategies to avoid race (Ancy Annamma et al., 2016). The term "color-evasion" has been suggested, yet this does not accurately capture the nuance of these embodied and affective racially avoidant strategies. The issue is not always reducible to visual perceptions, as racial differences are analogous but not coterminous with physical differences, such as skin color (Alcoff, 2005). The unspeakability of race is actively practiced in linguistically sensitive ways. For example, euphemism takes culturally specific forms and emerges as a regional practice, thus highlighting the lack of language-specific vocabulary to address race in Switzerland. This lack of language to employ in discussing race has impoverished critical thought on issues of diversity.

The literature in Switzerland on race positions racialized people as outsiders, largely because of the national narrative removing Switzerland's colonial histories (Purtschert, 2015). The logics behind this narrative construct Switzerland as a solely White country. Therefore, racialized people are very often portrayed solely or primarily as recent migrants, denying the possibility of Swiss people of color. This has many implications for international higher education in Switzerland; it means that both international and domestic students of color are automatically ascribed migrant status, while White international students are mistaken as Swiss. Yet, this process is not as simple as one might expect; racialization processes in the Swiss context emphasize migration history and construct various political, national, and phenotypical hierarchies (Ossipow et al., 2019). For example, Swiss-Italian people are often excluded from the Swiss national community and more closely aligned with their Italian neighbors than their Swiss co-nationals. This alignment gives way to an anti-Italian "racism" claimed by those facing discrimination. Despite all parties involved belonging to a singular racial group, the dividing boundaries of ethno-

linguistic group and nationality illuminate complexities that cannot be ignored when discussing diverging racialization practices in the Swiss context. In the previous example, a Swiss person might consider their Swiss-Italian co-national racially Other. The existence of somewhat exclusionary terms in Swiss-German for people from the south of Switzerland but as well as countries farther south (even those referring to other White people) can attest to this.

International students in Switzerland must learn to navigate the specific racial schemas in their local surroundings, generating specific kinds of navigational, embodied knowledge based upon their own situated (non-)belonging. As mobile students in Switzerland often move on after they have completed their studies (Riaño, Lombard, et al., 2018), they must also be aware of how their embodied knowledge will translate into the next country in which they find themselves. This is deeply affective, as globally mobile constructions of race structure and are structured by emotional processes.

Race and affect

Explaining race as a social construction focusing on meanings attached to different body phenotypes does not address the passions it arouses. Tolia-Kelly and Crang note, "racial categorization is felt and enacted through a profoundly emotive register" (Tolia-Kelly & Crang, 2010). The recent "affective turn" calls attention to the role of emotions in shaping all social phenomena, including the structuring of interactions among embodied subjects (Ahmed, 2013; Massumi 2002, Berlant 2005, Blackman 2012, Thrift 2004; Wetherell 2012). While some scholars argue that emotions are discrete and definable sensations (Damasio, 2003; Scherer, 2009), cultural studies scholars see them as a force beyond signification flowing between bodies. Many scholars decenter the embodied nature of affect, describing affect using various metaphors likening it to weather, for example (Wetherell et al., 2015). These approaches have been noted to "fetishize" emotion and affect and underplay the embodied nature of affective interactions (Wetherell, 2020). When employing the work of feminists of color (Ahmed 2012; Jackson, 2015), the influence of embodiment on the conceptualization of affect and on affect itself must not be understated.

Race and Embodiment

Utilizing frameworks in which the racialized, gendered, sexualized experiences of thinkers play an integral role in the development of affective theories means foregrounding the very distinctions that make such thinking innovative. It is useful to think of affect as "embodied meaning-making" dependent upon specific practices that converge to create specific constellations of behaviors, psychological processes, feelings, narratives, and other discursive and material constructs (Wetherell 2012).

Embodiment is the affective link between perception and somatic experience. Various forms of embodiment take place in affective terms, as the body is constructed based on its capacity to affect and be affected (Blackman 2012). Race is an embodied,

lived experience (Saldanha, 2006) dependent on culturally specific forms of embodiment (Geurts, 2003) that are shaped by the systematically sanctioned normalcy and supremacy of certain bodies. One important form of embodiment is language, which plays a role in mediating and expressing the body.

Race is also heavily influenced by how the body exists in physical space and the feelings that emerge from that lived experience (Sossa & Bull, 2017). Feelings such as alienation from the racial and cultural landscape or the joy of connection with others in a new setting based on cultural or behavioral similarities are part of a conceptual framework that affects how individuals navigate the world. Crucially, specific language is used to engage in emotional expression. This means that individuals are constantly engaged in meaning-making practices from an embodied standpoint; cultural expressions and their concomitant forms of embodiment can only be interrogated from a specific situated perspective (Wetherell et al., 2015). This article understands embodiment in various linguistic contexts rather than employing the monolithic notions of embodied race, ethnicity, gender, etc., that influence how students are categorized.

International students, Race, and Embodiment

International higher education institutions are situated within regionally specific systems of racialization (Goldberg, 2009) that provide meanings and emotions for interpretation of their specificity and affect the bodies of international students in various ways (Indelicato, 2018). Conceptualizing international students as a form of "cash, competition, or charity" (Stein and Andreotti, 2012) or "victim or villain" (Indelicato, 2018) draws upon particular emotional vocabularies that construct international students as well as their institutions in particular ways. For example, in the Australian context, an institutional "benevolence" towards international students results from a sense of colonial patronization of academic migrants (Indelicato, 2018). In this example, imbalanced relationships between institutions and students undermine students' potential for contesting dominant discourses. This demonstrates the necessity to consider the impact of various culturally inflected forms of emotion on embodiment as well as the potential for embodied individuals to contest oppressive perceptions of their embodiment.

Interest in embodiment in international education is gaining scholarly attention (Blanco & Saunders, 2019). Amy Scott Metcalfe (2017) asserts that the "literature on academic mobility has not yet effectively addressed the question of subjective change within the academic profession as a whole or the academic body at the individual level" (p. 13). Her call for interrogating the politics of academic bodies moving in and across spaces reflects a greater need for scholars of academic mobility to interrogate how embodiments change through time and space. While Metcalfe highlights how bodies that are not particularly thought of as suspect (e.g., White, cisgender, heterosexual, able-bodied, and so forth) can be viewed as potentially not belonging, greater attention is needed to address how marginalized bodies are perceived in diverse contexts, and how their embodied knowledge changes within

those contexts (Torres-Olave & Lee, 2019). Moving from national and institutional contexts that are relatively similar as a member of many majority groups entails a completely different set of challenges and opportunities compared with moving to completely different settings in which one must negotiate a newfound minority status.

While critical internationalization scholars highlight the reproduction of racialized and gendered oppressions (Estera and Shahjahan, 2018; Gathogo and Horton, 2018), there is little engagement with "on the ground" experiences of the student "Other" that specifically names race as a determining factor in processes of inclusion and exclusion within international higher education, particularly outside of the U.S. or Anglophone contexts. Specifically, it is useful to map out how racial embodiment affects emotional expression within the modern/colonial imaginary that enables and prescribes specific racial meanings (Stein & Andreotti, 2017). Mapping out these emotions by examining what themes emerge from interpersonal discourses will prove useful to see how various racially-embodied actors express themselves. For example, when certain actors – especially people racialized as non-White – emote in specifically negative ways (i.e., expressing anger, sadness, rage, etc.), these emotions are often politicized to portray the group as unnecessarily emotional, therefore denying the legitimacy of the emotions and those expressing them (Indelicato, 2018). The emotional force of these expressions reflects the context in which racialized embodiments take place.

METHOD

This study is built upon a collection of multi-disciplinary theories, drawing on theories of race and ethnicity, affect, and embodiment. It thus makes sense to rely on a bricolage of analytical methods to explore the rich data set (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000). This paper accounts for the relationship between discourse, or (un)spoken narratives, and affect, or the emotive flows that construct these narratives. The analytical bricolage incorporates data from field notes, informal conversations, and the interviewer's lived experience in addition to the transcribed semi-structured interviews. The bricolage positions the interview as a situated affective encounter, in which the "relationship between interviewer and interlocutor [...] is dynamic and always shaped by different relational intensities" Kahl et al., 2019). The study employs the bricolage of approaches to analysis and addresses the intertwined nature of affect, embodiment, and race through narrative.

Interview participants were asked to narrate their experiences, telling vivid stories that illuminated key themes crucial in constructing racial affective practices. Interviews were particularly suited for the study, as interviews allowed the participants to engage in affective linguistic practices, representing their experiences to construct narratives through affect. The study is also informed by a race critical research praxis that considers the researcher's positionality as a Queer, Latinx/Black cisgender male (Brown, 2016). The researcher also incorporated his experience studying abroad in five countries in which his own racialized and gendered position relationally varied from the majority population.

Scholarship about internationalization has called for more research to focus outside of the taken for granted hubs of the U.K. and the U.S. Such research could provide nuanced insight into transregional contexts that potentially illuminate broader trends in international higher education that would decenter the dominant Westernized conceptualization of internationalization and provide further insight into the dynamics of inclusion and exclusion (McAllister-Grande & Whatley, 2020; Bilecen & Van Mol, 2017). It is important to locate research in underrepresented geographical areas in the literature because they tell us something about the complete picture of international higher education. Despite the problematic nature of using university ranking systems to signify global importance (Shahjahan et al., 2020), Swiss universities have nevertheless been consistently ranked among the top universities in these rankings. These rankings signal Switzerland's desirability as a host country on the global stage and demonstrate that it continues to be a hub of international academic mobility (Q.S. World University Rankings, 2020). Furthermore, it is the only non-English speaking country with two universities that are regularly ranked among the top ten best universities (Times Higher Education, 2019). However, there is a dearth of research about internationalization specifically focused on Switzerland. The research that does exist tends to focus on mobile flows of students, rather than the experiential domain (Riaño et al., 2018). This study addresses how students narrate their experiences and offers insight into broader structural issues.

The author conducted twenty-six semi-structured interviews in English, German, and Italian. Twenty-one of the interviews were with students at the Bachelor's, Master's, and Ph.D. level, and five were international office administrators. Students and administrators (and not, for example, faculty or other staff) were selected as interview participants because of their proximity to internationalization experiences. Fourteen students were international, and seven were domestic. Four of the administrators were domestic, and one was international. Four students were non-White (two of Asian descent, one Black, and one of Middle Eastern descent). The remaining students were all White. The discussion section features quotes attributed to pseudonyms selected by the research participants. All interview participants were found via purposive and snowball sampling. The demographic breakdown can be found in Figure 1.

Narrative analysis is concerned with the teller as well as the tale (Toolan, 2012). The analysis attended to the lexical (word choice), syntactic (word order), and prosodic (tone) levels to explore emotional expressions (Kleres, 2011). Uniting a literary studies approach with a methodology of emotion provided a systematic approach to the texts, allowing analyses of individual participants' word choice, word order, and tone to identify linguistic codes that relate to emotional embodiment within the data. These levels of emotional expression also accounted for what participants avoided saying by addressing meta-linguistic features of the interviews, supporting alternative interpretations of individual narratives (Toolan, 2012). Additionally, given the paper's focus on embodiment, the analysis took body language into account,

acknowledging the cultural specificities of how bodies are used in conjunction with words to create meaning (Müller et al., 2013).

Figure 1. Demographic Information for Interview Participants

Name*	Gender	Age	Status	Race
Andrea	Female	Early 40s	Admin	White
Andreas	Male	Early 20s	BA student	White
Andy	Male	Late 20s	MA student	White
Blue	Female	Mid 20s	MA student	White
David	Male	Early 20s	Ba student	White
David	Male	Late 20s	PhD student	White
Elena	Female	Early 30s	PhD student	White
Esme	Female	Late 30s	Admin	White
Giacomo	Male	Mid 20s	MA student	White
Giovanni	Male	Mid 20s	MA student	White
Hakeema	Female	Late 30s	Admin	White
Indiana	Female	Early 20s	MA student	Black
Jo	Female	Early 20s	MA student	White
Laura	Female	Early 40s	Admin	White
Laura	Female	Late 30s	Admin	White
Leia	Female	Mid 20s	MA student	Asian
Ludovico	Male	Early 20s	BA student	White
Luna	Female	Early 20s	BA student	White
Maria	Female	Early 20s	MA student	White
Meagan	Female	Early 20s	MA student	White
Mercedes	Female	Mid 30s	MA student	White
Para	Female	Early 20s	BA student	White
Paula	Female	Mid 20s	MA student	Middle-eastern
Sara	Female	Mid 20s	PhD student	White
Stefan	Male	Early 20s	BA student	White
Vasco	Male	Mid 20s	MA student	Asian

*Note. All names are pseudonyms selected by interview participants

After constructing categories based on codes identified in the analysis, three main themes emerged that represent the complexities of affective negotiation processes for students and administrators at Swiss universities: the unspeakability of race, English as inclusion/exclusion, and affective regional isolation.

FINDINGS

Racial unspeakability

A common theme throughout the data among respondents is an issue about what constitutes diversity and internationality. Appearance seemed to be the first measure of who is an international student and who is not. A repeating refrain was that "you can't tell" simply by looking. Respondents repeatedly indicated that the number of international students at their university is high, while common-sense notions of international students, as well as the official rhetoric at many universities, equate international students with racial and ethnic diversity. However, the international students that participants seemed to have knowledge of or contact with tended to be from White-majority countries.

In [my course], they asked us the question "with which passport do you travel, if not Swiss?" and half of the class raised their hand. After, I heard one is Irish, one is American, one is English, one is Italian, another is Argentinian and there I realized, one is also Finnish, 'Ah, there's a lot.'"

– *Giacomo*

When the respondent discovered that despite the homogeneity of physical appearance in his class, there were students of diverse nationalities, he expressed surprise that likely would not have been the case had all students been visually different. Thus, his surprise at the number of international students present in his class stems from the understanding of international students as non-White.

When pressed about whether White students are representative of the international program, one program coordinator summarized the issue succinctly

"Ah, it's sort of a problem (laughs) I don't know. Well, the question then is who exactly represents a Swiss university, and I mean I know [my university] has twelve percent international students, so you're going to see a diversity, which is a great thing.

– *Esme*

This quote contains nervous laughter and featured the speaker shifting their body somewhat uncomfortably and explaining that diversity is a "great thing" while avoiding the issue of race in relation to diversity. Underlying anxiety around discussing issues of racial diversity was also quite common throughout the interviews. Over half of the respondents (15 out of 27) reported feelings of anxiety regarding diversity, and a similar proportion exhibited anxious behavior during the interview when asked more specific questions about phenotypical differences between students. For example, when asked about their definition of "international," they responded in various ways:

"(nervous laughter)... it's like an exam!"

–*Hakeema*

"(with hand in front of face) Yes, it's a little [uncomfortable]. I don't know...

– *Ludovico*

"(long pause)...I would have to think about it."

– *Giovanni*

These responses indicate something beyond a simple rejection of the question but rather an incapacity to address their feelings around this topic. One is both prevented from speaking about race by social norms and lacks the ability to speak about it.

The phrase "you can't tell" emerged frequently and indicates both an inability to tell someone's race, ethnicity, or nationality and the sense of being restricted from discussing race. Several participants even indicated that being able to tell might be akin to racism. As one participant put it, "I don't want to stray into bias [...] It would probably be quite racist" (Stefan). This aversion was repeated even at the administrative level, where one program coordinator admitted she didn't "want to say something rude." (Hakeema) when further asked about how one distinguishes between international and non-international students. A key difference here in understanding national and racial markers for international administrators is that they often know exactly where students come from. So, in this case, "you can't tell" doesn't mean an inability to tell (as administrators have access to detailed student information) but the feeling that acknowledging race is restricted. This phenomenon is an example of race being an affectively structured topic (Tolia-Kelly & Crang, 2010) as the emotional component of anxiety was a strongly inhibitive factor in discussing race. Emotional anxiety was also present in the interviews as the presence of the interviewer whose non-White body is assigned a differing racial meaning than a White interviewer's would, potentially influencing the way respondents discuss race. In a more general sense, the interplay between affect and embodiment results in unwillingness to discuss race in Switzerland and elsewhere; the conceptualization of race is shaped by these specific affective interactions. White students and administrators are aware of racial dynamics, yet feel affectively inhibited from discussing them.

As one White student who grew up in Switzerland, but was nevertheless not Swiss-born, said,

"When I grew up, it was 20% foreign-born people, and now it's possibly even higher. I personally am very proud of the fact that I am, and a lot of my friends are people who are...not racially from Switzerland but are still part of the community."

– *Stefan*

This interview respondent tensed his body and paused before saying "not racially" from Switzerland, indicating a level of discomfort with the terminology. Furthermore, this quote firstly conflates being "racially from Switzerland" and having a Swiss passport. Furthermore, it quite succinctly summarizes people who do not

racially belong but are nevertheless "part of the community," indicating that there is some resistance to the idea of non-White Swiss people (Cretton, 2018; Michel, 2015).

The resistance to discussing race is confirmed in another quote from an interview participant who said:

"And on the other side, my colleague whose father is African, and she grew up in Switzerland and is fully Swiss, I mean...she can't speak African and all that...where you at first glance would think, she's not Swiss. But she totally is. That's why I find it relatively difficult to say...is he, well, is someone really Swiss?"

– *Luna*

While the message's point is to underscore the existence of non-White Swiss people, the binary remains starkly drawn through a lack of understanding of cultural hybridity (e.g., she doesn't speak "African") and the acknowledgment that upon first glance, one would think she is not Swiss. One can see an acknowledgment of racial exclusion of non-White people in Switzerland, but at the same time a difficulty in discussing it.

The difficulty of pinpointing exactly how these racial meaning-making structures are expressed was not lost on the participants. This manifestation of racial unspeakability took on specific cultural forms.

"I do not know, I feel like it is just a part of you. Like I said when you were asking, how do you identify international students? You cannot. I mean, I guess you can look at somebody and be like, "Oh, they are Filipino." But I just feel like it is a way of identifying yourself. I do not really know how to express that in words."

– *Leia*

Leia's understanding of racial sense-making aligns with many common-sense notions of identification. However, she refers to a deeper level of understanding identification, one that exists, for her and many others, beyond words. This incapacity to name the deeply felt dynamics of racial identification points out how affect functions to shape racialized embodiment: subjects within this discourse often feel that they can't explain how race works but feel it on an embodied level (Saldanha, 2006).

One student described encounters with international students as follows:
"My impression is the ones you mean maybe you can tell by the skin color aren't exchange students, but rather do their whole Master here, at least it's like this in my course. There are a few from the far East, yes, India, yeah they're from...I don't know exactly. But from far away. So, with the other European students, I wouldn't be able to tell if they're from Germany or from Italy, I think."

– *Maria*

This student distinguishes between short-term and long-term international students, yet marks them as from "far away," excluding the possibility of being a domestic student whose parents were not born in Switzerland, as well as students of European origin being from farther away than a student of color. As the quote above indicates, the exclusion of the racially marked other is predicated on the inclusion of those shielded from assumptions of Otherness by Whiteness.

In Switzerland, Whiteness serves to unite racially those of solely European ancestry and presumes to ignore the large ethnolinguistic differences. In the Swiss context, this manifests as an overarching, specifically Swiss form of Whiteness that ignores cultural and linguistic distinctions between three distinct regions of Switzerland. Furthermore, this Whiteness works to include White international students, and practically disrupts the common-sense notion of international students as predominantly people of color. White international students noted a superficial sense of inclusion, predicated on their physical appearance

"I don't know. Maybe if I don't say a word, not because I guess I could be Swiss if you look at me... [...] Well, because I'm White, I guess. I mean, I'm not blonde, but I don't know."

– Mercedes

Gender diversity over racial diversity

Gender often served as a proxy for diversity. Interview respondents presented a greater facility and vocabulary in discussing both gender issues and gender discrimination than other issues, such as race. For example,

"It's more woman, man discrimination [...] I have the feeling that that's the bigger problem instead of nationality."

– Luna

Several respondents noted that, while other dynamics of difference did not emerge in their university lives, gender did. Other dynamics of difference did not feature heavily in the data; for example, only one interviewee mentioned ability status. One student noted in her courses,

"We discussed equality of men and women, but not religion, or origin or anything like that, if I remember correctly. Yes, it means for me actually the self-evident equal treatment regardless of where one comes from or what one thinks."

– Maria

Gender, in contrast to race, is a speakable concept that was readily intelligible to the interview respondents.

Students offered up anecdotes of their own experiences with discrimination, largely focusing on gender and rarely intersecting with race, ethnicity, or nationality.

A male student provided one vivid anecdote about the insensitive comments and behavior made by a male non-Swiss lecturer.

"There was a lecturer who made some strange comments. It was rather sexist, I would say. He brought a few students to the front and wanted to show how a study is conducted, then he, yeah, he touched the woman. I found that pretty crass."

– *Andreas*

Here, gender nevertheless supersedes issues of national origin as the determining factor in the incident, supporting the argument that gender dynamics at play are more easily legible to these students. In another instance, jokes about Italian migrants emerged as a potential comparison to gender-based jokes:

Interviewer: A person that makes these jokes, for example, would they make jokes against women?

Respondent: Uh, maybe a little (laughs)

Interviewer: Do you see a difference there, or is it all the same?

Respondent: No, according to me, jokes about women are a little bit more serious. Jokes against Italians are a thing, after all, that in certain cases make people laugh and of which sometimes even Italians laugh. Sometimes it's not against a person; it's only a stereotype. No, about women, frankly it seems you shouldn't make them.

– *Giacomo*

In the case of discrimination against (presumably White) Italian commuters to the Italian-speaking region of Switzerland, Giacomo noted that it was an acceptable stereotype, indicating a willingness to differentiate based on national origin yet a clear opposition to gender-based discrimination. This interaction is emblematic of the general approach throughout the interviews to microaggressions based on origin compared to gender microaggressions: the former are more frequently occurring and acceptable, the latter less so. This reflects a lack of engagement with racial diversity and the ready substitution of gender for race in diversity discourse at the university in the Swiss context.

English as inclusion/exclusion

English as a marker of internationality was also a common response. One student said:

"While I am walking around on campus, either I know they are international just because I know them or I can hear them speaking English to one another."

– *Andy*

The language issue is always couched in nationality. As one student put it:

"I don't know. It's hard to tell who's an international student from the main. I just assume everyone who's speaking French is from here, but then maybe everyone just already knows how to speak French."

- *Jo*

Here, one notes the limits of thinking around what constitutes internationality: while in cases like the U.K. and the U.S., unaccented English can be understood as a reasonable indication of national belonging, French (in this case) is only somewhat likely to be an indicator of national belonging. Someone speaking French in the French-speaking part of Switzerland, particularly in the metropolitan areas, could very likely be French rather than French-Swiss. This is also the case in the Italian-speaking region, where almost 70,000 Italian-speakers of non-Swiss origin cross the border per day.

Another issue that emerged was, when asked how to differentiate between domestic and international students, the most common answer was "by the language." A seemingly easy answer, however, obscures the practice of visually identifying students as non-White and potentially othering them. The apparently non-problematic process of othering through language, in a small number of cases, preceded acknowledgment of this nuance. For example, when asked about identifying international students, one respondent said

"Often by the language [...] actually not really, no. Well, you can't say exactly, well theoretically everyone could be Swiss, they could all have a Swiss passport, you can't really assume that from the skin color or clothing."

- *Meagan*

Another student asserted,

"They can be identified. Often there's some accent or because of external characteristics. Well, people with the veil or somehow foreign people, yeah, there's a certain immigration background there. Well, of course I can't say if they have been here for 15 years or if they're second generation, you can't tell based on that."

- *David*

English goes in tandem with a "foreign appearance" as any European person of non-White origin can attest; people of color throughout Europe tend to be approached in English, even if they are native speakers of the national language (Yue, 2000).

Affective regional isolation

The regional differences noted in participants between the French-, Italian-, and German-speaking regions were a common theme. Students described the regions as being distinctly isolated from one another. For example:

So, I studied in [Swiss-German region] at one point for a semester, and that was the complete opposite. Everyone was Swiss, everyone just kind of hung out with each other. And so, within half a year, I met no one. I just pretty much went from my apartment to school, and then I interacted with them. So, it is very, very different from what I experienced here.

–*Andreas*

The differences between regions noted by this participant were also felt by those with other mobility experiences within Switzerland, namely between the German- and French-speaking regions. However, there was a difference among perceptions of these differences. One participant responded:

"Basically, I wouldn't say that [the German and French regions] are different. Not really, it's my experience. That's, well yeah, I think the mentality isn't that different, neither the students nor the teachers."

–*Andreas*

This participant, who is from the German part and had studied for years in both the French and German parts, asserted that he hadn't seen a 'noticeable' difference between these two regions other than language.

While there are differences between all three main regions of Switzerland, the main difference was noted between the Italian-speaking region and the rest. The exclusion of Swiss-Italians is characterized by an exoticized notion of Swiss-Italians belonging to Italy rather than Switzerland. One Swiss-Italian participant studying outside of his home region said:

"For [Swiss-French and Swiss-German people] Ticino seems international because we these exotic creatures who come from the south. It's really difficult."

–*Giacomo*

The interview proved to be predominantly governed by emotions as the concept of emotional fatigue at being outside of his home region emerged multiple times as he recounted stories of his "Swiss-Italianness" being at odds with his surroundings. Having studied in both the German and Italian speaking parts, this student described the emotions that resulted from exclusionary rhetoric that cast him as outside of the dominant Swiss majority.

In the Swiss-Italian region, the Italian border-crossers were often put into the same category by all Swiss people, including Swiss-Italians. As one administrator from the Swiss-Italian region put it, while discussing an errant Italian international student:

"It's not a question of internationality, he was Italian. It's not like he came from who knows which country, and you say it was an intercultural clash."

–*Laura*

This anecdote feeds into larger narratives of the Swiss nation, constructing the Swiss-

Italian region as simultaneously inside and outside. The affective register of this "clash" underscores how emotions on an interpersonal level serve to construct a national Self in juxtaposition with an international Other; in this case, the Swiss Self recognized their own Italianness in the Other.

DISCUSSION

Consistent with previous research, this study highlights racism as a multifaceted challenge, both conceptually and practically (Fries-Britt et al., 2014; Lee et al., 2016). As shown in the interviews with both students and administrators, being unable to discuss diversity issues shaped affective and embodied responses in interactions amongst and between these groups. The ambiguity of identifying international students as such reflects an anxiety towards racialized Others in international academic settings, particularly on the part of the administrators. The most notable finding related to the anxiety was that administrators are aware of race-based distinctions yet were bound by their own positionality and embodiment to narrate encounters with international students, due to the unspeakability of race, in ways that reified common-sense notions of distinct national stereotypes.

Participants demonstrated a greater facility with speaking about gender-based dynamics. As scholars have noted, gender discrimination will often be highlighted in discussions of diversity at the expense of racial discrimination (Accapadi, 2007). This substitution also occurs in the Swiss context, where notions of race are obscured through the lens of nationality, if mentioned at all (Ruigrok et al., 2007). Interview participants consistently identified gender as a dynamic of diversity, and explicitly described the effects of gender-based discrimination. The interviews often featured subtle confirmation of race- and nationality-based discrimination, yet these instances were always informed by general anxiety around discussion of diversity issues. For the predominantly White participants, gender clearly played a role in their lives, while race was something they were not as adept at discussing.

The finding regarding English as a marker of internationality contributes a novel perspective on the role of English in the context of internationalization because, as much of the research suggests, English is often privileged over national languages in non-English-speaking countries (Baker, 2016). However, given that much of the research on internationalization is done in English and in English-speaking contexts, this study presents an example of how, in certain contexts such as Switzerland, English can work to Other international students. Students who study internationally, while typically more privileged than their counterparts who stay at home, are rarely seen as linguistically privileged Others in the literature. However, this research uncovers a link between the use of English and (inter)nationality.

Additionally, English creates an affective link between Swiss universities and representations of internationality through the use of English on websites, as well as course offerings in English. Representations on websites center both English and notions of whose body is present at the university, who is perceived as capable and welcome. Additionally, English as the medium of instruction privileges those with

stronger English skills. Furthermore, at the interpersonal level, English emerges as a means to communicate a specifically international embodiment. For example, all of the interview participants found it easier to relate to the English-native interviewer on a linguistic level, at least with certain phrases.

In the framework of the interview as a situated affective encounter, the embodiment of both interviewer and interviewee must be taken into account. The use of English in non-English conversation has significance; it often occurred to explain thoughts or feelings that didn't occur to the speaker in their native tongue. Also, the presence of a native English speaker, embodied within the affective encounter of the interview, played a role in how the encounter took place. Speaking English could be seen in this context as a means to form that emotive link through language. Often, the interviewer interpreted this attempt to speak in English as trying to convey a particular sentiment or construct a particular narrative. That narrative positioned both participants in the interview as international, cosmopolitan, and English-speaking in the moment.

Finally, the context in which the research took place affectively structured these interviews due to Switzerland's linguistic diversity. As regional differences emerged, one can see a breakdown in the logics of the nation-state that govern most studies of international student mobility. Indeed, the concept of internationality centers on crossing national borders. However, respondents in the study discussed technically international students as "not international" as well as technically domestic students as foreign. These divisions call into question the logics undergirding internationalization taken for granted in larger countries believed to be monolingual. For example, countries that share a national border in which groups on both sides of said border share similarities (e.g., racial, ethnic, linguistic, etc.) might benefit from a new way of conceptualizing academic mobility. Countries with autochthonous, starkly contrasted ethnolinguistic groups, such as Canada, Spain, Belgium, Sweden, South Africa, India, and other international academic migration hubs, fall into this category.

CONCLUSION

Racial diversity in international academic mobility is a confluence of multiple enabling factors. The purpose of this article was to address how students and administrators discuss cultural and social diversity and what impact this has on the affective embodiment of internationality in international and domestic students. Emotional and linguistic processes are an integral part of the affective and racial embodiment of international students. While racial discrimination cannot be simplified solely to affective exclusion practices, the article identifies how students shape and are shaped by intercultural interactions. The study highlights the difficulties of pinpointing race issues and the emotional investment students and administrators have in a system that renders discussions of race-related topics unspeakable. Research suggests that identifying discriminatory practices is a first, important step towards equity, but that the bases on which students are divided into

categories are more complex than thought by current conceptualizations of internationalization. Specifically, focusing on the affective dimension of race/racism in internationalization addresses crucial elements that existing analyses of racism in internationalization fail to engage. Empirically identifying affective dimensions, while not always a straightforward process, seeks to capture something beyond what is accounted for in descriptive analyses of policy texts or what interview participants say outright about race. The study offers a deeper analysis of underlying affective racial mechanisms to better understand the international higher education context.

It is important to center issues of race and nationality in internationalization as these issues have long been ignored in favor of neoliberal, Eurocentric approaches to equality. Additionally, administrators and domestic students should become cognizant of their own biases. This step would help in acknowledging their limitations in interactions with international students, who arrive in a new context with their own situated affective interactive skills. Similarly, international students should become aware of the situatedness of these skills. Particularly for administrators that work with international students, becoming aware of the unnuanced way international students are categorized and how these categorizations influence international students is paramount in avoiding or interrupting exclusionary practices. However, it is worth noting that intellectual awareness of racial bias is necessary but often insufficient, as it does not necessarily mean a shift in the affective environment nor embodied realities of international higher education. The topics raised by this paper form the basis for an important first step in transforming conscious thinking, which will further require scholars and practitioners to address how we can disrupt and ultimately change learned embodied/affective responses that enable systemic inequalities, particularly when these are rooted in logics that govern apparently well-meaning universities. Further studies should explore other contexts in which English is not a national language, as well as contexts with differing racial, ethnic, gender, and national demographics. The empirical nature of this study lends itself to comparative studies, in which a larger sample across students of differing positionalities would prove beneficial to exploring theories of race and affect in the international higher education context.

Despite a historical tendency to ignore race, international higher education must confront the unspeakability of race. This confrontation should be addressed within specific regional and linguistic contexts, thereby resisting the tendency to apply a one-size-fits-all approach to discussing race. This study's findings contribute to shifting the focus in research on internationalization to take into account the unspoken, intangible yet ever-present issues of race and affect.

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