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Exploring Perceptions of the Campus Racial Climate and Resistance Strategies of Asian
International Graduate Students in a Minority-Serving Institution

A Dissertation submitted in partial satisfaction
of the requirements for the degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

in

Education

by

Yi Zhou

June 2023

Dissertation Committee:
       Dr. Eddie Comeaux, Chairperson
       Dr. Rican Vue
       Dr. Mariam Lam

The Dissertation of Your official name is approved:

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                                              Committee Chairperson

University of California, Riverside

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISSERTATION

Exploring Perceptions of the Campus Racial Climate and Resistance Strategies of Asian
International Graduate Students in a Minority-Serving Institution

by

Yi Zhou

Doctor of Philosophy, Graduate Program in Education
University of California, Riverside, June 2023
Dr. Eddie Comeaux, Chairperson

When discussing students' educational experience on campus, including race and racism, previous studies usually discuss domestic and international students separately and use different theoretical frameworks. Previous literature examining international students focused on the individual characteristics of students and how those associated with their personal adjustment to their campus environment (e.g., Andrade, 2006; Khawaja & Stallman, 2011; Ward & Masgoret, 2009). Little attention has been given to critical frameworks that address the international student population, considering not only on students' race and ethnicity as major factors, but also engages international students' direct racial experiences within specific institutional types. This study explores Asian international graduate students' experiences of campus racial climate and resistance strategies in a Minority-serving Institution (MSI) in the U.S. This study uncovers how

racialization experiences are shaped by students' own ethnic backgrounds, the history of the U.S.'s racial stratification system, and national and global contexts. My research also raises timely concerns of anti-Asian racism in the U.S. during shifting political climate that occurred simultaneously with the COVID-19 pandemic. Despite facing microaggressions and other forms of oppressions on and off-campus, Asian international graduate students engage in resistance strategies to adjust to and combat microaggressions, institutional invisibility, and academic injustices. This research is guided by a qualitative research methodology utilizing a single case study to focus on an individual's lived experiences. The aim of this research also includes ameliorating oppressive attitudes to Asian international students.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Despite the COVID-19 pandemic creating irregularities, there are an increasing number of international students studying in the United States (U.S.) in the past few decades. According to an Open Doors Report (2022), the U.S. hosted 948,519 international students in the 2021–2022 academic year, which represented 4.6 % of all students in U.S. higher education.[1] International students came from China (31%) and India (21%) accounted for 52% of the total number of international students.[2] Current enrollment growth rates mainly rely on student enrollment from Asian countries such as China, India, and South Korea (Open Door, 2022).

Traditionally, the recruitment of international students in U.S. higher education is based on political, economic, academic, and social cultural rationales. In the sphere of political rationale, international students advance national technology competence in fields such as science, technology, engineering, and mathematics (STEM) to promote nation building (Altbach, 2012). Regarding an economic rationale for universities, international students contribute financially to the host institution and country. For example, international students contributed $33.8 billion to the U.S economy during the 2021-2022 academic year (Open Door, 2022). The academic rationale to recruit international students is to improve academic competence and bring a level of prestige

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[1] This data comes from an Open Doors Report in 2022. Open Doors Report is a comprehensive database on International Students and scholars in the United States and American students studying abroad for academic credit. https://opendoorsdata.org

[2] In the 2021-2022 academic year, there were 290,086 Chinese international students and 199,182 Indian international students studying in the U.S.

including research cooperation and reputation building (Knight, 2015). The social cultural rationale for recruiting international students across higher education is to encourage domestic students to build cross-cultural competencies and develop a sense of global citizenship (Altbach, 2012; Cantwell, 2015; De Wit, 2002).

International students comprise a distinct population within the U.S. higher education system for several reasons through their international status, cultural differences, ethnic and racial identity (Marginson et al., 2010). These students' values, language, culture, and educational backgrounds enrich and increase diversity on campuses. The growing number of international students on U.S. campuses gradually create a critical mass on campus,[3] which is expected to have consistently positive effects on student engagement, enhance students' experience with diversity, and change how students perceive campus racial climate as a whole (Guo & Jamal, 2007; Zhao et al., 2005). For international students, the exposure to American students facilitates cross-cultural communications and understanding (Andrade, 2006; Slaten et al., 2016). For domestic students, studying and living on a multicultural campus promotes their development of cross-cultural competence, improves career prospects, and prepares them for the globalized workforce (Jayakumar, 2008). International students' college academic, social, and racialization experiences may be different from their American peers. Research on international students' college experience has recognized their social, academic, and acculturation challenges at U.S. universities, including academic and

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[3] The term "critical mass" is to indicate a level of representation that brings comfort or familiarity within the education environment" (Hagedorn et al., 2007; Garces & Jayakumar, 2014).

social experience (e.g., Korobova & Starobin, 2015; Rienties, et al., 2012), sociocultural and acculture stress (e.g., Kuh & Love, 2000; Wang, et al., 2012), and identity development (e.g., Lee, 2005). Students who have difficulties overcoming these academic, social, and cultural challenges are often academically and socially marginalized on campus (Andrade, 2006; Houshmand et al., 2014; Karuppan & Barari, 2010; Lee & Rice, 2007).

Increasingly, literature is being published that discusses international students' experiences of discrimination and microaggressions in their social/academic settings and how these experiences affect their learning, integration, resource use, and sense of belonging to the university (Fries-Britt et al., 2014; Hanassab, 2006; Houshmand et al., 2014; Jean-Francois, 2019; Karuppan & Barari, 2010; Lee & Rice, 2007; Longerbeam et al., 2013; Mitchell et al., 2017; Wang et al., 2014; Wei, et al., 2012; Yao, 2015, 2018; Yeo et al., 2019). Such experiences often result from students and faculty's reactions to their distinct physical characteristics, English proficiency/accents, nationality, international student status, and religion (Cantwell & Lee, 2010; Lee, 2010; Lee & Rice, 2007). This perception, regarding international students of color as racial and/or ethnic minoritized groups, follows the social construction of race in the U.S. where the differentiation of racial groups has historically been used to suppress and oppress some groups (Banks, 2012; Dovidio et al, 2002; Sue, 2003). Based on this research, some scholars argue that international students of color should therefore be considered racial and/or ethnic minoritized groups (Bardhan & Zhang, 2017; Fries-Britt et al., 2014; George et al., 2016; Hanassab, 2006) or nontraditional students (Levin, 2014) in the U.S.

In recent years, literature discusses how Asian international students perceive their racial minority status in the U.S. context and how they process racial/ethnic discrimination as part of their education experience (Frey & Roysircar, 2006; Houshmand, 2014; Lee & Rice, 2007; Longerbeam et al., 2013; Slaten et al., 2016; Wei, et al., 2012). For example, research indicates that Asian international students often experience social isolation, insults, and direct confrontations on campuses (Hanassab, 2006; Lee & Rice, 2007). Recently, the recent socio-political environments have exacerbated the hostility for Asian international students on college campuses. Asian international students may be more vulnerable to the racial microaggressions than other international student groups due to the changing socio-political environment and the COVID-19 pandemic. For example, a recent survey about international students' experiences and concerns during the pandemic report that 25% of international students were distressed about discrimination, harassment, or xenophobia (Chirikov & Soria, 2020). As a result, the incidents of racism as well as xenophobic attacks continues to rise throughout the country. Asian Americans have experienced increasing verbal and physical violence motivated by individual-level racism and xenophobia since the pandemic. At the institutional level, U.S. government has often implicitly reinforced, encouraged, and perpetuated unequal treatment to international students through bigoted rhetoric and exclusionary policies.

International students' racialization experiences are shaped by the distinctive social categories and stratification of race, their international status and ethnicity/culture, as well as institutional environment and climate. In a U.S. context, the centering of a

black–white binary of race impacts the racialization and experiences of international students of minority backgrounds on American higher education campuses (Bashi & McDaniel, 1997). We know that Asian international students have similar experiences to Asian American students due to their racial categorization, as they are subsumed into the racial categories of American society. However, most studies of Asian Americans' racial experiences are built on an underlying prerequisite, the ownership of American citizenship, which is different from international students. International students temporarily stay in the U.S. for the purpose of academic studies and their legal status depends on student visas. This status difference between Asian American and Asian international students creates significant identity and experience differences. Thus, Asian international students have their own ways of negotiating and reconstructing their racial positions.

Moreover, international students' unique experience of racialization is also related to their ethnicity and culture. Although Asian international students have been regarded as Asian based on phenotypic characteristics (e.g., a recognizable facial feature), they are varied greatly by ethnicity and culture. Therefore, insights and discussion within the American racial categories might not fully apply to the study of Asian international students' racial experiences. Asian international students might not only describe their experiences in the American racial narratives, but also, they might interpret their racial experiences related to their home countries' cultures, transnational experiences, as well as the multifaceted nature of their social identities.

In addition, Asian international students have experienced racial inequality and hostile campus racial climates during their studies in the U.S., especially in predominantly white institutions (Fries-Britt et al., 2014; Mitchell et al., 2017; Poyrazli & Lopez, 2007). In higher education literature, one indicator to analyze students' racialization experiences is examined through the lens of "campus racial climate".[4] This dissertation will use "campus racial climate" to distinguish how racialization is navigated for Asian international students within a higher-education campus environment. A hostile campus racial climate arises from an institution's failure to create a safe and inclusive environment when institutions lack a systematic approach to handling racial incidents and other forms of exclusions (Perry, 2002; Rankin & Reason, 2005)

With factors all taken into consideration regarding a diverse population of international students, this dissertation will focus specifically on the graduate-level of Asian international student populations. Among the international student population, studies have demonstrated that graduate students have different experiences than undergraduates. Graduate students face more difficulties in acclimating to the U.S. compared to their undergraduate counterparts as they come to the U.S. at older ages and with mature world views (Li et al., 2010). Previous studies show that international graduate students face doubled academic pressure compared to domestic graduate students (Li et al., 2010). International graduate students not only deal with academic

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[4] Campus racial climate is an important social environmental factor that has an impact on students' university experiences, has been defined as the current attitudes, behaviors, and standards of faculty, staff, administrators, as well as their experiences with campus diversity and different racial groups (Hurtado et al., 1998).

requirements for their courses and degree, but also, they experience cultural challenges from their college campuses, community, and the country (Jean-Francois, 2019; Weidman, et al., 2001). More specifically, as international graduate students' study in a transnational space, they have to learn and negotiate the structures and traditions of the culture and climate on U.S. campuses and make sense of their racialization experiences. Due to the heavy academic burden and insufficient university support on international graduate students, they may not have opportunities to learn about race and racism presented primarily by the country's unique history and ongoing policy changes. Therefore, it may cause graduate students to experience racism without understanding the causes. Yet, universities in the U.S. give minimal instruction to international graduate students about American diversity or how to interact with different cultures.

Problem Statement

Research on international education tends to assume that international students bear the responsibility to adjust to their campus without taking into consideration the systematic barriers that can cause challenges for students (e.g., Andrade 2006; Khawaja & Stallman, 2011; Rienties, et al., 2012; Ward & Masgoret, 2009). This literature places the responsibility upon international students to adapt to and incorporate their hosts' values and practices and to independently overcome any challenge in their educational setting (Lee, 2014). Current literature on the subject positions language barriers, incomplete knowledge of the educational system, learning new teaching methods, and college culture as issues that international students are expected to overcome (Hagedorn & Ren, 2012; Korobova & Starobin, 2015). For example, when students are facing an

obligation to adjust to the learning environment due to lower English language proficiency, they may interpret this issue as an individual level problem (Brown, 2008; Houshmand et al., 2014). This misguided belief suggests that the responsibilities for adapting to a host culture is a burden that international students must address alone, often without institutional support. Because of this assumption, international students usually have acculturative stress and feel the burden to be assimilated into the dominant culture of the campus (Andrade, 2006; Yao, 2015).

Moreover, many of the frequently used theoretical frameworks in literature on international students use sociocultural (Lantolf, 2000) and acculturation (Ward et al., 2001) conceptual frameworks to discuss challenges that international students face in adapting to the new living and learning environments such as adaptation, integration, and socio-cultural aspects of students' experiences (Hagedorn & Ren, 2012; Heng, 2020). However, scholars criticize that "adjustment" and "acculturation" concepts assume the host country's cultural superiority (e.g., Marginson, 2014). Another frequently used theoretical framework is the psychological dimension, which is used to explain international students' mental health issues. Studies discussing international students' perceptions of discrimination and microaggressions largely focused on mental health issues resulted from racism without addressing outside systemic issues. So, the discussions are mostly within the psychology field and literature is mainly published on psychological literature. For example, researchers have found that Asian international students have more severe mental health issues than American students and other international students (Fritz et al., 2008). Other research found that Asian international

graduate students often suffer from stress, anxiety, depression, loneliness, or alienation resulting from adjustment problems in socio-cultural, cognitive, behavioral, or psychological dimensions (Li et al., 2012; Xiong, 2018). Even though this student group suffers with higher issues of psychological well-being, their attitude toward seeking professional psychological help is low (Xiong, 2018). By focusing solely on the psychological dimensions, this body of literature often failed to discuss the complex external factors affecting international students' mental health.

Another gap in the literature arises from not giving students voice in how they are empowered to resist oppressions and improve their experience (Heng, 2020). Both individual and collective agency relate to how people see themselves/others and reflect on how others view them. Student agencies are usually used against adversity, stereotyping, and injustices. Although Marginson (2014) uses "self-formation" to critique international students as deficient and describe international students' reflexive and self-determination in shaping their own identities, it is not enough to explain international students' racial experience. Marginson (2013) believes an international student is that of a reflexive and self-determining individual, guided by agentic freedom. He sees international students as self-formed, and international education as a process of negotiating plural identities on a constant basis. However, the notion of "self-formation" only discusses students' own processes of social participation and transformation. It ignores that international students navigate academic structures, cultural norms, and racial meanings solely and it lacks further explanation on incorporating international students' voices in seeking for racial and social justice.

Purpose of Study

My dissertation explores Asian international graduate students' experience of campus racial climate and resistance strategies in a Minority-serving Institution (MSI) in the U.S. I examined the historical, sociocultural, and national/global dimensions of race and racism within a multidimensional view of college campuses' racial climates in the U.S. This study examines how Asian international graduate students' experiences of racialization on college campuses and how these students engage in strategies of resistance to hostile campus climates. When discussing students' educational experiences in higher education, including race and racism, previous studies usually discuss domestic and international students separately and use different theoretical frameworks. Less research engages international students' racial experience with campus and socio-political environments, as well as include students' voices in exploring their resistance strategies when experiencing oppressions.

My research raises timely concerns of race and racism as being Asian international graduate students in the U.S. during shifting political climates that occurred simultaneously with the COVID-19 pandemic. Regarding the experience of racialization for Asians and Asian Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic, it is important to note that the Asian population has faced a long history of racialization and discrimination in the United States. The COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated existing racial tensions and stereotypes, leading to an increase in anti-Asian sentiment and hate crimes. Asian international students are vulnerable to racial discrimination, microaggressions, and other forms of racism. These include being visualized as Asian, experiencing transnational

white supremacy, and suffering from intersectional oppressions that interplay with their social identities including gender, sexuality, and class. This study discusses how various forms of oppression towards Asian international students emerges from interpersonal, institutional, and socio-political dimensions. More specifically, Asian international graduate students' racialization experiences are mainly shaped by the historical U.S. racial stratification system, national and global contexts, students' ethnic and racial backgrounds, as well as interpersonal and institutional factors on campus.

This dissertation takes into consideration previous literature in the fields of education, sociology, psychology, and documented historical accounts within the United States. I synthesized literature to explore Asian international graduate students' racialization experiences including socio-historical experiences of racism, modern myths of Asian cultures, national and global contexts of race and policy, and intersectionality factors. The literature review further addresses international student's perceived experience of racialization and hostile campus racial climates that affect students' learning and living and how they respond to racism and other forms of oppressions.

From a theoretical perspective, I examine recent research in the field on domestic students and take an innovative approach to formulate an understanding of international student experiences using an investigative framework that crosses transnational boundaries. This study uses four critical theoretical/ conceptual frameworks including campus racial climate framework (Hurtado et al., 1998, 2002), Asian Critical Race Theory (AsianCrit) [Chang, 1993; Museus & Iftikar, 2013], learning race in a U.S. context framework (Fries-Britt et al., 2014), and student resistance framework (Solórzano

& Bernal, 2001) that explore perceptions of the campus racial climate and resistance strategies of Asian international graduate students in a MSI.

The campus racial climate framework (Hurtado et al, 1998, 2002) analyzes how perceived campus racial climates affect students' interacting, living, and learning with various campus individuals/elements. Using the campus racial climate framework helps to facilitate environments to better engage international students in the discussion and contribution to diversity on campus. AsianCrit (Chang, 1993; Museus & Iftikar, 2013) explores the historical and sociocultural meanings of race and it also examines multidimensions of "Asianization" (a racialization process that impacts the experiences of Asian and Asian American groups) interrelated to students' transnational and intersectional experience. This study provides context to examine how racialization as "Asian" impacts international students who share Asian cultures and heritages. Learning Race in a U.S. Context framework (Fries-Britt et al., 2014) explains how Asian international graduate students navigate and make sense of their racialization experience while attaining higher education in America. This study explores the use of the learning race in a U.S. context framework in understanding international students' learning, navigating, and meaning-making processes of race during the COVID-19 pandemic and the shifting political environment in the U.S. The student resistance framework (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001) informs how Asian international students execute their agency against adversity, stereotyping, and injustices. Large numbers of studies focus on international students' problems or challenges without discussing students' agency in

resisting oppressions. Adopting this framework encourages studying international students' agency in higher education.

The campus racial climate framework was assessed using a qualitative research methodology by utilizing a single case study to focus on an individual's lived experiences. The methodological orientation of this study and the rationale of choice for this research design includes the research settings, participant recruitment methods, and participant characteristics. Data collection methods include 21 semi-structured interviews, 2 focus groups, and document analysis. I coded, analyzed, and inquired data from these different data resources using the content analysis method.

The aim of this research is to explore the experiences of Asian international students regarding racialization and the campus racial climate during the COVID-19 pandemic. It highlights the ongoing impact of the pandemic on the racialization of Asian international students within U.S. higher education institutions, extending into the post-pandemic era. The study examines the academic, social, and racial experiences of Asian international graduate students, emphasizing their agency in resisting racialization and oppression, thereby debunking narrow and homogeneous perceptions of this student population. Furthermore, the research argues for the need to address oppressive attitudes towards Asians and Asian Americans, while also urging universities to take responsibility for promoting diversity, equity, and inclusion. By challenging the status quo, this study seeks to advance social and racial justice in both university settings and society overall.

Significance of the Study

This section addresses the importance and innovation of the study in terms of theoretical, methodological, practical perspectives. Theoretically, the literature lacks variety in the types of theoretical lenses that have been employed when studying the international student population. Methodologically, this study employs qualitative research methods to gain a deeper understanding of the richness of international students' lived experiences. Practically, this study provides an opportunity to examine Asian international graduate students' experience of campus racial climate in the structures of Minority Serving Institutions (MSIs) and provide practitioners in these institutions with a better understanding of Asian international students in terms of their learning, navigation, and experience of race and campus racial climate.

Need to Study International Students' Experience Through Different Theoretical Lenses

Many of the frequently used theoretical frameworks have focused on how individual characteristics of students are associated with their adjustment outcomes. These frameworks place the responsibility upon international students themselves to adapt to and incorporate their hosts' values and practices. New theoretical frameworks are needed to engage in the study of the racialized experiences of international students. When certain theories dominate, research findings on international students may be repetitive, incomplete, and perpetuate bias (Heng, 2020; Stein, 2017). In order to find another framework to study international student experience of microaggressions and racialized experience, I examine recent research in the field as well as research on

domestic students. Research on domestic students' racialized experiences adopted

Critical Race Theory (Solorzano & Yosso, 2002; Sue et al., 2009; Yosso et al., 2009) and

campus racial climate framework (Hurtado et al., 1998) suggest that universities that

ensure diverse and inclusive campus environments have more satisfied students, better

student retention, and good student interaction and engagement (e.g., Berger & Milem,

1999; Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Museus et al., 2008). Therefore, using the critical

theoretical lenses may increase, diversify, and generate new findings on international

students.

Need for Research on Diverse Student Bodies and in Diverse Environments

Prior studies suggest that Predominantly White Institutions (PWIs) are likely

places of discriminatory experiences for international students (e.g., Glass, 2012;

Karuppan & Barari, 2010), but we know less about international students' experience in

Minority-serving Institutions (MSIs). MSIs are traditionally defined by one of two

overarching categories: historically defined or federally recognized categories based on

enrollment-defined institutions (Gasman et al., 2008). The student bodies at MSIs are the

most diverse in the nation (Lumina Foundation 2015). Because of the value of MSIs to

racially and ethnically diverse students, these institutions must support diversity and

perform the public service role for their racial and ethnic communities (Soares et al.,

2017). As MSIs have featured various practices to support and sustain students from

different cultural backgrounds, turning to MSIs could provide a model for understanding

how these cultural support practices can be extended to international students.

Need to Engage Qualitative Research Method

While several studies use quantitative methods to investigate the challenges international students face, the reliance on such data can be limiting. Quantitative research on international students is typically used to produce descriptive and inferential statistics and compare different groups of domestic/international students (Khawaja & Stallman, 2011). However, there are limitations to using quantitative research in revealing inequity and oppression toward underrepresented populations (including international students) in education research (Alfattal, 2016). Quantitative research may preclude a deep understanding of the richness of international students' lived experiences (Khawaja & Stallman, 2011). Instead, qualitative methods allow us to examine why issues occur, what those experiences mean to the participants, and to gain a deep understanding of the topic (Khawaja & Stallman, 2011). For example, it is hard for a researcher to accurately assess a behavior as resistant using quantitative methods. Rather, the exploration of student resistance relies on students' explanations of their experiences which may only be available using qualitative methods.

Need to Encourage Faculty and Staff to Develop Supporting Systems

Lastly, as the number of Asian international students increases, it is paramount for faculty and staff to support the racialization experience of this student population. As many more campuses aim to build a diverse and inclusive campus culture and climate, more attention should be given to including international students into this discourse and recognizing these students' contribution to campus diversity. Obviously, universities need to build more programs and support systems to provide diversity education for this

growing population in order to increase international students' interactions with other groups on campus and improve cross-cultural understandings. This study will allow for faculty and staff to not only understand how the international students navigate a U.S. campus and the U.S. racial environments, but also support them to better success in their graduate studies.

Theoretical Orientations for the Investigation of International Students

This study engages several theoretical and conceptual frameworks including campus racial climate framework (Hurtado et al., 1998, 2002), Asian Critical Race Theory (AsianCrit) [Chang, 1993; Museus & Iftikar, 2013], learning race in a U.S. context framework (Fries-Britt et al., 2014), and student resistance framework (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001).

Campus Racial Climate Framework

Campus racial climate, an important social environmental factor that has an impact on students' university experiences, has been defined as the current attitudes, behaviors, and standards of faculty, staff, administrators, as well as their experiences with campus diversity and different racial groups (Hurtado et al., 1998). The multidimensional model of campus racial climate has five dimensions: (1) compositional or structural dimension, (2) the psychological dimension of the climate, (3) the behavioral dimension of the climate, and (4) an institution's history and legacy of inclusion or exclusion (Hurtado et al., 1998), (5) organizational dimension (Milem et al., 2005). Within the campus racial climate frame, my study focuses on the compositional (numerical composition of students from various races/ethnicities), psychology (individuals' views of

discrimination and attitudes toward other racial/ethnic backgrounds), and behavioral

dimensions (frequency of interaction among members of different social identity groups

and the quality of interactions).

Asian Critical Race Theory

AsianCrit centers the racialized experiences of Asian Americans over the course

of U.S. history and their intersections with immigration and citizenship (Chang, 1993;

Museus & Iftikar, 2013). Though the original AsianCrit was developed for Asian

American legal scholarship, elements of it can be applied to educational research (Liu,

2009). Museus and Iftikar (2013) have extended this framework to aid in analyzing the

role of racism in Asian American experiences and introduced 7 major tenets to better

explain how race and racism operate for Asian Americans in contemporary society.

1. *Asianization:* refers to the mechanism by which society racializes Asian Americans. It

is grounded in the notion of Asians being racialized by white supremacy, which leads to

the exclusion of Asians in laws, policies, programs, and perspectives (Iftikar & Museus,

2018).

2. *Transnational Contexts*: highlights the historical and current political, economic, and

social processes when analyzing the impacts of racism on Asian Americans.

3. *(Re)constructive History*: calls for transcending invisibility and silence to construct an

Asian American narrative.

4. *Strategic (anti) Essentialism:* reviews race as a social construction and emphasizes

how Asian Americans are racially categorized as a monolithic group.

5. *Intersectionality:* refers to the idea that racism can intersect with other systems of oppression (e.g., heteronormativity, sexism) and social identities (e.g., gender, class, sexual orientation).

6. *Story, Theory, and Praxis:* refers to the power of stories from Asian Americans which can be used to inform theory and guide practice to better represent the Asian American community.

7. *Commitment to Social Justice*: argues that research should be employed with the intent of social activism and transformation.

Learning Race in a U.S. Context Framework

Learning race in a U.S. context framework (Fries-Britt et al., 2014) examines how foreign-born students' experiences with race and discrimination are a dynamic, and ongoing process impacted by the U.S. racial context. In the framework, the home country, and the U.S. racial context both influence international students' racial experience over time. The learning race in a U.S. context framework (Fries-Britt et al., 2014) has four themes: a) unexamined U.S. racial-ethnic identity, b) ethnic/racial encounters in the U.S. context, c) moving toward identity examination in the U.S. context, and d) integrative awareness in the U.S. context. These themes address the perceptions that students have about race and the behaviors that they engage in when confronted with race.

Student Resistance Framework

This framework measures a student's level of critique of oppressive conditions and level of social justice motivation in a coordinate system centering on their resistance

to unequal social justice and environment. This framework includes four different types of student oppositional behavior: (a) reactionary behavior, (b) self-defeating resistance, (c) conformist resistance, and (d) transformational resistance (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001). Even though the four types of student resistance framework possess specific differences, this approach does not mean that they are exclusive of one another. Rather, the distinction between the four behaviors is not static or rigid and the four behaviors are often mixed and used in combination (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001).

Research Questions

The following research questions guided this study:

(1) How do Asian international graduate students describe their educational experience in a Minority Serving Institution?

(2) In what ways do Asian international graduate students describe their educational experience related to race and racism and other intersectionality forms of oppressions in this setting?

(3) In what ways, if any, do Asian international graduate students engage in strategies of resistance to hostile campus racial climates?

Methodology

This study is guided by a qualitative research methodology utilizing a single case study to focus on an individual's lived experiences. The methodological orientation of this study introduces the rationale of using qualitative research methodology and the choice of this research design includes the research settings, participant recruitment methods, and participant characteristics. Data collection methods include 21 semi-

structured interviews, 2 focus groups, and document analysis. Content analysis method is adopted for data analysis, coded, and inquiry from these three data resources.

Qualitative Research Methodology

Qualitative methodology is a type of social science research that takes a systematic inquiry into social phenomena to capture complex interactions and relationships in a study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2011; Creswell, 2009). It collects data from researcher's interactions with participants and their knowledge of the participants' context (Bogdan & Biklen, 2011; Creswell, 2009). It interprets data that seeks to understand social life through the study of targeted populations or places (Bogdan & Biklen, 2011; Creswell, 2009). The purpose of qualitative research is to describe and interpret issues or phenomena systematically from the point of view of the individual or population being studied, and to generate new concepts and theories (Haradhan, 2018).

This investigation captures the racialized experiences of Asian international graduate students and connects theoretical orientations to the data collection and analysis process. To pursue this endeavor, this study uses a single case study design (Yin, 2003; 2017), which consists of interviews, focus groups, and document analysis. Case study is a form of qualitative research employed to better understand some complex social phenomena and the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events (Yin, 2003). Case study is a preferred strategy to study "how" or "why" questions on a research topic and its design depends on the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis (Yin, 2003). Case study also relies on multiple sources of evidence to allow the investigator to address a broader range of historical, attitudinal, and

behavioral issues. The rationale for selecting a single and explanatory case for this study is to capture the circumstances and responses to the everyday experiences of Asian international graduate students (Yin, 2003). Also, the utilization of a case study will help highlight the voices of Asian international graduate students and contribute to the literature (Creswell, 2018).

Selection of the Investigation Site

This research has been conducted at a MSI/research university located in the western U.S. One consideration in selecting a public research university is because most international students were enrolled in institutions with public control (Zhao et al., 2005). International students often select their U.S. institution based on ranking, leading them to favor research universities which tend to score high in national and international university rankings (Korobova & Starobin, 2015). Another reason for selecting this research site is its institutional minority-serving status. This selected university is an Asian-American, Native American, and Pacific Islander Serving Institution (AANAPISI) that serves an undergraduate population that is both low income (at least 50% receiving Title IV needs-based assistance) and in which Asian American or Native American Pacific Islander students constitute at least 10% of the student population (U. S. Department of Education, 2020).

Participant Recruitment

The participants for this study include 21 individual interview participants and two focus groups (10 participants). The interview and focus group sample size are based on both qualitative saturation of common themes (varying from 6 participants to 15–20

participants) and suggested sample size for qualitative studies (Creswell, 2009; Stark & Trinidad, 2017). The interview participant number is also determined by redundancy or a saturation criterion (Patton, 2002). Participants who took part in individual interviews have been asked to voluntarily participate in focus groups. Focus group participant numbers are dependent on participants' interests, availability, and schedules.

Data Collection

This case study adopts interviews and focus groups as the main source of data collection (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Poth, 2016; Lichtman, 2013; Mason, 2002). A semi-structured individual interview includes questions specifically designed for the research's purpose, but they are not close-ended questions (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Focus groups were used to obtain insights and shared experiences from participants. The adoption of this strategy evokes multiple perspectives from participants, allowing participants to communicate thoughts and providing us opportunities to gather students' collective experiences (Bogden & Bilken, 2007; Lichtman, 2012). Document analysis was adopted as a complement to these methods to provide background information and broad coverage of data, which are helpful in contextualizing the research within the field (Bowen, 2009). This study used interviews and focus groups as the main source of data collection (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Poth, 2016; Lichtman, 2013; Mason, 2002). Document analysis was used as a complement to these methods to provide background information and broad coverage of data, which are helpful in contextualizing the research within the field (Bowen, 2009).

Qualitative Content Analysis

This study uses qualitative content analysis as a method to analyze the data collected from different data resources as well as connect theoretical orientations to the data analysis process (Mayring, 2004). Qualitative content analysis is the systematic analysis of the content of narratives and text in a quantitative or qualitative manner to answer research questions (Mayring, 2004). Qualitative content analysis is suitable for case study research because it offers theory-guided methods for data analysis, and it offers a range of rule-based procedures for a systematic analysis of data material (Kohlbacher, 2006).

According to Yin (2018), the most important strategy in case study data analysis is to follow the theoretical propositions or hypotheses that led to the case study. Also, qualitative content analysis applies a systematic and theory-guided approach to text analysis using a categorization system (Mayring, 2004). In other words, such propositions help me plan and focus on the most relevant data, organize the entire case study, and determine the initial coding scheme or relationships between codes.

Content Analysis Procedure

Step 1. The audio recordings of the individual interviews and focus groups were transcribed into individual Word documents using an online transcription software called OTranscribe. OTranscribe is a free, open-source tool which allows me to navigate the audio player and edit text at the same time. This software ensures confidentiality of the data and doesn't share the files with a third party. After auto transcribing and editing using OTranscribe, I proofread the translated documents again to ensure accuracy.

Translating each individual interview enabled me to keep track of the data per participant and coded to explore key patterns and themes (Yin, 2017).

I read through each transcript and tried to understand how each participant experienced the phenomenon being examined. By doing so, I began to detect similarities in experiences while getting a sense of the big picture behind students' stories. Commonalities and individually unique experiences between participants' responses were identified.

Step 2. I coded a single interview at a time and identified relevant episodes and metaphors. I gathered information about the context of the students' stories. I read through interview transcriptions for each participant, wrote marginal notes, and placed relevant experiences chronologically. I then identified assumptions in each account and named them as codes (Riessman, 2013). I used the same method to analyze focus groups data.

Step 3. As I continued to read through and familiarize myself with the transcripts, the data was coded based on the predetermined codes. The purpose of coding is to refine content from the transcripts. During this initial coding, I read the transcripts line-by-line. I used the predetermined codes from analytical frameworks to color-code larger amounts of text and information from focus groups and interviews (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data that could not be coded initially was analyzed later to determine if they represented a new category or a subcategory of an existing code (Mayring, 2004).

In this study, the theoretical and conceptual frameworks discussed previously are used in data analysis as the analytical framework. Analytical frameworks are the

strategies that qualitative researchers used to reduce, organize, analyze, and interpret the data that they collect (Flick, 2014; Maxwell, 2009). Analytical frameworks were incorporated in the coding process and discussions to construct findings.

In the coding process, more specifically, learning race in a U.S. context framework (Fries-Britt et al., 2014) examines how foreign-born students' experiences with race and discrimination are a dynamic, and ongoing process impacted by the U.S. racial context. Under the campus climate framework (Hurtado, et at., 1998), psychology (individuals' views of discrimination and attitudes toward other racial and ethnic backgrounds) and behavioral dimensions (frequency of interaction among members of different social identity groups and the quality of interactions) were coded. I focused on the Asianization, transnational, and intersectionality tenets under AsianCrit (Chang, 1993; Museus & Iftikar, 2013). Also, the student resistance framework (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001) was used to code in understanding students' level of critique of oppressive conditions and their motivation in searching for racial/social justice.

Step 4. I revisited codes and continued to probe themes that emerged during Step 3. As the initial coding process is iterative and involves making initial predictions and comparing them against the case study evidence, when I revisited codes, I decided whether the predefined codes should change and develop as the research process continues and whether new perspectives and findings may indicate a need to move beyond the initial frames (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

I utilized a combination of descriptive, interpretive, and pattern codes to analyze the data based on analytical frameworks. Descriptive codes entail little interpretation and

will help to summarize text into short phrases, while interpretative codes include

inferential information which will help me to make sense of stories/meanings behind the

text (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I utilized the analytic tactic of clustering to create

pattern codes which are both inferential and explanatory (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Pattern matching in a case study is one of the most desirable techniques as it involves the

comparison of predicted patterns and/or effects with the ones that have been empirically

observed, and the identification of any variances (Yin, 2017).

Step 5. In the final data analysis process, I combined the data from individual

interviews, focus groups, and document analysis together to identify the relationships,

categories, and themes that may be new from the previous coding (Flick, 2014; Maxwell,

2009; Richards, 2009). I also interpreted the themes discovered while reflecting on any

original assumptions made prior to starting the study. It was necessary for me to consider

researcher bias and positionality during the entire process, but most importantly when

interpreting what the participants had shared.

Lastly, 4 major themes were identified in findings of the study: (1) a campus

portrait and a diversity analysis of the Minority-serving Institution, (2) academic and

social experience as well as the implication of the COVID pandemic, (3) racial

positioning, racialization, and racial isolation, and (4) sources of support and advocacy

for students to exercise their own agency.

Organization of the Dissertation

The following four chapters report the investigation. Chapter 2 consists of a

review of the scholarly literature, theoretical and conceptual frameworks that were

adopted to help frame this study. Chapter 3 presents the methods, research design, and methodology utilized in this investigation. Chapter 4 presents the findings of the investigation. Chapter 5 offers the discussion, conclusions, limitations, and concludes with recommendations for practice.

CHAPTER 2

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter develops four major sections of a literature review to examine the following: race is produced in the historical and modern perspective; how Asian international graduate students learn, review, and represent in educational spaces; and how student agencies are used against adversity, stereotyping, and injustices. The first section focuses on the racialization process of international students including Asian international students' experience of microaggressions in interpersonal and institutional levels. This second section provides historical contexts and modern perspectives to analyze factors that contribute to the racialization of Asian international graduate students in the U.S. This section's analysis includes socio-historical experience of racism of Asian American, modern myths of Asian and Asian international students including stereotype and homogeneity, national and global contexts of race and policy, as well as intersectionality. The third section pertains to discussing various students' responses to racism and what constitutes a hostile campus racial climate. The final section of this chapter addresses several theoretical and conceptual frameworks and statements of the research questions including campus racial climate framework (Hurtado et al., 1998, 2002), AsianCrit (Chang, 1993; Museus & Iftikar, 2013), learning race in a U.S. context framework (Fries-Britt et al., 2014), and student resistance framework (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001). I conclude this chapter with a description of three research questions that guided this investigation. Each segment of this literature review works in tandem to

provide a broad understanding of the racialization process for international students in the contemporary context of a "diverse" U.S. university.

In this chapter, I analyze and review three major areas of scholarship: historical and modern myths of racialized experience of Asian and Asian Americans; international students navigating race through their academic and social experiences; and students' agency and resistance. Throughout the review of these sources, I problematize how prior research approaches international students at university. For example, in this chapter, I address gaps in prior literature regarding international students by providing historical analysis, contemporary viewpoints, and theoretical aspects of the previous literature on Asian international graduate students' experiences of racialization. I analyze prior scholarship to emphasize that Asian international students' perceptions and experiences of race and racism have been affected not only by the historical and social construct of race in the U.S., but also by the unique characteristics of international students' status in transnational spaces. By pointing out the significance, conceptualization, contributions, and/or gaps within this selected literature, the literature review builds a comprehensive understanding of international students' experience of racialization in the U.S. higher education institutions and society.

Racialization

Racialization is the process through which groups are designated as different from the majority group and, on that basis, subjected to unequal treatments in the society (Little et al., 2016). Omi and Winant (2014) define racialization as the extension of racial meaning to previously, racially unclassified relationships, social practices, or groups.

Racialization can be understood as the meaning-making process of a certain group based on the social concept of race (Emirbayer & Desmond, 2015). Racial stratification generally concurs that racialization involves the constitutive processes of ascription and identification (Emirbayer & Desmond, 2015). Ascription involves the application of putting individuals into a meaningful social category based on phenotypic characteristics (e.g., a recognizable facial feature). This process creates a commonsense assumption of shared characteristics used to legitimize specific patterns of resource allocation and exploitation (Emirbayer & Desmond, 2015). The identification in racialization involves acceptance of this designation, often for mobilization or identity construction (Omi & Winant, 2014). Because of ascription and identification, racialization continues to permeate social structural systems in the United States, which allocates or denies opportunities to individuals and groups based on their race (Solórzano, 1998).

Racialization is not just a racial categorization; it also pertains to power relations that justify the power and privileges for certain groups, who can access the power of white privilege (Emirbayer & Desmond, 2015). The process of racialization emerged through centering on a black–white binary that increased social inequality throughout history (Guess, 2006). Racialized groups include people who might experience differential treatment based on race, ethnicity, language, religion, or culture (Omi & Winant, 2014). Because of these factors, racialized groups are seen as outside the norm and therefore receive unequal treatment. Racialization of people of color is a process of "othering", which has been used to justify the power and privileges (Omi & Winant, 2014). U.S. research on racialization has focused heavily on black-white racial dynamics,

but racial formation also involves groups such as Asians. Thus, any analysis of the race-making process of Asian international students' is how they become the "other" in U.S. society.

Racialization Process for International Students

Similar to how racialization in the U.S. involves minority groups' unequal treatment in the society (Omi & Winant, 2014), research in higher education indicates that students of color have been racialized in post-secondary education and struggle with racially marginalized experiences (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Huber & Solórzano, 2015; Museus & Vue, 2013; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Sue et al., 2007a; Yosso et al., 2009). More specifically, among the racial minority groups, Asian American college students face challenges due to their race which are both similar to and different from their African American, Latinx, and Native American peers (Sue et al., 2007; Teranishi, 2002). Yet, Asian American students have received less attention in these studies. Also, scant attention has been paid to understand how Asian ethnic identities are associated with other intersectional factors, such as students' citizenship and residency status. There are rarely substantive discussions about Asian international students' challenges of race. International students' experience of racialization is an aspect of the educational experience that has not been studied in depth.

As many international students come from racially homogenous countries and/or from countries where they are the racial majority, they may not fully understand how to distinguish between the socialization of race within their home country and how their race is constructed in the U.S (Fries-Britt, et al., 2014; Mitchell et al., 2017). When

international students of color enter the U.S. during their overseas studies, the racial logic drags newcomers into the existing system that maintains the white and non-white race binary (Collins, 2010). So, international students' racialization experience may be shaped by the distinctive social categories and stratification of race in U.S. society and on American higher education campuses.

Research indicates that when they first arrive in the U.S., international students identify themselves primarily in relation to their home country identity, comprising intersections of gender, socioeconomic status, religion, and ethnicity (Boafo-Arthur 2014; Fries-Britt et al., 2014; Lee & Rice, 2007; Wei et al. 2012). As a result, international students of color may not initially relate to the struggles that domestic students have regarding racism because they are not from the U. S. (Fries-Britt et al., 2014). However, after living longer in the U.S., international students learn more about the impact of race and racism. They begin to examine their identity in terms of race and experience identity struggles related to race (Bardhan & Zhang, 2017; Fries-Britt et al., 2014; Mitchell et al., 2017; Poyrazli & Lopez 2007). International students of color's encounter with race forces them to consider their own positioning within a U.S. racial context, which marks a shift in how they regard the importance of race (Fries-Britt et al., 2014). Adjusting to a racial minority identity can be new and demanding, and the racialization may be accelerated when international students receive racial messages which are imposed externally from the campus and society (Fries-Britt et al., 2014; Omi & Winant, 2015).

Asian International Students' Experience With Microaggressions

As a majority group of the international student population, Asian international students are often regarded as "outgroups" and being perceived in deficit frameworks in the U.S. higher education institutions (Dinh et al., 2008; Frey & Roysircar, 2006; Lee & Rice, 2007; Urban & Orbe; 2007). Scholarship identifies that Asian international students experience a marginalized status which often includes discrimination, microaggressions, and other forms of racism within predominantly white institutions (DiAngelo, 2006; Fries-Britt, et al., 2014; George et al. 2016; Hanassab 2006; Lee & Rice, 2007; Wong, et al., 2014). These deficit perceptions that many people in U.S. higher education hold toward Asian international students primarily come from the interpersonal and institutional levels.

Interpersonal Microaggressions

The term "racial microaggressions" was first introduced by Chester Pierce in the 1970s to refer to minor acts of discrimination that are experienced frequently by people of color (more specifically by African Americans) (Solorzano et al., 2000). Racial microaggressions are defined as the everyday verbal, nonverbal, and environmental slights, often performed automatically or unconsciously, which communicate negative messages toward people of color or based on their marginalized group membership (Sue et al., 2007b).

Racial microaggressions were first discussed in the literature to study African Americans' perception of racism on a daily basis (Pierce, 1969). Later, racial microaggressions began to be investigated in higher education (Solórzano, 1998;

Solórzano et al., 2000). Empirical examinations of racial microaggressions in higher education focus predominantly on African Americans (e.g., Sue et al., 2008), Asian Americans (e.g., Sue et al., 2007a), Latina/o Americans (Rivera et al., 2010), and indigenous Americans (Clark et al., 2011). These studies examine how racial microaggressions influence the campus racial climate (Solórzano et al., 2000; Yosso et al., 2009). They also contribute to the shift of discussion of racism from a black-white discourse to discussions that include other racial and ethnic groups (Solórzano et al., 2000; Yosso et al., 2009).

Racial microaggressions comprise three categories: microassaults, microinsults, and microinvalidations (Sue et al., 2007b). Microassaults are the most overt form, which directly defame the target's racial background and are intended to be hurtful (Sue et al., 2007b). Microinsults refer to subtle communications that convey rudeness and insensitivity toward a person's racial heritage or identity (Sue et al., 2007b). Lastly, microinvalidations encompass subtle communications that invalidate the target's thoughts, feelings, or experiential reality (Sue et al., 2007b). Although all three categories of racial microaggressions include both conscious and unconscious biased beliefs and attitudes, research reveals that the unconscious, subtle, and unintentional expressions are most harmful to oppressed groups (Sue et al., 2007b).

Using Critical Race Theory (CRT), Huber and Solórzano (2015) created a model to explain that various racial microaggressions emerge from larger systems that include interpersonal, institutional, and macro dimensions (Huber & Solórzano, 2015). This model has three layers (microaggressions, institutional racism, and macroaggressions),

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each responsible for different causes of microaggressions. In other words, the incentive to construct the model using layers is to help articulate the structural and systemic forms of racism that operate in everyday racist acts (Huber & Solórzano, 2015). This model shows that microaggressions seem small, but compounded over time, they can have a deleterious impact on the everyday experience, physical health, and psychological well-being of people.

The systemic oppression generates microaggressions and exclusion for students of color (Bonilla-Silva, 2010; Huber & Solórzano, 2015; Teranishi, 2002). Research suggests that Asian American students face interpersonal and institutional racial microaggressions in American universities and society (e.g. Chou & Feagin, 2008; Museus, 2013; Park, 2008; Sue et al., 2007a; Museus & Park, 2015; Teranishi, 2002). Sue and colleagues (2007a) identify several types of microaggressions faced by Asian American students including being treated as an "alien" in their own land, having their experiences of racism denied, experiencing invalidation of ethnic differences, pathologizing cultural values and communication styles, being assigned second class citizenship, and being invisible.

In the interpersonal dimension, research has discovered that race/ethnicity and nationality are the major factors resulting in racial microaggressions toward international students. Yan and Berliner (2009) reveal how individuals treat international students based on stereotypes about their country and/or culture. Lee and Rice (2007) explore international students' perception of discrimination at a predominantly white research university. This research indicates that Neo-racism, which is discrimination based on

cultural and national differences, affects students' experience of inclusion/exclusion based on their nation of origin (Lee and Rice, 2007). Lee (2010) found similar results with international students' experiences based on country of origin through an examination of international students' experiences at a United States institution. The students from predominantly non-white regions reported unfair treatment by community members of the university when compared to the treatment of domestic students. Yao (2018) had similar findings in her study on first-year Chinese international students, who shared examples both overt and implicit discrimination because of their nationality, language, and cultural background.

In some cases, discrimination experienced by international students is brought on by non-white students with origins in the host nation or other international students (e.g., Charles-Toussaint & Crowson, 2010). A desire to be "American" rather than "other" may cause non-white domestic students to view international students negatively, and it may motivate them to distance themselves from international students by magnifying their differences (Trujillo et al., 2015). For example, research has found that when whiteness is normalized, some Asian Americans adopt a white racial frame. White racial frame stands for stereotyping and racist ideology emphasized in the visual images, emotions, narratives, and inclinations to discriminate against other groups. This frame has been deeply embedded in American individuals, institutions, and maintained as systemic racism in the United States (Chou & Feagin, 2015). In adopting this frame, Asian American may internalize negative attitudes about other racial/ethnic groups (Chou &

Feagin, 2015), and distinguish themselves from Asian international students (Yeo et al., 2019).

English language proficiency is another major issue that is often discussed in relation to international students' experiences of microaggressions (Brown, 2008; Karuppan & Barari 2010). Research shows that language proficiency influences international students' academic and social experience (Brown, 2008). High English proficiency allows international students to engage in classroom communication, lowers acculturative stress (Yeh & Inose, 2003), and facilitates acculturation into the campus culture (Karuppan & Barari, 2010). Meanwhile, international students with lower English fluency perceived higher discrimination towards themselves, which diminishes their sense of belonging and increases dissatisfaction with their experiences (Karuppan & Barari, 2010). International students from non-Western backgrounds where English is not spoken as a native language will have more problems with their English language proficiency than white international students (Lee, 2010).[5] Besides, students in different disciplines will have language problems of different intensity. In turn, spoken language barriers are far more frequent than written language (Sherry et al., 2009). For example, at the graduate level, international students face complicated interpretation processes which they may not be able to explain adequately about the research process in their disciplines (Bell, 2007).

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[5] Indian students are an exceptional example in terms of language proficiency. For example, a study found that Indian students had less difficulty with English language use because they experienced early exposure to English in their home country (Nilsson et al., 2008).

Institutional Microaggressions

Racial microaggressions are not only perpetrated at an individual level, but they are also embedded in institutional policy and practice (Huber & Solórzano, 2015; Hurtado et al., 1998). As the social construct of race shapes university policy and practice, identifying institutional microaggressions in higher education research becomes critical to improving our understanding of the racialized experience of minoritized populations (Harper, 2012; Huber & Solórzano, 2015; Yosso et al., 2009). Microaggressions reinforce white privilege and undermine a culture of inclusion. This particularly matters in the context of higher education. Universities are charged with providing an education in an environment in which everyone feels welcome. However, historically, people of color and others who do not conform to the dominant demographics prevalent at most institutions of higher education in the U.S. already don't always feel included or welcome.

Institutional microaggressions consist of those racially marginalizing actions and the university structures, practices, and discourses that endorse a campus racial climate hostile to people of color (Huber & Solórzano, 2015; Yosso et al., 2009). Kim and Kim's (2010) research categorizes different types of institutional racial microaggressions perceived by international students. They include pathologizing cultural values and communication styles, sending messages that students must assimilate their personal beliefs to match the dominant culture, and invalidating international issues and perspectives in the classroom and curriculum, which leads to international students'

experiences of being overlooked, excluded, and perceived as all being the same by members of the host culture (Kim & Kim, 2010).

The institutional microaggressions toward international students also include lack of sufficient campus resources to accommodate international students, which contribute to the hostile campus racial climates (Kher et al., 2003). As international students have increased on U.S. campuses, they perceive their campuses to be less supportive. Studies show that although the increasingly growing student population on campus creates barriers for many students. Although institutions claim that they provide accommodations, almost all student groups have experienced troubles, such as accessing resources, including health insurance, affordable housing, and financial aid (Dolly Nguyen et al., 2016; Sue et al., 2007a; Teranishi, 2002). Particularly, one study focuses on these barriers that international students encounter, including registering for classes, getting parking tickets, and having trouble seeing an advisor (Zhao et al., 2005). Scholars have argued for setting up support systems on campus to support positive college experience (Cantwell, 2015; Poloma, 2017; Bamberger, et al., 2019). For example, because of budget cuts, some "short-term" remedial adjustment programs (e.g., language programs) fail to provide enough services to international students. International students are heavily dependent on the host university in various ways, including visa status, on-campus employment, and funding opportunity (Cho & Yu, 2015). This lack of resource accommodation distresses international students, creating feelings of rejection, and contributing to their minority status on campus (Brown, 2009; Lee, 2008, 2010; Lee & Rice, 2007; Nora & Cabrera, 1996).

In conclusion, racial microaggressions take a large psychological, emotional, and social toll on Asian individuals and on their communities (Sue et al., 2007a; Sue, 2010; Teranishi, 2002; Yeo et al., 2019). These experience of microaggressions in both interpersonal and institutional levels toward international students, especially Asian international students damage their psychological well-being (Wei et al., 2007), affect their communication with domestic students and faculty members (Lee, 2008, 2010; Lee & Rice, 2007; Wang, et al., 2012; Ward, et al., 2009), affect their academic engagement and success (Dinh et al., 2008; Lee, 2010; Lee & Rice, 2007), decrease their sense of belongings on campus (Slaten et al., 2016; Yao, 2015), as well as cause them to use fewer university resources (Frey & Roysircar, 2006).

Negotiating and Reconstructing Racial Positions in the U.S.

To understand the experiences of racialization of Asian international students, we must consider various forms of race-related experiences. These include (a) socio-historical experience of racism of Asian American, (b) modern myths of Asian and Asian international students including stereotype and homogeneity, (c) national and global contexts of race and policy (d) and intersectionality.

a. History of Racialized Experiences of Asians and Asian Americans in the United States

Like other minoritized immigrant groups, Asian Americans have experienced discrimination and racism since they initially immigrant to the United States. There have been negative stereotypes about Asians since Chinese laborers first immigrated to California during the Gold Rush in the late 1840s (Yu, 2006). At that time, Chinese

immigrants were regarded as starving masses, beasts of burden, and opium addicts (Yu, 2006). Based on this perspective, Chinese immigrants were discriminated against and stereotyped as poor and inferior people. This contributed to discrimination and violence that led to the Chinese Exclusion Act in 1882, which banned Chinese laborers from entering the United States (Yu, 2006). Other Asian ethnic groups were also being discriminated against in the dominant culture in the United States. For example, negative racial stereotypes describing Japanese as subhuman, untrustworthy, and inferior before World War II were exaggerated after Pearl Harbor, leading to the internment of Japanese Americans in concentration camps (Nagata, 1990). Thus, racism and discrimination against Asian American groups was exclusionary and violent. Experience of discrimination included being denied the rights of citizenship, forbidden to own land, and incarcerated in internment camps by government, which denied them civil and human rights (Sue & Sue, 2003).

The historic mistreatment toward Asian American shifted in the 1960s during the Civil Rights Movement (Yu, 2006). Although the civil rights movement had a significant impact on improving the racialized experience of people of color in the U.S., racism continues to affect these racial minoritized groups (Sue, 2003). Instead of overt expressions of white racial superiority, racism has become more subtle and unintentional, which manifests in American social, political, and economic life (Sue, 2003; Dovidio, et al., 2002). Asian Americans began to be regarded as the "model minority", which positions Asian Americans as a successful minority in achieving academic and occupational success (Museus & Kiang, 2009). This image described Asian Americans as

being "close to white," pitting minority groups against each other, while allowing for continued discrimination against Asian Americans (Coloma, 2006; Teranishi & Pazich, 2013; Yu, 2006). Teranishi and Pazich (2013) argued that this stereotype was a manifestation of interest convergence that served to maintain white dominance in the United States. Interest convergence stipulates that racial minorities are accommodated only when it serves the interest of whites (Bell, 1980).

In the 1960s, Asian Americans began to be regarded as the "model minority", which positions Asian Americans as a successful minority in achieving academic and occupational success (Museus & Kiang, 2009). This image described Asian Americans as being "close to white," pitting minority groups against each other, while allowing for continued discrimination against Asian Americans (Coloma, 2006; Teranishi & Pazich, 2013; Yu, 2006). Teranishi and Pazich (2013) argued that this stereotype was a manifestation of interest convergence that served to maintain white dominance in the United States. Interest convergence stipulates that racial minorities are accommodated only when it serves the interest of whites (Bell, 1980). The model minority stereotype upheld the ideal of meritocracy, claiming to prove that racially and ethnically minoritized communities could overcome challenges and persevere despite inequalities in the United States (Teranishi & Pazich, 2013). Thus, the creation of a model minority was a political instrument, which was not meant to accurately describe the lived experiences of Asian American but was constructed to divide people of color and maintain and strengthen white supremacy (Yu, 2006).

The model minority myth supports the idea that racial and ethnic communities can overcome challenges associated with minority status and persevere despite inequalities in America (Takagi, 1992). The concept of the model minority myth, however, does not take into account the ethnic and socioeconomic diversity of Asian Americans. When examining the attributes of the model minority thesis, a notable association arises between the model minority stereotype and the prioritization of individual values and efforts, while comparatively neglecting discussions concerning social injustice and educational inequalities (Yu, 2006). The Model Minority image could easily be accepted by the public and even the university to disregard Asian American students.

As universities debated on whether Asian Americans should be counted as minorities in higher education admissions in the 1980s, Asian Americans became victims of their success in higher education (Ng et al., 2007). As an example, affirmative action programs at UC Berkeley originally included Asian Americans among their targeted minority groups, where they all benefited from the special admissions considerations and other support programs (Carroll et al., 2000). However, as Asian American student numbers exceeded the available undergraduate share, their race and ethnicity in turn disqualified them as a disadvantaged group. Hence, in 1984, Berkeley administrators deemed Asian Americans no longer eligible for special admissions consideration and no longer proper targets of minority-oriented outreach and support programs (Carroll et al., 2000). This example shows that Asian Americans were de-minoritized and singled out as this group excelled in regular admissions (Lee, 2008). Thus, treating Asian Americans as a model

minority allows university policies and public discourse to be de-minoritized which

separates Asian American from other minority groups (Nakanishi, 1989).

Asian Americans' racial experience in the U.S. provides context to examine how

the racialization of Asian impacts international students who share Asian cultures and

heritages. The historical notions of race continue to affect Asian Americans and Asian

immigrants, including Asian international students, in the modern views of U.S. society.

b. Modern Perceptions: Myths of Asian and Asian International Students

Asian international students' perceptions and experiences of race and racism have

been affected by the modern myth of race (e.g., Asian ethnic identities). Modern myths

about Asian and Asian international students including stereotypes, homogeneity, and

microaggressions have been adopted to guide further analysis in this section.

Challenging the Stereotypes

Racial stereotypes are deeply woven into U.S. society based on a racial caste

system in which white supremacy remains dominant (Huber & Solórzano, 2015).

Therefore, exploration of Asian and Asian Americans' racial experience must include

examinations of racial stereotypes and their effects (Solórzano et al., 2000). Stereotypes

refer to prejudice of knowledge, beliefs, and expectations about some groups (Hamilton

& Trolier, 1986). Asian Americans are often regarded as the "model minority" in the

U.S., which is a stereotyped notion that this ethnic group achieves a higher degree of

academic and economic success than the average population. The "model minority" myth

is due to Asian cultures being perceived as having strong families, valuing academics,

and working hard (Museus & Kiang, 2009; Yu, 2006).

The stereotypes regarding Asian Americans as a model minority similarly apply to Asian international students (Houshmand et al., 2014). Asian international students often fit the expectations as the model minority, such as concentrating in academically rigorous STEM fields, and don't encounter academic challenges (Lewis et al., 2000; Museus, 2008, 2013; Museus & Kiang, 2009; Museus & Park, 2015; Suzuki, 2002). For example, Houshmand and colleagues (2014) found that Asian international students are usually perceived as having greater intelligence in math and sciences and they are also ostracized for studying too hard and performing too well academically.

While the model minority myth sounds positive, research has shown that this stereotype is harmful to individuals, families, and communities (Han, 2006; Sue et al., 2007a; Yu, 2006). Asian international students' academic performance and adjustment to college environments may be different from the model minority stereotype. The prevailing depiction of Asian Americans as high academic performers imposes high and unfair expectations on Asian international students (Longerbeam et al., 2013). The model minority myth contributes to Asian international students' fear of being viewed as unsuccessful, which pressures them to prove themselves via academic achievement (Houshmand et al., 2014).

The minority myth creates barriers to learning for Asian international students as they often need help and educational resources to accommodate their academic and social needs. (Museus, 2009; Museus & Kiang, 2009; Suzuki, 2002). Individuals who carry the perception of reviewing Asians as a model minority may ignore these students' undergoing academic stress and isolation. For example, the model minority myth fuels

assumptions that Asian American students are socially inept (Lewis et al., 2000; Suzuki, 2002). Faculty members may feel it's normal to see the lack of socialization of Asian international students on campuses.

In addition to the model minority stereotype, previous studies have also identified various stereotypes which mixed with positive and negative toward Asian international students. In one such study, Ruble and Zhang (2013) investigated the stereotypes that Americans held of Chinese international students. Five stereotype clusters emerged: Chinese are (1) smart and hardworking; (2) kind, friendly, nice, and polite; (3) bad at speaking English, only friends with Chinese, not well assimilated, and socially awkward; (4) quiet, shy, loners, and not very social; and (5) oblivious, loud, intrusive on personal space, conceited, annoying, and strange and do not care to adapt. The findings include the stereotypes determined by previous research on Asians and Asian Americans (competency, lack of communication, and social skills). However, they also introduce the stereotype that Chinese are loud and annoying, which is disconcerting and likely a function of the growing density and concomitant more noticeable conational networks of Chinese students on U.S. campuses. Another study (Bonazzo & Wong, 2007) explored discrimination and stereotypes experienced by female Japanese students in the United States. In this study, stereotyping focuses on Asians and Asian Americans as overachievers. The Japanese students reported having encountered few Japanese-specific stereotypes. Instead, they noticed that Americans either racialized their ethnicity as Asian or tended to perceive the Chinese ethnicity as representative of Asians. Likewise, Lee and Carrasquillo (2006) found that American professors perceived Korean students as low in

English proficiency, unable to express critical thinking openly, and lacking eye contact during conversations; that is, Koreans were seen in the same vein as other East Asians.

Consequently, racial stereotypes of Asian international students fail to recognize students' diverse educational experiences and fail to characterize the lives of these unique individuals of international students (Longerbeam et al., 2013). The perceived stereotypes of Asian international students could further lead them to confirm negative stereotypes, internalize inferiority images, and ultimately affect their intergroup relations (Frey & Roysircar, 2006; Hamilton & Trolier, 1986; Spencer-Rodgers, 2001).

Challenging Misperceptions of Homogeneity

In the U.S. context, race often outweighs culture and ethnicity and fails to distinguish among the various groups and individuals from the same race but vary in ethnicity and nationality (Foner, 2001). Race is ''a social construct that has both self-prescribed and externally ascribed meaning.'' Thus, race in the United States has had ''more social and political meaning than biological reality'' (Howard et al., 2010, p. 96). Like race, individuals may be identified or self-identify with ethnicities in complex ways. Ethnicity refers to ''traditions, customs, activities, beliefs, and practices that pertain to a particular group of people who see themselves and are seen by others as having distinct cultural features, a separate history, and a specific sociocultural identity'' (Smedley & Smedley, 2012, p. 29). Race and ethnicity continue to be an identification method that individuals and institutions use today.

Asian Americans have been misrepresented because they are categorized and treated as a single, homogeneous racial group. Asian cultural values and beliefs include

collectivism, conformity to norms, deference to authority, emotional self-control, family

recognition through achievement, humility, hierarchical relationships, and avoidance of

shame (Kim et al., 1999). Although this group shares significant common cultural values

and beliefs, there are significant within-group differences among Asian population (Kim

et al., 1999). It is necessary to recognize that the Asian community is highly diverse, with

different identities, languages, religions, value systems, and lifestyles (Yu, 2006). For

example, there are many subgroups within the Asian American group, such as Burmese,

Laotian, Cambodian, Hmong and Nepalese. In particular, Teranishi (2007) criticized

scholarly explorations assuming that racial categorizations as a whole are consistently

homogeneous across racial groups in their lived experiences. Rather, Teranishi (2007)

emphasized the need for critical perspective in exploring Asian American students'

educational experiences.

Asian international students have various characteristics and differences,

including country of origin, ethnicity, cultural background, and languages, which all

should be recognized and be valued by others and by the host institutions. Oversimplified

stereotype perceptions of Asian international students make them vulnerable to be

reviewed as a homogeneous group (Hamilton et al., 2009; Spencer-Rodgers, 2001; Yeo et

al., 2019), which is similar to Asian American students being described as a monolithic

group (Museus & Kiang, 2009).

The misperception of homogeneity fails to identify Asian international students'

experience between race and ethnicity (Jang, 2018; Teranishi, 2007). For example,

various systems and surveys in the institutional and national level often fail to

acknowledge racial, national, and cultural diversity among international students which (un)consciously lets the dominant group view Asian international students through a monoethnic racialized lens (Yeo et al., 2019). This example shows that insights from American racial categories might not fully capture Asian international students' racial experiences. Asian international students might not describe their experiences in the American racial narratives but interpret their racial experiences with the framework they have acquired in their home countries, with transnational spaces, and shaped by the institutions and student agencies. Thus, rather than fit all students into the Asian racial category, recognizing the differences among Asian international students based on their different ethnicity and sociocultural backgrounds is important.

c. Situating International Students' Challenges in the National and Global Context

Asian international students' perceptions and experiences of race and racism have been affected by the modern myth of race (e.g., Asian ethnic identities), but also by the unique characteristics of their status in the transnational spaces (students' citizenship and residency status). Situating international students' challenges in the national and global contexts including analysis of national socio-political contexts, global white supremacy, and critiques of neoliberal ideologies.

National Socio-Political Contexts

International students are generally perceived as skilled laborers and migration in U.S. society, as with many western countries' governments, make efforts to address labor market gaps arising from economic shifts and structural aging. Many western governments want international students for their skilled labor. However, the U.S. has

more restrictive policies on the official immigration of international students compared to countries like Canada and Australia in order to become permanent residents. Political intervention in U.S. immigration policies have implications on American institutions and on international students' college experiences.

There has been a concerted effort by the U.S. to restrict access to foreign nationals, including international students, since September 11, 2001 (Mueller. 2009). Starting from 2016, we have seen as of late that the prevailing political rhetoric under the Trump administration has been found to be positively associated with prejudice against many groups, including international students (Erhart, 2016). These immigration policies make international students perceive the U.S. to be less welcoming (Down, 2017). Such ideologies reflect resistance to change and justification of inequality (Mills, 2003).

The former Trump administration's promotion of nationalist ideology set an anti-immigration agenda, which has extended to higher education, primarily targeting international students (Tolman, 2018). The Trump administration's anti-immigration policies potentially affected international students' legal status and immigration plans. For example, the Trump administration's Executive Order 13769 (2017) titled, "Protecting the Nation from Foreign Terrorist Entry into the United States", also referred to as the "Muslim Ban", restricted entry of individuals from Iran, Iraq, Libya, Somalia, Sudan, Syria and Yemen. The Executive Order increased fear for the Muslim population on college campuses, as students feared the personal consequences of this national policy on themselves and their families. It also influenced the campus racial climate for Muslim students throughout U.S. higher education. Moreover, in 2020, the Trump administration

attempted to impose restrictions on international students who wanted to work in the U.S. after graduation on Optional Practical Training (OPT), including in STEM (science, technology, engineering and math) fields (Anderson, 2020). This targeted restriction was never implemented, but has since been interpreted to be aimed at students from China and aimed at reducing immigration to lower the U.S.'s unemployment rate (Anderson, 2020). In conclusion, these examples demonstrate how the sociopolitical and sociohistorical context influenced campus racial climate throughout various policies. These examples may also serve as a component of analysis of international students' experience of racialization, and it also led to a broader analysis of the interrelated oppressions and systems of power during the Trump administration and the subsequent administration.

Global White Supremacy

International students' racialization experience has also increasingly been impacted by the global sociocultural, economic, and political factors that interplay with race and white supremacy. The global political, economic, and cultural systems are overwhelmingly controlled and dominated by white supremacy (Mills, 2003). This economic, socio-political, and cultural hegemony resulted in a racial caste system in which white supremacy retains its dominance (Bardhan & Zhang, 2017). Allen (2001) refers to white supremacy as, "the global system that confers unearned power and privilege on those who become identified as white while conferring disprivilege and disempowerment on those who become identified as people of color" (p. 476). While white supremacy is a system created by white people, it can also infiltrate the ideologies

and actions of people of color as well. This historical legacy of racialization through white supremacy remains evident today and has dangerous implications in its covert presence, including its prevalence in higher education (Mills, 2003; Stein, 2017). From a critical perspective, higher education has perpetuated the political and racialized system that gives more power to whites, as well as decides who gets to be represented in higher education, and how these representations vary by race and class (Bardhan & Zhang, 2017; Stein, 2017; Vavrus & Pekol, 2015).

Asian international students' racialized experiences have been influenced by a larger systemic racism that includes ideologies of white supremacy. White supremacy's influence on international students in the global context is apparent in two specific areas: the privileged positioning of white American values and the pervasiveness of English as the dominant language. First, global political, economic, and cultural systems are overwhelmingly controlled and dominated by whites (Stein, 2017). These systems favor students who share the privilege and power (predominate white), encouraging others (students of color) to desire the same (Vavrus & Pekol, 2015). The desire to enhance their social and cultural capitals is combined with white supremacist thought, resulting in international students adopting the U.S. racial hierarchical ideology.

For Asian international students, receiving a western higher education can lead to a tendency of prioritizing white culture over other non-white cultures. For example, research found that when whiteness has been set up as norms, international students are often subconsciously accustomed to attitudes that elevate whiteness and to practice whiteness (Yeo et al., 2019). DiAngelo's (2006) research affirms classroom norms and

behavioral patterns of white privilege in predominantly white university classrooms. Whiteness culture in U.S. higher education systems harms quality of learning opportunities for Asian international students as these students are often quiet and don't fit into the class discussions (DiAngelo, 2006). Further, racial segregation, particularly Asian international students' segregation, is often justified by the pervasive colorblind racism and normative whiteness on campus. whiteness and white privilege bolster advantageous social positions for white students at the expense of Asian American and Asian international students (Yeo et al., 2019). These subtextual negative messages about Asian languages, English accents, social skills, and cultures elevate whiteness as an essential element of American society (Yeo et al., 2019).

Neoliberalism's Influence on Students' Understanding of Race and Racialization

Neoliberal ideology, as a socio-economic theory, is one dimension of globalization, which is linked to economics, and emphasizes free trade under globalization (Olssen & Peters, 2005). On the one hand, neoliberalism rejects governmental intervention in a domestic economy, believing in the market's role and mechanisms that allocate resources in society (Giroux, 2004; Olssen & Peters, 2005). On the other hand, neoliberalism offers a market view of citizenship that is generally against the rights in education, welfare, health, and other public goods (Giroux, 2014). Neoliberalism has not only altered the discourse in the political economy but has also shaped our understandings of race and racialization (Omi & Winant, 2014). Yet, there are very few studies on students' experience under neoliberalism of higher education (Levin, 2005; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Also, there is a gap in the literature linking the

neoliberal higher education context and race in international students' experiences (Glass et al., 2014). Without considering the rise of students' interactions within the greater socioeconomic context, the discourse within higher education cannot provide a comprehensive understanding of the changes in student life under neoliberal regime.

Neoliberalism has become a mainstream characteristic of higher education around the world, with increasing scholarly investigations of the rise of academic capitalism (Altbach & Knight, 2007; Edelstein & Douglas, 2012; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Academic capitalism demands that universities transform their basic functions of teaching, research, and service into revenue-generating operations (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). As neoliberalism redefines the public good of higher education in terms of economic gain, the purpose of educating students for the public good is undermined when education has been treated as a service to people who can afford to buy it (Giroux, 2002, 2014; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004).

Neoliberalism's Influence on Students' Understanding of Race and Racialization

U.S. higher education embraces a market-driven approach to generate revenue by recruiting international students (Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). Unlike domestic students who enjoy a state subsidy, international students have often been charged higher tuition and fees without taking any loans from the government or increasing the burden on taxpayers (Cantwell, 2015). International students offer greater financial compensation to host universities and the competition for fee-paying students has been one prominent way for universities to generate additional income (Marginson, 2007b; Slaughter & Cantwell, 2012). As a result, international students are primarily being seen as a source of financial

revenue. International students usually pay double or even triple the tuition fees than domestic students. The competition for fee-paying students, especially undergraduate students, has been one prominent way in which higher education institutions compete for additional income (Marginson, 2007b; Slaughter & Cantwell, 2012). For this reason, many higher education institutions are targeting middle- to upper-class international students from specific regions, thereby limiting access for low-income international students (Altbach, 2012a; Altbach & Knight, 2007; Schofer & Meyer, 2005).

This selectivity enrollment strategy pays little attention to the geographical and socioeconomic diversity among international students (Poloma, 2017; Viggiano et al., 2018). It narrows institutions' academic, racial, and ethnic diversity of the students' pool and contradicts admission policy and practice (Poloma, 2017; Viggiano et al., 2018). The less geographical and socioeconomic diversity of international students also limits the opportunity that domestic students must gain understanding of diverse international populations (Viggiano et al., 2018). Scholars have argued against approaching international students as "cash cows" without setting up support systems on campus to guarantee they receive positive college experiences (Cantwell, 2015; Poloma, 2017; Bamberger, et al., 2019). Perceiving international students as "cash cows" has inherent negative implications for quality, access, retention, integration, and inclusion of international students (Poloma, 2017; Lee, 2008, 2010; Lee & Rice, 2007). This rationale in international student recruitment is turning universities away from their public good as it cannot accommodate those who do not pay for tuition and fees.

Despite neoliberalism's influence in higher education revenue generation, scholars describe several interconnected elements of how neoliberalism shapes racism in society and in higher education (Davis, 2007; Giroux, 2003; Iftikar, 2017). Several connections are highlighted below to explain the relations between neoliberalism and neoliberal racism. First, neoliberalism's consumer thinking lets people choose and prefer their diversity agendas and social/racial justice efforts based on individual level of comfort of engagement on these issues (Case & Ngo, 2017; Iftikar, 2017). Second, neoliberalism's individualism beliefs emphasize individual responsibility for their own success while ignoring racial inequities (Davis, 2007; Giroux, 2003; Iftikar, 2017). Giroux, (2003) argues that racial matters can also be privatized in the neoliberal era. This issue is based on the color-blind approach that omits sociohistorical context, thus limiting the understanding of racism to a matter of individual attitudes and personal prejudices. Third, systemic oppressions place the responsibility to address racism on an individual level (Case & Ngo, 2017; Giroux, 2003). Neoliberal cultural logics regarding race shapes students' unique understandings of, and responses to, race and racism with the domain of self-responsibilities (Giroux, 2003).

Simultaneously, international students' race along with the neoliberal logic shapes the students' unique understandings of, and responses to, race and racism that align with the historical and social construct of race in the U.S. The reasons for students' transnational mobility for education include but are not limited to obtaining knowledge, gaining the prestige of a foreign degree, and emigration opportunities (Altbach & Engberg, 2014). Besides, international students' experiences are often influenced by their

initial goal of overseas studies and in their worldview of market-driven logics, which mainly focus on private wealth accumulation (Stein et al., 2016). Many of the Asian international students' global education journeys were initiated by the goals of social mobility in order to improve their position in the global knowledge market (Fong, 2011). The global educational aspirations of middle and upper middle-class Asian international students' pursuit of "cross-cultural" research in the neoliberal global context enable them the choice and freedom to move back and forth across national and cultural boundaries (Fong, 2011). Thus, the role and meaning of education in their strategic cosmopolitan project is privatized as an individual accomplishment and responsibility for self-management rather than as a public good.

d. Intersectionality

Kimberle Crenshaw (1991) created the umbrella term intersectionality to build a coalition among the study areas of race, ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status (SES), age, and language as an interdisciplinary endeavor and to include diverse social categorizations and contexts beyond Black women. Later, scholars use intersectionality as the various ways in which multiple social categorizations interact to shape the dimensions of the experiences of individuals (e.g., Collins & Bilge, 2016; Crenshaw, 1991; Jang, 2018). The intersectionality perspective is useful as it reveals that inequality is multidimensional and that social problems, policies, and practices are the product of intersecting race, ethnicity, SES, and/ or gender categorizations (Jang, 2018). This perspective renders visible the power relations and the structural oppression and exclusion of marginalized people, and it builds interdisciplinary knowledge for more

nuanced and complex understandings of and changes in the lives of groups of marginalized students (Jang, 2018).

International students have different intersecting identities, such as race/ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, and religious beliefs. International students' identities can be viewed as intersectional in their examination of race, sex, class, national origin, and how these combinations play out in various settings. International students' realization experience related to their multiple marginalized identities (Lee & Opio, 2011; Wong et al. 2014). Literature usually discusses international students as one monolithic group despite their multiple countries of origin, cultures, and backgrounds (Bonazzo & Wong 2007). Intersectional studies are critical to unpacking discrimination against international students. However, there is a lack of intersectional analysis in studies on international students' experiences. Literature indicates that international students face multiple and intersecting forms of discrimination) and oppression (Lee, 2007; Lee & Opio, 2011) The lack of consideration of intersectionality results in insufficient understanding of different international students' responses when experiencing microaggressions and negative campus racial climates.

Cultural and Country of Origin Differences

Asian international students' racialization experience varies greatly based on their culture and country of origins (Houshmand et al., 2014). In general, Asian cultures share some similarities, for example, Asian international students' group ethnicities based on geographic and cultural boundaries, for example, East Asian (e.g., Chinese, Japanese, Korean, and Taiwanese), Southeast Asian (e.g., Filipino, Cambodian, Vietnamese, and

Thai), South Asian (e.g., Bangladeshi, Indian, and Pakistani). Asian international students are likely to have been brought up in a culture that emphasizes collectivism and obligation to family and community. Commonly, these students arrive with high expectations in academic achievement and substantial pressure to excel (Nillson et al., 2005). Asian international students who endorse Asian values and experience high race-related stress might embrace their culture when faced with racism and draw on cultural values and cultural styles of coping, such as collective group belonging, that support their well-being in these conditions (Houshmand et al., 2014).

Although Asian countries share cultural similarities, the cultural differences are distinguished among Asian countries. One study of East and South Asian international students at a Canadian university found that these students respond differently. East Asian international students are shown to disengage from certain academic activities and withdraw from academic engagement more than South Asian students (Houshmand et al., 2014). Houshmand and colleagues (2014) also found that East Asian students reported more racial microaggressions than South Asian students, which may have been linked to lesser English language proficiency. East Asian students' feelings of shame contributes to their withdrawal from certain spaces on campus (Wei et al., 2008).

Students' country of origin plays a vital role in students' perceptions of and response to racial experience. Taking China for example, Chinese international students consistently accounted for the largest source of international students for U.S. universities (Open Door, 2022). Chinese international students' racial understanding in the host society is closely connected to how race and racism are conceptualized in contemporary

China. In China, the terms 'race' and 'racism' are rarely used, the conceptual thinking of race has been formed based on nationalism, which is the historical and contemporary Western imperialism in China (Dikötter 2015). A hundred years of war since the middle 19th century with the western countries and Japan brought the idea of humiliation and national rejuvenation to Chinese people (Callahan, 2017; Wang, 2014; Wang, 2020). When the People's Republic of China was founded, the government adopted top-down governance and prohibited bottom-up activism. This governance structure significantly shapes Chinese students' perception of social justice movements in China and beyond, including in the U.S. (Jiang, 2020).

Under China's recent economic growth since the 1980s, Chinese parents are able to afford to send their kids to study abroad (Wang et al., 2021). Many Chinese students are often enthusiastic about using their studying abroad experience to become international citizens (Wang et al., 2021). That is, they were enthusiastic about broadening their political, social, and cultural perspectives to become representatives of China in the global hierarchy. Also, the economic strength of the nation makes young Chinese tend to be more confident about their national identity compared to the older generations (Callahan, 2017; Wang, 2020).

When studying in the U.S. and other western countries, Chinese international students are generally proud of their national identity and are inclined to be more outspoken against injustice and unfair treatment from the foreign powers (Wang, 2014; Wang et al., 2021). For example, Chinese college students organized a large-scale protest Western bias against China before the 2008 Beijing Olympics and they also engaged in

anti-racism activities during the COVID-19 pandemic (Hail, 2015). One recent study during the pandemic (Long, 2022) found that Chinese international students' national identity became strengthened via their own experiences of living abroad. These students started to express their dissatisfaction with their unfair treatment abroad and their support for the Chinese government. As a result, popular nationalism tended to rise among Chinese international students (Long, 2022).

Graduate Students' Unique Experiences

Graduate education has been described as a process of socialization to an ultimate professional role (Weidman et al., 2001). Graduate education is a time of multiple and rapid life changes which is associated with high risk for the development of physical and psychological health problems (Weidman et al., 2001). Graduate students, particularly those who enrolled in doctoral programs, are important contributors in many fields of study, such as medicine and STEM (Zhang, 2016). They not only contribute to research activities in these fields, but also serve as teaching assistants for various undergraduate courses and laboratory sections.

International graduate students' experience varies at the school and department level; therefore, academic discipline, program type, department culture, and advisors are closely related to their academic experience (Golde, 2005; McClure, 2007). The literature shows that academic departments with higher completion rates have the features including positive department climate, supportive faculty, and good faculty-student relationship (Erichsen, & Bolliger, 2011). In contrast, students who have a lower compatibility with the institute and limited social networks have lower completion rates.

As interactions between graduate students, peers, and faculty are important in graduate programs, their relationship can determine a graduate student's academic, social, and racial experience.

Previous studies found that international graduate students often must make difficult choices between a social life and academic life; as a result, many of them chose to limit their participation in social activities, focusing instead on academic studies (Andrade, 2006). Another example can be found in a first-year international graduate students' engagement study. Researchers found international students spent considerably less time socializing and relaxing than American students (Zhao et al., 2005). This study indicates that in order to have academic success, first year graduate students spent less time socializing as they were still adjusting to a foreign culture, language, and academic environment (Zhao et al., 2005). In summary, international graduate students not only deal with academic requirements, but also, they experience socio-cultural challenges from their college campuses, community, and the country.

Gender Differences

Students' experiences of realization may be inherently gendered (Liang et al., 2010; Wong et al., 2014); that is, racial discrimination manifests itself through gender-specific racial stereotypes that are distinct to Asian American women and men. Male Asian students are more vulnerable to microaggressions than their female counterparts (Won et al., 2014). Asian American men are regarded sexually inadequate and lacking in masculinity (Wong et al., 2014; Ye, 2006). Asian female students have also experienced gender oppression and power domination (sexism) underlying the institutionalized gender

beliefs (e.g., Dill & Zambrana, 2009). As an example, a recent study found that institutionalized oppressions as critical external forces affecting Southeast Asian female students. Patriarchal norms devaluing females as well as early marriage and childbearing patterns are salient factors affecting the distinct experiences and outcomes of Southeast Asian international students (Jang, 2018). As a result, this group of students pursuing higher education was the lowest among females from other Asian countries and significantly lower than that of Southeast Asian males across.

Unfortunately, some universities haven't considered graduate students' gender differences and role conflicts and failed to manage institutional support for them. The lack of support may further impact students' experience and success in graduate school. For example, Mallinckrodt & Leong (1992) found that female graduate students reported significantly less support from their academic departments and family environments than did their male counterparts. The literature also suggested that female graduate students are likely to face significantly more stress and symptoms of stress than their male counterparts.

Responding to Racism and Hostile Campus Racial Climate

Literature on student resistance indicates that when racially minoritized students face oppression and systemic challenges, they tend to develop resistance strategies that are culturally influenced (Comeaux et al., 2020; Jones & Reddick, 2017). That is, students' resistance depends on not only students' individual efforts, but it is also contingent on the availability of resources, institutional and structural factors influencing the students' lived realities. Various institutional mediating factors, ranging from public

policy to the university's strategies, should be at the heart of shaping international students' experience. Therefore, the issue is not simply about structure and agency but also the mediating role of institutions.

The role of student agency in co-constructing cultural other-awareness and repositioning themselves. From the perspective of this student's self-positioning, international students are active agents in bridging existing gaps, assumed to be within themselves and others, in mutual cultural understanding. Through attending to the needs of both ends, the students reconstruct their cultural identity and relationships with other social actors with whom they interact. For example, faculty often perceive Asian students as lacking a participatory spirit in and outside the classroom and lacking the ability to socialize (Trice, 2007). However, international students' being quiet does not necessarily mean those students, especially Asian ones, are being passive, submissive, or indifferent. This view fails to unpack the complexity of international students' intentions and their agency underpinning their behavior.

Previous studies indicate that self-validation, co-ethnic community, and environment are the common channels and resources Asian international students (Glass & Westmont, 2014; Houshmand et al., 2014) use when responding to hostile campus racial climate and resisting assimilation. First, a notable number of international students of color had a strong sense of their identities, which made them resistant to cultural assimilation or Americanization beyond the threshold needed for academic success only (Sato & Hodge, 2009). Although some of them struggle between what they want to hold on to and what they feel pressured to adapt to (Bardhan & Zhang, 2017), international

students' internalized cultural values help them maintain their uniqueness and self-conceptions, as well as help them to continue with their study (Sato & Hodge, 2009). Studies found that Asian international students reaffirm their ethnicity and self-esteem to counter and ameliorate the negative effect of stress and discrimination (Longerbeam et al., 2013). For example, in research of Chinese students who have negative perceptions of the U.S. campus racial climate, researchers found that Chinese students have an increasing sense of obligation to defend their country against criticism, and they become more aware of their identities as Chinese people (Longerbeam et al., 2013). Another research about international students of color found that they resist the imposition of U.S. race ideology in order to maintain a positive identity in an environment that racially subjugates them. Ethnicity, language, and nationality are positive sources of identity used to push back against racial downgrading (Bardhan & Zhang, 2017). Therefore, when international students emphasize their own identities and national pride from their original culture, they are maintaining their personal, social, and national identities.

Second, some Asian international students actively seek opportunities to participate in activities including mentorship programs, counseling services, and community outreach (Sato & Hodge, 2009). Studies find that campus space and student organizations can function as subcultures to serve as "safe-spaces" that positively support the experiences of racial/ethnic minority students (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Harper & Quaye, 2007; Hurtado, et al., 2012; Kuh & Love, 2000; Solórzano & Villalpando, 1998). By joining these organizations, ethnic minority students improve their cross-racial interactions and increase their sense of belongings (Berger & Milem, 1999). Similar

findings are displayed in international students' studies. Through involvement in campus space and student organizations, international students develop university identities (Glass & Westmont, 2014), and thus gain resilience (Glass & Westmont, 2014; Houshmand et al., 2014).

Other Asian international students, however, are hesitant to challenge their circumstances, environment, and campus racial climate (Houshmand et al., 2014; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Wei et al., 2008). They are sometimes to assume a victimized posture by remaining a passive mentality and accept their marginalized positioning (Houshmand et al., 2014). Asian international students report deliberately choosing to stay in their racial and cultural circles, disengaging from certain academic activities, and limiting their engagement within the classroom in order to avoid racial microaggressions (Houshmand et al., 2014). For example, Asian international students prefer to ask their co-ethnic friends for help rather than using campus resources (Houshmand et al., 2014; Wei et al., 2008). Also, international students have developed their own intercultural communication strategies by enrolling in classes that do not require a lot of interactions with peers and professors (Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007). The frequent use of passive form of reactions to deal with perceived discrimination result increasing negative consequences of depressed feelings, especially when the level of perceived discrimination is high (Wei et al., 2008).

Theoretical and Conceptual Frameworks

This study engages several theoretical and conceptual frameworks including campus racial climate framework (Hurtado et al., 1998, 2002), The learning race in a U.S.

context framework (Fries-Britt et al., 2014), Asian Critical Race Theory (AsianCrit) [Chang, 1993; Museus & Iftikar, 2013], and student resistance framework (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001). Within the campus racial climate frame, my study will focus on the psychology (individuals' views of discrimination and attitudes toward other racial/ethnic backgrounds) and behavioral dimensions (frequency of interaction among members of different social identity groups and the quality of interactions). The campus racial climate framework enables me to tackle issues of microaggressions and challenging interactions that many Asian students confront. AsianCrit will be used to better analyze the role of racism in Asian American students and Asian international students' racialized experiences under the umbrella of Asianization (a racialization process that impacts the experiences of Asian and Asian American groups). The student resistance framework helps me to understand the intersectionality in race, racism, and other forms of subordination that students suffer. It also helps to understand students' level of critique of oppressive conditions, as well as their motivation in searching for racial equity on campus.

Campus Racial Climate Framework

Campus racial climate, an important social environmental factor that has an impact on students' university experiences, has been defined as the current attitudes, behaviors, and standards of faculty, staff, administrators, as well as their experiences with campus diversity and different racial groups (Hurtado et al., 1998). The multidimensional model of campus racial climate has five dimensions: 1) compositional or structural dimension, 2) the psychological dimension of the climate, 3) the behavioral dimension of

the climate, and 4) an institution's history and legacy of inclusion or exclusion (Hurtado et al., 1998), 5) organizational dimension (Milem et al., 2005).

Although this campus racial climate framework was designed to understand undergraduate student experience, it has been used to guide a wide range of assessments in institutional climate including graduate students, faculty, and staff (Hurtado et al., 1998; Hurtado, et al., 2012). This framework has also been measured by researchers to examine various cultural identity domains, such as gender, race/ethnicity, and religion (Rankin & Reason, 2005). Prior research has thoroughly documented campus racial climate's influence on students on college campuses. Hostile campus racial climate contextualized through microaggressions toward racial/ethnic minority students, including African Americans, Asian Americans, and Latina/o students is severe (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Huber & Solórzano, 2015; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Sue et al., 2009; Yosso et al., 2009).

This study will focus on the three dimensions of the campus racial climate framework: compositional, psychological, and behavioral dimensions under the campus racial climate framework (Hurtado et al., 1998). Compositional diversity means the numerical composition of students from various races/ethnicities. The psychological dimension of the campus climate involves individuals' views of discrimination and attitudes toward other racial/ethnic backgrounds. The most critical finding under this dimension indicates that students of color perceive and experience their educational environments differently than their white peers do, and that these perceptions can impact student outcomes (Harper & Hurtado, 2007; Hurtado et al., 2008; Museus et al., 2008).

Based on the discussion of different experiences of campus racial climate among domestic students, we could extend the conversation to international students as most of them are students of color. International students are usually targeted because of their ethnic/racial identities and the intersections of their ethnic/racial identities with other social identities including gender, sexuality, and class (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001).

The behavior dimension of campus racial climate focuses on frequency of interaction among members of different social identity groups and the quality of interactions (Hurtado, 2005; Hurtado et al., 2008). Under this dimension, we care about not only the number of students of color, but also interactions among these students (Hurtado et al., 1998, 2002). Interactions among students can occur in both formal and informal settings on campus. Formal interactions refer to campus-facilitated interactions (e.g., classroom and co-curricular settings) [Gurin et al., 2002; Hurtado, 2005]. Informal interactions occur during everyday activities outside of campus-facilitated interactions (Hurtado, 2005; Hurtado et al. 2008). Research shows that positive interactions with diverse peers are associated with students' cognitive, interpersonal skills, as well as sense of belonging on campus (Hurtado et al., 1998; Chang et al, 2004; Gurin et al., 2002; Pike & Kuh, 2006). For international students, investigations using domestic and international student samples generally show a positive association between intergroup contact and beneficial outcomes (Glass, 2012; Longerbeam et al., 2013; Ward et al., 2009). Thus, there are benefits for college campuses to provide opportunities to improve peer interactions between domestic and international students, as well as to facilitate

environments to help international students to better engage in and contribute to the diversity campus.

Several studies have already used the campus climate model to examine international students' experience and demonstrate the benefit of engaging this framework in future research (Glass, 2012; Jean-Francois, 2019; Longerbeam et al., 2013; Ward et al., 2009; Wang et al., 2014; Yao et al., 2019). However, those studies relied primarily on quantitative methods, leaving a lack of empirical data from qualitative research. Therefore, by engaging the discussion of campus racial climate and focusing specifically on Asian international students, this study will contribute to the literature in understanding how racial relations and interactions influence this particular population.

Asian Critical Race Theory

The Critical Race Theory (CRT) emerged during the U.S. Civil Rights movements in the 1970s in response to the failures of civil rights litigation to generate significant racial reform (Comeaux, et al., 2020). CRT grew from Critical Legal Studies, where CRT legal scholars recognized race and racial inequality were reproduced through the law and sought to address the role of racism in the law (e.g., Bell, 1992). CRT privileges the experience of people of color in opposition to normative white standards (Liu, 2009).

Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) introduced CRT in education scholarship in 1995. CRT argues for the centrality of race and racism, countering white hegemony, white supremacy, and claims of color blindness and meritocracy (Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). Since that time, applications of CRT to the experiences of marginalized

racial groups have grown in the field of Education (e.g., Solórzano, et al., 2000; Yosso et al., 2009). Solórzano and Yosso (2002) define CRT as "a framework or set of basic insights, perspectives, methods, and pedagogy that seeks to identify, analyze, and transform those structural and cultural aspects of education that maintain subordinate and dominant racial positions in and out of the classroom" (p. 25). CRT provides methodological tools to invite students of color to share their racialized experience and analyze how they respond to racism (e.g., Smith et al., 2007; Solórzano et al., 2001; Yosso et al., 2009).

Although CRT has helped education researchers center race and white supremacy in their analyses, it is important to acknowledge that CRT does have limitations when applied to Asian Americans. Yet, in-depth critical analyses of other racial groups are needed to generate a better understanding of race, racialization, and white supremacy. Critical frameworks based on CRT that are grounded in other communities of color can stimulate deeper inquiry into these communities of color's experiences (e.g., Solórzano& Yosso, 2002; Yosso et al., 2009). Therefore, CRT has developed different branches, such as Latino/a Critical Race Theory to address Lationo/a experience (e.g., Solórzano et al. 2000; Yosso et al., 2009) and Asian Critical Race Theory (AsianCrit) to support the experience of Asians in America (Chang, 1993; Museus, 2014; Teranishi, 2002).

Extending the construct of CRT to further racial specificity, Asian American legal scholars recognize that while many ethnic minority groups have suffered from exclusion and marginalization, Asian Americans have been subjected to different forms of exclusion and oppression (Chang, 1993; Lee, 2005; Wu, 2002). According to Asian

critical scholars, one of the unique aspects of racism against Asian Americans relates to nativism ("perpetual foreigners") [Chang, 1993; Wu, 2002]. Other racialization Asian critical scholars have fought against the "model minority myth", which denies contemporary racism towards Asian Americans, dismisses the diversity and complexity of struggles within the Asian American community, and sets Asian Americans struggles against those of other people of color (Chang, 1993; Lee, 2005; Wu, 2002). AsianCrit builds on the core tenets of CRT to offer a refined set of tenets that can advance critical analyses of racism specific to Asian Americans. In doing so, AsianCrit not only illuminates racism against Asian Americans, but also contributes to larger discussions regarding how racism functions in U.S. society. Both models (perpetual foreigners & model minority myth) operate to "Otherize" people of Asian descent.

AsianCrit centers the racialized experiences of Asian Americans over the course of U.S. history and their intersections with immigration and citizenship (Chang, 1993; Museus & Iftikar, 2013). Museus and Iftikar (2013) have extended this framework to aid in analyzing the role of racism in Asian American experiences and introduced 7 major tenets to better explain how race and racism operate for Asian Americans in contemporary society.

1. *Asianization:* refers to the mechanism by which society racializes Asian Americans. It is grounded in the notion of Asians being racialized by white supremacy, which leads to the exclusion of Asians in laws, policies, programs, and perspectives (Iftikar & Museus, 2018).

2. *Transnational Contexts*: highlights the historical and current political, economic, and social processes when analyzing the impacts of racism on Asian Americans.

3. *(Re)constructive History*: calls for transcending invisibility and silence to construct an Asian American narrative.

4. *Strategic (anti) Essentialism:* reviews race as a social construction and emphasizes how Asian Americans are racially categorized as a monolithic group.

5. *Intersectionality:* refers to the idea that racism can intersect with other systems of oppression (e.g., heteronormativity, sexism) and social identities (e.g., gender, class, sexual orientation).

6. *Story, Theory, and Praxis:* refers to the power of stories from Asian Americans which can be used to inform theory and guide practice to better represent the Asian American community.

7. *Commitment to Social Justice*: argues that research should be employed with the intent of social activism and transformation.

Though the original AsianCrit was developed for Asian American legal scholarship, elements of it can be applied to educational research (Iftikar &Museus, 2013; Liu, 2009). The seven tenets of AsianCrit can be applied to education in the form of analyzing White supremacy and the experiences of Asian Americans in U.S. education. To build this connection between AsianCrit and Asian international graduate students in this study, I acknowledge that all these tenets can be applied; however, I am focusing on three aspects of the AsianCrit framework.

First, the AsianCrit term "Asianization" explains that racialization as "Asian" is based on a stereotypical visual appearance and reduces Asians to a monolithic group (Museus & Iftikar, 2013). For example, Asian American students in higher education are often misread as Asian international students, irrespective of nationality and ethnicity identities (Yeo, et al., 2019). So, scholars indicated that the AsianCrit framework might be extended to facilitate analyses of Asian international student experiences (Iftikar & Museus, 2018).

Another tenet of AsianCrit is understanding race and ethnicity through transnational contexts. Through a transnational framework, the impact of racism in both historical and contemporary international contexts highlight how white supremacy influences the lives of Asians beyond national boundaries (Museus, 2014; Museus & Iftikar, 2013). For example, Asian Americans have been historically mistreated and excluded by U.S. laws and policies, so they have been seen as foreigners in their own country (Iftikar & Museus, 2018; Yu, 2006). Such experiences of Asian Americans as foreigners is manifested through responses to an English accent, physical appearance, ascription of intelligence, and pathologizing cultural values (Sue et al., 2007). Many Asian American students report experiencing these racial incidences in higher education institutions.

Also, the transnational tenet in AsianCrit reveals the imperialist aspects of the increasing numbers of Asian international students in the U.S. For example, international student recruitment and retention are often discussed as benefits for the university. Universities use these students to represent themselves as diverse and globally engaged

(Iverson, 2005; Marginson, 2007). However, as international students are expected to pay high student fees, without taking any loans from the government or increasing the burden on taxpayers (Cantwell, 2015), universities mainly recruit them for profit-making (Marginson, 2007; Slaughter & Cantwell, 2012). Besides, as immigration policies in the U.S. have historically been discriminatory and largely based on race, international students of color find it hard to stay in America, find jobs, and establish their citizenship. By setting restrictive student visa and immigration policies, the United States as a host country perpetuates its existing racialized social structure and justifies racial inequalities within the context of white hegemony (Bardhan & Zhang, 2017). Thus, international students are perceived as economic and political commodities within higher education and larger policy levels to maintain a white supremacist system (Museus & Iftikar, 2013; Slaughter & Cantwell, 2012; Yao et al., 2019).

Third, the tenet of intersectionality considers how other systems of oppression such as sexism, ableism, and heterosexism (in addition to racism) shaped the lived experiences of Asian Americans (Museus, 2014). AsianCrit was proposed to conceptualize Asian and Asian Americans' racial realities and examine the interaction between multiple identities (Chang, 1993; Museus, 2014). Asian international students have different intersecting identities, such as race/ethnicity, gender, socioeconomic status, which can be viewed as intersectional. Examining the relationship between and among these identities makes it important to consider how these combinations play out in various settings (Yao et al., 2019). While the literature investigates international students' ethnic identity, research does not adequately account for how ethnic identity overlapping

with other social identities like skin color and country of origin impacts how students may be perceived (Smith & Khawaja, 2011). For example, Asian international students may experience discrimination for being Asian, having darker skins, and coming from less wealthy countries. Male Asian international students are more vulnerable to microaggressions than their female counterparts (Won et al., 2014). In addition, multiple external elements contribute to the oppression situation and a hostile campus racial climate encompasses environment, practices, and socio-political factors (Museus, 2014; Yeo et al., 2019). As there is a lack of intersectional analysis in studies on international students' experiences, I will use this analytic framework to examine students' perception of campus racial climate with institutional, structural, and ideological dimensions of racial oppression.

Learning Race in a U.S. Context Framework

The learning race in a U.S. context framework (Fries-Britt et al., 2014) has been developed to examine how international students' experiences with race and discrimination are a dynamic, and ongoing process impacted by the U.S. racial context. In the framework, the home country, and the U.S. racial context both influence international students' racial experience over time. The learning race in a U.S. context framework (Fries-Britt et al., 2014) has four themes: a) unexamined U.S. racial-ethnic identity, b) ethnic/racial encounters in the U.S. context, c) moving toward identity examination in the U.S. context, and d) integrative awareness in the U.S. context. These themes address the perceptions that students have about race and the behaviors that they engage in when confronted with race.

First, unexamined U.S. racial-ethnic identity illustrates that international students feel disconnected to racial issues in the United States (Fries-Britt et al., 2014). Because race manifests differently across national contexts, many international students lack awareness or salience of racial identity until coming to the United States. As international students do not understand issues of race in a United States context, they do not identify and internalize U.S. notions of racism, leading to an unexamined U.S. racial-ethnic identity.

Second, ethnic/racial encounters reflect that international students' encounters with race and racism serve as catalysts for examining their race and resisting the impact of racism in the U.S. context (Fries-Britt et al., 2014). However, when students encounter incidents involving racial and ethnic identity, they are reluctant to respond or resist racial distractions.

Third, the moving toward identity examination shows that international students move from being an "outsider," where they rely on their beliefs that race does not affect them to becoming more of an "insider," where societal issues can impact them (Fries-Britt et al., 2014). This shift shows that international students understand the reason why they have been perceived as the "other" is partly because of their background and culture in the U.S. context. Even as students move toward an insider perspective, they continue to see their national identity and homeland affiliation as the primary lens for understanding broader issues of race.

Last, integrative awareness indicates that international students develop an integrative racial awareness and choices, which ranges from withdrawal and isolation to

motivation for academic success (Fries-Britt et al., 2014). International students have a

growing awareness of their racial/ethnic positioning within the U.S. context as well as

exhibit an internalized and more confident sense of their racial positioning. Eventually,

race serves as a source for commitment to action that leads to social change.

Student Resistance Framework

Given the evidence of international students' increasing experiences with

microaggressions and hostile campus climates, their academic and social experience may

worsen when facing structural challenges and lacking support from universities.

Literature shows that racial minority students recognize and reject oppressive conditions,

as well as take actions to demand equity and social justice (Solórzano et al., 2000; Jones

& Reddick, 2017). Thus, recognizing international students' agency is important. I adopt

Solórzano and Bernal's (2001) framework of student resistance. This framework focuses

on race and racism and intersectionality with other forms of subordination that students

suffer. It critically challenges the dominant ideology and measures an individual's

commitment to social justice. Thus, it helps us to better understand the various forms of

oppression and focus on the racialized experiences of students.

This framework measures a student's level of critique of oppressive conditions

and level of social justice motivation in a coordinate system centering on their resistance

to unequal social justice and environment. This framework includes four different types

of student oppositional behavior: (a) reactionary behavior, (b) self-defeating resistance,

(c) conformist resistance, and (d) transformational resistance (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001).

Even though the four types of student resistance framework possess specific differences,

this approach does not mean that they are exclusive of one another. Rather, the distinction between the four behaviors is not static or rigid and the four behaviors are often mixed and used in combination (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001).

Reactionary Behavior

This is an oppositional behavior without resistance because students lack both a critique of their oppressive conditions and their reactions are not motivated by social justice (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001).

Self-Defeating Resistance

This is the traditional notion of school resistance which refers to students who may have some critique of their oppressive conditions but are not motivated by an interest in social justice. These students engage in behavior that is not transformational and in fact helps to re-create the oppressive conditions from which it originated (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001).

Conformist Resistance

This type of resistance refers to students who are motivated in seeking social justice without holding any critique of the systems of oppression. In other words, they intend to find the personal reasons to explain the negative personal and social conditions instead of choosing to critique the existing social justice systems (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001).

Transformational Resistance

This type of resistance refers to students' behavior illustrating both a critique of oppression and a desire for social justice. In other words, students should hold some

awareness and critique of the oppressive environment and structures to challenge the dominant society (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001).

Solórzano and Bernal's (2001) framework highlights the potential to address the issue of exclusion by incorporating the voices of marginalized groups (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). Aligned with this framework. I will raise questions to address my research topics including Asian international students' interactions with campus members; their experiences with racism and hostile campus racial climate; their use of campus resources; and their forms of resistance. By engaging the student resistance framework, my research aims to contribute to the development of frameworks for advocating international student agency in higher education.

Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study:

(1) How do undergraduate Asian international students describe their educational experience in a Minority-serving Institution?

(2) In what ways do undergraduate Asian international students describe their educational experience related to race and racism and other intersectionality forms of oppressions in this setting?

(3) In what ways, if any, do undergraduate Asian international students engage in strategies of resistance to hostile campus racial climates?

In this chapter, I address gaps in prior literature regarding international students by providing historical analysis, contemporary viewpoints, and theoretical aspects on Asian international graduate students' experiences of racialization. I analyze prior

scholarship from a variety of disciplines (Education, Ethnic Studies, etc.) to emphasize

that Asian international students' perceptions and experiences of race and racism have

been affected not only by the historical and social construct of race in the U.S., but also

by the unique characteristics of international students' status in transnational spaces.

This literature review identifies that the lived experiences of international students

have not been thoroughly examined by previous scholarship. Prior research in higher

education indicates that students of color have been racialized in post-secondary

education and have struggled with racially marginalized experiences (Harper & Hurtado,

2007; Huber & Solórzano, 2015; Museus & Vue, 2013; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Sue et

al., 2007a; Yosso et al., 2009). Scholars have identified that international students

experience a marginalized status at the interpersonal and institutional levels, which often

includes discrimination, microaggressions, and other forms of racism (DiAngelo, 2006;

Fries-Britt, et al., 2014; George et al. 2016; Hanassab 2006; Lee & Rice, 2007; Wong, et

al., 2014). However, unlike their domestic peers, international students' experiences of

racialization are an aspect that has not been studied in depth within university settings.

Little attention has been given to racialization frameworks that address the international

student population in depth. Prior literature indicates that most research on international

students has focused on how individual levels of adjustment and certain characteristics of

students are associated with their adaptation and outcomes in higher education. (e.g.,

Andrade, 2006; Khawaja & Stallman, 2011; Ward & Masgoret, 2009). This body of

literature places the responsibility upon international students themselves to adapt to and

incorporate their hosts' values and practices. Another understudied topic within this field

indicates that the majority of studies focus on international students' problems or challenges without discussing students' agency in resisting oppressive institutional and political systems. In addition, this literature review indicates that we know less about international students' experience in the structures of MSIs than in PWIs.

In this literature review, I include the historical analysis of Asian Americans' racialization experience with emphasis on immigration and being labeled as a model minority. This analysis helps readers to build understandings of Asian Americans' racial experience and positioning in U.S. racial stratification. Asian international graduate students' racialization experiences are mainly shaped by the historical U.S. racial stratification system, national and global contexts, students' ethnic and racial backgrounds, as well as interpersonal and institutional factors on campus. I continue to connect Asian Americans to Asian international students who share Asian culture and heritage to help situate both group's challenges in contemporary times. Students' ethnic and racial backgrounds help to explain Asian international graduate students' status as cultural and racial minorities in the U.S. higher education system and affect their racial experience and transformation.

CHAPTER 3

METHODOLOGY

This chapter introduces the methodology for this study on Asian international graduate students' perceptions of their campus racial climate and resistant strategies. Specifically, this chapter discusses the methodological orientation of this study and the rationale of choice for this research design. It introduces the research settings, participant recruitment methods, and participant characteristics. Then, it continues to describe data collection, analysis, and inquiries using the content analysis method. This chapter also includes the explanation of the personality, confidentiality, trustworthiness, and limitations of this study.

Qualitative Methodology

Qualitative methodology is a type of social science research that takes a systematic inquiry of social phenomena to capture complex interactions and relationships in a study (Bogdan & Biklen, 2011; Creswell, 2009). It collects data from a researcher's interactions with participants and their knowledge of the participants' context (Bogdan & Biklen, 2011; Creswell, 2009). It interprets data that seeks to understand social life through the study of targeted populations or places (Bogdan & Biklen, 2011; Creswell, 2009). The purpose of qualitative research is to describe and interpret issues or phenomena systematically from the point of view of the individual or population being studied to generate new concepts and theories (Haradhan, 2018).

Qualitative analysis is inherently subjective because the researcher is the instrument for analysis (Morrow, 2005). Creswell (2013) acknowledges that researchers

bring beliefs and philosophical assumptions into their work, which influences the questions we ask, the theories we use, and the ways we gather data. So, qualitative inquiry becomes the most appropriate method for exploring these different realities as it attends to the subjective nature of different perspectives. Moreover, knowledge can be known through the subjective experiences of people (Creswell, 2013). Thus, the importance of getting to know participants in a study and lessening the distance between the researcher and the participants to understand how they describe their subjective experiences is of the utmost concern (Creswell, 2013). Qualitative methods are the best mode of understanding these subjective experiences as it allows for the excavation of multiple perspectives and diverse views, which can facilitate a more profound, sophisticated understanding of a problem or issue.

Qualitative study requires an understanding and interpretation of one's background and experience to underscore the researcher's role in the investigation as integral and inevitably biased (Creswell, 2009). Researchers usually start a study with some preconceived ideas. For example, the researcher carries conscious and subconscious motives, feelings, and assumptions, which make them biased in coding, categorizing, decontextualizing, and recontextualizing the data (Morrow, 2005). For this reason, I first introduce and examine the experiences, biases, values, and personal background that I may bring to this study, as these elements shaped my subjectivity and may affect my objectivity in the research (Creswell, 2013; Lichtman, 2013).

This investigation intends to capture: (1) How do Asian international graduate students describe their educational experience in a Minority-serving Institution? (2) What their

experiences are of perceiving and responding to racial microaggressions within their university's campus racial climate, and (3) The execution of their own agency to resist adversity, stereotyping, and injustices within U.S. higher educational structures.

Case Study as a Qualitative Methodology

This study uses a single case study design (Yin, 2003; 2017), which consists of interviews, focus groups, and document analysis. Case study is a form of qualitative research employed to better understand some complex social phenomena and the holistic and meaningful characteristics of real-life events (Yin, 2003). Case study is a preferred strategy to study "how" or "why" questions on a research topic (Yin, 2003). Case study design depends on the prior development of theoretical propositions to guide data collection and analysis (Yin, 2003). It also relies on multiple sources of evidence to allow the investigator to address a broader range of historical, attitudinal, and behavioral issues. The rationale for selecting a single and explanatory case for this study is to capture the circumstances and responses to the everyday experiences of Asian international graduate students (Yin, 2003). Also, the utilization of a case study will help highlight the voices of Asian international graduate students and contribute to the existing body of literature (Creswell, 2018).

This case study adopts interviews and focus groups as the main source of data collection. A semi-structured individual interview includes questions specifically designed for the researcher's purpose, but they are not close-ended questions (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Focus groups were used to obtain insights and shared experiences from participants. The adoption of this strategy evokes multiple perspectives from participants,

allowing participants to communicate thoughts and providing us opportunities to gather students' collective experiences (Bogden & Bilken, 2007; Lichtman, 2012). Document analysis was adopted as a complement to these methods to provide background information and broad coverage of data, which are helpful in contextualizing the research within the field (Bowen, 2009). Document analysis is a form of qualitative research which provides opportunities for researchers to investigate a broad range of materials related to the case and to give context to an assessment topic (Yin, 2017).

Role of the Researcher and Positionality

My background and experience as a researcher and as an Asian graduate student not only shaped my understanding of the research topic, but also affected the research process and data interpretation. Coming from Western China, where a majority of the population shares the same ethnic background, I was first exposed to the concept of "race" in my overseas studies in the U.S. during my master's program. As an international student in a predominantly white campus, I quickly noticed that some domestic students viewed international students negatively and they distanced themselves from international students by magnifying cultural differences. Because of this exclusion, Chinese students grouped themselves together automatically in class and after class. This experience impacted me in both my identity and future career aspirations. For the first time, I realized I am a person of color, in addition to my established identity as an international student at a college campus in the U.S. This situation allowed me to embrace my race and I became proud of it. Although the process of realizing and accepting my racial identity within a U.S. context was not pleasant, it was an important

self-reflection process to understand why students of color are not treated equally in U.S. higher education.

Later, my doctoral training in education has made me aware of the needs and interests of a culturally and ethnically diverse student body. This experience enabled me to engage diverse and inclusive practices throughout my research, teaching, and service to the profession. I am sensitive to issues related to racial and ethnic identity, minority status, and power dynamics. My sensitivity towards these issues allows me to investigate international students' experiences and inform my services to the university community. For example, I served as the International Student Affairs officer in GSA and chaired/co-chaired two international students and scholars committees. In my roles, I worked closely with different university departments, actively advocated for the needs of the international community, and pushed for the improvement of students/scholars' experiences. I believe that in providing international students with resources, promoting diversity, and ameliorating oppressive attitudes, we may challenge the status quo to promote social and racial justice in universities.

In this study, I carried my own biases based on my ethnic/racial background and my graduate student status, so it was necessary for me to consider researcher bias and positionality during the entire process. Since research cannot be totally objective, the challenge for the researcher is not to eliminate but to reflect on the activities that influence her behavior and positionality (Mendoza-Denton, 2008). Therefore, considering how my individual positionality affected the participants' engagement is important. For example, I entered the interviews with an expectation of participants' feelings as I am

familiar with the research topic. Additionally, during the interviews, I personally related to some of the stories, challenges, and struggles the participants face. When asked, I shared with the participants about my thoughts on some of the interview and focus group questions. I also sometimes engaged my experience as an Asian graduate student to inspire participants in reflecting on their experience. For example, I encourage participants to incorporate their knowledge about political, sociocultural, and economic factors to reflect whether they have experienced any oppressive conditions on campus. This approach helped participants construct their understanding of race and racism as they engaged in conversations.

I balanced my positionality using an insider and outsider's view in this study (Mendoza-Denton, 2008). As an insider to this study's population, my personal experience provides me with an understanding of academic and social experiences that Asian international students may encounter in American universities. So, my background allowed me to gain access, build rapport, and maintain trust with some of the informants. However, these advantages are not absolute, and it is important to consider ethical and methodological dilemmas associated with cross-cultural communications as an international student. Moreover, I am an outsider to some of the study population in some aspects of my identity: gender, academic discipline, and country of origin. My experiences may not inform my understanding of all the participants' experiences. So, instead of looking for a shared experience with the participants, I focused primarily on the individual experiences of the participants (Creswell & Poth, 2016).

Research Design

In the research design, I will explain the selection of the investigation site, participants selection, and recruitment for this study.

Selection of the Investigation Site

This research has been conducted at an MSI/research university located in California of the United States. One consideration in selecting a public research university for this case study is because most international students are enrolled in institutions with public control (Zhao et al., 2005). International students often select their U.S. institution based on ranking, leading them to favor research universities that tend to score high in national and international university rankings (Korobova & Starobin, 2015). Another reason for selecting the university as the research site is its institutional minority-serving status. This selected university is an Asian-American, Native American, and Pacific Islander Serving Institution (AANAPISI) that serves an undergraduate population that is both low income (at least 50% receiving Title IV needs-based assistance) and in which Asian American or Native American Pacific Islander students constitute at least 10% of the student population (U. S. Department of Education, 2020).

The university has been listed among the most ethnically diverse universities in the nation. According to the university fall 2021 enrollment demographics, it enrolls 37.8% Chicano/Latino, 31.5% Asian, 12.8% White, and 2.9% Black/African American. In addition to ethnic and racial diversity, the student body at the university comprises 54.7% first generation students, 40.8% low-income students, and 48.2% Pell Grant

recipients. Besides, the university is also one of the top-ranked public universities hosting a good number of international students. As of fall 2021, there were 1978 international students from 88 countries accounting for 7.9% of the total number of students. The top three countries for this demographic are: China, South Korea, and India. Among the international student population, there are 855 undergraduate and 1232 graduate students. International graduate students surpassed international undergraduate students on campus, and they also account for about one third of the total graduate student's population at the University.

Participants Selection

Creswell (2015) presented the importance of purposeful sampling, criterion sampling, and snowball sampling when seeking information-rich participants. For this study, purposeful sampling was utilized to intentionally recruit and select participants to assist in better understanding the research questions of the study (Creswell, 2015). I utilized several criteria in the participants' recruitment. First, participants are Asian international graduate students who are enrolled full-time in a graduate academic degree program as of spring 2021. Second, students have completed at least one year or more of graduate study at the university. Students with more than a year at the university have accumulated more experience in their host community, and they are expected to have had sufficient time to interpret those experiences. Third, participants have at least one quarter of experience of on-campus study. Given that the university has moved to online instructions since the COVID-19 pandemic began in early 2020, some new international students haven't had opportunities to come to campus and experience in-person

instructions. In this case, these students' experiences may be different from the students who have experienced regular campus settings. Fourth, to capture diversity within the Asian international student body, the recruitment for both interview and focus groups process aims to capture the diversity of nationality, major, year of graduation, gender, and age (Berg, 2000). By including students across different academic programs, I captured the shared experiences of students based on their race and ethnicity in the same campus community.

Qualitative research does not incorporate large samples or attempt to produce generalizations (Creswell, 2003). It selects specific cases that are most likely to inform the research issues (Creswell, 2003). The participants for this study include 21 individual interview participants and two focus groups (10 participants). The interview and focus group sample size are based on both qualitative saturation of common themes (varying from 6 participants to 15–20 participants) and the suggested sample size for qualitative studies (Creswell, 2009; Stark & Trinidad, 2017). The interview participant number is also determined by redundancy or a saturation criterion (Patton, 2002). Data saturation means that the researcher sees similar instances over and over again and no additional data are being found. Therefore, the researcher becomes confident that a category is saturated (Patton, 2002). Participants who took part in individual interviews have been asked to voluntarily participate in focus groups. Focus group participant numbers are dependent on participants' interests, availability, and schedules.

Participant Recruitment

In August 2021, the Institutional Review Board Socio-Behavioral (IRB-SB) of the university approved this investigation. After IRB-SB gave approval, I started the recruitment process. Participants were notified about the IRB-SB approval, the purposes of the investigation, the risks, and the benefits of their participation prior to data collection.

Individual interview and focus group recruitment of the participants involved the following steps:

1. After I received the access approval from IRB-SB, I first contacted the International Students and Scholars Office (ISS) in August 2021 and asked the office to include the research recruitment announcement in their biweekly newsletter. A brief research description and my contact information were provided in the newsletter. After the first email announcement, I asked ISS to repost the information a month later.

2. I used the snowball sampling method to recruit participants. Snowball sampling is a purposeful sampling technique that allows for the identification of information-rich cases through existing networks (Patton, 2002). Snowball sampling is an effective method for identifying potential participants. Snowball sampling means the current study participants help to recruit further subjects for a study (Patton, 2002). It is an effective method to recruit participants as the previous study participants gain a better understanding of the research after participating in the study. So, these participants become willing to help to identify and reach out to potential participants in their contacts. I contacted three students who responded to the recruitment announcement and scheduled

interviews with them. Afterwards, I asked these students to refer other participants to participate in this study. All the participants who I interviewed in the first round referred at least one student. I continued to use the snowball sampling method to recruit students until I reached data saturation.

3. I emailed the recruitment announcement to my personal contacts and recruited 5 participants.

4. Focus group selection was based on responses from the initial recruitment communication and individual interview participants. Each focus group was scheduled for 1.5 hours.

Participants for both individual interviews and focus groups were informed about their voluntary participation by sending them a consent form before the research was conducted. To ensure confidentiality, identifying markers and names were removed from the research report, and the participants were asked to choose their own pseudonym. Also, participants were asked to review, acknowledge, and sign an informed consent form (see Appendix A) before participating in the study. A copy of the consent form with relevant information about the study regarding the purposes of the study, benefits, and risks involved, and a request for audio recording were provided to all participants.

Data Collection

This case study includes 21 in-depth interviews, two focus groups, and document analysis. Qualitative research frequently relies on interviewing as the primary data collection strategy because interviews provide an exploration of the study topic that allows researchers to obtain perceptions and meanings from participants (Dewalt &

Dewalt, 2011; Yin, 2017). This study uses interviews and focus groups as the main source of data collection (Creswell, 2009; Creswell & Poth, 2016; Lichtman, 2013; Mason, 2002). Document analysis was used as a complement to these methods to provide background information and broad coverage of data, which are helpful in contextualizing the research within the field (Bowen, 2009).

Interviews

Due to COVID-19 pandemic restrictions, all interviews in this research were conducted remotely from August 2021 to February 2022. Most of the interviews lasted approximately 60 minutes while 5 interviews lasted over 90 minutes.

Interview Setup Procedures

The following procedures and steps guided the individual interviews:

1. Once participants indicated their preferred schedule of interviews and focus groups, I set up the interview/focus group schedules.

2. Interviews/focus groups took place via a password protected Zoom session. A unique Zoom link and password were generated for each session. I sent the Zoom link and password to participants before the scheduled time.

3. Participants were encouraged to choose a pseudonym, alias/nickname, or I provided one for their Zoom username during the interview/focus group.

4. Zoom participants could choose to turn-on or turn-off their cameras.

Interview Preparation Procedures

Semi-structured individual interviews are designed for the research's purpose and to give researchers opportunities to elicit the participant's story that may be beyond the

scope of questionnaires (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). This method was used to understand the applications and connections of theories that guided the study as well as the everyday campus experiences from Asian international graduate students' perspectives (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Semi-structured interview formats permit changes in the interview questions and order based on the lived experiences of the participants (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). So, by approaching the interviews in a semi-structured manner without a close-ended ending, I had flexibility and opportunity to probe the participants with additional questions related to their individual responses. The responses to these questions can be used to attain detailed and descriptive information on these topics and to pursue new topics as they arise during the interview (Berg, 2000). So, I asked probing questions to encourage the participants to elaborate on the details of their lived experience.

In addition, developing appropriate interview questions is important because well-explained questions are useful for eliciting detailed responses that can lend insight to the research questions (Mason, 2002). I adopted Mason's 7-step process (Mason, 2002) to develop semi-structured individual interview protocols and interview questions (see interview protocol in Appendix B). I paid attention to the wording of the questions to avoid common problems in question formulation, such as ineffectively worded questions, double-barreled questions, and complex questions (Berg, 2000). Finally, I checked my interview format, questions, and protocols to make sure that they inform my research aims.

Interview Procedures

During the interviews, I used an interview protocol that was designed to obtain

meaningful information from the participants through a series of questions that was

followed by prompts (Seidman, 2013). The interview protocol was present to remind me

of the topics that I wanted to address in each interview. The interviews were conducted

with a reflective approach, but participants were allowed to determine what was

important about their own experiences (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015; Moores & Popadiuk,

2011; Sato & Hodge, 2015; Tran, 2010).

I first briefly introduced the study's purpose and shared my motivations for conducting

the study. Then, interviews were audio-recorded with the consent of the participant. The

interview process allowed for necessary trust building between myself and the participant

to produce a rich, detailed dialogue and discourse about the interviewee's experiences.

Initially, I prompted the participants to share their backgrounds and educational journeys.

These initial interview questions were intended to engage participants in reflecting upon

their academic and social experiences at the university. Then, I began to ask participants

to reflect their racial identities as well as how they navigate race and racism through their

educational experience. Later, the questions centered around their perceptions of race,

racism, and racialization, along with its impacts on their educational experiences.

Specific stories were encouraged regarding their experiences. Afterwards, I asked

interviewees about their strategies to resist adversity, stereotyping, and injustices on

campus. Last, I asked the participants to share their final thoughts and ask any questions

related to the progression of the study, which included a member checking process,

where participants had the opportunity to validate the accuracy and authenticity of my findings (Creswell, 2013).

Participant Demographics

Participants in this investigation were all taking graduate courses at the university, and they have diverse backgrounds in country of origin, gender, major, and years of study. The demographic breakdown of participants included: 10 women and 11 men. I used the preferred pronouns of each participant. The ethnicities of participants included: 14 students from mainland China, one student from Taiwan, China, three students from India, one student from Thailand, and one student from Sri Lanka. The participants' demographic information is listed below (see Table 1).

Table 1. Interview Participants Demographics

Name	Gender	Country of Origin	Major	Degree	Years of study
Kat	Female	China	Education	PhD	3
Xiao	Male	China	Computer Science and Engineering	PhD	2
Jiao	Male	China	Electrical and Computer Engineering	PhD	5
Qin	Female	China	Material Science and Engineering	PhD	5
Bob	Male	Thailand	Chemical & Environmental Engineering	PhD	4
Vera	Female	UAE	MBA	Master	2
James	Male	China	Humanities and Social Science	PhD	5
Hai	Male	China	Graduate Program of Genetics, Genomics, and Bioinformatics	PhD	6
Alice	Female	Taiwan, China	Music	PhD	4
Luo	Male	China	Engineering	Master	2
Lu	Female	China	MBA	Master	2

Mary	Female	China	Education	PhD	4
Leo	Male	China	Chemistry	PhD	4
Crystal	Female	China	Chemistry	PhD	4
Yaster	Male	China	Graduate Program of Genetics, Genomics, and Bioinformatics	PhD	4
Polaris	Female	India	Mechanical Engineering	PhD	2
Sabrina	Female	India	Mechanical Engineering	Master	1
Yangyang	Female	China	Chemistry	PhD	4
Enzo	Male	China	Chemistry	PhD	4
Jack Sparrow	Male	India	Material Science and Engineering	Master	1
Robert	Male	China	Material Science and Engineering	PhD	5

Focus Groups

Two focus groups in this research were conducted using Zoom. I first sent a Doodle poll to coordinate a date and time and then selected a time based on the majority's best convenience. Next, the Zoom links were generated (following the same procedure described earlier in the interview preparation procedure) and sent to participants. Both focus groups were scheduled on a Friday evening after 5:00 PM for 90 minutes. The first focus group was conducted in October 2021, and it lasted approximately 150 minutes with the consent of all participants to continue their discussion beyond the scheduled time. The second focus group was conducted in April 2022 and it lasted 90 minutes.

Focus Group Preparation Procedures

Focus group questions are different from the individual interview questions which cover different areas of research focuses (See Appendix C). The questions range from asking about students' academic and social experiences to their racial experiences as they relate to the research questions. Open-ended questions were used to elicit participants' perceptions and descriptions of the phenomenon of racialization in a diverse university setting. These broad questions were designed to encourage discussions among participants and obtain rich, substantive descriptions from them.

Focus Group Procedures

The focus groups were audio-recorded under the consent of the participants. During the focus groups, I acted as both researcher and moderator. I used the moderator plan (See Appendix D) to organize focus groups. In the plan, I include procedures for the

focus group process. These procedures included introduction of research topics, statements of interview guidelines, and closing remarks, which helped me to organize the interview time and facilitate it properly (Berg, 2000). During the focus groups, I also adopted a semi-structured approach by having a prepared list of open-ended questions and asking follow-up questions if necessary (Lichtman, 2012).

Participants Demographics

8 out of 10 focus group participants participated in the individual interviews and were interested in participating in the focus groups. Two students participated in focus groups only. The focus group participants' demographics information is listed below (see Table 2).

Table 2. Focus Groups Participants Demographics

Name	Gender	Country of Origin	Major	Degree	Years of study
Kat	Female	China	Education	PhD	3
Qin	Female	China	Material Science and Engineering	PhD	5
Bob	Male	Thailand	Chemical & Environmental Engineering	PhD	4
Alice	Female	Taiwan, China	Music	PhD	4
Michael	Male	Taiwan, China	Physics & Astronomy	PhD	5
Young	Female	China	Economics	PhD	4
Mary	Female	China	Education	PhD	4
Leo	Male	China	Chemistry	PhD	4
Crystal	Female	China	Chemistry	PhD	4
Yaster	Male	China	Genetics, Genomics, and Bioinformatics Program	PhD	4

Document Analysis

Several benefits of using document analysis were considered when incorporating this method in the study. One of the main advantages of using document analysis for my study is the exploration of the institutional discourses on diversity and inclusion and comparing it with the students' experience. Selected documents can provide supplementary research data, which is a valuable addition to the current literature on the study of university campus racial climate (Yin, 2017). Second, documents can be analyzed to verify findings or corroborate evidence from other data sources (Bowen, 2009). If the documentary evidence is contradictory rather than corroboratory, I could investigate further to find why the distinction happened.

In document analysis, the researcher determines what documents are being searched for and used based on central questions of the research (Bowen, 2009). I use the university's mission statement and strategic plan as complimentary data sources to support my study. In general, a mission statement expresses the sense of purpose of an organization and articulates the purpose and direction of the organization (Meacham & Barrett, 2003). Universities mainly focus strategic diversity initiatives on specific institutional components to drive organizational change, reform institutional support structures, and to create more inclusive institutional decision-making processes (Hurtado, et al., 2012). A university strategic plan is a discursive artifact that defines and articulates the university's formal vision including diversity and internationalization. The selected university's strategic plan is an institutionalized narrative and can also shape employees' beliefs and perceptions about how the institution is serving its students (Ahmed, 2007). I

focus on this document because it's formally endorsed by the highest levels of leadership and can be important in guiding resource allocation.

Confidentiality

The following information from the participants was collected from the interview and focus groups, including name, gender, email address, country of origin, major, and year of study. Private identifiable information was only collected after a participant provided consent. Any identifiable information related to the name of the participants was not presented in any part of the result and report. Thus, names present in this study are pseudonyms. The recorded interview and focus group data, as well as its transcriptions are saved on a personal computer in a locked folder to keep the data safe. The participant information and the pseudonyms are saved on the computer under a different folder.

To ensure the information is safe and protect the confidentiality of participants, all information collected was encrypted by the researcher. The researcher maintains a master key document that links the coded data with identifiers. In addition, none of the information will be sent to or shared with others. By obeying academic integrity and legal rights, I will not use the collected information for future research or other public postings. The data and transcription will be stored for 5 years and will then be destroyed.

<div align="center">

Data Analysis

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This study uses qualitative content analysis as a method to analyze the data collected from different data resources as well as connect theoretical orientations to the data analysis process (Mayring, 2004). Qualitative content analysis is the systematic

analysis of the content of narratives and text in a quantitative or qualitative manner to answer research questions (Mayring, 2004). Qualitative content analysis is suitable for case study research because it offers theory-guided methods for data analysis, and it offers a range of rule-based procedures for a systematic analysis of data material (Kohlbacher, 2006).

According to Yin (2018), the most important strategy in case study data analysis is to follow the theoretical propositions that led to the case study. Also, qualitative content analysis applies a systematic and theory-guided approach to text analysis using a categorization system (Mayring, 2004). In other words, such propositions help me plan and focus on the most relevant data, organize the entire case study, and determine the initial coding scheme or relationships between codes.

Content Analysis Procedure

Step 1. The audio recordings of the individual interviews and focus groups were transcribed into individual Word documents by me using an online transcription software called OTranscribe. OTranscribe is a free, open-source tool which allows me to navigate the audio player and type/edit text at the same time. This software ensures confidentiality of the data and doesn't share the files with a third party. After auto transcribing and editing, I proofread the translated documents again to ensure accuracy. Translating each individual interview enabled me to keep track of the data per participant and coded to explore key patterns and themes (Yin, 2017).

I read through each transcript and tried to understand how each participant experienced the campus racial climate and how it is related to their other education

experiences. By doing so, I began to detect similarities in experiences while getting a sense of the big picture behind students' stories. Commonalities and individually unique experiences between participants' responses were identified.

Step 2. I coded a single interview at a time and identified relevant episodes and metaphors. I gathered information about the context of the students' stories. I read through interview transcriptions for each participant, wrote marginal notes, and placed relevant experiences chronologically. I then identified assumptions in each account and named them as codes (Riessman, 2013). I used the same method to analyze focus groups data.

Step 3. As I continued to read through and familiarize myself with the transcripts, the data was coded based on the predetermined codes. The purpose of coding is to refine content from the transcripts. During this initial coding, I read the transcripts line-by-line. I used the predetermined codes from analytical frameworks to color-code larger amounts of text and information from focus groups and interviews (Miles & Huberman, 1994). Data that could not be coded initially was analyzed later to determine if they represented a new category or a subcategory of an existing code (Mayring, 2004).

In this study, the theoretical and conceptual frameworks discussed previously are used in data analysis as the analytical framework. Analytical frameworks are the strategies that qualitative researchers use in order to reduce, organize, analyze, and interpret the data that they collect (Flick, 2014; Maxwell, 2009). Analytical frameworks were incorporated in the coding process and discussions to construct findings.

In the coding process, more specifically, learning race in a U.S. context framework (Fries-Britt, 2014) examines how foreign-born students' experiences with race and discrimination are a dynamic, and ongoing process impacted by the U.S.'s racial context. Under the campus climate framework (Hurtado, et at., 1998), psychology (individuals' views of discrimination and attitudes toward other racial and ethnic backgrounds) and behavioral dimensions (frequency of interaction among members of different social identity groups and the quality of interactions) were coded. I focused on the Asianization, transnational, and intersectionality tenets under AsianCrit (Chang, 1993; Museus & Iftikar, 2013). Also, the student resistance framework (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001) was used to code in understanding students' level of critique of oppressive conditions and their motivation in searching for racial/social justice.

Step 4. I revisited codes and continued to probe themes that emerged during Step 3. The initial coding process was iterative and involved making initial predictions and comparing them against the case study evidence. When I revisited codes, I decided whether the predefined codes should change and develop as the research process continues and whether new perspectives and findings may indicate a need to move beyond the initial frames (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

I utilized a combination of descriptive, interpretive, and pattern codes to analyze the data based on analytical frameworks. Descriptive codes entail little interpretation and will help to summarize text into short phrases, while interpretative codes include inferential information which will help me to make sense of stories/meanings behind the text (Miles & Huberman, 1994). I utilized the analytic tactic of clustering to create

pattern codes which are both inferential and explanatory (Miles & Huberman, 1994).

Pattern matching in a case study is one of the most desirable techniques as it involves the

comparison of predicted patterns and/or effects with the ones that have been empirically

observed, and the identification of any variances (Yin, 2017).

Step 5. In the final data analysis process, I combined the data from individual

interviews, focus groups, and document analysis together to identify the relationships,

categories, and themes that may be new from the previous coding (Flick, 2014; Maxwell,

2009; Richards, 2009). These categories and themes center on data shared by the

participants. Through my interpretation and analysis, the themes that I discovered not

only reflect original predictions made prior to starting the study, but also contain some

unexpected findings. In the following chapter, research evidence has been presented by

showing codes with examples and by offering descriptive evidence, in support of my

research questions (Mayring, 2004).

Trustworthiness of the Study

Several approaches were adopted to monitor, document, and evaluate the analytic

process and the researcher's role to enhance the trustworthiness of the study.

Trustworthiness is the degree to which research accurately assesses and investigates its

intended purpose (Brinkmann & Kvale, 2015). Qualitative researchers usually use at least

two data sources in their methods. This study uses three different data sources to enhance

data triangulation and to improve research trustworthiness (Bowen, 2009). Data source

triangulation provides an opportunity to analyze whether different data carry similar

meanings when they are collected under different circumstances (Stake, 1995).

I then incorporated member checks (also known as informant feedback) in the research. Member checks are often used as a technique by researchers to help improve the accuracy, credibility, validity, and transferability of the research (Creswell, 2007). The member checks were used during the interview process by paraphrasing a number of statements participants made to provide either an affirmation or clarification (Creswell, 2007). By doing so, I could actively involve the participants in the inquiry during content data analysis. Also, I used participants' direct quotations to support the research conclusions.

I clarified my bias and maintained reflexivity on my positionality throughout the research process, which are important to enhance trustworthiness (Creswell, 2007). By reflecting on my subjectivity, cultural background, interest, and experience with the topic and population being studied, I addressed my preconceived ideas about international students (Creswell, 2007). This reflexivity is a continual process, enacted before, during, and after the data collection (Creswell, 2007; Patton, 2002).

In addition, one challenge of trustworthiness is associated with self-reported data that can rarely be verified. The data could contain several potential sources of bias that should be noted as limitations. For example, students may have selective memories about experiences. Students may exaggerate their perceptions and experiences in the interview. To mitigate this potential issue, I designed subjective interview questions to explicitly address students' concerns, allowing them to reflect on the impact of race, racism, and other social identities. I also encouraged participants to incorporate their knowledge about political, sociocultural, and economic factors to reflect whether they

have experienced any oppressive conditions on campus. By encouraging participants to reflect critically on their experience and surroundings, participants were likely to critically analyze the social conditions and campus environment, as well as proposed actions to change those conditions. Overall, I believe the question design allowed participants to explore both sociocultural factors such as race/ethnicity and gender identity, and environmental factors like campus racial climate.

Limitations

Prior to conducting interviews, three limitations were predicted. First, because this study attempted to examine a subgroup of international students, the findings are limited to international students with Asian cultural heritages. Hence, the study's findings may or may not reflect other international students, especially if they are not rooted in Asian cultures. Second, as this study will be conducted at a single university campus in the U.S., there is a limitation on the scope of the research (Creswell & Creswell, 2017; Yin, 2017). Findings need to be interpreted and understood in the context of the current university setting and may not reflect other universities (for example, findings may be different for universities that have a sizable international student population but lack a diverse domestic student population). Future studies can build on this research with additional locations and additional student populations.

Second, the way the participants were recruited might have impacted the results. The participants of this study are most Chinese international graduate students who had studied in the United States for at least one year. The participants fit a very specific profile, but their experiences and expectations varied based on their own positionalities.

However, the study did not recruit many students from South Asian and Middle East countries. With that in mind, the current participants' educational and racialization experiences may not represent all Asian international graduate students studying in the United States. Also, given the small sample size and the diversity of ethnic identities in the sample, group differences could not be explored in depth.

Third, the data were collected at one point in time and this study did not examine how students' experiences may change over time. Although this study is not historical or longitudinal, it is timely and critical to reflect a particular and significant period of time during COVID-19 pandemic. Future research may employ longitudinal methods to see how international students' experience may change over time after the COVID-19 pandemic and whether specific institutional or personal factors operate differently across time.

In summary, chapter 3 This study is part of my dissertation research which is guided by a qualitative research methodology focused on an individual's lived experiences. Semi-structured interviews were used as a data collection method with 14 Chinese international students participating in this study. The research site is a public research university in Southern California.

CHAPTER 4

FINDINGS

There are four sections to the chapter. It described Asian international graduate students' experience in the following part include: (1) a campus portrait and a diversity analysis of the Minority-serving Institution, (2) academic and social experience as well as the implication of the COVID pandemic, (3) racial positioning, racialization, and racial isolation, and lastly (4) sources of support and advocacy for students to exercise their own agency.

In the first section, I began with a portrait of the MSI in this study by providing campus backgrounds, features, and limitations. I then introduced the research campus of this study. Specifically, I provided descriptions of the institution's diversity and inclusion policies and documents, the MSI efforts, the MSI initiatives with important institutional and program contexts.

MSIs were developed in the late 19th and early 20th century. Its histories are tightly interwoven with the history of the U.S. and connected to the various racial and ethnic cultures within the country. Although MSIs have expanded rapidly over the past few decades, these institutions remain historically marginalized spaces in the landscape of higher education (Gasman, 2008). MSIs are traditionally defined by one of two overarching categories: historically defined or enrollment-defined institutions. Historically defined MSIs were established with the express purpose of providing access to higher education for a specific minority group (Espinosa et al. 2017; Núñez et al., 2015). They include Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) and Tribal

Colleges and Universities (TCUs). Five other MSI types are federally designated based on student enrollment and institutional expenditure thresholds: Hispanic-Serving Institutions (HSIs), Alaska Native-Serving and Native Hawaiian-Serving Institutions (ANNHIs), Asian American and Native American Pacific Islander-Serving Institutions (AANAPISIs), Predominantly Black Institutions (PBIs), and Native American-Serving Nontribal Institutions (NASNTIs).

Based on the American Council on Education (2017), there are more than 700 federally designated MSIs that represent approximately 14 % of all degree-granting institutions. They enroll roughly 5 million students, or nearly 30 % of all undergraduates in U.S. higher education (Espinosa et al., 2017). A single institution can be classified in more than one group.

The MSIs: A Model of Diversity for Higher Education

Diversity is commonly defined as the representation of individuals from different racial, ethnicity, immigration status, sexual orientation, religion, mental and physical abilities, first-generation status, socioeconomic status (Rankin & Reason, 2005). In applying the term to an organizational setting (e.g., companies and universities), Cox (2001) categorized diversity as the existing variation of social and cultural identities among people. Inclusion is defined as individuals' feeling of welcoming and their learning and working styles are valued (Doughtery & Kienzl, 2006). When we hear or read about diversity, and inclusion within the higher education context, we assume that these are natural and inherent within American society, and everyone understands what these concepts mean. Higher education institutions in the United States have been

responding to the student body diversification for decades. The increasing diversity and inequities of college students call for institutional action to diversify their campuses to remedy issues of social injustice, increase enrollment, and improve the quality of student learning (Hurtado, 2007). In order to serve students of color, institutions gradually transform their historically and predominantly white institutional cultures, structures, processes, and practices to be more responsive to these student populations (Jayakumar & Museus, 2011). Empirical research shows MSIs enroll a significant population of students of color and can be effective at facilitating positive outcomes among students of color, including increased identity development, greater sense of empowerment, and higher graduation rates (Flores & Park, 2013).

MSIs play a significant role in educating minority students who might otherwise have limited postsecondary opportunities, including underrepresented racial and ethnic groups, low-income students, first-generation-to-college students, adult learners, and other nontraditional students (Lumina Foundation, 2015). Therefore, the student populations at MSIs are some of the most diverse in the nation (Lumina Foundation, 2015). Although not always representative of the racial makeup of the campus's student body, full-time faculty members at MSIs are much more diverse than those at non-MSIs (Espinosa et al., 2017).

Because of the value of MSIs to racially and ethnically diverse students, many institutional agents at MSIs are leaders in the efforts to cultivate supportive environments for their target student populations (García & Ramirez, 2018; Museus et al., 2018). These institutions support diversity and perform critical public service roles for their racial and

ethnic communities. Institutional policies and practices needed to serve a largely nontraditional student body are very different from higher education institutions who intend to serve traditional students. For example, MSIs value and acknowledge experiences of marginalization, discrimination, and racism (Gasman, 2008). Serving nontraditional students requires institutions to be more innovative in their educational approach.

As MSIs have featured various practices to support and sustain students from different cultural backgrounds, turning to MSIs could provide a model for understanding how these cultural support practices can be extended to international students. Little is known, however, about how MSI agents transform their campuses to more effectively respond to the racially minoritized populations and international students they serve. This lack of knowledge is not surprising, given the overall pattern of low representation of MSIs in higher education research. MSIs might be better positioned to meet the needs of students of color, including international students of color.

The University Campus and its Students

The selected university is a public land grant university in California of the United States. The university has been listed among the most ethnically diverse universities in the nation and has long been recognized for its diversity, achievements in social mobility. More than half of the students at the university are first-generation college students. The university is a Hispanic Serving Institution (HSI) and an Asian-American, Native American, and Pacific Islander Serving Institution (AANAPISI) that serves an undergraduate population that is both low-income (at least 50% receiving Title

IV needs-based assistance) and in which Asian American or Native American Pacific Islander students constitute at least 10% of the general student body (Mahmoud, 2021; U. S. Department of Education, 2020).

Campus Diversity Efforts

In the 21st century, the university expanded its focus on diversity, including (a) structural diversity and (b) diversity-related efforts. Structural diversity refers to the number of individuals from diverse social identities on campus, which is an initial step in the creation of a diverse learning environment (Hurtado et al. 1998, 2008; 2012; Milem et al. 2005). Regarding structural diversity, the university has achieved a diverse undergraduate student population. According to the university's fall 2021 enrollment demographics, the university enrolls 37.8 % Chicano/Latino, 31.5 % Asian, 12.8% White, and 2.9% Black/African American. The university is also one of the top-ranked public universities hosting many international students. It has steadily increased their number of international students. According to data from the fall 2021 quarter, there were 2050 international students from 70 countries accounting for 7.9% of the total number of students. The top three countries for this demographic are: China, South Korea, and India. Among the international students, there are 833 undergraduate and 1217 graduate students.

Regarding diversity-related efforts, the university continues to recognize the need to elevate and expand the institutional commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion. The university continues to develop and offer a wide range of initiatives and committees related to diversity, equity, and inclusion, and partnering with campus and community

stakeholders. In 2020, the university appointed a Vice Chancellor for Diversity, Equality, and Inclusion as a reflection of an inclusive campus community. Before this recent appointment, the university set up an office of Diversity, Equity & Inclusion. The office committed to the urgent, sustained, and comprehensive work of creating a campus climate of mutual respect and communal vision at the university. Through these various initiatives to cultivate diversity, the university offers resources for faculty, staff, students, and alumni to improve its campus climate. For example, the office offers training modules and workshops for departments and units based on their needs. The office has also developed programs that encourage students, staff, and faculty members to take a more active role in improving inclusivity. As another example, the office provides the Making Excellence Inclusive (MEI): Graduate Student Diversity Certificate Program to interested graduate students. The Diversity Certificate Program provides an opportunity for graduate students to learn broad issues that affect higher and postsecondary education, as well as the depth of knowledge and experience gained across a variety of learning contexts.

Analysis and Critique About Diversity-Related Documents

To analyze the university's diversity efforts and its implication to campus racial climate and students' experience, I first use document analysis by looking at the official university's mission statement and the university's Strategic Plan 2020. Although there are many recommendations and strategies about diversity campus building at a national level, relatively little research has been done regarding institutional diversity policies and their role on university and college campuses. I focus on these documents because it not

only relates to my research questions, but also, it's formally endorsed by the highest levels of leadership and can be important in guiding resource allocation.

In general, a mission statement expresses the sense of purpose of an organization and articulates the purpose and direction of the organization (Meacham & Barrett, 2003). According to Meacham and Barrett (2003), "an institution's mission statement represents a consensus on campus-wide values, expectations for student learning and development, and a statement of campus priorities for many years ahead" (p. 6). An institution's mission statement may provide insight into whether it truly values diversity (Meacham & Barrett 2003). Further, universities mainly focus strategic diversity initiatives on specific institutional components to drive organizational change, reform institutional support structures, and to create more inclusive institutional decision-making processes (Hurtado, et al., 2012).

The university mission states that "The university will transform the lives of the diverse people of California, the nation, and the world through the discovery, communication, translation, application, and preservation of knowledge, thereby enriching the state's economic, social, cultural, and environmental future." This mission statement has potential to help set university goals, solidify the institution's identity, and help faculty members, staff, and students to work toward goals. This statement indicates the university acknowledges academic contributions on the local and global level and it makes a commitment to diversity in domestic and international terms. It also indicates that the university will serve and represent the diverse population of the state, country, and world where universities used are typically accessible only by the elite and white.

A strategic plan is a discursive artifact that defines and articulates the university's formal vision including diversity and internationalization. The university's strategic plan is part of official institutionalized narratives and can also shape employees' beliefs and perceptions about how the institution is serving its students (Ahmed, 2007). The institutional wide strategic plan will provide a framework for development and investment, guiding the university toward its future. Through the strategic plan, leaderships, colleges/ departments, and faculty/staff work toward goals through various campus activities and advocates. Thus, it will affect students' experience on campus including their perceptions of campus diversity and campus racial climate.

In this document, I focus on its description of diversity related descriptions. As the university aims to build diverse and inclusive campus communities, these descriptions provide a plan of action to strengthen, enhance, promote, and support campus diversity. Given this information, this analysis will 1) address how the university's official statements regarding their mission and the institution's commitment to diversity, 2) whether the racial/ethnic composition of a university campus may affect the experience of students, and 3) whether international students are included in the diversity conversation. In the section that follows, findings are organized into three discussions: celebrating undergraduate diversity, recognizing the lack of diversity of graduate students, and ignoring race and racism.

Celebrating Undergraduate Diversity

The university's strategic plan shows that the university celebrates undergraduate students' diversity. The university campus is a national example for diversity: the

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university has a large concentration of diverse students' socio-economically and racially. In addition to discussions of racial diversity, other aspects of students' identities, including their culture, ethnicity, and religion are mentioned in the texts. For example, the document states that efforts will be made to increase diversity in these groups as well, including not only race, ethnicity, and gender but also inclusion of groups. Moreover, the university recognizes that how diversity could benefit the university has been discussed: it is about diversity of ideas, programs, and perspectives, including a vibrant mix of domestic and international graduate and undergraduate students. A diverse campus promotes diversity in research and creative activities, becoming a part of the learning experience as well as scholarship for our students and faculty. These descriptions from the strategic plan document indicate that the campus leadership and administrators emphasized both the diversity population and the vibrant diversity on campus including a mix of domestic and international students. As an MSI, HSI and AANAP designations provide universities with grants and related assistance to allow for improvement and expansion in relation to their capacity to serve ethnic and culturally minority students who are also low-income individuals. The campus community's diverse efforts to focus on its undergraduate students was manifested through its resources and programming. For example, the campus recently announced a new crowdfunding initiative in support of programs that promote diversity, equity, inclusion and belonging. The initiative has more than 30 funds participating, most of which provide scholarships and fellowships to students from underrepresented backgrounds. However, whether the university has

provided similar efforts to its graduate student's population and increased interactions between domestic and international students were questionable.

Recognizing the Lack of Diversity of Graduate Students

While the university has achieved a remarkably diverse undergraduate population, the same is not yet true for graduate students. The university strategic plan indicates the need to attract academically stronger and more diverse graduate students. The university faces challenges in recruiting talented graduate students from underrepresented minority groups: racial and ethnic diversity in its graduate admission has always been low and has improved only minimally over time. To further improve this situation, universities must create opportunities for faculty to recognize the potential of underrepresented students and to combat a perceived overreliance on and misinterpretation of standardized test results.

The admissions process plays a strong role in the university's ability to diversify the student body. In undergraduate admissions, a centralized office decides what factors will be considered during the review process, including the value placed on recruiting and admitting students from underrepresented groups. In contrast, the graduate admissions process is decentralized, and decisions are made by faculty (Griffin, Muñiz, & Espinosa, 2012). Studies report that faculty often view students of color as less able or unqualified based on two factors: the prestige of the undergraduate institutions that underrepresented students attended, and their scores on standardized tests such as the GRE, which they view as an indicator of ability (Griffin, et. al., 2012). Faculty members are likely to disregard underrepresented minority applicants when their test scores are lower than

others in the applicant pool and therefore carry biased opinions towards the ethnic and racial minority students. Therefore, the standardized test and faculty's biased view make underrepresented minority applicants disadvantaged that further decrease the graduate school diversity.

Ignoring Race and Racism

Although the strategic plan document has a very optimistic statement about its campus environment and campus racial climate, it ignores race and racism as part of the campus diversity issue. The strategic plan outlines that the university's already welcoming, attractive, safe, and sustainable environment will be further enhanced. All activities of the university will include perspectives from every aspect of its diverse community and will incorporate an international point of view. The word choice of "already" in this statement indicates that the campus has reached the goal of becoming a welcoming, attractive, safe, and sustainable campus. This future endeavor, as outlined in their strategic plan, implies that the university can continue to enhance what it has already achieved while attempting to engage an international perspective. However, this statement indicates that the university is already confident about its campus culture and climate. It denies and/or does not acknowledge that any issues exist on campus and prevents the campus from public criticism. It also implies that the international perspective is currently lacking in the campus's culture and discourses.

Although strategy documents rarely explicitly discuss ideas of race, racialization, or racism, the absence of mentioning race in these documents may implicitly reinforce that whiteness is the norm in higher education. When institutional strategies celebrate

diversity and portray happy students, it can become difficult for individuals on campus to recognize and acknowledge systematic forms of racism and discrimination (Ahmed, 2007). As mentioned in the strategic plan that the university campus is already welcoming, thus, there is little institutional questioning or reflection on institutional responsibilities to address students' intersectional identities and experiences with racism. However, this statement seems like an acknowledgement without pointing out the potential, on-going, and increasing racism on and out of campus. When institutions fail to acknowledge the racial identities and racialized experiences of their students, including 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. Instead, if universities explicitly state anti-racist strategies in their policies and strategic plan, individuals on campus would appreciate and benefit from these specific efforts. Therefore, higher education institutions must begin by acknowledging their students' experiences of race and racism on campuses as a starting point for building more inclusive and anti-racist spaces.

International Students' Experience of Diversity on Campus

The document analysis of the university's strategic plan provides an opportunity to examine the university's diversity initiatives from the administration level. The following section will analyze how participants experience and embrace diversity. Data from the interview and focus groups will provide a bottom-up approach to analyze this topic.

Enjoying the Diversity and Improving Cultural and Diversity Awareness

Diverse environments present students with numerous opportunities to think critically about their own beliefs, understand what others believe, as well as resolve conflicts through compromise and mutual understanding. When asked about these questions regarding diversity, all participants mentioned that they feel the university campus is diverse. The interviewees expressed excitement to be part of diverse campus communities. These campuses have great potential to offer students opportunities to learn from one another. Factors such as diverse student bodies and diverse faculty members are highlighted from the interviewees to describe their experience and understanding of diversity. Vera, a Sri Lankan MBA student, said:

> "I feel very connected to campus. I think the diversity is really apparent in the campus personnel and then culture and climate. I feel proud that so many different cultures are really contributing to the success of the university, and I feel like that's part of the university campus. I can see that diversity and do feel that diversity affects me. Through my diversity, it's adding on to the success of the campus. I'm bringing something helpful and useful."

Vera's expression referred to a diverse campus culture and climate. Being an international student, she viewed herself as contributing to other students' learning of a new culture. Also, Vera and many other participants acknowledged the university's diverse campus composition as one of the unique features to contribute to students' successes.

All participants mentioned their awareness of the diverse environment of the university campus. Some participants mentioned that studying in the U.S. provided them with an opportunity to meet people from diverse cultural backgrounds and also fostered a broader cultural awareness and more opportunities for critical thinking. Others mentioned that the university and its community outside of the campus contributes to their development of a positive image of diversity. Bob, a Thailand PhD student in the Department of Chemical & Environmental Engineering, mentioned that "I want to broaden my horizon and interact with people from different countries in my graduate study, so the university provided me the opportunity to experience the diversity. I also like the diversity vibrate here in California, where I can get to interact in a very diverse environment." Bob's comments indicated that the campus location is important to affect international students' experience of diversity on and off campus.

Unsure About the Benefits of Diversity

Although all participants are aware of the university's diverse appearance, only two of 20 interviewees clearly stated the diversity attributed to their academic and social learning and successes. Two participants mentioned that they don't know the benefits of diversity. The lack of education about diversity may make students lose opportunities to further explore and take advantage of the diversity to learn other cultures. Qin, a Chinese PhD student in the Department of Material Science and Engineering, said "I kind of feel the diversity, but if you ask me how the diversity helped me. I don't know." Also, Crystal, a Chinese PhD student in the Department of Chemistry commented the following:

"I think the university advertises it on the website and in the email. I know they want to sell this point of diversity. The diversity in the staff seems in the lower positions, like the building managers, [but] not [folks] in the high[er] positions. But how will diversity benefit students? They don't mention it. Will this benefit the university, or will it benefit all the students? I have no idea. They don't explain too much. As a student, I don't know the benefit of having diverse students, I just know we have these students. I kind of know, if there is only [myself that is] different from others, no one will care. If there is a large group of students, for sure they will pay attention to it."

From this comment, we can see that for some international students, diversity and inclusion is more about a vague idea than a useful construct. We know that students benefit from diverse and inclusive environments because they may be less likely to experience microaggressions and discrimination. They may have more opportunities to collaborate with people who look and think like them but could also get the chance to branch out and work with people who may not share their cultural and social experiences. Thus, the university needs to communicate with international students about the importance and benefit of diversity to foster interactions and changes. The university needs to be more proactive in their approach to foster international students' learning and benefit from the diversity environment because some don't know the concept of diversity well.

Academic and Social Experience as Well as the Implication of the COVID-19

Pandemic

This second section of findings focus on understanding Asian international graduate students' academic and social experience, as well as their experience during the COVID-19 pandemic. For Asian international graduate students, their academic experience is closely related to their specific disciplines, language skills, and financial stresses.

Academic Experience

Many Asian international graduate students choose to pursue their graduate education in the U.S. because U.S. universities provide them with good research opportunities and the U.S. degrees have outstanding international reputations (Durrani, 2021). In order to achieve academic excellence and pursue careers in the U.S., international graduate students often study hard and live under various pressures. PhD students, who were admitted to highly competitive doctoral programs at a research university, demonstrated that they were well-prepared for graduate school. However, to meet the academic requirements of the graduate school and perform well, many international students experienced scholastic challenges from their specific subject fields, graduate program, faculty members, and overall campus environment. Therefore, some students often sacrificed their social activities for academic studies. Asian international students in this study also have experienced language barriers as teaching assistants and struggled financially during their graduate studies.

Long Working Hours and Expected to Perform Well Academically

Data regarding students, who were admitted to highly competitive doctoral programs at a research university, demonstrated that these students were well prepared for graduate school. However, to meet the academic requirement and perform well, many international students experienced academic challenges from their specific subject fields, graduate program, faculty member, and overall campus environment. As graduate students are mainly evaluated by their academic achievement, the academic stress for PhD students who participated in this study was high. For example, Xiao, a Chinese PhD student in the Department of Computer Science and Engineering, said, "When I first came to the U.S. and took courses, I found it really hard to catch up with professors and other students because we are running a quarter system: we only have 10 weeks. I just feel overwhelmed by the courses and the midterms, and we have lots of homework to finish. Jiao, another Chinese PhD said "I treat my academic life as my job during my studies here. So, every day, I spend at least 8 hours on research." Leo, a Chinese PhD in the Department of Chemistry said:

"Unlike others who work 8 hours a day, for the PhD students, you spend all your day finishing the task, step by step, day by day, and year by year. Not only for me, but also for most PhD students, they need to spend like four, five, or even six years to finish to get their degree. They need to be patient and work hard. For [their] research work, there is no end."

Sometimes, the research activities are overly stressful and intense which leads to high levels of anxiety and depression. Some high-intensity research activities are

conducted by students' faculty advisors that may have negatively impacted international students.

Crystal, a Chinese PhD in the Department of Chemistry, mentioned that her advisor (a Chinese professor) texted her several times a day to ask about her research progress during the pandemic, which caused her to become very stressed. They communicated through a Chinese communication app and in the Chinese language. She said, "My advisor can text me at any time. Compared to her American students, she can only email them every few days." This example shows that some faculty members may have different sets of expectations for international students: they contact students inappropriately and beyond working time by using institutionally unofficial ways of communication. This may be a gray area that blurs boundaries of the professional faculty and student's communications channel. This type of power dynamic between student and professor represents a gray area that blurs boundaries of the professional faculty and student's communications channel. Also, Crystal's story shows that Chinese international graduate students sometimes suffer from more academic stress than domestic students because of their ethnic background and assumed stereotypes of submissiveness. The professor may assume that Chinese students are more polite, accommodating, obedient to instructions, and won't retaliate. So, some professors have more expectations and assign more workload to Chinese students.

Another Chinese PhD student Xiao, studying in the Department of Computer Science and Engineering, said his advisor has very high expectations about his performance. He said, "My advisor is also Asian. He is from India, I guess. So, he

assumes that my math skill[s] [are] pretty strong. But the fact is, I don't think my math is as good as he expected. So, when I ask him a question, then he knows my actual math level."

For other Asian international students, they trended towards individualized accounts of making efforts to achieve academic success. Yaster, a Chinese PhD student in the Graduate Program of Genetics, Genomics, and Bioinformatics, said that "the reason why the department recruits so many international students are that they hope you will perform well." Students not only from the region of China experienced high expectations from their professors to perform well academically, but also international students from South Asia. For example, Sabrina, an Indian Master student in the Department of Mechanical Engineering, shared her thoughts that "it's a stereotype that people think that Asian students are extraordinary, but not everyone is like that. Sometimes you do feel like you must live up to that stereotype, but some other days you're just like that. That's fine, you just work on whichever you can and not compare yourself with other people." These assumptions and treatment that some professors give toward Asian international graduate students indicate the stereotype threats of Asian students on a U.S campus. Those stereotypes include being good in the STEM field, encountering fewer academic difficulties, and being submissive. Data from interviews and focus groups show that some Asian international graduate students internalized these stereotypes and work hard to meet expectations academically.

Language Barriers as a TA

Being a Teaching Assistant (TA) is part of the graduate student academic experience. TA positions provide graduate student funding opportunities, but it also adds heavy workloads to their individual studies and research. International graduate students that are Teaching Assistants (TA) not only teach outside of their primary language, but also navigate classroom cultures and expectations that may be entirely different from experiences at their undergraduate institutions. International TAs not only face English language challenges (conversational skills, pronunciation, and intonation), but also need to learn teaching skills like rapport building, presentation, and cultural sensitivity.

These language challenges start at the beginning of their academic journey when international graduate students must pass a language proficiency test to become a TA. If international graduate students fail this test, they won't qualify for a TA application. The university requires any student, who was born in a country where English is not the official language, to pass an English language competency exam before performing duties as a TA. This requirement includes not only international students, but also citizens and permanent residents. Those who score a conditional pass can be appointed as a TA but are required to participate in the appropriate English as a Second Language (ESL) programs at the university's Extension Center and retake the test. Only the first quarter of ESL instruction will be paid for by the Graduate Division. This English test fee is $75, and it requires students to pay out-of-pocket. Students can apply to waive the language test if their TOEFL IBT test speaking scores are over 23 or IELTS scores over 8 (very high scores). Although these English language tests are required when international

students apply for graduate programs, it is common for international students to experience language barriers when they are immersed in an English-speaking environment for the first time. Thus, U.S. institutions have a consistent emphasis placed on the testing of international TAs' English proficiency.

Asian international graduate students are normally at a disadvantage in the TA system because of language skills. Compared to international students that come from western countries or where English is their official language, some Asian international graduate students have a higher chance of failing the test and are referred to ESL training. Leo, a Chinese PhD student in the Department of Chemistry told me that he had been referred to the ESL training in his second year. He found the training course was not very useful to improve his English language skills. However, Leo said, "at least it helps me to clear my registration hold and get my qualification to be a TA." Hai, a Chinese PhD student in the Graduate Program of Genetics, Genomics, and Bioinformatics, shared his experience with ESL training. Because he couldn't pass the language test for two quarters, he wasn't able to get a TAship and get any financial support. Hai was very stressed mentally and financially during this period. Hai's example shows that international students' language barriers have financial repercussions. These requirements are a huge burden for students to improve their language skills in a short period of time, as the university is unable to provide these students more than one quarter of the ESL training fee and other financial support.

Further, two participants shared some negative experiences because of their language barriers. Leo, a PhD student in the Chemistry Department, had a negative

experience with gaining a TAship because of his language barriers. He stated that the first year is difficult because English is not our first language. It is still not very easy to express yourself even after taking those English classes." Leo mentioned that due to language barriers, he spoke a chemistry word wrong, and one student got really angry. Later, this student came to his office hours and continued to express his anger. There were some other students in his office hours during the incident and these students felt uncomfortable and embarrassed. I asked him why he felt it's not a big deal. He said the student didn't use any inappropriate languages. This experience teaches him how to read correctly about English words and prepare well for his teaching.

Leo also has another negative experience of teaching experimental research in the lab. He said there was one student very confident about himself. So, when the student followed his instruction and got wrong results, he got angry. Even when the student was told that something was wrong with the procedure, the student didn't believe it. Leo continues "the student said if I (Leo) do the experiment myself, I won't do it better than him. Of course, I won't make any mistakes. But he is just a kid, and he doesn't know these things. So, I don't really mind?" Leo felt these negative experiences are not only related to his language skills, but also doubt about his knowledge as a TA. It is true that even though some international TAs are knowledgeable in their field and are competent to perform the role, the U.S. higher education system is challenging for them to adapt especially at the beginning of their teaching career. However, perceiving international students who are ESL learners as less knowledgeable is a harmful stereotype. ESL

learners who are also TAs are more likely to receive harmful stereotypes and negative comments about their job because of the language barriers.

For other international students, language barriers may let them spend more time investing in their TA duties compared to students who do not have these extra requirements. Crystal, a Chinese PhD studying Chemistry shared her experience of working extra hours during the COVID-19 pandemic as a TA. The pre-set hours for graduate student TAs, established by the university, are 20 hours per week. Crystal admits that there is a language barrier, so that she may take longer to finish her TA duties. She talked to her department, but there is no solution to solve her heavy workload.

> "I think I have spent nearly 40 hours per week because the classes are online during the pandemic. The online version makes everything new, and we need to prepare many things, like make a recording, do the editing, and add my voice to the video. I also need to prepare the class slides, do experiments, and grade homework."

English language ability can serve as an essential tool for TAs to interact with students, present subject material, and manage classrooms. From these participants' experience, we know that language barriers place a heavier burden for international TAs compared to native speakers or international students from English speaking countries. In order to perform their role well, satisfy instructors and students, and get consistent fundings, many international graduate students need to spend extra time and make huge efforts in their teaching assistant jobs.

Financial Stress

Having adequate financial support was a major concern for many international graduate students at the university. Many of the participants mentioned that financial support from their departments is insufficient to meet their needs and they expressed concerns about obtaining grants or other funding for their studies to complete their degree programs.

For example, Alice, a Taiwanese PhD student studying in the Department of Music, shared her experience of finding different TA positions every quarter. Even though her advisor helped her to connect with other faculty to find a TA, it is still not a guaranteed position. She went back to Taiwan during the pandemic because of lack of funding. She said:

"They just treat us the same as other U.S. citizen students. However, for international students at the graduate level, we do not qualify for many kinds of scholarships. If we don't get the funding, we must pay twice as much tuition…. Last year, I didn't get any money or financial funding and I just went back to Taiwan."

My research concerning the topic of financial funding found that not only students in the humanities and social science programs experienced difficulties to get funding (which is typically the most underfunded departments in higher-education settings). Nevertheless, a few students in STEM programs also expressed concerns. For example, Qin, a Chinese PhD student from the Department of Material Science and Engineering, pointed out the funding difficulties and limited TA opportunities for

international graduate students. She said "The research funding could be a very critical issue for my department. My program doesn't offer guaranteed TA positions. So, there are very limited positions for international students to be TAs. That's a concern." Qin also shared her experience as being treated differently in TA applications compared to domestic students. She said: "One quarter, I was seeking a TA position. My program told me that there is no position available. But later, I found out they hired an American guy for TA. I don't know the reason, but I think that is because I am an international student. I think the campus may have a different policy for international students to get a TA compared to domestic students."

TA hiring should be based on a cohesive match between the job opening and a candidates' overall academic or subject background. However, this case showed that some departments or programs may have their own TA hiring priorities. Candidates' international student status should not be a barrier for their on-campus employment.

Crystal, a Chinese PhD studying Chemistry, expressed her disappointment with the limited working capacity requirement for international students. She said:

"They treat international students differently. When I tried to apply for a scholarship, I found many of them are only for domestic students. I got two offers from two departments, and they said they can make this workload 75%. But later they email me that they find international students can only work up to 50% (20 hours) per week."

It is true that U.S. immigration law and regulations only allow a maximum of 20 hours per week working hours (during the academic year) for international students who

are studying in the U.S. (U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, 2022). This requirement also limits students' source of income if the institution won't provide other eligible financial aid for international students causing immense financial hardships and burdens regarding cost-of-living expenses.

Qin, a Chinese PhD student in the Department of Material Science and Engineering, noticed that financial funding is a campus wide issue for the university. She said: "Financial issues are a big concern. If it can be figured out, other resources would be a good add on. However, if financial issues are still there, other resources are not that helpful." Overall, participants pointed out that holding student visas limited their choices of applying fundings and receiving financial support. For example, international students were usually not qualified for receiving the feral COVID-19 Economic Relief. Financial concern was one of the major challenges for international graduate students that made them feel being treated differently from domestic students.

Social Experience

International students' social experiences are an important aspect of their overseas studies and are closely related to their academic and racial experiences. Campus environment and racial climate affect these student academic, social, and professional experiences and development. Asian international graduate students in this study explained how they balance their academic and social lives by interacting with different individuals on campus. Since students are far from home, they only have the official/institutional activities to engage in. They review services and participate in campus activities hosted by the international office.

Balancing Academic Studies and Social Lives

For international graduate students, the social experience of the university contains both academic and social lives. The process of socialization in graduate school is important to graduate students as they learn useful practices and help to maintain a healthy work-life balance. Students' social life outside the academic environment has a strong influence on academic integration. For example, joining student unions and making friends from the same culture and host-culture can influence both a student's social and academic experience (Russell et al. 2010). These social activities allow students to establish a social life closely attached to the university setting.

Although the university provides various resources to engage students, Asian international graduate students seem detached from the many of the campus activities and events. About two thirds the respondents, in this study, reported a tension in having to balance an academic life and a social life. Often, these students must sacrifice their social life for academic studies. Qin, a Chinese PhD student in the Department of Material Science and Engineering, experienced struggles with course work, research, and lab duties. Qin indicated that he could not afford participating in social activities when trying to survive in competitive doctoral programs. Hai, a Chinese PhD in the Graduate Program of Genetics, Genomics, and Bioinformatics, said "I spent almost all of my time in my office, lab, and the library and I had not enough time to eat and sleep." Another Chinese student Yaster, in the same program as Hai, stated, "You have to sacrifice some of your social time in order to make progress in your research. My time and energy are limited. So, after I finish my day, I don't have time and energy to socialize." Other

respondents expressed similar experiences. Although they would like to spend more time meeting with friends, they set their academic study as the priority when there is a conflict between the two. These participants said if there is a conflict schedule with their research, they will prioritize the research rather than social activities.

Oftentimes, graduate students' academic lives overlap with their social lives. A few participants shared their observations that PhD students are not only social with their colleagues on and off-campus, but they also often have academic related conversations with others in their spare time. Some participants shared that people in their academic contacts were often just concentrated on academic studies but were not often interested in talking about entertainment and leisure. For example, Robert is a Chinese PhD student in the Department of Material Science and Engineering. Robert said, "I would say, 70% of my friends are from my academic group and the other 30% are from my social group. Most of the time, we discussed topics in the field of science. Other times, we talked about life and some entertainment." Robert felt that his social life was highly involved with his academic life. Robert also felt that research was part of social activities. Robert said:

> "Some research cannot be achieved or cannot be accomplished by myself especially in our field. Research entails interactions with other people and units. For example, when I have to use the lab, I need to get permission and training to operate some experiments with colleagues."

Some participants shared that they did not like to join any organizations or get involved in activities and events because they felt it wouldn't help them academically. As an example, Jiao, a Chinese PhD student in the Department of Electrical and Computer

Engineering, did not want to be in the Graduate Students Association email list. Jiao stated: "I feel it's not very helpful and kind of a waste of time." For this reason, Jiao thought graduates are mainly based on their academic fields, not belonging to the larger campus community. Jiao continued, "As a graduate student, I feel I do not belong to the big community of the campus. This situation even became worse after I finished courses because I have less communication with others."

Jiao's words speak to many of the international graduate students who lack motivation to get involved in student activities. Especially for PhD students who finished course work and are no longer required to take classes on campus, socializing with people is not required as they are often burdened with busy and strenuous research agendas. This transition after coursework often causes them to lose a natural social environment to connect with students and peers. Gradually, they may feel loss of interest in participating in campus activities which results in a loss of a sense of belonging in a community and on campus. Thus, reengaging graduate students into academic life and campus life should be an important concern for university administrators.

Interactions With Faculty Members and Staff

A graduate student's relationship with the faculty and staff, particularly with advisors affects not only their own academic experiences, but also their perceptions of campus culture and sense of belonging. International graduate students' interactions with faculty and staff are important factors related to their academic and social lives. For two participants in this study, faculty advisors acted as key institutional agents who understand students' backgrounds and engage them in proactive ways. Some participants

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indicate that connecting with these professionals on and off-campus helped them feel supported. Some participants described how faculty proactively reached out to them, offered support, and connected students to resources they needed. Enzo, a Chinese PhD student in the Department of Chemistry, shared that his faculty advisor came from China. This faculty advisor understood Chinese international students' challenges in graduate school, so this advisor sometimes invited students to gatherings. Especially during the COVID-19 pandemic, the faculty advisor took his graduate students hiking regularly to keep the students physically and mentally healthy. Leo, a Chinese PhD student in the same department as Enzo, shared a similar experience. Leo felt great support from his advisor not only in academic aspects, but also in his daily life. Leo said:

> "I think we got good financial support from my advisor. Also, my advisor sometimes invites us to go to his home and have some parties during the holiday season. My advisor sent us some safety workshop links. He seems to care about students' safety during this critical period of time."

However, participants in this study indicated an overall lack of interactions with staff members on campus. Findings in this study pointed out that participants felt contacting staff is a purposeful activity that should be done with a specific reason, which prohibited their regular communications. For example, Vera, a Sri Lankan MBA student said, "I don't interact with staff too much because I need to set up an appointment and have a purpose to meet the staff. It's more intentional. I think it's a little bit discouraging." Sometimes, participants are discouraged from reaching out because of the staff member's slow response pace. A few students also mentioned that The International Students and

Scholars Office (ISS) responded to emails and handled students' requests slowly since the COVID-19 pandemic began. For example, Jack Sparrow, an Indian Master student, said, "They [ISS] took at least seven to 10 business days to respond to emails. If I go in person, they are super friendly, but still the process will take that long."

Interactions With Co-Ethnic Groups and Other International Students

Social networks are critical for international graduate students' studies and adjusting to living in a foreign country. Those who have a strong social support system tend to adjust to college life in their host country more quickly and effectively. Asian international graduate students in this study indicated a stronger preference for making friends from the same country or other international students over domestic students from the host country. Because 1) they have limited opportunities to interact with domestic students on campus, 2) international students shared similar experiences and cultures, which generated a common ground and a comfort zone.

For instance, based on the interviews conducted in this research, Chinese graduate students naturally group together and communicate within social circles that share varied commonalities. Their lab mates tended to be their friends and/or roommates. They felt comfortable and socialized with other international students because they share the same language, culture, and backgrounds. For example, Jiao, a Chinese PhD in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, mentioned that some labs in STEM programs have 100% Chinese students or usually account for half of the lab students. Trends suggest that Chinese professors tend to recruit students from China. Also, a few Chinese PhD students in the Department of Chemistry mentioned that the majority of graduate

students in their department are Chinese. Jiao mentioned that "My lab has 10 Chinese students, and our advisor is Chinese. We speak Chinese in our group meetings. We only speak English when there are other non-Chinese professors or students in the meeting. We feel comfortable interacting with each other." When I continued to ask him if he felt compelled to speak English on campus, he said "Because our university is more diverse and there are some people that prefer to speak Spanish or other languages, so the university and departments are also very tolerant." This example emphasizes that there are a limited number of domestic students in some graduate programs. This lack of diversity of student groups may limit international students' communication with people from other cultures and backgrounds.

Some participants expressed they relate more to other international students because they share a similar background of coming from another culture and studying on campus. These international students understand the needs of those who do not feel like they belong and will and try to help their peers. Having the support of these international peers help Asian international graduate students navigate campus resources. For example, Leo, a PhD student in the Department of Chemistry, mentioned that he had a coworker from Mexico who was helpful to teach him about the scientific instruments used in projects and helped beyond just academic studies. The Mexican student drove him to go grocery shopping during Leo's first year. Vera, a Sri Lankan MBA student, said, "International student friends like to support each other a lot because we don't have other sources of support. Sometimes, we support each other more and we talk about different

things related to visas, international status, and our plans after graduation. These things are not the same for domestic students."

Data from the interviews and focus groups show that Asian international students are likely to interact primarily with their co-nationals and other international students. Many of these students tend to stay within their comfort zones and not interact with students of other cultures. It would be better to encourage these students to step out of their comfort zone and break down the "cultural wall" between them.

Connections With Domestic Students and Students From Other Race

Participants in this study have mixed experiences regarding making connections with domestic students and students from other cultures. Some of them have connections with a variety of domestic students through their programs, daily interactions, and friendships, and were able to maintain these connections well. As mentioned above regarding feelings of kinship between international students, Vera, a Sri Lankan MBA student, also recognizes the benefit of having friends from both domestic and international aspects. She commented that "I think it's nice having a mix of both friends. I am very connected with international friends because we can share the same experiences. Domestic friends are also very nice to help integrate me into society and experience life with them too." On the contrary, other students are more reluctant to reach out, interact, and connect with domestic students and students from other races. Cultural differences are a major obstacle prohibiting cross-cultural and cross-racial interactions. For example, Sabrina, an Indian Master student who studies in the Department of Mechanical Engineering, felt like international students have

commonalities with each other that do not exist with other domestic students. She felt

other international students understand each other despite being from different countries.

However, Sabrina felt that the cultural differences prohibited her interaction with

domestic students. She stated:

> "Sometimes I feel like I'm not most welcomed here, but that's just a feeling.
>
> When you talk to new people, everyone does not relate with you. It ends up
>
> feeling like they are not sharing that many similarities with you. That's why
>
> when you feel like you're not people in the U.S. because we have such a big
>
> cultural gap. It's difficult to find that common ground."

Alice, a Taiwanese PhD in the Department of Music, mentioned that cultural

differences shaped her scope and preference of interacting with people. She said, "For

me, I need to care about what happens in both Asia and America. Domestic students only

care about one side. So, that's a barrier for me to communicate with them." Yangyang, a

PhD student in the Department of Chemistry, found that her conversations with domestic

students are usually short and superficial without any deep communication. Yangyang

said, "It's harder for me to find topics to talk about. It's usually like how someone's day

was, then talk about what's happened today, and that's all. No further or deeper

conversations. I feel those are superficial conversations, like greetings."

In addition, departments play an important role in fostering international graduate

students' interactions with domestic students. The social events promoted in different

departments at the university influenced international graduate students' social practices.

Some international graduate students stated that their departments held regular social get-

togethers, which allowed all the graduate students to socially interact with each other. For example, Jack Sparrow was an Indian student in the Department of Material Science and Engineering, studying for a master's degree. Jack felt that "Coffee Socials" provided him an opportunity to interact with people. Jack said,

> "Coming from India, I haven't had any friends here in the first two months. So, the Coffee Social is one thing, at least I hang out with some people. At least, I feel safe and met some people from my country who's here to help. So, the Coffee Social provides opportunities for the new and old students to meet together. And I like that."

The students who maintained that their department hosted regular social events over the course of the semester were more inclined to socially interact with a mixture of American, co-national, and other international graduate students. However, limited efforts by departments to promote social connections among graduate students reduced opportunities to engage in cross-cultural exchanges or to develop close friendships, thereby increasing the likelihood of social segregation between domestic and international students.

In conclusion, the cause of limited communication between domestic and international students includes culture differences and departmental environment. Lack of interactions with domestic students and students from other cultures affect Asian international graduate students' feelings of campus culture/climate, as well as affect their sense of belonging on campus.

ISS Services and Hosted Events Participation

The International Students and Scholars Office (ISS) supports and promotes the success, wellness, and personal growth of international students/scholars through expert advising, intercultural programming, and advocacy. The office aims to create a safe and welcoming environment that respects cultural diversity and fosters intercultural skills and communication across campus. ISS offers guidance for all international students: by helping with requirements to enter the country, housing options, and providing an orientation program for international students upon their arrival. ISS does provide social and cultural activities in addition to offers visa related services to international students. Some of the programs are geared towards helping international graduate students with enhancing their knowledge of diversity and promoting their skills in a diverse environment.

This study finds that Asian international graduate students are more likely to contact ISS for visa/status related issues but are less involved in its programing and events. Students note that ISS provides useful services to international students and the office is there to help students adapt and learn. Some participants mentioned that staff members in the office are very nice and helpful to solve issues related to immigration/ international status.

When I asked participants whether they have attended ISS sponsored activities and events, many of them said they are busy with their studies and have less time to attend these events. For those who attended ISS sponsored events before, some noted that the ISS offers social events only for international students, and there are a limited number

of Americans attending international events. They felt that American students simply did not care or were not interested in such events. Also, international events were not well advertised at the university for domestic students. Instead, these events are usually emailed only to international students' listservs or advertised through the ISS weekly email. For instance, Lu, a Chinese MBA student stated, "I sometimes come to the events hosted by ISS. I found that events are designed only for international students without inviting American students." Michael, a Taiwanese PhD student in the Department of Physics & Astronomy, said that "I think there are some international student activities that are designed for international students that prevent domestic students from joining." Several of the students pointed out that they would enjoy having American students in international events and activities. In this case, events provided through ISS usually did not actively encourage social interaction between international and domestic students. In suggestion, ISS could engage corporations with different cultural organizations on campus. So that through hosting and celebrating cultural events and activities, students became immersed in culturally diverse environments.

The COVID-19's Implications to Students' Academic and Social Lives

In the earlier stage of the outbreak of COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, international students have been impacted by the pandemic academically, socially, economically, and mentally. Compared to domestic students, international students are physically away from their family and friends, and they lack social support in the local community. The pandemic may have put them under a more isolated position abroad with less access to public resources due to monetary, informational, or language/cultural barriers.

__Impacted Research Progress, Experienced Academic Difficulties, and Safety Concerns__

During the pandemic and the campus shutting down in-person operations, some PhD students still performed heavy research duties despite. They were expected to perform these duties despite feeling physically and mentally unsafe from the spread of the COVID-19 virus. For example, Yangyang, a PhD student in the Department of Chemistry, said, "My research is experimental research and based in a lab, so, I have to go back to the lab soon even though it's not so safe. So, this is kind of contradicting." In the earlier days of the COVID-19 pandemic, Yangyang also mentioned an incident in which his lab mates conducting research on the same floor as him had tested positive for COVID. However, Yangyang's department didn't inform researchers within the lab: students only found out later through their personal connections. This example shows the risks that some international PhD students, who do experimental research, had no option to center their own health and safety during the pandemic. Students like Yangyang felt unsafe and had to conduct research even though they experienced hesitation and concern about their safety on campus.

Crystal, a Chinese PhD student also in the Department of Chemistry, was forced to return to the lab at the very beginning of the pandemic. Crystal said:

> "During the pandemic, my advisor was working on one publication. So basically, she wanted me to go back to the lab very early to continue working on the data. I may be one of the first 10 people who went back to campus. My advisor kept asking me if I was ready to go back to research. Because she was in a hurry with the publication, I could only say yes, even though I was worried about our safety.

I was the first one to work in the lab. I think I worked for two months until others came to the lab. I felt unsafe because people who tested positive used to come to the lab on our floor."

Crystal's experience indicates that research activities for international students can become overly stressful and intense which, in turn, leads to high levels of anxiety and depression. Some high-intensity research activities that are conducted by students' faculty advisors can negatively impact international students. Furthermore, some graduate students were stressed and frustrated to continue to perform their roles for the lab or professors at the early stage of the pandemic even though they had serious health concerns regarding in-person research.

For many of the PhD students in STEM fields, the campus shutdown affected their use of labs. This situation further affected some PhD students' research progress and graduation timelines. For international graduate students, their graduation timeline is more critical than domestic graduate students since their visa and funding opportunities are tied together with their academic progress. For example, Xiao, a Chinese PhD student in the Department of Computer Science and Engineering, said:

"I am a member of a SuperLab. The lab gives us world-ranking high-performance computing. Almost every student in my lab is an international student. Last year, because of COVID-19, we were all unable to enter our lab on campus to perform research. This affected our ability to do research and collaborate."

The COVID-19 pandemic not only had implications on graduate students' research progress, but it also affected these students' learning opportunities and communication with professors in switching labs. For international graduate students, the cost of a change advisor or lab switching seems more challenging during the pandemic as they face barriers in understanding policies and procedures of the university and department. Qin, a Chinese PhD student from the Department of Material Science and Engineering, has also experienced switching advisors and a research delay during the pandemic. Qin felt the pandemic impacted the university's funding situation, which limited some faculty member's capacity to recruit new students. In addition, the campus shutdown has seriously affected her communication with faculty members and made her research stop. She said:

> "I was trying to switch a faculty advisor during the pandemic. If it's a normal situation, I could meet with faculty members on campus, and that's an easier way to communicate and to show my work. However, during the pandemic, many faculty had very busy schedules and also, I think the funding was somehow cut or not enough. Thus, during the pandemic, many faculty members did not recruit new students. They said they can't have me. My research has been stopped for one and a half quarters."

Polaris is an Indian PhD student in the Department of Chemistry Engineering. She started her PhD remotely in the fall quarter of 2020. Polaris felt that remote instruction made her lose opportunities to interact with people, learn the campus's culture, and learn effectively from the department and lab. After she came to the U.S. and started working

in a lab in person, she did not know the academic work and culture well. Also, Polaris spoke on how there was always a communication gap or error between her and her advisor. Polaris said:

> "My advisor mentioned that maybe I was not working hard enough or maybe I was not putting in enough effort. It seemed like she was unhappy and disappointed with me. I couldn't handle that stress. Then, it became evident that I won't be able to work in this lab for a long time. So, I decided to switch labs. If everything would have been in-person, I would have decided this back nine months ago before we tried to rotate labs."

As evidenced in these cases, the participants had huge implications towards their studies and interactions during the COVID-19 pandemic. These implications include health concerns while working on campus, delay of research progress, funding issues, and communication issues between advisors/professors. Research progress, funding, and graduation timelines are important aspects and milestones for graduate students. While COVID-19 pandemic impacted all graduate students, international doctoral students have more difficult situations because they have limited quarters to obtain reduction of the Non-Resident Supplemental Tuition (NRST) from the university before and after reaching candidacy.

Implication to Communication and Socialization

Participants raised some major social challenges, due to the pandemic, including adapting to independent learning environments. Other challenges included the lack of opportunities for social interaction and an overall lack of a sense of belonging. Almost all

participants reported feeling isolated during COVID-19. Leo, a Chinese PhD student in the Department of Chemistry, felt he lost natural conversation opportunities with domestic students during the COVID-19 pandemic, as students couldn't physically interact with each other. Leo said, "For Zoom, I feel it's hard to initiate a meeting to talk to each other. I am unfamiliar with online resources and platforms. It took us a while to learn how to do those using those tools, like Zoom." Jiao, a Chinese PhD student in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, mentioned that he didn't have any communication with other students during the pandemic. The only communication was between him and his professor. Jiao said:

> "If I am staying in the campus, I will need to talk with many different people like students and professors for daily communication. But staying at home, I don't have a chance to meet anyone. During the pandemic, I talked with like less than 20 people in the past year for sure.…The difference between me and me two years ago is that I feel more comfortable to stay alone and do the research by myself."

Yangyang, in the Department of Chemistry, felt that the pandemic affected her communication skills negatively by not talking to people. She expressed:

> "During the pandemic, I don't talk to people. I lost some communication skills to talk to people. Even though my personality pushes me by not interacting with others or talking to strangers, I think I still need to talk to people to maintain my language skills."

Despite having some mixed feelings about the online instructions during the pandemic, about half of participants in this study felt that in a normal in-person environment, international students have conversations naturally with domestic students in class, during research, and on campus. However, during the pandemic, despite engaging in virtual interactions, the online communication was insufficient for international students to feel connected during the pandemic. In conclusion, most Asian international graduate students in this study have experienced isolation because they have limited opportunities to participate in engaging learning communities and to receive sufficient university support during the pandemic. This isolation resulting from the COVID-19 pandemic is an add-on to their existing isolated experience as international students in the U.S.

Racial Positioning, Racialization, and Racial Isolation

This third section of findings is conceptualized to account for the impact of racialization to Asian international graduate students. These findings create a salient concern for Asian international graduate students as they are positioned as outsiders and inferior within academic social structures. Higher education institutions must begin to acknowledge 1) how international students of color navigate race in the U.S., 2) how Asian international students' experience racialization on campuses, and 3) how they contend with systemwide invisibility.

Racial Positioning

Learning race, while studying in the U.S., is a transformation and/or awakening regarding how their identity is constructed for many Asian international graduate

students. Participants mentioned how their perceptions of race and racism have changed since studying in the U.S. The following concepts are participants' beliefs about race and racism in the U.S. and what helps them build their current perceptions.

Race is an Issue in the U.S. but not in Their Home Countries

After studying in the U.S., a majority of participants were surprised to witness the extent to which race and racism are emphasized in the U.S. In countries that are racially homogenous, race is not an identity marker or a social distinction. For that reason, adjusting to this new reality in the United States can be dislocating. Chinese students in this study come from monoracial countries: racial constructs in the U.S. do not exist in their home countries. Lu, a Chinese MBA student shared that, "I didn't learn about race in China, as everyone in China is the same as me. So, less people have the concept of race and not many people care about it." Lu didn't think race was an issue until she came to the States. Another Indian Master student Jack Sparrow, studying in the Department of Material Science and Engineering, said, "When I was in India, racism was not a common thing. Here, race is a big thing and it's a common word to use. Everyone talks about race."

Some participants noted that they knew race is an issue and concern in U.S. society before coming to America, so they prepared themselves for the changes of a new racial environment. These students mentioned that they saw an increasing number of racial incidents reported from news and social media throughout the country, so they had a certain degree of anxiety before coming to the U.S. As an example, Xiao, a Chinese PhD student in the Department of Computer Science and Engineering, also shared his

preparation and experience. Xiao said, "Before I came to the U.S., I read a lot of news from a lot of sources about race issues in the States. So, I am fully prepared about what I'm going to face. But so far, I haven't experienced anything." Sabrina, an Indian Master student in the Department of Mechanical Engineering, said, "Before I came to the States, I read news about the discrimination. So, I thought that maybe when I arrived here, I'd experience someone discriminating me. But I have not faced that on campus." She also mentioned that within an Indian student group, they asked each other if they have had any problems on campus. Most of them did not have any negative experience regarding race.

Racial Silence and Avoidance

Participants sometimes expressed discomfort or a lack of knowledge when discussing race and racism in the United States. Partly, it results from international students' feeling disconnected from racial hierarchies in the U.S., lack of knowledge and language skills to communicate, and/or their comfortable level to talk about racial issues.

> "I cannot say I have a very good understanding about race and racism, but I have
> the basic understanding. I personally will try to avoid talking about race in the
> U.S. because I worried that I might not handle them very well. I prefer to be kind
> and to express my kindness. Sometimes, I might not know exactly how to express
> them in English, so I am concerned that I might not express them well. But
> personally, I will communicate it with my friends in Chinese……I'm still kind of
> not familiar with the real American culture. I do not want to step in, so I will not
> feel any discomfort……Because of my race, I stay in my comfort zone. So that's

why eventually, I might still need to go back to China to find a job." (Enzo, a Chinese PhD student in the Department of Chemistry).

"I muted myself as an international student. Mostly, when I try to meet anyone or encounter something new to me that I don't know, I will say that I'm an international student and I don't know these things. As a safer option, I just mentioned my international status…… to talk about race, you need to get out of your comfort zone to talk over some sensitive issues. Racism is a sensitive word here. So, both parties need to feel comfortable to talk. I sometimes talk with my roommate about race, but I never had these conversations with my lab mates or any other faculty members in my class." (Jack Sparrow, an Indian Master student in the Department of Material Science and Engineering).

In the focus group, I asked participants why some international students are not interested in race related topics and what caused the invisibility and ignorance of race among international students. For participants who were more knowledgeable and cared about race and racism in the U.S., they observed that international students were often ignorant and silent on this topic. Due to a lack of background knowledge, international graduate students may sometimes perceive race and racialization as irrelevant to their graduate studies. This lack of knowledge discourages international students from participating in the diversity discussions while increasing opportunities to deliver explicit racist comments to other groups of people. For example, Mary, a Chinese PhD student in the School of Education, commented in the following:

"Many international students don't really have these opportunities to get exposed

to all these important issues. For example, I need to explain to my Chinese friend

why it's an important topic and why you need to know about this. I think, if you

want to be more involved to know the American culture, and you are going to stay

in the U.S., you need to know how race and racism works in the U.S.

society…One workshop is not enough, you need to constantly expose students to

this knowledge and let them know how to build a system of knowledge for

themselves."

Similarly, Crystal, a Taiwanese PhD student in the Department of Music, said:

"Many international students in the PhD program don't need to take ethnic studies

classes like undergraduates, so they are not having that kind of information or

knowledge in their mind. So, it'

The avoidance of talking about race and racism is not only for students, but also

for some faculty members. Participants mentioned that in many of the STEM

departments, race and racism were not a topic in either departmental or interpersonal

conversations. For example, some participants noticed that during the Black Lives

Matters movement in 2020, although the university sent an official statement to support

African American students on campus, their departments did not send any emails or

organized workshops. Also, some students observed that their professors in the

department seemed not interested in the topic and avoided talking about race and racism

publicly. Even when students communicated and asked about their opinions, some

professors seemed to avoid the conversation. This knowledge gap between national and

global contexts could be a critical blind spot for international students to understand America's struggles with racism and being denied an important learning opportunity.

Learning Race While Studying

Participants noted that they are learning first-hand about race and racism while learning in their field of study in the U.S. Some students learned formally through courses and studies in academic settings and others learned through social communication and life experience. For example, Vera, a Sri Lankan MBA student, stated:

> "Before coming to the States, I didn't think racism was very big in the United States. But when I stayed here longer, I saw racism happen around me in terms of the news/current events in the United States. I took many different classes as an undergrad and also attended some workshops as a graduate student. I see that there is a lot more racism than I would think, but I don't see it as much firsthand."

Alice is a PhD student from Taiwan, China, studying Music. Alice made the following reflection about her transition and learning process of race in the U.S. By taking a graduate level course, Alice not only realized her privilege as a dominant ethnic group in Taiwan, but she also built on her identity as both Taiwanese and Asian in the U.S. Alice said:

> "In Taiwan I'm part of the majority of Han Chinese. I'm the person that my race may oppress another race of people. But when I moved to the U.S., I became the minority. It caused me to face discriminations. That's the biggest difference. So, I started to realize how hard it is for non-Han Chinese people living in Taiwan.

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That [transition] helped me to realize my privilege back home. When I took an anthropology class, I began realizing that race will impact people's self-identity and their behaviors, and I started to realize that I am an Asian- not only a Taiwanese. Now, I pose myself as Asian in America. So, it's like adding on, not taking off my identity……In the class, we discussed a lot about race and how the idea of race constructed people's identity and their behaviors. From that time, I started to consider people's race."

Some participants not only learned about race and racism through education, but also through media, social media, and interpersonal communications. For example, Kat, a Chinese PhD student in the School of Education, mentioned that she did not think about race and racism before coming to the States. She said, "Taking classes, learning history/theories, and talking to domestic students helped a lot to change my mind. Since we talked about it all the time, it influenced my own position on race. I think race definitely plays an important role in my life now, not only in my daily life experience, but also in my research and studies." Kat shared a story about her conversations with a domestic friend. When Kat mentioned that China doesn't have a race issue, Kat's domestic friend said that "China has 55 minority groups who are different from the majority Han ethnic group." Kat said she never thought about race and ethnicity in China in this way before. Kat realized that her education in China built her initial knowledge of race and ethnicity, but her education and conversations with Americans improved her understanding through a comparative and international perspective.

This example shows that international graduate students' home country culture and its composition of race affected their initial knowledge and experience of race. While their knowledge and understanding of race reflect their respective countries of origin, graduate education and life experience in the U.S. helped to or improve and/or change their perspectives.

"I Don't See Race and Racism"

Two students within the study felt that race and racial ideologies did not affect them. One of these students denied being categorized under any racial groups. These students' reflection indicated that some students distance themselves from the racial relations within the U.S. society based on their personal experience of race. They may choose to believe race doesn't exist when they are not directly affected by race and racism. Young, a Chinese PhD student in the Department of Economics, reflected on her experience. Young said:

> "Maybe some students were not affected by racism because they did not feel strongly related to American culture and society. For international graduate students, sometimes we didn't experience discrimination, or we were too busy to focus on studies. For example, I felt that I was not impacted by the issue of race and racism, so I didn't join the Stop Asian Hate Movement last year."

One participant named James, a Chinese PhD student studying in the humanities and social sciences fields, shared his personal view regarding race as not being a social construct. He did not want to be identified based on biology traits. Instead, he preferred to

be defined and recognized by his experience, thinking, and beliefs that make him who he is. James reflected:

"I feel we are not defined by race. The reason is that we are all humans, and we are all equal. So, there really is nothing to stand out there. People should be distinguished by how hard we work and how much we are willing to learn and so on. For example, if you are a working person, you earn what it is [from your job]. Race has nothing to do with it……I really hate being categorized as something, especially what other people think you are. People know nothing about who you are and what you have. People have their own experiences and understandings. You cannot just look at a person and then automatically categorize him/her into a category.

Further, James did not believe the power relations of race associated in U.S. society. So, he did not accept Critical Race Theory and preferred to use meritocracy to explain his efforts to achieve success. James continued:

"Race is taught and discussed more here than compared to the East Coast. I think in a predominantly white campus, you're less likely to talk about the issue of race, but more about meritocracy. Like the harder you work, the better you will achieve……I feel hard work could always pay off. So, the harder you work, the better outcomes you are expected to see. This thinking benefits me. I just tell myself to work hard, no matter what the environment changes.

James' statement shows that some students may refuse to acknowledge that the construction of race makes sense to them, or they do not acknowledge that racism exists.

They believed that a person should be categorized based on other identifiers, but not race. Through hard work and success, they won't be defined and categorized under race. This type of ideology draws on neoliberal logics of racism with the rationale of meritocracy. Performativity matters in the ways that students seek cultural and social capitals to increase their global competitiveness. However, they may not realize that an internalized racial hierarchy is prevailing in the U.S. and beyond, including Western countries and even non-Western countries,

The Experience of Race and Racism

Although some participants have not experienced racism on their campus, other participants recognized that race/racism exist in the United States and expressed an understanding that Asian international students do experience racism on campus or elsewhere. These racial experiences on campus come from faculty members, staff members, and other interpersonal interactions.

The Experience of Microaggressions, Discriminations, and Racism

A few participants in this study believed that some professors treated international students differently from American students. They observed that their professors disengaged themselves from international students. For instance, Kat, a Chinese PhD student, shared her experience in the School of Education. In her program, there were four Chinese international students and they supported each other most of the time. During their final exams, they went to ask their professor about a group project for the final exam. Although the professor agreed that Chinese students can be grouped together, the professor emphasized twice that they could not cheat in this project. Kat described

that she felt shocked and uncomfortable after hearing this comment about her and her fellow Chinese students. But Kat did not say anything in response. In addition, Kat described that this professor seemed to treat domestic and international differently. The professor liked to talk and interact with domestic students and often ignored Chinese international students' questions by showing them a confused look and skipping their questions. Kat said, "I felt I was being treated as if we were not as intelligent as my American peers."

Unfortunately, Kat had another experience working as a TA in which a professor expressed concerns about her English language skills because she was an international student. Kat gave an example pertaining to grading. Although Kat followed the professor's instructions, it seems that the professor had different opinions on some gradings and complained about her ability for grading. Kat didn't feel trusted as a TA because English is her second language. This experience frustrated Kat because she felt that some professors may apply different standards in working with international students.

Crystal, a Chinese PhD studying in the Department of Chemistry, shared her experience of racism from a white faculty member. Crystal had a discussion with a professor in her department about a research paper that their research team was going to publish soon. When Crystal pointed out an issue in the paper, the professor got angry and complained that Crystal caused last minute trouble for their publication plan. The professor then emailed her to continue his complaint and typed inappropriate and unprofessional words such as "WTF". I asked Crystal what happened when she read the

email from her professor. Crystal said, "I don't really care about it. But my advisor noticed it and she replied to him saying that he cannot say this to students. The professor then emailed back an apology."

Robert, a Chinese PhD student in the Department of Material Science and Engineering, shared his experience of a racial related misunderstandings on campus. In 2021, GSA offered a 2-part Anti-Blackness workshop to enhance students' knowledge and understanding of diversity and Anti-Blackness. Robert said:

"When GSA planned to organize a workshop to discuss Anti-Blackness, I think they were close-minded to only talking about Anti-Blackness, so I suggested changing the title to a more general one, like anti-racism and suggesting adding anti-Asian racism in the workshop. However, an African American in the GSA meeting said that my action is an example of anti-blackness. I argued with this person by saying that changing the title could attract more students to the workshop. Then some other students in the meeting joined the conversation to blame me and I think they used some dirty words. I think this is not an equal treatment. They're looking for some kind of privilege……I didn't talk to other people in the university about that incident. I talked to my friends. Someone in GSA wanted to talk to me, but I refused. My only debate about racism failed."

Due to lack of context, Robert may be involved in more complicated situations. Robert's experience highlighted that international students may not be prepared to navigate the diversity and inclusion landscape, engage in conversations about race and racism, and feel supported as they explore their own racial understanding and identities.

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In summary, these experiences shared by the participants highlights that Asian international graduate students have experienced microaggressions, racial incidents, and racial related misunderstandings on campus. Kat's experience shows that some faculty members invalidate international students' thoughts, backgrounds, and feelings. Even though these invalidating behaviors targeting international students were unconscious, biased attitudes and beliefs are still harmful to these students. Crystal's experience reveals that sometimes, faculty members can generate direct discrimination or racism in comments to international students. Robert's experience indicates that to engage in sensitive conversations related to race and racism, international students may need to listen to respect and learn more about the content before speaking up.

Faculty and Staff Members' International Sensitivity and Interest

Faculty and staff members' sensitivity and interest toward international topics affected participants' feelings of welcoming and perceptions of a campus racial climate. Unfortunately, three participants in the humanities and social science field shared thoughts about invisibility in classroom discussions. As graduate students in these fields are encouraged to participate in class discussion in seminar style classes, they often talk about their own experience in their home countries and their perspectives outside of the domestic domain. However, international perspectives were usually not preferred to be discussed and professors in those departments were not interested in international affairs or their experiences. Participants found that their international perspectives often bring silence to the classroom, as no one follows up or comments on their thoughts, not even the professors. As a result, these students felt discouraged to share their thoughts.

Participants felt that professors, whose research is focused on international aspects, are more willing to involve international students and value their opinions in the classroom. When professors included more diverse and international oriented reading materials, students usually viewed classrooms as more inclusive and felt encouraged to contribute to the discussion. However, participants felt many classes were only focused on domestic topics, which limited both domestic and international students' learning scopes. Mary, a Chinese PhD student in the School of Education, said, "I was frustrated that the class readings are all concentrated in the U.S., and no international perspective was introduced in the class. The professors were trying to explain to us how things work in the U.S. only."

Qin, a Chinese PhD student in the Department of Material Science and Engineering, noticed that staff members who have international backgrounds have more understanding of international students. Qin said, "I heard from friends in the mechanical engineering department that their graduate advisor is from Japan. This advisor put more attention and efforts into international graduate students' success. I feel this is quite different from my program advisor, who is a white male." In addition, Vera (a Sri Lankan MBA student) felt that staff members who have more international experience or diverse cultural backgrounds are more sensitive towards and considerate of international students. Vera said:

> "When I first came to America, I felt a little bit shy to show the fact that I am an international student. Because I was afraid that I would be unwelcome here. I tried to behave as American as possible. But I was wrong about my perception.

When I started to reveal my background and identity to staff and faculty, they were actually very interested in my background. You know, some staff members in the International Affairs Office have international backgrounds. Their background really helps me to feel welcomed, because I share a similar experience with the staff member……One of the career center graduate student staff has an international background. She understands international students and she works to make sure the programs in the Career Center are inclusive for international graduate students."

For international graduate students, faculty and staff are important informants, contacts, and agents in graduate programs. Data from this study show that faculty and staff members' sensitivity, consideration, and interest in international topics and international students' success influenced students' perceptions of the campus culture as welcoming and inclusive. Those that didn't show this interest foster the opposite effect. Faculty and staff may benefit international students' development towards having positive perceptions of a campus's racial climate by showing their understanding, offering help, and contributing to a diverse campus culture.

Institutional and Systemic Barriers Contribute to Institutional Invisibility

Institutional and systemic barriers were perceived by Asian international graduate students in this study. These barriers included setting different timelines for their qualifying exams in different departments and a lack of sufficient campus resources to accommodate international students.

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Different Timeline for Advancing to Candidacy

The university graduate division's regulations and procedures state that doctoral students should complete their written and oral qualifying examinations and advance to candidacy in the first four years of their Ph.D. study. However, different programs and departments at the university have their own requirements for doctoral students regarding their timeline to advance to candidacy and graduation. A few STEM programs have a shorter timeline for international graduate students to advance to candidacy. Some of the participants, in this study, mentioned their observations and concerns during interviews and focus groups. For instance, Qin, a Chinese PhD student in the Department of Material Science and Engineering, noticed that international graduate students in her department have a shorter time to pass the qualifying exam than domestic students. Also, Enzo, a Chinese PhD student in the Department of Chemistry, pointed out that international students are recommended to be advanced to candidacy at the end of their second year or face financial consequences. Enzo made the following comment:

> "For domestic students, the timeline to take a qualifying exam can be more
> flexible. But for international students, if we don't pass the oral exam in the third
> year, we need to pay an additional fee. That's why we are always recommended
> to pass the exam at the end of our second year to get rid of this [fee]. So,
> international students are more hard working. If they don't focus on the research
> in the first or two years, they will have problems in passing the exam."

Even though not all participants shared the same qualifying exam schedules recommended by their departments, this example shows that international graduate

students felt additional pressure to meet their department's required timeline during their doctoral studies. Falling behind in the timeline to advance to candidacy and/or failing their qualifying exam would accrue serious consequences. These repercussions include paying additional tuition. Thus, as mentioned earlier in the section on students' academic and social lives, most participants in this study focused their time on academic studies to avoid graduation delay. Compared to domestic students, setting up a stricter timeline for international students to take the qualifying exam manifests as an institutional barrier and an unequal treatment for these students.

"The Campus is not Designed for us."

Unfortunately, some participants highlighted that they felt international students were at a disadvantage when compared with other students on campus. Some participants noted that the American education system did not favor international students. More specifically, the campus structure and services did not support international graduate students sufficiently and tried to ignore their institutional presence. For example, Michael, a Taiwanese PhD student in the Department of Physics & Astronomy, commented "I think the university takes care more about the domestic student. Like jobs and fundings, prioritize the domestic student." Crystal, a Chinese PhD in the Department of Chemistry, said that university systems are not designed for everyone because much less opportunities were available for international students. Crystal noted:

> "They (her department) sent some scholarship opportunities to everyone but did not really mention who is eligible for it. For example, I have received one email from my department about a career mentor program. A professor will meet you

every week if you want to pursue academic positions. I was so interested to join, however, it's only for the domestic students. Hopefully, the university could provide more services to its own graduate students and not only for undergraduate students. For international students, opportunities are [even more] limited."

Vera, a Sri Lankan MBA student, has been studying at the university since undergrad. Vera felt that career services on campus did not tailor towards international students. Vera thought a lot of the international students in her program did not feel supported with the MBA Career Center. Vera gave examples from being a student in the MBA program and her undergraduate experience with career fairs. Vera said:

"One thing I felt different, as an international student on campus, is the career fairs. They didn't take into account international students' perceptions and lives. They kind of make their workshops very focused on domestic students, despite the fact that there's so many international students in the MBA program. For example, the school invited a lot of domestic aluminum for network sessions. I feel like it's a very direct benefit towards the domestic students. Also, I have similar experiences as an undergraduate student at the university career center. I went to a lot of career fairs, and none of the employers wanted to hire international students. So, I felt very discouraged."

Despite the career services, Vera felt that, although the campus has resources and support for students to succeed, international students need extra help to navigate and take advantage of campus resources. Vera continued:

"I feel international students do need to integrate into that kind of culture of being able to just seize different opportunities in order to succeed. They [the university] do value student success and they want you to succeed. But for international students, it does take extra effort to engage on campus even though the opportunities and resources are there on campus. It also takes determination from international students to get involved."

Other students noticed that there is a dominant culture on campus especially for the graduate programs. Hai, a Chinese PhD student in the Graduate Program of Genetics, Genomics, and Bioinformatics, shared his observations in the Graduate Division and Graduate Student Associations (GSA). Hai pointed, "The culture here is not diverse enough, I feel white culture is dominated on campus. In GSA, most games are American originated games- not international games. I know there is some Asian food on campus. But when we have meetings, we always have American food, like pizza."

The participant reports indicated that many international graduate students felt that the resources and support on campus were not enough. The resources on campus were catered to focus on undergraduate domestic students and were not tailored to international graduate students.

Implications of the COVID-19 Pandemic and Political Environment

In recent years, the U.S. government created an unwelcoming political environment that incentivized a bigoted rhetoric and exclusionary policies targeting international students. Although participants may have been aware of and/or experienced racism prior to the COVID-19 pandemic, the events of the pandemic greatly impacted

their awareness of race and racism in the U.S. During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, former President Donald Trump used the term "Chinese Virus," stoking issues of fear, anxiety, and concerns for both Asians and Asian Americans. Unfortunately, an increasing number of Chinese international students have experienced microaggressions, racism, and even physical assaults toward Asians/Asian Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic (Chirikov & Soria, 2020). Participants in this study have either experienced racism first-hand or heard about racism targeting Asians from their friends and contacts. As an example, at the beginning of the outbreak of the pandemic in the U.S. in early 2020. Some participants have had unpleasant experiences and encountered negative reactions, including surprise, shock, and resistance for wearing masks on campus. It's unfortunate that the outbreak of the pandemic has led to stereotypes and misconceptions about individuals from certain backgrounds. Other participants shared that they were even afraid to go to the market alone for fear of being attacked. James, a Chinese PhD student studying in the humanities and social sciences fields said,

> "Initially, I was a little terrified by the reactions that people may have. Especially when President Trump mentioned the virus came from China and it should be called 'Wuhan Virus.' I felt like I was in danger at that point… like people may attack you because of your Asian identity."

Participants also felt that not only Chinese, but also other Asian groups (including Asian American and Asian international groups) were all victims of these racial incidents. For example, Vera, a Sri Lankan MBA student, mentioned that her friend, an international student from Japan, was harassed and physically assaulted off-campus.

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Vera's friend was told to take the virus "back to China" in downtown Los Angeles. Vera

felt strongly connected to these situations because they shared commonalities through

being Asian or holding a different immigration status in the U.S. Vera said:

> "We're victims of these incidents. I'm Southeast Asian and I feel a little different
>
> from the targeted racial or ethnic group. But I still felt strongly connected to the
>
> situation because we were all immigrants in this country in some ways......I
>
> haven't experienced it myself, but I feel very sad and at some points. It may make
>
> me change my long-term goal on whether to stay in the United States or not.
>
> When I have children, I don't want to bring them into an environment that's not
>
> welcoming to them or going to be hostile to them in any way."

Moreover, the U.S. government also created an unwelcoming political

environment that incentivized a bigoted rhetoric and exclusionary policies targeting

international students. Former President Trump also issued a presidential directive on

July 6, 2020, that forced international students to be in-person on campus for fall classes

or risk losing their visa status (Anderson & Svrluga, 2020). This policy stated that if

international students were enrolled in online-only courses in fall 2020, the United States

Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) would cancel their visas. In 2020, at an

early stage of the COVID-19 pandemic, a majority of colleges in the U.S. had announced

that they would reopen their campuses in the fall—but conduct classes online. Even with

campuses open to conducting courses virtually, international students would have been

prohibited from studying in the U.S. under the imposed ruling. This type of policy hurts

international students because it fails to consider students' challenges in every aspect of

life while navigating the global pandemic and would create physical, mental, and financial risks. This example shows that international students must be attentive to shifting socio-political environments that may or may not be welcoming to their presence in higher education institutions in the U.S. and society at large.

Although the decision was rescinded after receiving waves of criticism and lawsuits from universities, international students have encountered uncertainty as well as health and safety concerns. Almost all participants in this study shared their common experience of anxiety and helplessness regarding this visa policy and COVID restrictions during 2020. Some students had to postpone their admissions because of the uncertainty of policies regarding international students during the pandemic. An Indian Master student Sabrina said "I was planning on coming to the U.S. during fall 2020, but because of the Trump administration's rule on international students, I had to push my admission date for three months. That was a big negative thing that I faced."

In addition, the relationship between the U.S. and China has affected Chinese international students' perceptions of the U.S. as a safe and welcoming place to study. The U.S. government regards Chinese STEM graduate students as potential national security threats and these students have experienced growing scrutiny on and outside of campus (Burke, 2021). For example, the former Trump administration signed a policy announcement on May 29, 2020, banning "communications with the Chinese People's Liberation Army" and forbidding Chinese graduate students and researchers to enter the United States. The government canceled visas and expelled 3,000 Chinese students who they believe have ties to the Chinese military (Wong & Barnes, 2020).

Some Chinese PhD students indicated that they suffered daily stress by not knowing whether they could find jobs and remain in the country due to visa restrictions and biases toward Chinese international students. Yaster, a Chinese PhD student in Graduate Program of Genetics, Genomics, and Bioinformatics, described:

"The U.S.- China relation is just like the two governments publishing different policies to dislike each other. To be honest, I was very anxious and nervous about my future because of the pandemic. I worry that I may get unfair treatment because we didn't do anything wrong."

In addition, some Chinese graduate students have experienced intense security checks and even interrogations when entering and leaving the U.S. Kat, a Chinese PhD student in the School of Education, shared three experiences of Chinese STEM PhD students attending the same university as her. This experience happened on the same flight as her when she was coming back from China to the U.S. before fall 2020. Kat said these three students were subjected to an extraneous three-hour check at the airport and were being asked questions about their background and research. Another Chinese PhD student, Enzo, studying in the Department of Chemistry, said:

"I am worried about the U.S. Government's special check on some of the Chinese scholars. I heard from some friends that when Chinese PhD students and scholars go back to China, they have very strict checks when they are at the airport. The check even includes their personal computers. They checked if there was anything that was not supposed to be brought back."

While U.S. foreign policy at this time (and contemporarily) grappled with varying positions on immigration and international relations, this article focuses on the direct impacts of international student policy through formal laws and informal communications perpetuated by the government. Findings of the research indicate that Chinese international graduate students have been impacted negatively by a contentious political environment and transnational relations where certain Chinese researchers were viewed as suspicious and even dangerous by U.S. governmental structures.

In conclusion, this section of findings discussed that about one third of the participants have experienced microaggressions, discriminations, and racism on and off campus. Except two students in this study denied the implication of racism, other two thirds of the participants indicated that they have not experienced racial microaggressions and discriminations on campus. However, they noticed that either their friends have experienced microaggressions or they learned of the increasing racial incidents from the media. Participants mentioned that they have experienced more racial microaggressions outside of campus than on campus. They explained two potential reasons: 1) students at the university campus are educated to behave well, 2) they did not have enough interactions with individuals on campus. For example, Jiao, a Chinese PhD student in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, said, "After I came here, I feel the race issue is less serious. Because on campus, students are highly educated. It's less likely that people will say something very terrible to each other outright."

This section presents findings that illuminate how Asian international graduate students positioned their conception of race, experienced racialization, and were

reinforced into racial isolation at the university. Asian international graduate students' experiences in this study highlighted systematic and organizational barriers that contributed to their ethnic and racial isolation on campus and further caused their prevailing institutional invisibility. The COVID-19 pandemic and the shifting political environment in the U.S. caused an unwelcoming racial climate on campus and in general U.S. society toward Asian international students.

Sources of Support and Advocacy for Students to Exercise Their Own Agency

Participants gain sources of support from different resources including on and off campus support. Despite some participants' reluctance to engage on campus activities, more than half of participants in the study chose to actively participate in programs and organizations to make their voices heard. The final section of findings explores how Asian international graduate students respond to their experience of racialization and what sources of support helped them to develop resistance strategies. This section also discusses student engagement in student groups, activities, and a campaign to advocate support for international graduate students to create a more welcoming campus racial climate.

Responses to Racialization

When asked how to respond to microaggressions, discriminations, and racisms happening on campus, some participants stated that they would ignore the racial incidence if it's small (not directly or physically assault). Also, for safety concerns, they would not try to engage directly to change others' thinking. As mentioned in the previous section, the two participants who have experienced microaggressions on campus

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preferred to share their experiences with friends instead of reporting it to the university. Kat, a Chinese PhD student in the School of Education, did not communicate her feelings with her professor. Kat talked about her concerns with another professor once but was told that she was overthinking. Kat felt it was hard to capture any evidence to report to university officials and that no one could change or address the professor's behavior. Kat said:

> "If I talk about my experience with other professors and department administrators, they may express their sympathy, but they may do nothing. I don't expect the systematic microaggressions to be easily fixed. U.S. society is still struggling with [racial] issues. I don't expect others to pay more attention to the Asian population and international students."

> Crystal, a Chinese PhD in the Department Chemistry, said:

> "I won't report if I experienced microaggressions because I don't want other people to get in trouble. I can't interfere with them and change their mind. At least, I feel I should not be the one to change their mind. We need to respect their thinking. Also, getting involved with these things will affect my study and research. It depends on what level they affect me and what it's going to cost me if I deal with it."

Mary, a Chinese PhD student in the School of Education, felt that whether students feel comfortable to report racism incidents on campus is also related to power dynamics. Mary said, "If it's a stranger, I will report it immediately. If it's someone in

power or in higher-level positions, I will talk to my family and friends first before doing anything. The power dynamic will affect my decision."

Some participants believed that their home cultures shaped their values, behaviors, and reactions. So, their resistance strategies deeply reflect their culture and values. Some of the participants are likely to find their own problems as an explanation of their negative experience. For example, Bob, a Thailand PhD student in the Department of Chemical & Environmental Engineering, said: "It may be cultural background because in Asian cultures we are likely to be told not to complain." Alice, a Taiwanese PhD student in the Department of Music, expressed that, "We don't want people to blame us like you're lazy and just finding excuses because that's like part of our culture. When you complain, people will blame you for not working hard enough and for making excuses." Qin, a Chinese PhD student in the Department of Material Science and Engineering shared a similar perspective. Qin said:

"Sometimes when I want to complain, I always think to myself that maybe it's because my English is not so good. So, if I improve my English, I won't have those problems. This kind of question always comes into my mind when I want to speak up."

Three participants noted that the COVID-19 pandemic caused increased racism toward Asians and Asian Americans in the United States and as part of the Asian community, they would stand together to actively combat racism. For instance, Bob, a Thai PhD student in the Chemical & Environmental Engineering Department, commented the following:

"The different dynamics is really interesting especially during the pandemic when there was rising anti-Asian racism. So, I think people of Asian descent have to stand together and fight back against racism because many domestic people cannot tell that you are from different countries. When they see my face, they might say, "Go back to China," or things like that. This racist environment and the pandemic made me reconsider my position. Before, I didn't normally see race first when I interacted with people. But now, the environment is not safe and there are a lot of tensions between each race. Now, I regard race as a really important/significant issue. The issue is less serious here in Riverside because we have really open and supportive communities."

Vera, a Sri Lankan MBA student, commented that she felt fortunate that because she did not present as East Asian because she is South Asian, she was not a target of these specific incidents because of her skin color, physical image, and English language skills. Vera had not experienced racism directly during the COVID-19 pandemic, but she felt strongly connected to the Asian international students and Asian American in the U.S. She participated through social media during the Stop Asian Hate Movement. Vera said:

"I felt sad because we are being unwelcomed in the country. Especially for Asian Americans, they actually belong to the country, and they should be treated equally. They should have all the same rights as every American who is here. They shouldn't have any experiences that are racially motivated against them…I feel like I am more privileged than East Asian people because I'm not

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experiencing that same discrimination in any way directly at least. So, I do feel that my East Asian peers experienced it more directly, as they have told me so. They have experienced stereotyping and microaggressions more directly than me. My first language is English, so I was able to communicate very effectively with everyone. I know it's not the same for many international students. So, I definitely want to help international students who have language barriers and who have negative experiences."

Sources of Support

Critical sources of support helped Asian international graduate students to develop agency and resistance strategies. These critical sources of support included: 1) Learning programs and student organizations that linked students to on-campus support services to exercise their own agency, 2) Family and friends support systems that helped students to mitigate their isolation, and 3) Being grounded in their home culture provided students with cultural resistance to maintain their identities and resist the experiences of racialization.

Learning Programs and Student Organizations

Participants described attachment to their campus by joining learning programs and/or student organizations, which fostered opportunities for participants to get involved. For example, two participants joined the university's Science to Policy Program. This program supports STEM graduate students' professional development by providing resources and offering certificate classes to help students to translate research into policies. Qin, a Chinese PhD student in the Department of Material Science and

Engineering, shared her experience. Qin felt this program provided her a great opportunity to not only learn science policy, but also to connect with other graduate students who share the same interests as her. Qin noticed that Chinese international students are usually not interested in joining learning programs and student organizations, so she hoped that her experience could influence others. Qin stated:

"I learned a lot from the program. After I finished the certificate program, I became a student cabinet member and I hope to share my experiences with other students who are interested in joining it. I noticed that some international students have limited participation in organizations. Many Chinese international students in my lab are only concentrating on their studies and not interested in joining organizations. I hope more Chinese students can join because that's a way for Chinese students to be more involved on campus. If those organizations have more Chinese or Asian faces, I think the impact of Asian groups will be improved because our voices can be heard."

Similarly, Robert, a Chinese PhD student in the Department of Material Science and Engineering, shared his motivation and experience in this program. Robert said:

"I don't want to limit my knowledge to just inside the lab. I know some students. They just stay almost all of the time in the lab, and they barely get involved in anything else. That's not my choice. I want to get engaged. For example, I participated in the Science to Policy Program. I have knowledge and data about science. So, I felt that the more knowledgeable I am, the more motivation I have to change something, like the policy."

Some participants shared that they gain a sense of belonging by joining student organizations. Vera, a Sri Lankan MBA student, mentioned her experience of being a member and leader of the International Student Union. Vera said:

"Being a member is very valuable because I do feel it makes me part of the community and I feel like I am working towards something with them. I have a purpose on campus because I am a part of these organizations. Although it's a lot of work [by being a leader in the organization], it makes me feel like I have something to do outside of school and work. I want something more. I want to engage with the campus, community, and peers. I want to also help to support them whenever I can."

At times, sources of support come from mentor programs for graduate students by being both mentees and mentors. Two participants, Crystal and Leo, both Chinese PhD students from the Department of Chemistry, volunteered as peer mentors for the International Students and Scholars Office (ISS)'s mentor program. These students shared that they were mentees in their first year when they needed the support most, however, the program capacity was limited to include many other international graduate students. After this experience, they hoped to become mentors to help new international students transition to graduate school and to overseas studies. They also hoped to meet more people to expand their contacts. Leo said, "I want to be connected on campus. By becoming a mentor, I can meet more people and help international students." As mentioned earlier, Leo felt he had lost natural conversation opportunities with domestic

students during the COVID-19 pandemic. So, he would like to use the opportunity to join GSA to expand his social networks.

In addition, a few other participants shared their experiences of joining student organizations on campus and then making connections or developing friendships with other students. These experiences shared by students demonstrated that learning programs and student organizations served as an essential hub for international students to communicate and develop their interests beyond academic studies. More importantly, through these programs and organizations, international students developed attachments and memberships on campus. A sense of belonging emphasizes feelings of membership in individual students (Hurtado & Carter 1997). Thus, being a member is important for international students to further gain a sense of belonging and acquire positive feelings towards their campus community.

Family and Friends Support System

Family and friends served as a critical support system in helping international students to disperse feelings of loneliness and to counter their racial and ethnic isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic. Unlike domestic students, international students did not have major support systems such as family, relatives, and long-term friends nearby in the U.S. As mentioned earlier, family and friends were the contacts that helped students to persist and resist some of the negative consequences of their racialization in the U.S. Moreover, some participants pointed to a lack of emotional support from the university during the COVID-19 pandemic. Thus, family and friends, who usually share their ethnic identities and experiences, played a significant role in shaping international student

responses to mental health issues. Participants mentioned that they either were not familiar with mental health services on campus, or they did not like receiving emotional and mental health support virtually. For example, Jiao, a Chinese PhD in the Department of Electrical and Computer Engineering, said:

> "International students do not know the kind of services [offered] and they are more likely to get used to solving their emotional issues by themselves. Chinese students feel the Student Health Center is equivalent to a hospital. In China, they only go to the hospital when they are very sick. Here is the same. Chinese students won't use the mental health services unless they have mental health issues."

Previous studies found that international students experience higher levels of stigma associated with mental illness (Eisenberg et al. 2009). Beyond cultural orientation, stigma may also be an inhibiting factor for Asian population, including Asian international students, who seek professional psychological help (Wynaden et al. 2005). Compared to using campus mental health support programs virtually when the campus was closed for in-person services, international students often felt more comfortable to have communication with friends and talk to family members. All participants stated they contacted their friends and family back home on a regular basis when experiencing loneliness and isolation, especially during the pandemic. These strong social connections and bonds that international students maintained during their overseas studies helped them battle their loneliness and survive isolation through the COVID-19 pandemic.

Cultural Resistance

Asian international students' home cultures provide a critical form of resistance. Some students believe that their home culture can provide them a source of relief with their negative experiences including the experience of racialization. For instance, cultural resistance allowed them to be reassured that they were not incompetent when facing different institutional expectations and requirements that varied from their experiences back home. They also felt that, compared to domestic racial minority groups (e.g., Asian American students) who don't have choices to not adapt to American culture or become Americanized at all, Asian international students have more flexibility to choose their future living places and their levels of adaptation to American culture. For example, Alice, a Taiwanese PhD student in the Department of Music, illustrated how she kept her culture while engaging with American culture. Alice explained:

"If I like an American value, I learn it and take it. But if I don't like it, I just won't take it. It's just adding upon some new things that enlighten me. I will not change myself entirely into an American. I will keep my original identity. So, it's just like adding new things on what I already have."

Yaster, a Chinese PhD student in the Graduate Program of Genetics, Genomics, and Bioinformatics. Yaster said:

"I think we are very lucky because we came to the U.S. for my graduate study only, students here have already got some education and they had similar education backgrounds like us. However, for some Asian American students who were born and grew up here, they might have experienced race and racism which

is totally different from us. Also, even if I experienced racism, I felt at least I have my national and cultural identity to embrace."

Similarly, Mary, a Chinese PhD student in the School of Education, shared her experience. Mary always goes back to her culture when experiencing uncertainty. She stated:

"I felt like, as an Asian international student, I have an advantage. That advantage is that I always have my home culture to support me. When I feel the American culture is too much for me, I can always go back to my Asian culture and feel comfortable. Also, I am very confident, because I grew up as a majority [ethnic group] in China. I think some Asian Americans may be under pressure to fit into American culture. They don't have options. But for me, I can be more critical to choose the level of integration and what kind of [aspects of] American culture to adopt."

These students' expressions indicated that Asian international graduate students often felt confident about their home cultures. Being an international graduate student with professional and international knowledge provided them a certain freedom to choose whether to stay in their home country or not, as well as their level of adaptation to American culture. Some of the participants believed that Asian American students don't have these certain privileges such as moving to another country. Asian American students were likely to be assimilated into the dominant American culture as they are not the majority in the U.S. Cultural resistance is a powerful way of maintaining international

students' original cultural as well as ethnic and racial traits instead of being assimilated into the dominant culture.

Advocating

Although home countries' culture and education affected Asian international graduate students, their critique and advocacy on university campuses changes after living in the U.S. for a period of time. Participants in this study actively participated in the Graduate Student Association (GSA), supported the Asian community, and rejected unequal racial treatments.

Get Involved with Graduate Student Association

GSA is an organization that represents graduate students at the university and advances the academic, social, and physical environment of current and future graduate students. GSA officers are elected representatives that ensure graduate student concerns are addressed on campus. Five participants in this study were involved in GSA. These positions included GSA International Students Affairs Officer, GSA Secretary, as well as GSA Liaisons for the Career Center, the Department of Music, and the Department of Engineering.

Participants joined GSA because they had strong intentions to build connections, share information, and advocate for the graduate students as a group. They also believed their GSA experiences would benefit their personal and professional development. For example, Leo, a fourth year PhD student in the Department of Chemistry, applied for the GSA Chief of Staff position recently. Leo believed that these positions would benefit him professionally by enhancing his communication and organizational skills. Leo mentioned

that "since I have been familiar with everything on campus, it is perhaps the last chance I can be involved in any student organizations. I can see that in my fifth year, I need to work on my dissertation." Crystal, a Chinese PhD student in the Chemistry Department, shared her motivation to join GSA. Crystal explained, "Some international students care only about their own issues. They are not connected with issues on campus. I want to make a greater impact. I have the motivation to advocate for issues that students are facing like the housing issue." Crystal's statement highlighted an important aspect that many Asian international graduate students failed to connect their academic, social, and racial challenges with institutional barriers. Failing to have a bigger picture of their issues made these students unable to identify institutional barriers and further motivate them to strive for better treatment. Thus, for students who realized this barrier, their joining of GSA helped other students raise concerns and make their voices heard.

Vera, a Sri Lankan MBA student, worked as a GSA Graduate Student Liaison for the Career Center. Vera often provided suggestions as an international student for the Career Center's programs. Vera said, "If I see something that is going to be very useful for international students, I will suggest they make changes to add international perspectives." Vera's global perspective and her efforts in adding international components to Career Center programming benefited international graduate students in their internship and job searching.

Robert, a Chinese PhD student in the Department of Material Science and Engineering, was appointed as the Academic Affairs Officer of GSA. Robert participated

in advocating and allocating a budget to help international students during the COVID-19 pandemic. Robert said:

> "I would not say I did a very excellent job in this position, but I tried my best. Compared to domestic students, international students have had no financial support from the government and the university from the beginning of the pandemic. Later, GSA decided to help students. We have some funds to help because of the cancellation of so many conference travel budgets due to the pandemic. So, we were able to give some financial support to graduate students and to international students. And yes, I was proud to get involved in one of these efforts."

7 participants in this study had been involved in GSA. These students performed their roles by raising concerns, attending meetings, as well as offering feedback and solutions. These students played important roles in supporting GSA functions and connecting departments/units with GSA, through which students' concerns and suggestions get formal institutional recognition. Especially, some participants' involvement in GSA helped to advocate and allocate resources to international students which is essential for promoting the institutional changes.

Participated in Supporting Asian Students

Mary, a Chinese PhD student in the School of Education, participated in drafting a letter to the Chancellor because of increasing anti-Asian sentiments during the COVID-19 pandemic. Mary took an ethnic study course in the spring 2020 quarter. Students in her class decided to write a letter to the Chancellor suggesting that the university send an

official statement to support Asian students in facing the crisis of growing anti-Asian sentiment. Mary said:

> "We know the university sent a letter to support African American students during the Black Life Matters movement. They seem to have mentioned Asian students briefly in that letter. So, we hoped the university could send another letter to specifically address this anti-Asian racism issue. However, we sent the letter around June 2020, and we did not receive any formal responses from the university. The response was very general and vague. It was very general like thank you for your concern and support. The university is working to support all students on campus. It was not mentioning what specifically can be done. It was not a successful effort."

When asked why she felt it was important to take actions to address the anti-Asian racism, Mary pointed out that she felt people could not tell the difference between Asian Americans and Asian international students from their appearance. She realized that Asians and Asian Americans need to be more vocal about their racial experiences so others can realize all the challenges and difficulties that Asians experienced. Mary summarized:

> "Domestic students understand that they need to do certain things in order to protect their rights in the U.S. But we were not educated to speak up in China. After I lived in the U.S. for a few years, now I am becoming more vocal to make my voice heard."

Mary's expression pointed out that some Asian international students transitioned into engaging in activism to challenge oppression in their campus policies, culture, and environments. These participants usually had a few years of study experience in the U.S. before moving towards exercising their agencies. The U.S. education experience influenced and transferred their advocacy motivation.

Get Unionized: A Campaign for NRST Waive

Bob is a PhD student from Thailand studying in Chemical & Environmental Engineering. Bob is a very active member of the United Auto Workers (UAW). In the 2021-2022 academic year, the university employed 1,650 academic student employees as teaching assistants, research assistants, readers, and tutors. These academic student employees are primarily graduate students who play important roles in helping to fulfill the university's instructional and research mission. The majority of academic student employees are represented by the UAW. UAW have been at the front of the fight for racial justice and equity in the university system.

Bob shared a story that motivated him to be involved in many students' organizations and the union. Bob said the motivation came from an unfair treatment of his friend, an international graduate student from China. Bob's friend went back to China during Christmas break without his principal investigator's approval. The PI assumed that the student was going to be in the U.S. during the break and continued to do research. Then, the PI became angry and decided to stop funding the Chinese graduate student for an entire quarter. The student also almost got kicked out of the lab. Bob said: "The Chinese student went to his department for help but was told that 'this is something that

you and the API have to deal with.' I feel like the response from my friend's department was not appropriate. Basically, the Chinese student was told he was on his own and told goodbye." Bob said the student contacted a few offices but didn't get help until he finally received help from the union.

As a UAW 2865 international student committee member, Bob worked with others to connect the union with international graduate students and faculty members to win the campaign of Non-Resident Tuition (NRST) waiver. Based on the university's policy on international graduate students' tuition, the annual Non-Resident Supplemental Tuition charge for graduate doctoral students who have advanced to candidacy is reduced by 100%. A graduate doctoral student may receive the reduced Nonresident Supplemental Tuition rate for a maximum of three years. However, due to campus closures during the COVID-19 pandemic, many graduate students' research progress have been seriously impacted and they may need more than three years of post-candidacy time to finish their degree. To respond to these challenges, many universities have opted to waive NRS Tuition for graduate students. However, the university has been slow to adjust to this change of NRST. Because of this slowness to implement the new policy, graduate students on campus (mainly international graduate students) started to ask for granting an extension for all graduate students. If successful, the university could help ensure that graduate students affected by the pandemic are able to have some systematic financial support. Thus, graduate students could worry less about their graduation timeline and continue to produce valuable results during graduate school.

During this time, Bob played a key role in UAW 2865 in the campaign. He drafted a petition letter with other union members and actively publicized this avocation to the graduate and international students' committees. The petition letter has been shared with students by emails, through class/workshops, and personal connections. By the end of 2020, nearly 700 graduate students and 42 faculty members at the university have signed the petition letter to extend a waiver of Non-Resident Tuition (NRST). As a result of the campaign, the university announced in February 2021 that the university will grant a twelve-quarter extension to all post-candidacy graduate students.

The campaign has won a 'partial' victory in getting extensions for post-candidacy graduate students instead of granting extensions for both the pre-candidacy and post-candidacy international graduate students. Bob said, "Compared to students' original request, there is still more the university can do. I tried my best, and I am proud to be part of the campaign." Seven participants in this study also participated in the campaign by signing the petition letter and shared this campaign information with other students and faculty members.

This section of findings illustrated that although participants showed different attitudes in responding to racial microaggressions and invisibility on campus, many of them engaged in different sources to develop agency to strengthen their resistant strategies and advocate for better treatment of the international community. Through participating in the GSA, drafting letters to address the anti-Asian racism, and advocating extending a waiver of Non-Resident Tuition, students developed aspects of strength, resiliency, and agency. These Asian international graduate students' activities and

engagement not only significantly shaped their higher education experience, but also acted as a starting point for building more inclusive and anti-racist spaces.

In conclusion, this chapter comprises four sections of findings including a campus portrait and a diversity analysis of the MSI, students' academic, social, and racial experience, as well as the implication of the COVID-19 pandemic, and lastly students exercise their own agency to resist and advocate. Through the document analysis and data presented from interviews and focus groups, a holistic picture of the campus racial climate and Asian international graduate students' academic, social, and racial experiences in the selected university was presented. Findings suggest that many Asian international graduate students have experienced challenges on campus academically, socially, and financially. Institutional barriers often create feelings of exclusion and isolation for these students. Participants' stories demonstrate that the campus racial climate perpetuated and reinforced the racialization experience of Asian international graduate students in ways that maintained their status quo of racial isolation and invisibility. Off-campus influences on Asian international graduate students largely result from the racial dynamic in the U.S. racial context, the changing socio-political environment, and the COVID-19 pandemic catalyzed by Asian population. These on campus and off campus factors are interrelated and all affect these students' learning process of race, experiences of racialization, and the belief in meritocracy through in their studies at the selected university in the U.S. In addition, this chapter explores how Asian international graduate students respond to their experience of racialization and what sources of support helped them to develop resistance strategies. Participants in this study

gained sources of support from learning programs/student organizations, family and friends, and home cultures. Many participants also participated in campaigns to advocate support for international graduate students to create a more welcoming campus racial climate.

CHAPTER 5

DISCUSSIONS, RECOMMENDATIONS, AND CONCLUSION

Discussions

This chapter presents a discussion and analysis of my findings for this study. I interpret findings presented in the previous chapter and offer recommendations about engaging international graduate students in terms of diversity and a sense of community in higher education. In this section, I draw recommendations for future research and implications for higher education practitioners especially for policy makers. Finally, I provide some personal reflections regarding this study and offer some concluding remarks.

When discussing race and racism, previous studies usually discuss domestic and international students separately and use different theoretical frameworks. This study represents innovative research that supports using campus racial climate framework (Hurtado et al., 1998), AsianCrit theory [Chang, 1993; Museus & Iftikar, 2013], and student resistance framework (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001) to study the racial experiences of Asian international graduate students. Later, learning race in a U.S. context framework (Fries-Britt et al., 2014) and neoliberal racism ideology were added later after data collection to reflect participants' different and mixed perspectives regarding race. Viewed through these lenses, findings of the study illustrate the challenges encountered by Asian international graduate students at a MSI campus including:

1) Potential limitations of the MSI: Focusing primarily on domestic diversity, ignoring international diversity, and a lack of diverse interactions, 2) feelings of

exclusion and isolation resulting from university policies, structure, and services, 3)

learning race, experiences of racialization, and whiteness' influence, 4) neoliberal racism

and the belief of meritocracy, and 5) sources of support, feeling of inclusion, and

resistant/advocacy.

1. Potential Limitations of the MSI: Focusing on Domestic Diversity and a Lack of

Diverse Interactions

Prior research indicates that despite having a high population of students of color,

it is not sufficient to create a diverse and inclusive campus racial climate and

environment if cross-racial interaction is lacking (Gurin, et al., 2002; Hurtado & Carter

1997; Jayakumar, 2018; Locks et al. 2008). Institutions tend to practice race-evasive

ideologies and policies which only value the number of racially diverse students- but not

their experience (Bonilla-Silva, 2010). In other words, diverse settings may appear on the

surface as inclusive, but they do not practice cultural sensitivity and inclusivity towards

all individuals on campus. For example, even on a campus that enrolled a large number

of Asian and Asian American students, this group of students are also isolated and lack a

sense of belonging on campus (e.g., Chou & Feagin, 2015; Dolly Nguyen et al., 2016;

Museus & Truong, 2009; Teranishi, 2002). This example from prior literature shows that

a university may have a diverse student population, but the campus racial climate may

not be diverse and inclusive enough, because the racially minority students still feel

isolated from interacting with others. A similar finding has been found on MSI campuses.

Even though student bodies are diverse on MSI campuses, it does not necessarily mean

that the culture of the institution is inclusive (Baez et al., 2008). More specifically,

previous research suggests that, although attending a MSI may reduce the discriminatory experiences of students overall, attending a MSI does not eliminate the overall discrimination and impact of these experiences (Baez et al., 2008; Gasman et al., 2008). MSI campuses may vary in their level of inclusiveness given the campus culture and may vary in terms of the specific resources provided to support students in their minority identities (Baez et al., 2008; Gasman et al., 2008).

Focus on Domestic Diversity

Compositional diversity within a campus racial climate framework refers to the numerical composition of students from various races/ethnicities (Hurtado et al., 1998). Based on these ideas, MSIs can quantitatively assess the following compositional diversity criteria: 1) low numbers of underrepresented groups on campus (Thompson & Sekaquaptewa, 2002), 2) underrepresented groups who usually feel pressured to fit in the dominant culture (Bensimon, 2004), and 3) fostering a multicultural and inclusive campus environment.

First, we can assess campus' compositional diversity and inclusion for Asian international graduate students based on the above criteria. As mentioned in the findings, the university faces challenges in recruiting talented graduate students from underrepresented minority groups. Racial and ethnic diversity for the university's graduate admissions has always been low but has improved in recent years. The university's efforts to diversify its undergraduate students also help to diversify its graduate academic population. The university campus hosted 1232 international graduate students as of the fall 2021 quarter, which account for about one third of the total

graduate student's population at the university. However, from the open data of the university, it is unknown about the number of Asian international graduate students on campus. The data represents either based on students' foreign status as international graduate students, or a mix of undergraduate and graduate students based on racial/ethnic category as Asian. Among the Asian international students' group, Chinese international students accounted for the majority. Thus, the enrollment data suggests that even though the selected university campus achieved undergraduate diversity, it may lack domestic and international diversity presented in the graduate program.

When asked about whether participants feel pressured to fit into the dominant culture on campus, 19 out of 21 interview participants, in this study, felt there is no dominant culture on campus. Except for one participant who mentioned that there was a dominant white culture on campus, especially in the graduate program. The previous literature regarding assimilation discusses how international students usually have acculturative stress and feel the burden of fitting into the dominant culture in predominantly white campuses (Andrade, 2006; Lee & Rice, 2007; Yao, 2015). Majority of the international students in this study, however, did not feel a dominant culture existed or did not feel pressured to be assimilated into the campus culture. Therefore, this study suggests that MSIs campuses that foreground a sense of diversity may contribute to international students' positive images and experiences of adjusting to campus culture and racial climates.

Third, regarding fostering a multicultural and inclusive campus environment of compositional diversity, I argue that the university campus focuses on domestic diversity

while ignoring international diversity or including international perspectives into diversity discussions. Discussions about diversity and inclusion within U.S. higher education typically revolve around domestic students, particularly racial and ethnic minorities. However, international students are overwhelmingly spoken of as a monolith population and contribute to adding overall diversity of nationality to the American higher education landscape. For this reason, international students are invisible, at times, from multiculturalism and racial/ethnic diversity discourses (DiAngelo, 2006; Sato & Hodge, 2009; Yeo, 2019).

For some participants in this study, concise definitions of diversity remain elusive, as evidenced from Qin (a Chinese PhD student in the Department of Material Science and Engineering) and Crystal (a Chinese PhD student in the Department of Chemistry). These participants mentioned that they don't know the benefits of diversity. Diversity and inclusion are more about a vague idea than a useful construct for them. The lack of education surrounding what diversity means can cause students to lose opportunities to further explore and take advantage of the diversity to learn about other cultures. We know that students benefit from diverse and inclusive environments because they may be less likely to experience microaggressions and discrimination. However, the university appears to over-emphasize improving structural diversity for domestic students. Universities primarily foster diversity-related initiatives to domestic students without fully considering including international students in their diversity discourse. This divide between the university's cultural and population makeup/climate may leave international students invisible and silencing them.

Lack of International and Global Diversity

Universities that implement diversity-related initiatives are usually constructed around the campus's climate by recruiting and retaining diverse faculty and students and diversifying the curriculum, as well as the leadership and organizational aspects of the university (Iverson, 2005). Findings in this study suggest that international students' diversity is often not included in the university's overall diversity discourse. Two participants in this study pointed out the lack of international and global diversity within the student population on campus. These students noticed that more than half of the international student population comes from China, and they felt it doesn't meet the perception of diversity in their mind. One student mentioned that the university could improve the diversity of the international student's population to match the domestic and regional diversity.

It is true that a lack of international student diversity appears across the nation, not only within the study campus. As the current international student recruitment is more focused on revenue generating for universities, (Knight, 2015; Poloma, 2017; Bamberger, et al., 2019; Viggiano et al., 2018), many higher education institutions are targeting middle to upper-class international students from specific regions, thereby limiting access for low-income international students (Altbach, 2012a; Altbach & Knight, 2007; Schofer & Meyer, 2005). Students from China, in particular, are increasingly drawn from families who can afford an expensive American education. This selective enrollment strategy, especially for undergraduate admissions, pays little attention to the geographical and socioeconomic diversity among international students (Poloma, 2017; Viggiano et al.,

2018). It narrows institutions' academic, racial, and ethnic diversity of the international

students' pool (Poloma, 2017; Viggiano et al., 2018). The lack of geographical and

socioeconomic diversity of international students also limits the opportunity that

domestic students have to gain understanding of diverse international populations

(Viggiano et al., 2018).

Although graduate student admissions are less affected by revenue generation

considerations, some master's programs (e.g., MBA) were designed to attract rich

international students who can pay high tuition costs. Diversity of international students,

in terms of race, gender, class, nationality, are not generally part of diversity

conversations in higher education. The international student group on campus is

increasingly homogenous academically, geographically, socio-economically, and

culturally. Lack of diversity among the international student's population may undermine

the university's proposed diversity goal of recruiting a diverse student population.

Furthermore, it undermines the needs of greater diversity that universities promise.

Lack of Diversity Interactions

Continuing with the use of the campus racial climate framework, the next

discussion of MSI campuses centers on its behavior dimension (Hurtado et al., 1998).

The behavior dimension of campus racial climate focuses on the frequency of interactions

among members of different social identity groups and the quality of these interactions

(Hurtado, 2005; Hurtado et al., 2008). I argue that Asian international graduate students

at the university lack diverse interactions with domestic students and students from other

cultures or races.

Previous literature suggests that a disconnection exists between structural diversity and the "meaningful" social interactions of diversity (BonillaSilva, 2009; Yosso et al. 2009; Jayakumar, 2008). Having a diverse group of people, who are only present on campus, is not enough if individuals on campus are still beholden to color-blindness ideology (BonillaSilva, 2009). Colorblindness racism is the racial ideology (more than a racial attitude) that attempts to ignore differences in race and assumes the best way to end discrimination is by treating individuals as equally as possible, without regard for race, culture, or ethnicity (Bonilla-Silva, 2013). Many Americans may view colorblindness as helpful to people of color by asserting that race does not matter (Tarca, 2005). But race does matter for most underrepresented minorities in America, as it affects opportunities, social justice, and many other aspects of lives. Students, especially students of color, often criticize the dominance of whiteness in the campus climate and find that administrators do not place enough emphasis on addressing these issues (Yosso et al. 2009; Jayakumar, 2008). Therefore, the university still maintains a dominant culture that does not reflect students of color or other under-represented student populations, because whiteness remains visible in powerful administrative positions (Jayakumar, 2008).

According to the latest report from the selected university, the campus made steady progress to diversify its faculty members in the past decade. For example, the campus's white faculty members decreased 12.4 % during the past 10 years. Although the university made steady progress in diversifying the faculty members, it is true that white faculty and staff remained the majority of members in the faculty and administrative positions.

Findings indicate that, although participants did not perceive a dominant culture on campus, the invisible institutional and structural issues of the university affect international graduate students. These systematic issues also prevented international graduate students' interactions with other student populations. Despite being in regular contact with people from their culture and home countries, a large portion of participants lacked engagement with domestic students and local community groups. In a regular in-person school environment, participants still have opportunities to meet students from different cultures/countries from their lab, class, and program. Due to campus closure during the COVID-19 pandemic, the interracial communication worsened, as there was no in-person environment to provide natural conversations. Many participants felt that they lost natural opportunities to meet people and interact with them. Asian international graduate students felt lonely and isolated on campus during and beyond campus closure. Participants in this study indicated that they hope the university would make more efforts to bring international students and Americans together. This data correlates to the breadth of past research regarding international students experiencing both personal and social loneliness (Hanassab, 2006; Lee & Rice, 2007).

Findings from this study also illustrated that international perspectives were overlooked on campus including areas of curriculum, research, and class discussions. International perspectives were given less importance and concern by faculty and domestic students on campus. Also, findings indicate that a number of Asian international graduate participants were not familiar with the concept of diversity and the benefits of diversity. Therefore, these students were less engaged in activities that promote diversity.

This finding reflects previous studies that compared to white and black international students, Asian international students were less engaged in active/collaborative learning and diversity-related activities (Zhao et al., 2005).

In summary, findings suggest that MSIs that feature diversity as a large proponent of their campus mission and environment may not necessarily benefit international students. These findings echo previous literature that universities tend to acknowledge international students' contribution to overall structural diversity as only numerical and proportional representations of various racial and ethnic groups (Garces & Jayakumar, 2014). However, this benefit of diversity does not reflect the fact that communication and integration between domestic and international student groups are lacking (Lee & Rice, 2007; Poloma, 2017; Wang, et al., 2012; Ward, et al., 2009).

Asian international students are presented with a diverse population on campus, yet that is not enough for them to learn and engage with diversity. The university's campus did not engage international students in diversity discourses and culture centers. It also did not promote cross-racial interactions between domestic and international students. Promoting and stimulating diverse interactions among the student body is key to enhancing the diversity of a campus's culture and racial climate. By engaging in communication with cross-cultural individuals, Asian international graduate students acquire abilities to successfully negotiate cross-ethnic relationships and may also challenge their beliefs, prejudices, and discriminations.

2. Feelings of Isolation and Exclusion and Resulting From Institutional Policies, Structure, and Services

Findings indicate that Asian international graduate students' feelings of exclusion and isolation was not only an interpersonal issue, but also a campus structural and organizational issue. The university's structure, culture, and policies created barriers for departments and offices to understand and support Asian international graduate students. In response to the academic and social needs of the diverse graduate student population, the university does provide numerous resources for graduate students to connect with others, navigate college life, and engage fully in the community. These resources include the individual colleges and departments, academic resources centers (e.g., GradSucess), ethnic and cultural student programs (e.g., Asian Pacific Student Program), and physical and mental health resources (e.g., counseling and psychological services). Although the university provides various resources to engage students, international graduate students are often detached from these campus activities and events. At the graduate level, some critical structural components that supported international graduate students' learning and experience were missing at the university. The following analysis discusses the lack of a holistic support for international graduate students on campus.

Academic support from departments and programs have influenced Asian international graduate students' academic and social experience. A few participants pointed out that compared to other universities they attended, the current university has more activities for both domestic and international students. Students have opportunities to be volunteers, mentors/mentees, or get involved with different events. Some

participants also noticed that there are some programs designed for international students. Among various campus services, participants are usually satisfied with the Student Recreation Center and the Well as good examples of resources. However, the findings from this study also illustrate that the university lacks a holistic perspective to support international graduate students within and beyond their academic successes. Except for examples, such as funding and scholarship shortage, mentioned in the findings section of this dissertation, the academic and social support resources indicate that a disparity exists in the different institutional facilities offered by the university. This disparity is manifested/can be attributed through mentor programs. There are two major mentor programs available for international graduate students on campus: the Graduate Student Mentorship Program (GMSP) and the ISS Peer Mentor Program. GMSP supports 80 incoming graduate student mentees including both domestic and international students. Incoming mentees are assigned to both peer and faculty mentors in their own or a related discipline. However, as GSMP only accepts about 80 mentees annually, many international graduate students do not have opportunities to join the program. GSMP is organized by a full-time staff member. GSMP mentors are paid, and faculty mentors are also compensated. Through this program, mentees gain access to support, advice, resources, and community as GSMP participants.

The International Students and Scholars (ISS) Peer Mentor Program is organized and supported by the ISS staff members who have other working tasks. Mentor recruitment in this program is also volunteer based and operates without any compensation. It's obvious that GSMP has much more financial and human resources

than the ISS Peer Mentor Program. The resource disparity between the two programs facilitated different mentee experience. As previously mentioned in the findings section of this dissertation, two Chinese PhD students named Crystal and Leo, volunteered to become ISS Peer Mentors to help first year international students obtain smooth transitions on campus. Crystal was a GSMP mentee during her first year and became an ISS mentor later because she had a strong motivation to serve others. However, Crystal shared her mixed experiences of being an ISS Peer Mentor due to lack of resource support for mentors. For example, Crystal was surprised that she was assigned 10 mentees and there were no supporting materials for her to run the bi-weekly mentor-mentee meetings. In order to prepare for peer mentor meetings, Crystal and Leo spent time with two other Chinese mentors to prepare slides to introduce campus resources and discuss life within a graduate school program. Crystal shared that her experience with GSMP was much better than being an ISS mentor because of resource support differences. This example showed that, although mentor programs are useful sources of support for international graduate students, lack of financial support and resources for the ISS Peer Mentor Program may fail to benefit students.

The lack of holistic support for international graduate students also manifested from the university's individual colleges and departments. These institutional units sometimes have insufficient knowledge to help international students and they adopt unequal treatment towards international students. For example, compared to domestic students, some colleges and programs set up a stricter timeline for international students to take their qualifying exams. Another example, as mentioned earlier in the finding

section, is when the Trump administration issued visa regulations for international students who planned to enroll for all online classes during the COVID-19 pandemic. This policy required international students to still take in-person classes during the pandemic, otherwise it would result in international students' loss of their league immigration status as students in the U.S. Many departments at the university did not understand this regulation's serious implication to these students because of the campus closure resulting in all classes being moved to on-line. Instead of actively engaging conversations and seeking solutions, some departments just referred students to the ISS office. These examples showed that some colleges and departments have less knowledge about international students, so they cannot provide enough resources and information to international students in situations that affect their livelihoods.

In addition to these specific incidents regarding lack of institutional support, the university's Ethnic and Gender Programs segregated international students from domestic students. In an effort to promote and support diversity, the university's Ethnic and Gender Programs advertise various events aimed at creating environments in which different cultures, beliefs, and experiences can be expressed on campus. One of the Ethnic and Gender Programs, the Asian Pacific Student Programs (APSP), serves Asian American, Native Hawaiian and other Pacific Islander students. Participants of the study felt that they were excluded from this program. Focus group participants mentioned that they felt APSP separated Asian international students from Asian American students. When participants saw the name of the program, they knew that they were not supposed to enter the office. Because the name of the program generalizes different Asian and

Pacific cultures into one monolithic group. One participant did try to enter the program's office and was told to leave—as APSP is intended to primarily serve undergraduate students. It does not indicate specifically whether international graduate students can or cannot join this program from information on their official website. This incident is in line with the findings of this dissertation that institutional microaggressions can occur regarding segregating Asian international graduate students with domestic students.

This finding is not new; previous research about the limits of international undergraduate student diversity found that in a predominantly white campus, Asian American and Asian international student organizations exist as independent entities from one another, maintaining their own activities and social circles (Kwon et al., 2017). Previous study argued that the student organization difference and segregation more likely reflect the dominant ideology of colorblindness (Kwon et al., 2017). Colorblind racism recognizes that individual and institutional racism is based on structures of power that privileges whiteness and white supremacy (Bonilla-Silva, 2013). This university structural difference and practice reflect the dominant racial ideology of colorblindness and influenced the privileges of normative whiteness (Kwon et al., 2017).

This study finds that in an MSI, international students' activities are usually designed separately with domestic students to address their needs differently. However, this strategy sometimes segregates international students from domestic students. That is, this finding speaks for the colorblindness practice of the university student services that may have privileged certain groups, separate the ethnic minority students, and left international students to carry the burden to seek for diversity interactions. Instead,

international student programming should collaborate more with domestic students to provide both groups of students with opportunities to communicate and potentially seek understanding and power. In this way, the Ethnic and Gender Programs can serve to bolster the university's commitment to diversity by incorporating international students to a larger field of international diversity and racial justification.

Another resource that is not appropriately catered to international students is the Counseling and Psychological Services Program. Although it's not the focus of this study, the findings of this dissertation suggests that many Asian international graduate students have experienced stress, loneliness, and other negative mental health issues. Instead of using the university's Counseling and Psychological Services Program, some participants preferred to use personal contacts. A previous study found several factors that negatively affected Asian international students' counseling experience including perceived stigma, mismatched expectations, and a perceived lack of multicultural competence and knowledge from therapists (Li et al., 2013). On campus, Asian international students may not be familiar with mental health services and might not have access to counselors who share their ethnicity and native language. These factors all result in international students' limited use of this resource. Asian international students would benefit from being matched to a counselor from a similar ethnic and linguistic background (Li et al., 2013). So, counselors who work with Asian international students should strengthen their cultural competence by learning more about these students' ethnic and language backgrounds. More importantly, it is recommended that the university provide more guidance for international students to navigate the Counseling and

Psychological Services Program as well as health insurance use and reimbursement. Also, the university should hire more counselors who can provide multicultural and bilingual services for international students or refer international students to a medical network outside of the university community for mental health services more tailored to students' specific needs.

Findings of my research illustrate that the campus's policies, structure, and services did not support Asian international graduate students sufficiently and tried to ignore their institutional presence. The resources on campus were created to focus on undergraduate domestic students and were not tailored to international graduate students. These organizational and structural issues also created resource disparity for international graduate students and contributed to the lack of interaction between Asian international graduate students, domestic students, and students from different racial groups. The overall lack of institutional recognition and acknowledgment of the unique challenges faced by international graduate students can deepen their sense of isolation. When their specific needs and concerns are ignored or overlooked, it reinforces a feeling of being invisible or undervalued within the campus community. This can lead to a diminished sense of belonging and hinder their ability to fully integrate and participate in campus life.

While the pandemic has greatly affected students' lives and experiences on college campuses, international students may have experienced unique challenges and difficulties as they encountered uncertain times while away from their support systems in a foreign country (Koo et al., 2021). For example, international students are physically

away from their family and friends, and the pandemic may have positioned them into isolation while abroad with less access to public resources. This isolation and lack of access from the COVID-19 pandemic can be due to a variety of factors such as monetary, informational, or language/cultural barriers.

3. Learning Race, Experiences of Racialization, and the Influence of Whiteness

This part of the discussion engages the learning race in a U.S. context framework (Fries-Britt et al., 2014), AsianCrit (Chang, 1993; Museus & Iftikar, 2013), and the campus racial climate framework (Hurtado et al., 1998). The discussion centers on 1) Asian international graduate students' racial learning and positioning engaging with the learning race in a U.S. context framework, 2) students' experiences of racialization and its connection to being racially identified as Asian (connecting with the AsianCrit and the psychological dimensions of campus racial climate framework), and 3) the influence of whiteness.

Learning Race in the U.S.

Learning race, while studying in the U.S., is a transformation and/or awakening regarding their racial identities for many Asian international graduate students. Findings in this dissertation regarding participants' racial positioning suggests that Asian international graduate students have their own ways of negotiating and reconstructing their racial position. Also, their perceptions of race and racism have since changed from the time before they studied in the U.S. and after living and studying in America.

These findings were confirmed in a qualitative study by Fries-Britt and colleagues (2014) who developed an emergent framework for learning race in a U.S. context. This

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framework (Fries-Britt et al., 2014) examines how international students' experiences with race and discrimination are a dynamic and ongoing process impacted by the U.S.'s racial context. In this framework, the home country and the U.S.'s racial context both influence international students' racial experience over time. The following section discusses how findings in this study generally match the four themes of the learning race in a U.S. context framework. These themes address the perceptions that students have about race and the behaviors that they engage in when confronted with race.

a) *Unexamined U.S. racial-ethnic identity* (Fries-Britt et al., 2014). At first, Asian international students constructed their understanding of race based on their home countries' culture and environment. Majority of these students did know the U.S. notion of race and racism before their overseas studies and then subsequently realized the importance of this issue. After they lived in the U.S. for some time, participants felt discomfort and/or a lack of knowledge when discussing race and racism publicly in the U.S. It mainly resulted from international students' lack of knowledge and language skills to communicate, and/or their comfortable level to talk about racial issues.

b) *Ethnic/racial encounters in the U.S. context* (Fries-Britt et al., 2014). This study found that Asian international graduate students receive racial messages which are imposed externally from the campus and society. For example, students in the study experienced racism, but did not associate the discrimination as an act of racism or resisted the effect of racism on their experiences. However, at this stage, students are reluctant to respond or resist racial distractions. As shown in the findings of this study,

the participants who have experienced microaggressions on campus chose to ignore these incidents and not engage directly in response to their experience.

c) *Moving toward identity examination in the U.S. context* (Fries-Britt et al., 2014). At this stage, international students shift from beliefs that race does not affect them to accept the fact that race does impact them (Fries-Britt et al., 2014). In moving towards this stage, international students usually have learned formally about race—not only through social communication and life experience, but also through course studies in academic settings.

d) *Integrative awareness in the U.S. context* (Fries-Britt et al., 2014). International students have a growing awareness of their racial/ethnic positioning within the U.S. context, as well as exhibit an internalized and more confident sense of their racial positioning. In this stage, race serves as a source for a commitment to action that leads to social change (Fries-Britt et al., 2014). The findings of this study show that three participants (Mary, Vera, and Bob) achieved integrative awareness. These Asian international graduate students felt strongly connected with racial hierarchies in the U.S. They also actively participated in campus activities and advocacy to improve social and racial justice.

In addition to using the learning race in a U.S. context framework to explain Asian international graduate students' racial transformation and positioning, this study has an interesting finding that participants mainly self-identified based on their home country and/or on international students' status. These participants did not identify themselves as Asian before coming to the States. After they studied and lived in the U.S.,

a majority of participants still preferred to be identified based on their country of origin instead of being categorized as a U.S. racial based category as Asian.

The Experience of Racialization and Feeling of Racial Isolation

This part of the discussion section centers around Asian international students' experiences of racialization and their connection to being racially identified as Asian. Both frameworks of AsianCrit (Chang, 1993; Museus & Iftikar, 2013) and the campus racial climate (Hurtado et al., 1998) are applied to analyze Asian international graduate students' experiences of racialization. AsianCrit (Chang, 1993; Museus & Iftikar, 2013) contextualizes how Asian international students have been racialized in American society and within a higher education campus. Racial systems of oppression are highlighted through three tenets of AsianCrit: Asianization, transnational, and intersectionality.

Asianization, as an AsianCrit tenet, refers to the pervasiveness of racism and how it racializes Asian Americans as 1) model minorities and 2) perpetual foreigners (Museus & Iftikar, 2013). First, many people fail to see that Asian Americans do experience racism due to the model minority myth (Museus, 2009; Museus & Kiang, 2009; Suzuki, 2002). This stereotype toward Asians obscures systemic racism against people of color and functions as a tool to perpetuate white dominance and racial oppression (Poon et al., 2016). Thus, Asian critical scholars have fought against the "model minority myth," which denies contemporary racism towards Asian Americans, dismisses the diversity and complexity of struggles within the Asian American community, and sets Asian Americans struggles against those of other people of color (Chang, 1993; Lee, 2005; Wu, 2002).

Findings of this study indicate that many participants have experienced high academic expectations from their professors/programs and therefore they oftentimes sacrificed their social activities for academic studies. Nearly half of the participants in this study felt that the university support system rendered them as an invisible group. Echoing prior literature, the findings of my study support previous literature that many Asian international graduate students often choose to limit their participation in social activities, focusing instead on academic studies (Frey & Roysircar, 2006; Zhao et al., 2005). This study also supports previous studies that the stereotypes regarding Asian Americans as a model minority similarly apply to Asian international students (Houshmand et al., 2014; Lewis et al., 2000; Museus, 2014; Museus & Kiang, 2009).

Asianization view of Asian and Asian American students contributes to the conceptualization of a group of "model minority students" that includes both domestic and international students. Although some previous research focused on Asian international students' experiences of the model minority myth (Houshmand et al., 2014; Longerbeam et al., 2013), few research models tackle this issue from the lens of AsianCrit. I posit that the model minority myth can be taken further than just domestic AsianCrit and be applied to the educational sector when considering the lived experiences of Asian international students.

Second, findings of my study suggest that Asian international graduate students were racialized as both students of color and simultaneously as foreigners in American society. More specifically, more than half of the Asian international students in this study felt that they have been categorized into the racial minority students' group by many

individuals on campus and the dominant group off campus. This finding of my study supports the literature in which some scholars argue that international students of color share similar experiences to domestic students of color, and therefore should also be considered racial and/or ethnic minority groups in the U.S. (Bardhan & Zhang, 2017; DiAngelo, 2006; Fries-Britt et al., 2014; George et al., 2016; Hanassab, 2006). Meanwhile, this study finds that Asian international students' status, their unfamiliarity with American cultures/norms, and their English language skills directly and indirectly caused them to be seen as foreigners in the U.S. and on American university campuses. This finding also echoes previous studies' findings that international students also experienced marginalized status on U.S. campuses because of their distinct physical characteristics, English proficiency/accents, nationality, international student status, and religion (Cantwell & Lee, 2010; Lee, 2010; Lee & Rice, 2007).

Engaging the AsianCrit in the discussion to further explore reasons behind the scenes, Asianization of AsianCrit explained the perpetual foreigner image of Asians and Asian Americans (Chang, 1993; Museus & Iftikar, 2013). Data from this study reveal that Asians and Asian Americans, despite their immigration status, were likely to be grouped into a primary image of being Chinese by the dominant society. This tendency especially occurs with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic. This image mainly resulted from the shared stereotypical visual appearance of being Asian while ignoring the difference between cultures, identities, and ethnicities among different Asian groups. This image of Asian people (including Asian Americans and Asian international students) as foreigners explained victims' experiences of racial incidents on and off-campus. The Asianization

image of Asian population mainly results from the shared stereotypical visual appearance of being Asian while ignoring the difference between cultures, identities, and ethnicities among different Asian population. Participants in this study expressed that Asians and Asian Americans should be welcomed in this country and they should be treated equally.

The transnational tenet in AsianCrit reveals that global political, economic, and cultural systems overwhelmingly reflect a culture of white supremacy (Museus & Iftikar, 2013; Mills, 2003). The transnational influence on Chinese international students' experience of racialization is highlighted through America's shifting political environment and national relations. While routes to citizenship often incur these same types of anxieties, these international students were previously guaranteed time in the U.S. to complete their studies. The uncertainty and flip-flopping of policies aimed at international student populations sent a message to the international student community that they are not welcomed in their host country. Their student statuses were highly contingent on the shifting political environment in the U.S., as well as bilateral relations between the U.S. and another country.

An intersectional analysis is necessary to understand the many forms of racism and oppression faced by Asian international graduate students (Crenshaw, 1991). The intersectionality tenet of AsianCrit focuses on the intersections of various systems of oppressions and examines the interaction between multiple identities (Museus, 2014; Museus & Iftikar, 2013). This study is able to identify different social identifiers of Asian international graduate students, such as skin color, English language skills, and gender impact their experience of racialization.

Findings of this study show that English language proficiency and phenotype are targets of discrimination. South Asian international graduate students felt lucky that she was not directly targeted because of their skin color/phenotypic presentation and better English language skills. They did not get grouped into being stereotypically part of the East Asian racial group. Four South Asian participants, including one Sri Lankan student and three Indian students, all mentioned that their acquired fluent English language skills made them feel like it was easier to communicate in the U.S. Also, South Asian participants felt they were usually not directly being associated with the East Asian groups by the dominant society. This non-association with East Asian groups benefited them from being a target of racial incidents in the U.S. especially during the COVID-19 pandemic. For these reasons, South Asian participants felt they have experienced less racial microaggressions and racism in the U.S. This finding supports the previous literature that East Asian students reported more racial microaggressions than South Asian students due to lesser English language proficiency (Houshmand et al., 2014). Meanwhile, this finding contributes to the literature in considering how Asian international students' various social identifiers, such as skin colors, affect their experience during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Students' experiences of realization may be inherently gendered (Liang et al., 2010; Wong et al., 2014); that is, racial discrimination manifests itself through gender-specific racial stereotypes that are distinct to Asian American women and men. Although previous literature generally identified male Asian students as more vulnerable to microaggressions than their female counterparts (e.g., Won et al., 2014), this study finds

that Asian female international students shared more experience of microaggressions and discrimination than Asian male students. Participants in this study who mentioned both their understanding of race and shared their experience of racialization tend to be females, such as Crystal's (a Chinese PhD student), Kat (a Chinese PhD student), Mary (a Chinese PhD student), Qin (a Chinese PhD student), and Alice (a Taiwanese PhD student). Male Asian international students in this study are more likely to report their neutral feelings towards race and racism. This study was not able to identify how students' other social identifiers, such as socioeconomic status and religion, intersect with participants' educational experiences. More research needs to be done to further investigate how racialization is gender influenced and socioeconomically constructed.

Compared to previous studies of Asian American students' experiences of microaggressions (Sue et al., 2007a), this study about Asian international graduate students does correlate with similar findings that include being treated as an "alien (having English language test for being TAs)," having their experiences of racism denied (e.g., being commented as overthinking when talking about experience of racial microaggressions), experiencing invalidation of ethnic differences, and communication styles (e.g., ignoring international perspectives in curriculum and experiencing concerns about their English language skills as TAs), as well as being invisible on campus (e.g., experiencing of racial isolation). For example, findings discuss that participants have experienced concerns about their English language skills as TAs, While Asian international students shared these types of racial microaggressions with domestic Asian students, this study finds that Asian international students' experience of racialization is

not only associated with their race/ethnicity, but also through the transnational and the intersectionality tenet of AsianCrit, which is different from Asian American students. This study found that Asian international graduate students' experience of microaggressions and racialization were also interwoven with political environment, transnational relations, and diverse social identifiers of the individual.

Lastly, the campus racial climate (Hurtado et al., 1998) applies to analyze Asian international graduate students' experiences of racialization. The psychological dimension of the campus racial climate framework involves individuals' views of discrimination, group relations, and attitudes toward other racial/ethnic backgrounds (Hurtado et al., 1998). Findings of this study show that Asian international graduate students not only experienced microaggressions and racist incidents, but they also had a sense of racial and ethnic isolation on campus. A few participants had experienced racial discrimination personally, others learned about racial discrimination through the experiences of others. These direct and indirect experiences of microaggressions and racism increased students' racial awareness and influenced the way that they interacted with others. For instance, experiences with racial discrimination in the classroom environment informed students' views and caused some participants to form negative feelings toward the campus racial climate. The sense of being an outsider and/or alien is shaped by students' racialization experiences that make them feel invisible, omitted, excluded, and isolated from resources, services, and support on campus. The campus racial climate perpetuated and reinforced the racialization experience of Asian international graduate students. In

conjunction with these factors, the COVID-19 pandemic accelerated Asian international graduate students' awareness and experience of racism in the U.S.

This finding lends support for the previous literature on domestic students of color who are more likely to experience a hostile campus racial climate and receive unequal treatment on campus compared to white students (e.g., Harper & Hurtado 2007; Hurtado et al. 2008; Solórzano et al. 2000; Solórzano & Yosso, 2002; Sue et al., 2009; Yosso et al., 2009). Also, this finding supports previous scholarship on international students of color often experience discriminations, microaggressions, and other forms of racism on U.S. higher education campuses (DiAngelo, 2006; Fries-Britt, et al., 2014; George et al. 2016; Hanassab 2006; Lee & Rice, 2007; Wong, et al., 2014).

The Influence of Whiteness

The historical legacy of racialization through white supremacist structures remains evident today and has dangerous implications in higher education (Mills, 2003; Stein, 2017). Higher education has perpetuated structures of white supremacy and is manifested through colorblindness on interpersonal, institutional, and marco (socio-political) levels (Huber & Solórzano, 2015). This section of analysis adopts the lens of colorblindness, as a core component of whiteness (Cabrera et al., 2017).

At the interpersonal level, microaggressions are one of the most common forms of interpersonal racism that occur on college campuses (Cabrera et al., 2017). As shown in these findings, whiteness directly or indirectly resulted in Asian international graduate students' experience of microaggressions, discriminations and racism. In this study, these direct or subtle negative messages about Asian international students, including their

English language skill/accents, social skills, and cultures, show that whiteness is a pervasive problem in higher education. This finding shows different results compared to empirical research demonstrating that white students are significantly more likely than students of color to see the campus environment as welcoming and equitable (Rankin & Reason, 2005).

At the institutional level, color blindness is associated with treating international students as a monolithic group and using a one size fits all approach for student services on campus. The lack of resources and an overall holistic support impacted Asian international graduate students' academic and social experiences. Also, the institutional racial segregation of international students and domestic students, particularly Asian international students' segregation, is often justified by the pervasive colorblind racism and normative whiteness on campus (Cabrera et al., 2017). Furthermore, institutional racism is also highlighted through the ignorance of international perspectives in the curriculum and classrooms. Previous literature discusses that in classes that predominantly have a majority of white students, a cultural supremacy of privilege harms the quality of learning opportunities for Asian international students, as these students are often quiet and don't fit into the class discussions (DiAngelo, 2006). Also, this study supports literature that invalidating international issues and perspectives in the classroom and curriculum leads to international students' experiences of being overlooked and excluded (Kim & Kim, 2010). This study echoes previous literature and expands this conversation to a MSI and shows a similar finding to previous literature published on the subject.

On the socio-political level, white supremacy is prevailing in society through political rhetoric and the COVID-19 pandemic which has exacerbated the hostility against Asians and Asian Americans. Findings of the study describe how the U.S. government created an unwelcoming political environment that incentivized a bigoted rhetoric and exclusionary policies targeting international students. Participants in this study shared a common experience of anxiety and helplessness regarding the changing visa policies and COVID restrictions during the pandemic. Findings also indicate that Asian international graduate students increasingly gain concerns of racism and safety during their studying in the U.S.

My research supports Huber and Solórzano (2015)'s model of racial microaggressions and expands its use to study international students' experience of microaggressions, racism, and other forms of oppressions. Huber and Solórzano (2015) claim that racial microaggressions emerge from a larger systemic racism that includes institutional and ideologies of white supremacy. That is, racial microaggressions are not only perpetrated at an individual level, but they are also embedded in institutional policy and practice (Huber & Solórzano, 2015). My research on Asian international students also shows that the various forms of oppression emerge from larger systems that include interpersonal (e.g., race and ethnicity), institutional (e.g., campus racial climate), and socio-political dimensions (e.g., shifting political environment and visa policies). Consequently, my study helps to situate international students under a larger systemic racism. It expands Huber and Solórzano's (2015) framework by studying international students' experience of racialization in the critical socio-political environment.

4. Neoliberal Racism and the Belief of Meritocracy

Neoliberal rationale, as a socio-economic theory, is one dimension of globalization, which is linked to economics and emphasizes free trade under globalization (Olssen & Peters, 2005). Neoliberalism reflects a form of market capitalism that "embraces commercial rather than civic values, private rather than public interests, and financial incentives rather than ethical concerns" (Giroux, 2005). The logic of neoliberalism is not restricted to macro-level economics, but it also shapes people's ordinary lives. According to Omi & Winant (2014), neoliberalism has implications for the public's understanding of race and racialization. Similar to Omi & Winant (2014)'s study, my research found that neoliberalism influences Asian international participants' experiences and responses to race and racism. The neoliberal meaning of race results from the predominant political economy, the structure of race in U.S. higher education, and global socio-cultural structures (Giroux, 2014; Slaughter & Rhoades, 2004). My research indicates that neoliberal rationale shapes students' responses and mainly manifests in three ways: 1) emphasis on meritocracy, 2) use self-regulation and self-management to explain the experience of racialization, and 3) color-blindness racism.

International students in a neoliberal university setting seek U.S. higher education to emphasize education as capital in a market of global competitiveness. Meritocracy refers to the idea that, whatever our social position is at birth, society ought to facilitate the means to "move up" (Litter, 2013). A neoliberal meritocracy makes people believe that success depends on individual effort and talents, meaning responsibility lies with the individual (Litter, 2013). Under this ideology, students who attend higher education

believe they are being educated for private good to increase their human capital, rather than public good (Giroux, 2014). This belief makes students more individual achievement-oriented rather than community achievement-oriented. In neoliberal universities, students are more self-oriented by placing more value on finishing their courses, getting their degrees, and then finding a good job after graduation.

In this context, some Asian international graduate students were motivated to study hard because they believed that a graduate degree from universities in the U.S. is valuable for the purposes of job searching and future advancement. Academic performativity matters in the ways that students seek cultural and social capitals to increase their global competitiveness. As these students committed to their goals and increased their drive to succeed, they focused on their own academic achievements— while likely choosing to ignore the issue of race and racism during their studies. For example, James, a Chinese PhD student studying in the humanities and social science field, believed he is capable of achieving success through hard work. Therefore, James refused to acknowledge that the U.S. construction of race was applicable to him, and he did not acknowledge that racism exists. James was not the only participant who held this view, as a few other Chinese participants in this study also showed a certain degree of neoliberal logic of racism with the rationale of meritocracy. Their future-oriented perspective reflected a neoliberal rationale of meritocracy that is highlighted in China throughout their compulsory education to believe hard work pays off. This framework also reflects the current neoliberal global era ideology that race is inconsequential to success. However, meritocracy is criticized for limiting opportunities for those who can

participate and pay to attend a "first-class" college and be members of the global knowledge economy. Meritocracy coupled with neoliberal logics in education focuses primarily on the few students who can afford to participate and achieve higher education (Bamberger et al., 2019). This perpetuates and reinforces inequalities instead of working to ensure widespread access and equity (Bamberger et al., 2019). From this perspective, some Asian international students are at an advantage because they can compete and pay the tuition fee for advancement in the U.S. and be participants of our current global neoliberal era.

Neoliberal ideologies and practices shape Asian international graduate students' understandings of race and responses to racism. Self-regulation and self-management are key features of neoliberal ideologies (Foucault, 2008). Previous findings reveal that some students shared the experience and positioning of invisibility, self-responsibility, and performativity to make sense of their experiences of race and racism (Ham, 2017). For example, when discussing the lack of interactions/communications with domestic students, many Asian international graduate participants in this study blamed themselves for their introverted personality, limited understanding of American culture, and/or English proficiency issue. Findings of this study indicate that a few students usually use self-responsibility and performativity to make sense of their experiences concerning race and racism in the United States. This finding supports the previous study of Asian international undergraduate students' neoliberal logic of responsibility and performance (Ham, 2017). Under this logic, students become individually accountable for their trouble

with race and a performance of "self-checking" regulates their denial and private experiences of racism.

The ideology of denial of and private encounters of racism also reflected the notion of color-blindness and race avoidance. Bonilla-Silva (2013) argued that color-blind racism allows people to be unaware of "color" as the recognition of it can be discriminatory. However, color-blindness itself maintains discrimination against people of color by ignoring structural and historical racism. Color-blind ideologies omit the structural racial inequalities that exist and only focus on the individual context. So, participants in color-blindness in regard to race usually failed to recognize racial tensions and racial segregation on campus and in the broader society. In this discussion of neoliberal racism, participants that denied racism and defended racial "preferences" as solely private preferences reflect both colorblindness and neoliberalism ideology. Findings of this study show that Asian international students' shared understandings of race and racism was negotiated through imbricating neoliberal colorblind ideologies.

5. Sources of Support and Resistant/Advocacy

Asian international graduate students in this study respond to their experience of racialization and oppressions differently. Participants in this study show different involvement on campus; thus, their level of attachment, belongingness, resistance, and advocacy vary greatly. About one third of participants stayed in a small contact circle with their co-ethnic friends, where they felt safe and comfortable. Others were able to build informal support networks and used sources of support to help them to develop resistance strategies.

Sources of Support

Prior studies show that universities in the U.S. historically have not been developed to serve racially minoritized students (Harris, 1995). There were limited institutional efforts to create an inclusive and supportive environment for minoritized students to succeed (Comeaux et al., 2021). So, these students prefer to use informal support or services rather than formal support on campus (Chiang et al., 2004; Constantine et al., 2003; Grier-Reed, 2010; Yosso, 2005). A recent study finds that even in a MSI (where domestic racial minority students represent a majority of the student population) students still tended to rely on informal support networks and engaged in multiple types of resistance rather than using formal campus resources for their personal and academic needs (Comeaux et al., 2021). These informal support networks include on campus friendships developed within peer groups and other racially minority students from campus culture centers. Within-group informal support networks acted as a mechanism of collective well-being for many students. Off campus support includes family and community from home (Comeaux et al., 2021). Students in this study often rejected formal support or services in the MSI, which demonstrate a hostile and discriminatory campus racial climate (Comeaux et al., 2021). This finding suggests some MSIs' still lack campus environments that truly promote levels of diversity, equity, and inclusion for students to learn and grow despite having a large racially minoritized student population. This study calls for the need to address the campus racial climate at MSIs and beyond and holding universities accountable to serve the racial minority students (Comeaux et al., 2021).

My research supports Comeaux and colleagues' (2021) study on sources of support and resistance strategies of racially minoritized students in a MSI and extends the discussion to international students. For international students, previous studies indicate that self-validation, co-ethnic community, and environment are the common channels and resources international students engaged in when responding to hostile campus racial climates and as strategies for resisting assimilation (Glass & Westmont, 2014; Houshmand et al., 2014). Findings of my research confirm previous literature that many Asian international students acquired critical sources of support to develop agency and resistance strategies (Longerbeam et al., 2013; Sato & Hodge, 2009). These critical sources of support included: campus subcultures, family and friends, and home cultures.

Studies of domestic students underscore campus subcultures that support students' academic needs and their sense of community and inclusion (Harper & Quaye, 2007; Hurtado, et al., 2012). Research suggests that campus subcultures can play an important role in positively shaping the experiences and outcomes of racial/ethnic minority students and may serve as "safe spaces" on campus (Kuh & Love, 2000). Similarly, my research found that campus subcultures provide both informal and formal spaces which served as racially and ethnically safe spaces for many Asian international participants. Student organizations and learning programs are important characteristics of campus subcultures to help international graduate students establish a sense of belonging and sense of membership on campus.

Informal social networks including family and friends from the same country serve as the main source of cross-cultural reference in facilitating effective support. The

family and friends support system is especially important in helping participants to feel included and to counter their racial and ethnic isolation during the COVID-19 pandemic. This finding in my research reflects empirical research on domestic racially minoritized students that have familial capital and family support to improve the quality of their educational experience (Yosso, 2016). However, Asian international graduate students in this study often use less formal support or services on campus. For example, as discussed earlier, students have limited use of the university's Counseling and Psychological Services Program. This finding matches with previous studies that discussed Asian international students prefer to ask their co-ethnic friends for help rather than using campus resources (Houshmand et al., 2014; Wei et al., 2008).

In addition, Asian international students' home cultures provide a critical form of resistance and a source of relief from their negative experiences—including the experience of racialization. Being an international graduate student with professional and international knowledge provided them a certain freedom to choose whether to stay in their home country or not, as well as their level of adaptation to American culture. Cultural resistance is a powerful way of maintaining international students' original cultural and racial traits instead of being assimilated into the dominant culture. This finding in my research supports previous studies that state international students' internalized cultural values help them maintain their uniqueness and self-conceptions, as well as reaffirm their ethnicity and self-esteem to ameliorate the negative effect of stress and discrimination (Longerbeam et al., 2013; Sato & Hodge, 2009). Findings of my research also illustrate Asian international graduate students' reflection and comparison

with Asian American students regarding their cultural and racial minority status in the U.S. This finding can shed light on future research in comparing and contrasting both groups' integration, assimilation, and cultural identities development.

Diversity of the neighborhood, city, and state act as environmental factors that contribute to international students' resistance against an unwelcoming campus climate (Houshmand et al., 2014; Khawaja, & Stallman, 2011). Not only does campus environment matter, but diverse environments within the community and city provide international students with a source of comfort (Houshmand et al., 2014; Hurtado, et al., 2003). My research finds that Asian international graduate students often refer to the location of the university as directly related to their experiences. For example, some students emphasize that the university's location brings them a feeling of diversity. The university campus is in California, where diversity is highlighted. This area holds a large number of immigration and undocumented populations. So, some participants felt that people in this state are more open minded to diversity than people who live in predominantly white places. Many of the participants understood that the location of the university directly influences their university experience.

Agency and Resistance

When Asian international graduate students experience difficulties aligning themselves with racism and other forms of oppressions, they can demonstrate different forms of resistance. Findings of my research confirmed previous literature that some Asian international students are hesitant to challenge their circumstances, environment, and campus racial climate (Houshmand et al., 2014; Poyrazli & Grahame, 2007; Wei et

al., 2008). They are sometimes to assume a victimized posture by remaining a passive

mentality and accept their marginalized positioning (Houshmand et al., 2014). However,

other Asian international graduate students in this study activated their agency to

negotiate, resist, and advocate their own practices. Davies (1990) defines agency as a

form of discursive practice by individuals within certain groups where they have their

memberships and positions. Through this framework, individuals understand the

constitutive nature of discursive practices and make a series of choices. Agency allowed

international participants in this study to explore, negotiate, challenge, and resist their

academic, social, and racial experience. It also allowed these students to advocate a

positive campus racial climate and inclusive university strategies and policies,

This part of the discussion adopts Solórzano and Bernal's (2001) framework of

student resistance. Utilizing this framework, my analysis shows how participants

critically challenge the dominant ideology and push forward for social/racial justice on

campus. This framework includes four different types of student oppositional behavior:

(a) reactionary behavior, (b) self-defeating resistance, (c) conformist resistance, and (d)

transformational resistance (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001).

Findings of the study capture Crystal's (a Chinese PhD student) experience

adopting reactionary behavior. Kat (a Chinese PhD student) shows self-defeating

resistance. Crystal said she didn't care when she saw an inappropriate language comment

in an email from a professor. Kat felt shocked about her professor's comments regarding

a group of Chinese students in a class and relating to her own English language skills as a

TA. But Kat did not respond to these comments. These participants either lacked a

critique of their experience of racism or had some critique of their oppressive conditions, but they did not engage in direct/confrontative reactions to their experience of microaggressions (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001).

Other participants, such as Qin (a Chinese PhD student) and Alice (a Taiwanese PhD student), engaged in conformist resistance strategies. These students were motivated in seeking social justice; however, they did not engage in any critique towards systems of oppression. For example, both students linked international students' challenges to the overall campus structure and culture, but Qin and Alice mentioned that they tended to find personal reasons to explain their negative personal and social conditions (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001).

Lastly, Bob (a Thailand PhD student), Vera (a Sri Lankan MBA student), and Mary (a Chinese PhD student) had experiences that show their transformational resistance. They actively participated in student organizations, activities, and campaigns to advocate for more equal policies to cultivate a welcoming campus praxis and environment. These students' behaviors and actions indicated their desire to challenge oppressions and promote social/racial justice on campus (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001).

Recommendations

Understanding attitudes and beliefs that students hold about their campuses is the first step to build a diverse and inclusive campus racial climate (Hurtado, 1998). These recommendations engage the key stakeholders within the university (Poloma, 2017) including senior administrators, faculty members, and students. Next, universities need to actively engage in developing proposals to assess and improve diverse learning

environments and a positive campus racial climate (Hurtado, et al., 2012). The recommendations for the university's practices and policies to better engage and serve international graduate students on campus include 1) increase resources and support, 2) facilitate the cross-racial and cross-cultural communications on campus, 3) enhance diversity learning environment, and 4) develop institutional internationalization strategies.

Increase Resources and Support for International Graduate Students

University resources are especially important for international students due to educational, social, and cultural challenges that occur when adjusting to the host institution and society. Findings within my research suggest that the university campus lacked holistic support for international graduate students.

As financial support affects international graduate students' overall educational experience, increasing the fundings to graduate programs and students is one of the essential factors that could leverage campus and funding resource limitation. The university's strategic plan states that the university aims to provide multi-year support packages that can close the competitive gap with other institutions. Also, the university should provide more scholarship opportunities for international students given that international students are often illegible for many current opportunities. In addition, as discussed in the finding that the COVID-19 pandemic caused a certain degree of delay for some graduate students' research progress and graduation plans. Although the university has granted a twelve-quarter extension of Non-Resident Tuition (NRST) to all

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post-candidacy graduate students, many students still hope the university grants NRST extensions for the pre-candidacy international graduate students.

In addition, participants in this study suggested that the university should take more efforts in assisting graduate students' housing issues, offering regular public speaking and academic writing resources, and improving mental health resources. In the future, the university should assess overall how international students experience campus resources. A better understanding will inform improvements to campus resources infrastructure and will help international students' transition to U.S. academic/cultural environments positively.

Facilitate the Cross-Racial and Cross-Cultural Communications

As discussed above, a truly diverse and inclusive campus will not be complete if it does not develop students' multicultural competencies and cultivate intercultural and multicultural communities. In creating a diverse learning environment, institutions should provide international and domestic students with opportunities for cross-racial interaction for both in and out of the classroom environments to increase diversity awareness and a welcoming campus climate (Hurtado, 1998). Thus, universities' diversity efforts must become more integrated into the institutional culture in order for cross-cultural interactions to take place across the university.

ISS Events and Activities

Also, as discussed earlier, Asian international graduate students usually tend to pay more attention to the ISS events and activities within the international community. Rather, these students were less likely to explore the ethnic and gender programs/student

organizations on campus. These students noticed that ISS events are usually designed for international students without inviting domestic students. My research raised a concern about whether ISS and cultural student organizations segregate international students from domestic students or students from different cultures. There is a risk that the current international graduate student services prevent them from moving from bicultural or multicultural literacy to sort of enforcing homogeneity or assimilation within their co-ethnic and international community.

I suggest that ISS and other campus units design events beyond the international community and better advertise international events at the university to both domestic and international students. In this case, events provided through ISS will actively encourage social interaction between international and domestic students and students will benefit from having domestic students in international events and activities. ISS could engage corporations with different cultural organizations on campus so that through hosting and celebrating cultural events and activities, students became immersed in culturally diverse environments.

Cross-Cultural Peer Programs

My research shows that Asian international graduate students usually felt comforted by the company of people who came from their similar backgrounds. The current mentor programs from the ISS serve as co-ethnic peers that help international students feel they belong and serve as role models to encourage students to persist and overcome adversity in graduate school. Nevertheless, students from other ethnic groups also could have positive effects on students' ethnic identity formation and could serve as

role models in the ethnic identity development process. Peers not from the same culture are likely to promote acculturation and to help find ways to integrate other cultures into one's understanding of ethnic identity. Thus, I suggest that the university develop cross-cultural peer programs to help Asian international graduate students develop multicultural competence and compassion. By engaging in communication with cross-cultural peers, students acquire abilities to successfully negotiate cross-ethnic relationships. Through interactions from cross-cultural peer programs, students may also challenge their beliefs, prejudices, and discriminations.

Facilitate Interracial Interaction

In creating a diverse learning environment in the context of higher education, multicultural interaction is an effective strategy. Institutions should provide students with opportunities for cross-racial interaction in both in and out of the classroom environments (Hurtado et al., 2008). Interracial interaction is crucial to increase diversity awareness and benefits in building a healthy and welcoming campus climate (Hurtado et al., 1998, 2012). Therefore, institutions of higher education need to proactively challenge microaggressions and whiteness on campus by sending the message that interracial dialogue and interaction are highly valued on campus. This strategy will provide opportunities for engaging a wide variety of persons, including the campus leadership, faculty, staff, students, and community members.

The selected university must intentionally arrange its resources and facilitate environments to help international undergraduate and graduate students have meaningful interactions with other individuals, as well as better engage in and contribute to the

campus diversity. Also, international students need to be directly involved in these diversity conversations. This inclusion will conduct more interactions with people who come from varying backgrounds on a day-to-day basis. These efforts should be involved in all aspects of university life, including teaching and learning. Therefore, initiating changes in the institution's culture and climate is crucial to engage everyone in the university, including faculty, staff, and students. These strategies will provide opportunities to challenge institutional microaggressions and whiteness on campus, as well as engaging a wide variety of persons for the endeavor. The benefits of increased interaction will transition from individuals to the larger community and the overall campus environment, which will affect the campus racial climate. Thus, higher education institutions can be developed into intercultural places where diversity is embraced and woven into daily interactions.

Enhance Diverse Learning Environment

Universities need to actively engage in developing proposals to increase diverse learning environments to assess and improve diversity and student outcomes (Hurtado et al., 2012). The suggested approaches include engaging diversity curriculum and providing diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) workshops for international students.

Engage Diversity Curriculum

Students' curricular experience contributes to the organizational dimension of campus climate (Hurtado, et al., 2012). Diversity in the curriculum informs student ideas about the legitimacy of knowledge (e.g., who can create knowledge), which influences individual perspectives about race and racism (Engberg et al. 2007; Denson, 2009). For

example, a longitudinal study shows that when white students complete diversity courses, they have very positive educational outcomes, including an improvement of interracial interactions (Jayakumar, 2015). Diversity and a positive campus climate can be effectively introduced via a critical curriculum in different disciplines (Cabrera et al., 2016). Campuses may provide academic support for faculty members who desire to engage diversified teaching content in their courses that will be taught to enhance learning for students. Alongside these curricular supports, exploring and implementing diversity approaches to teaching and research can support educational diversity in the classroom and can assist departments in diversifying and strengthening their faculty (Hurtado et al., 1998).

Faculty members can help by engaging in critical self-analysis to consider how their actions and disposition may encourage and/or hinder international students' success. Faculty members could also consider cultural differences in learning styles and academic settings. Understanding, accepting, and validating a student's cultural background is also critical to the student's personal and academic development. Students who feel validated are more inclined to participate in the learning process and seek help from teachers, counselors, and mentors when such assistance is needed (Rendón, 2002). Through such approaches, faculty are encouraged to take into consideration the cultural differences in academic settings and create "safe" learning environments where students feel that they can make contributions. Faculty are also encouraged to effectively communicate with people from diverse cultural and linguistic backgrounds, as well as being aware of international perspectives to interpret issues within a global context.

Providing DEI Workshops

As shown in findings of my research, Asian international graduate students sometimes lack an understanding of the racial dynamics in the United States. Because of a lack of background knowledge, international graduate students may sometimes perceive race and racial context as irrelevant to their graduate studies. This issue can also result in having a lack of knowledge to participate in the diversity discourses as well as unfamiliarity with racial bias and discrimination, stereotyping, and microaggressions (Mitchell et al 2017, Jean-Francois 2019). Most support for international graduate students often overlooks concerns relating to diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI). Primary DEI support is aimed at a general audience and does not directly address the challenges international graduate students face. Therefore, the university should address these disparities by providing a DEI workshop series for international graduate students—especially for new international students. When raising this idea in the focus groups of this study, almost all participants felt it is a necessary resource for the university to implement. Participants suggested the university hold a series of workshops to help students to build a system of knowledge, asking graduate students to take ethnic studies classes, and conducting sessions for students to speak out their experience and learn how to respond to racism. The university will, hopefully, take some of these suggestions into consideration and implement them as available resources to help international students acquire the knowledge of DEI.

Connect International Initiatives and International Students Services With the University Collective Efforts

At many institutions, resources allocated to the international student programs and services may be limited. International programs and services may receive little attention on campus from faculty and staff members who do not directly work with international students. Therefore, international students and scholars' offices need to raise attention to influence the college's major strategic and budgetary plans including bridging international students into the institution's strategic plan and policies for the development and success of the entire international student community. For example, the university could have an open discussion about how the institutional international strategy can be developed, launched, and implemented to better benefit international students. The collective entirety of international students' identities and racial backgrounds should also be purposefully included to facilitate learning and community building. Institutional strategic plans and policies guide the institution's diversity practices. So, engaging international students in these conversations will help the institution develop holistic strategies in supporting international students. Connecting international programming and services to existing strategic plans is an effective way to engage international perspectives into institutional development, including the financial and budget.

Conclusion

When discussing students' educational experience on campus, including race and racism, previous studies usually discuss domestic and international students separately and use different theoretical frameworks. Prior literature indicates that most research on

international students has focused on how individual levels of adjustment and certain characteristics of students are associated with their adaptation and outcomes in higher education. (e.g., Andrade, 2006; Khawaja & Stallman, 2011; Ward & Masgoret, 2009). This body of literature places the responsibility upon international students themselves to adapt to and incorporate their hosts' values and practices. This view within scholarship places emphasis on the individual-level of students to adapt to their campus environment and how mental health issues are associated with academic, social, and cultural challenges (e.g., Andrade, 2006; Khawaja & Stallman, 2011; Ward & Masgoret, 2009).

Increasingly, literature on this topic has engaged discussion of international students' racial minority status and experience of microaggressions and racism in the U.S. (e.g., Frey & Roysircar, 2006; Houshmand, 2014; Lee & Rice, 2007; Longerbeam et al., 2013; Slaten et al., 2016; Wei, et al., 2012). However, unlike their domestic peers, international students' experiences of racialization are an aspect that has not been studied in depth within and beyond the university settings. Little attention has been given to critical frameworks that address the international student population beyond just students' race and ethnicity as major factors in affecting their racial experience. There is a gap in engaging international students' direct racial experiences within specific institutional types/structures (such as a MSI campus) and under a certain period of socio-political environments (such as during the COVID-19 pandemic). Even more so, there is a significant gap in prior literature that has not included international students' voices and first-hand accounts of exploring their own resistance strategies when experiencing oppressions.

In the literature review, I analyzed how classifications as "Asian" in the U.S. involves a precarious racial positioning (e.g., perpetuating foreigners, model minority, generalization, stereotypes). By taking a historical overview of Asian American experiences and by critically analyzing domestic Asian American students' racialized experience, my research provides context to examine how racialization as "Asian" impacts international students who share Asian cultures and heritages. This literature review includes the American racial formation in history, Asian Americans racial positioning, whiteness's influence in the U.S. society and policies, global white supremacy, and critiques of neoliberal ideologies. The literature review builds from the socio-historical dimensions of racism in the U.S. and draws on national and global contexts of race. It also takes an intersectional approach to recognize individual students' country of origins, cultural backgrounds, language skills, gender, and level/field of studies. This approach debunks notions of monolithic viewpoints of what Asian international graduate students are racially and ethnically categorized as.

Theoretically, I examined recent research in the field on both domestic and international students and took a creative approach to engage the discussion and use of theory across national boundaries when interviewing students. This study explores perceptions of the campus racial climate and resistance strategies of Asian international graduate students in an MSI. This study centers on the campus racial climate framework (Hurtado et al, 1998, 2002), AsianCrit (Chang, 1993; Museus & Iftikar, 2013), and student resistance framework (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001) in the initial stage to develop the research questions, as well as interview and focus groups questions. Learning race in

a U.S. context framework (Fries-Britt et al., 2014) and neoliberal racism were included to explain mixed and unexpected findings regarding racialization experiences of international graduate students and acts of complicity and resistance in the face of institutional oppression.

The campus racial climate framework (Hurtado et al, 1998, 2002) analyzes how perceived campus racial climates affect students' learning, living, and interacting with various campus individuals/elements. My research focuses on the elements of compositional, psychological, and behavioral dimensions of the campus racial climate framework. I adopted the compositional diversity dimension within the framework to measure the MSIs campus diversity. The psychological dimension was used to assess individuals' views of discrimination and attitudes toward other racial/ethnic backgrounds. I included the behavioral dimension to discuss the frequency and quality of interaction between Asian international graduate students and other racial identity groups. Engaging the campus racial climate framework is important to assess overall campus diversity makeup, as well as international students' experience of diversity and interactions. This study also analyzes perceived hostile campus racial climates that affect students' learning and living, as well as their interactions with various campus individuals. Using the campus racial climate framework helps to facilitate environments to better engage international students in the discussion and contribution to diversity on campus.

AsianCrit (Chang, 1993; Museus & Iftikar, 2013) explores the historical and sociocultural meanings of race and it also examines multidimensions of "Asianization" (a racialization process that impacts the experiences of Asian and Asian American groups)

interrelated to students' transnational and intersectional experience. AsianCrit has been largely engaged in U.S. domestic studies and has limited application to the study of international students. Indeed, this research shows that several lenses of AsianCrit, such as Asianization, transnational, and intersectionality are powerful tools to examine international students' racial experiences.

AsianCrit offers a critical and comprehensive lens to analyze the experiences of Asian international students by challenging stereotypes, exploring intersectionality, and addressing structural racism. Their encounters with racialization during the COVID-19 pandemic are influenced by their identification as Asian, international status, ethnicity/culture, and transnational tensions. This research significantly contributes to the application of AsianCrit to the international student population, fostering diverse perspectives and generating new insights. By incorporating this framework into future studies on international students, we can deepen our understanding of international students and aid in the creation of an inclusive and equitable environment. Through the examination of power structures and their impact on marginalized groups, AsianCrit sheds light on the experiences of Asian international students, a group not commonly associated with this framework. This analysis allows us to uncover the underlying power dynamics of being an international student in the U.S. and certain effects on their educational journey. By utilizing and expanding the tenets of AsianCrit, we can gain a deeper understanding of these students' unique challenges during and beyond the pandemic, while also challenging dominant narratives of "model minority," "perpetuate foreigners", and other stereotypes assigned to immigrant/international groups. Employing

AsianCrit to study Asian international students helps connect their shared racial experiences with pan-Asian population and serves as a warning that the racial history and rhetoric of anti-Asian sentiments in the United States were echoed during the COVID-19 pandemic. Ultimately, the objective of this study is to foster inclusive and equitable educational environments and ensure a fairer future for all.

Learning race in a U.S. context framework (Fries-Britt et al., 2014) explains how Asians international graduate students navigate and make sense of their racialization experience. Learning race in a U.S. context framework explains that encounters of race, meaning-making, internalization of racism, and awakening of resistance are experiences that international students must go through while studying in another country. My research finds that home countries' cultures and education build Asian international graduate students' initial understanding of race. However, lack of knowledge or receiving misinformation regarding race and racism in the U.S. may place these students in vulnerable positions when they come to study in the U.S. When international students arrive and finally conduct their studies in America, they are immersed within U.S. education, media, and interactions and must navigate these new complexities.

More specifically, racialization can be understood as the meaning-making process of a certain group based on the social concept of race (Desmond & Emirbayer, 2015). International students' experiences of racialization are a long process of navigating complex structures of academic university systems and individual campus climates, as well as the U.S.'s racial context that can elicit feelings of suffering, transformation, and development. Encounters of race, meaning-making, internalization of racism, and

awakening of resistance are experiences that international students must go through while studying in the U.S. Participants in this study generally noted that they are learning first-hand about race and racism while learning in their field of study in the U.S. through courses in academic settings and through social communication and life experience. Some participants not only learned about race and racism through education, but also through media, social media, and interpersonal communications. Encounters with race forces them to consider their own positioning within a U.S. racial context, which marks a shift in how they regard the importance of race (Fries-Britt et al., 2014). My research supports the use of the learning race in a U.S. context framework in understanding international students' learning, navigating, and meaning-making process of race during the COVID-19 pandemic and the shifting political environment in the U.S.

The student resistance framework (Solórzano & Bernal, 2001) measures a student's level of critique to challenge dominant ideologies and oppressive conditions. By adopting the student resistance framework, my research is informed through how Asian international graduate students execute their agency against adversity, stereotyping, and injustices. Large numbers of studies focus on international students' problems or challenges without discussing students' agency in resisting institutional or societal oppressions. Building on the student resistance framework to include students' personal voices resulted in compelling new findings. My research indicates that Asian international graduate students' resistance strategies are culturally influenced. Culturally influenced means Asian international graduate students' home culture and background shaped their values, behaviors, and reactions. So, students' resistance strategies deeply

reflect their culture and values. Cultural resistance provides students freedom to choose their level of integration into the campuses and American culture. It also provides students a critical form of resistance and a source of relief from their negative experiences—including the experience of racialization.

Moreover, engaging the student resistance framework helps readers understand how Asian international graduate students addressed issues of racial isolation and institutional invisibility during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many participants also participated in various organizations, involved in activities to improve graduate students' experience, and engaged in advocacy for the better treatment of Asian students and international graduate students. These stories of participants provided and discussed in the findings chapter and these examples show some Asian graduate students' intentions to battle exclusion on campus to improve their experience and surroundings. My research on international graduate students' individual agency contributes to the understanding and development of engaging the student resistance framework by including this understudied topic in higher education studies.

Together, using these theoretical and conceptual frameworks, my research discusses how various forms of oppression towards Asian international graduate students emerge from larger systems that include interpersonal, institutional, and socio-political dimensions. However, these four frameworks are not able to explain students' different racial experiences. Thus, I adopted neoliberalism ideology into this discussion to interpret data. Neoliberal racism and the belief of meritocracy make Asian international graduate students more individual achievement-oriented and shape their understandings of race

and responses to racism. This finding of neoliberal racism echoes prior literature studying international students' self-responsibility to make sense of their experiences of racism and/or carry color blind ideologies to ignore race issues in the U.S (Ham, 2017).

Methodologically, my research contributes to a qualitative methodology by including participants' voices into the study. This study is guided by a qualitative research methodology utilizing a single case study that includes semi-structured interviews, focus groups, and document analysis as data collection methods. As it is hard for a researcher to accurately assess a behavior as resistant using quantitative methods, adopting the qualitative methodology in the exploration of student resistance allowed me to take a closer look at how participants activated their agency to negotiate, resist, and advocate for their rights on campus. In addition, using different qualitative data collection methods helped me, as a researcher, to compare data from different sources. For example, document analysis of the university's mission statement and strategic plan provide me opportunities to assess students' experience of diversity and racism on campus. This comparison fostered discussions and suggestions to enhance the campus racial climate.

I built trust relations with the majority of participants during the interviews and focus groups as my culture and education background have allowed me to gain access and build rapport with them. These trust relations were fostered through the questions of individual interviews/focus groups. Therefore, rather than just answering a list of questions, the interviews and focus groups encouraged participants to express themselves freely and tell their life stories. For example, two participants told me that they felt more relaxed when sharing their experience of microaggressions because they previously felt

that nobody cared about their experiences. One participant, Crystal (a Chinese PhD student) told me that she felt the interview process was more like therapy than a formal interview where she enjoyed sharing her experiences with me. She felt more relaxed and gained some courage and confidence after the interview. In the focus groups, many participants shared that they like the format of discussion and enjoyed having a space to talk about their experience, concerns, and suggestions. Some participants commented that they wish the university could provide them more opportunities like the focus groups to freely express themselves.

In The Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Freire (2000) stated that the "awakening" of an individual's consciousness is what leads to their "liberation" because those who are oppressed and are unaware of their status as oppressed. Building on Pedagogy of the Oppressed (Freire, 2000), my research allows participants to explore both sociocultural factors such as race, ethnicity, and gender identity. For example, I designed interview and focus group questions to explicitly address students' concerns, allowing them to reflect on the impact of race, racism, and other social identities. During the interviews and focus groups. I encourage participants to incorporate their knowledge about political, sociocultural, and economic factors to reflect whether they have experienced any oppressive conditions on campus. By reflecting on sociocultural factors such as race/ethnicity and gender identity, and environmental factors like campus racial climate, participants are likely to critically analyze social conditions and their campus environment, as well as proposed actions to change those conditions. Thus, I argue that this study helps participants develop their understanding of race/racism, and it further

helps participants engage in the process of dialogue to raise critical consciousness (Freire, 2000). In summary, methodologically, I argue that my positionality, the interview format/design, and the trust relations all affect participants' engagement to interviews and focus groups in positive ways. These factors encouraged me as a researcher to piece individual voices together to form the collective experience of Asian international graduate students on an MSI campus.

Findings of my research create a salient concern for Asian international graduate students in U.S. institutions as they face a particularly challenging situation regarding increasing anti-Asian racism throughout the nation. Asian international graduate students have also been positioned as outsiders and racially isolated on campus. For Chinese international students, the political entanglements between China and the U.S. have also led to serious concerns about anti-Asian sentiment. These findings indicate that Asian international students shared some similar experiences as Asian American students in U.S. higher education institutions (Chou & Feagin, 2015; Dolly Nguyen et al., 2016; Museus & Truong, 2009; Teranishi, 2002). Due to their racial categorization as simply just "Asian," Asian international students are subsumed into the racial categories and hierarchies of American society. This categorization occurs for all Asian-presenting students despite significant cultural differences between different countries throughout the entire region of Asia. By learning from the experiences of the past, this study helps to situate both Asian and Asian American students' challenges in contemporary times. Asian international students should work with other racial minority students, such as Asian American students, to strengthen against anti-Asian racism on and beyond campus.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, Asian and Asian Americans experienced incidents of verbal and physical assaults, discrimination in various settings, and stereotyping that links them to the spread of the virus. This harmful racialization of Asian Americans during the pandemic reflects a pattern of xenophobia and racism that has deep historical roots in the United States. These patterns of xenophobia throughout the pandemic echo similar legislation and rhetoric on Chinese immigration over the past two hundred years that sought to dehumanize laborers from China. Linking Asian people with the COVID-19 virus operates on a similar level to dehumanize Asian communities, including international student groups.

When compounded with the challenges posed by the pandemic, such as social isolation, disrupted study/research progress, and increased anti-Asian racism, international students faced heightened psychological and emotional stress. The absence of robust support systems and the pressure to conform to the model minority stereotype leaves them with limited avenues for seeking help and understanding. Thereby, Asian international students and Asian American students all face unique challenges due to nativism and/or being cast as the model minority, as well as "perpetual foreigners" (Chang, 1993; Wu, 2002) regardless of citizenship status.

Nevertheless, findings of this study also illuminate students who have sources of strength, resilience, and agency. In the process of adjustment, Asian international graduate students utilize their social networks, including family, friends, and co-national peers to resist the negative influence of the campus's racial climate and advocate. Asian international graduate students who took agentive actions changed their role as outsiders

and positioned themselves as insiders to explore, negotiate, and change the existing normative practices on the university campus. Through the recognition of disciplinary and organizational power (e.g., GSA and the union), Asian international graduate students claim competence and to become legitimate members of their academic communities. The processes through which international students align themselves, resist existing norms in their practices, and initiate changes as a form of empowerment not only construct their identities, but also push forward for social/racial justice on campus.

My research examines Asian international graduate students' experience focusing on a MSI campus. My research finds that a MSI's diversity components and multidimensions of the campus racial climate influence international students' academic, social, and racial experience. Previous literature only focuses on international students' experience of discrimination in PWIs (e.g., Glass, 2012; Karuppan & Barari, 2010). Turning to a MSI campus to study international graduate students' experience provides a model for understanding how a diverse student population and diversity campus component affect international students' experience. Thus, my research contributes to the prior literature on the subject by examining campus diversity's influence on international graduate students and extending the campus diversity discussion to international students.

The selected university's high degree of diversity is a key factor in its academic reputation and campus culture because it achieves diversity in the numerical representation of undergraduate students. However, there is room to improve its graduate students, faculty, and staff members' diversity. Diversity cannot be just a buzz word used to promote the university. A truly diverse university must contain workshops and

programs to educate students and faculty/staff to appreciate the multicultural campus environment. These challenges require U.S. higher education institutions to combat institutional barriers and work to provide truly diverse, welcoming, and inclusive campus racial environments to international students. International graduate students are one of the essential components for not only the campus academic community, but also facilitators to enhance campus's diversity, equity, and inclusion. Students, faculty, and staff must help to establish dialogues between international students and domestic students which can provide reassurance to all students about the campus' commitment to diversity, equity, and inclusion.

My research not only helps higher education institutions understand how Asian international graduate students navigate race and their racial experience in the U.S., but also holds universities accountable for expanding diversity, equity, and inclusion to build more inclusive and anti-racist spaces. The results of this study benefits both higher education administrators and policy makers by helping them launch and implement policies and practice to improve international students of color's experience on campus. Moreover, the findings of the study help to extend the discussion from the individual campus where this study was conducted to a broader socio-political dimension. Governments and institutions should implement policies and practices that actively combat discrimination and xenophobia. This includes establishing robust reporting mechanisms for racial discriminations and hate crimes on higher education campuses and promoting cultural competency and diversity training within educational institutions and workplaces. By collaborating and implementing these policies/practices, institutions can

work towards creating inclusive policies and fostering a supportive atmosphere that empowers international students to thrive academically and culturally.

In addition, this research will have a further implication beyond the education field. One of the aims of the research includes promoting diversity and ameliorating oppressive attitudes to Asians and Asian Americans. It challenges the status quo to promote social and racial justice in the U.S. society to combat xenophobic ideologies. The findings do only apply to the education fields, but also benefit cross disciplinary studies. This research also calls for cross-discipline coalitions and solidarity in the fight against racism as well as improving social and racial justice.

As a host country of nearly 1 million international students (Open Door, 2022), the United States benefits from international students who bring prestige and financial resources into their college campuses. In recent years, however, institutions have reported nation-wide decreases in international student enrollment and retention—majorly due to the shifting political environment and the COVID-19 pandemic. On April 10th, 2023, the Biden Administration officially declared the end of the COVID-19 pandemic. However, the scars of these early days of the pandemic remain deeply etched in the cultural memory of Asian domestic and international communities. As we move into the post-pandemic era, it is essential to reflect on the lessons learned and strive for a more inclusive and compassionate society. In the post-pandemic era, the interconnectedness of these issues should serve as a reminder that addressing discrimination and fostering inclusivity is an ongoing process.

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Appendix A: Interview Protocol

[Introduce Purpose of the Interview]

[Demographic Questions]

1. ask participant's name, gender, email address, country of origin, major, year of study.

2. What's your plan after graduation?

[Students' Experience With Academic Setting, Racial Diversity, and Campus Climate]

3. Could you please describe your overall campus experience as an international student in this campus?

4. What's your experience as an Asian international student during the changing political climate and the COVID pandemic?

5. What's your experience of interaction and communication with students, faculty members, and staff on campus?

6. Could you please describe your experience in academic settings such as classrooms, workshops, academic resource centers?

7. Are you members of any student organizations, clubs, and groups? How much does feeling like a member of that community matter to you?

9. Have you interacted with your racial group and/or different racial groups at UCR? What does interaction look like?

   a.   How, if at all, do you feel gender shapes this experience?

10. Have you ever felt welcomed as an international student? Have you ever felt you were treated differently from other students? Why?

a. if no, are some of the negative experiences related to the ongoing politica, economic, gender, and racial tensions in the U.S.?

b. how, if at all, do you see gender related to this feeling? interaction with other groups?

11. Have you ever been discriminated against because of your race/ethnicity, and or gender, English language, social economic class?

a. If yes, please provide an example.

b. How did it make you feel?

c. What did you do when experiencing the discrimination or related incidents?

12. What's the biggest challenges/difficulties you have experienced and/or feel as an Asian international student at UCR?

a. Are these challenges come from academic studies, relationships with advisor and coworkers, or department levels?

b. Do you feel supported in your academic studies?

[Resistance Strategies]

13. How confident do you feel to seek help on campus when experiencing microaggressions and/or negatively of campus racial climate?

14. Have you ever participated in advocating for more resources and/or better treatment of international students?

15. How have your culture, language, values, or beliefs influenced your ability to adapt and socially connect with others on campus?

[Conclusion]

16. Is there anything else about your experience as an Asian international student at this university that you would like to share?

17. Do you have any questions for me?

18. Do you want to participate in the 1.5 hours focus group to continue to discuss this topic with other participants?

Appendix B: Focus Group Questions

[Students' Experience With Academic Setting, Racial Diversity, and Campus Climate]

1. What's your experience as an Asian international graduate student during the changing political climate and the COVID pandemic?

2. What's your experience of interaction and communication with students, faculty members, and staff on campus?

3. Have you interacted with your racial group and/or different racial groups at UCR? What does interaction look like?

a. How, if at all, do you feel gender shapes this experience?

4. Have you ever felt welcomed as an international student? Have you ever felt you were treated differently from other students? Why?

   a. if no, are some of the negative experiences related to the ongoing political, economic, gender, and racial tensions in the U.S.?

   b. how, if at all, do you see gender related to this feeling? interaction with other groups?

5. Have you ever been discriminated against because of your race/ethnicity, and or gender, English language, social economic class?

   a. If yes, please provide an example.

   b. How did it make you feel?

   c. What did you do when experiencing the discrimination or related incidents?

6. What's the biggest challenges/difficulties you have experienced and/or feel as an Asian international student at UCR?

   a. Are these challenges come from academic studies, relationships with advisor and coworkers, or department levels?

   b. Do you feel supported in your academic studies?

[Resistance Strategies]

7. How confident do you feel to seek help on campus when experiencing microaggressions and/or negatively of campus racial climate?

8. Have you ever participated in advocating for more resources and/or better treatment of international students?

9. How have your culture, language, values, or beliefs influenced your ability to adapt and socially connect with others on campus?

[Conclusion]

10. Is there anything else about your experience as an Asian international graduate student at this university that you would like to share?